

*Richard the Redeless
and
Mum and the Sothsegger*

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Chronology of Events Relating to Richard the Redeless & Mum and the Sothsegger

c. 1330	Birth of Langland
1337	Earliest English sumptuary law (restricted clothing according to class) Hundred Years' War begins
1348–49	Great Plague
1351	First Statute of Provisors (allowing English crown patronage in ecclesiastical preferment)
1353	First Statute of Praemunire (antipapal legislation)
1363	Sumptuary laws restricting clothing and food according to specific estates
1366	Birth of Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, later Henry IV
1367	Birth of Richard of Bordeaux, later Richard II (reigned 1377–99)
1368–74	<i>Piers Plowman</i> A-text
1376	Death of Edward, the Black Prince, Richard of Bordeaux's father (8 June) Good Parliament at Westminster (Commons, with Peter de la Mare as spokesman, draft 146 articles of complaint against the king's councillors, including the chamberlain, Lord Latimer, who is executed)
1377–81	<i>Piers Plowman</i> B-text
1377	Death of Edward III Richard crowned king in July

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1378	Great Schism, with rival popes in Rome and Avignon
1381–85	<i>Piers Plowman</i> C-text
1381	Great Rising (Peasants' Revolt)
1382	William Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a London Council condemn twenty-four of Wyclif's propositions (ten as heretical and fourteen as erroneous) Statute against Itinerant Preachers
1384	Death of Wyclif
c. 1386	Death of Langland
1386	Robert de Vere, Richard's favorite, Earl of Oxford and Marquis of Dublin (1385), created Duke of Ireland Wonderful Parliament: Duke of Gloucester challenges Richard's "evil ministers"; succeeds in ousting the chancellor, Michael de la Pole, and others from office. A commission is established to reform (and in effect to rule) the government
1387	De Vere abandons his royal wife, Philippa de Coucy, for a Bohemian lady in waiting, outraging the dukes of Gloucester and Lancaster Lords Appellant, led by Henry Bolingbroke and including the Duke of Gloucester, challenge the Earl of Oxford at Radcot Bridge; Richard II takes refuge in the Tower of London
1388	Merciless Parliament (Westminster; February): Robert Tresilian, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, Nicholas Brembre, former Mayor of London, and Thomas Usk executed, along with four chamber knights, including Simon Burley, Richard's tutor. Battle of Otterburn or Chevy Chase (Scots defeat the English): 5 August

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	Third Statute of Laborers in Cambridge Parliament, September (concerned with vagrancy)
1389	Richard II comes into his majority; rules in his own right
1390	Statute of Livery and Maintenance (forbids retaining private armies and identifying badges)
	Statute of Provisors (reiterating and expanding 1351 statute)
c1390–95	Chaucer's ecclesiastical satires written (The Friar's & Summoner's Tales) <i>Jack Upland</i> William Woodford's reply to <i>Jack Upland</i> (<i>Responsiones ad quaestiones LXV</i>)
1391–93	Trial of Walter Brut, Lollard sympathizer, before Bishop Trefnant. In 1393 Brut is executed
1392	Richard II's quarrel with Londoners (moves Exchequer, Common Bench, and Chancery to York)
1393	Great Statue of Praemunire (asserts king's right to bestow benefices in England) Rising in Cheshire
1394	Hilary Parliament (quarrel between Lancaster and Arundel about Cheshire rising) Death of Queen Anne
1394–95	Richard II's first expedition to Ireland
1395	<i>Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards</i> (<i>Lollard Manifesto</i>) affixed to doors of Westminster and St. Paul's

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	Cheshire yeomen and archers enlisted as King Richard's household troops; given badges with emblem of the White Hart
c. 1395	<i>Piers the Plowman's Crede</i>
1396	Richard II marries Isabella of France, age 7
1397	Death of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, while imprisoned at Calais, in the custody of Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham
	Westminster Parliament. John Bushy appointed as speaker of the Commons. Four points of treason determined. Arrest and execution of Richard FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel; banishment of Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. At Richard's instigation, this Parliament created what Walsingham called the "duketti" (the "little dukes"), including the Earl of Derby (to Duke of Hereford); the Earl of Rutland (to Duke of Aumale); the Earl of Huntingdon (to Duke of Exeter); and the Earl of Nottingham (to Duke of Norfolk).
	Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, impeached and exiled
1398	Shrewsbury Parliament (accedes to king's wishes especially as regards burdensome taxation)
	King Richard interrupts judicial duel at Coventry: Henry of Hereford ("Bolingbroke"), versus Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk; Bolingbroke banished for ten years (later commuted to six)
1399	Death of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (3 February)
	Henry of Hereford's banishment extended to life; Lancastrian estates confiscated
	Richard II's second Irish expedition, leaving the Duke of York as regent
	Henry of Hereford returns from banishment in Paris together with the exiled former Archbishop, Thomas Arundel (early July). Hereford moves quickly through England to Berkeley Castle, where he forced York to yield, and then marched to Bristol, executing Sir John Bushy and Sir Henry Green, two of Richard's ministers

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	Deposition of Richard II by decree of parliamentary elements: lords spiritual and temporal (29 and 30 Sept.); accession of Henry of Lancaster as Henry IV; beginning of Lancastrian rule
	Richard II moved in secret from the Tower to Leeds Castle and then Pontefract (October)
	John Gower attaches the <i>Tripartite Chronicle</i> to <i>Vox clamantis</i>
1400	Death of Richard II (February)
	Death of Geoffrey Chaucer (25 October)
c. 1400	<i>Richard the Redeless</i>
	<i>The Plowman's Tale</i> (Chaucerian apocrypha)
	<i>There Is a Busch That is Forgrowe</i> (On King Richard's ministers)
1401	Hilary Parliament (10 January–10 March) that paralleled Arundel's drafting of legislation on heresy (<i>De haeretico comburendo</i>) that sanctioned the burning of heretics
	William Sawtry, Lollard, burned at Smithfield for heresy
1402	Battle of Homildon Hill: Henry Hotspur defeats the Scots
	Rumors circulate — spread in part by friars — that Richard II is still alive; friars hanged on Tyburn for the treasonous report
1403	Henry IV marries Joan of Brittany (February)
	Battle of Shrewsbury (Henry IV and loyalist forces defeat the Percies; Hotspur killed)
1403–09	<i>Mum and the Sothsegger</i>

Chronology of Events

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| 1404 | Parliament levies taxes of two tenths and two fifteenths because of rebellions and for defense and maintenance of the realm; parliament also refuses to subsidize aliens in Henry's and Joan's households |
| 1405 | Revolt of Northumberland Percies fails; Archbishop Scrope executed |
| 1407–09 | Archbishop Arundel's <i>Constitutions</i> (regulations drafted with Lollardy and the suppression of Oxford University in mind) |
| 1407 | Arundel's examination of William Thorpe, heretic |
| 1408 | Death of John Gower |
| 1409 | Archbishop Arundel's <i>Constitutions</i> promulgated |
| 1410 | Burning of John Badby, Lollard heretic (5 March) |
| 1411 | Oxford board releases list of 267 heresies at the University; Oxford University compelled to submit to authority and discipline of Arundel |
| 1413 | Death of Henry IV; accession of Henry V |
| 1414 | Failure of Oldcastle Rising |
| 1415 | Battle of Agincourt (English defeat French) |

Richard the Redeless

Introduction

In the troubled historical moment after Henry of Lancaster's deposition of Richard II, an unknown poet offered Richard retrospective — perhaps even posthumous — advice, composing, at the same time, a mirror for princes. This work has come to be known as *Richard the Redeless* — “Richard without Counsel” — because, as the work contends, Richard has been poorly advised, his kingdom mismanaged, his loyal subjects ill-served. Richard’s epithet in this work seems to invoke another ill-advised king, Ethelred II, who was characterized after his death as “unræd” (mistranslated as “the Unready”). The author expects that the advice he provides in his poetic treatise will help guide the kingdom in future years. If a Christian king were to pay close attention to his advice, he declares, “Ther nys no governour on the grunde ne sholde gye [govern] him the better” (Prol.42). He wants to counsel “my kyng and the lordis” (Prol.49). Therefore he endeavors, with all his faculties, “To traveile on this tretis, to teche men therafter / To be war of wylffulnesse, lest wondris arise” (Prol.51–52). He strives for the “public voice” that Anne Middleton¹ has identified as distinctive of Ricardian literature.

Richard the Redeless offers an important witness to political events and their meanings in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England. The poem centers on the year 1399, when Richard was in Ireland fighting the “wilde Yrisshe” (Prol.10) while Henry of Hereford (surnamed Bolingbroke), first son of John of Gaunt, had just returned from banishment in Paris, dispossessed of his Lancastrian inheritance by an increasingly imperious King Richard after Gaunt’s death on 3 February. The point of departure for the poem occurs when the narrator arrives at Christ Church in Bristol — such is the fiction — and overhears political arguments for and against both King Richard and Henry. The poet also ranges back to previous political events, such as the Appellants’ challenge to Richard at Radcot Bridge (1387), the Merciless Parliament of 1388, and the Shrewsbury Parliament of 1398, when Richard banished Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, for life and Henry Bolingbroke for ten years.

The premise of *Richard the Redeless* is that the king was thrust into office at too early an age for himself and for the kingdom: “Ye come to youre kyngdom er ye youreself knewe” (I.32). Richard was only eleven when King Edward III, his grandfather, died in 1377. Richard’s father, the Black Prince, who would have inherited the kingship, died a year before his father,

¹ “The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II,” *Speculum* 53 (1978), 94–114.

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with the result that Richard was elevated before he or anybody was prepared for the event. Richard's uncle, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, fourth son of Edward, served as regent of England until Richard declared himself ready to govern in his own right (1389). In hindsight it is not difficult to see that Richard managed his kingdom poorly, especially in the final years of his realm, after the death of Gaunt. His reign fostered fear, mistrust, and anger; and his contemporaries judged his kingship far more in light of the deposed King Edward II than his much-revered son, Edward III.

The story of Richard's kingship largely concerns issues and quarrels within his family. The first crisis of Richard's reign was the Great Rising of 1381, which the king helped to calm.² The second crisis occurred in 1387–88, shortly after John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, departed England to pursue opportunities in Spain. The Duke of Gloucester (younger brother of Lancaster), Richard, Earl of Arundel, and Thomas, Earl of Warwick — core of the group known as the Appellants — presented grievances to parliament concerning the king's favorites, especially the despised Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whom the king had recently elevated, first, to the rank of marquis of Dublin and then to Duke of Ireland.³ De Vere scandalized the court by divorcing his royal wife — Richard's cousin — for a Bohemian lady-in-waiting of the queen's court. The general sentiment held that this nouveau duke and his friends exercised far too much influence on the young king. Among the king's several miscues in this episode was his declaration that he would seek aid from the French king, a statement which alarmed Gloucester and others. The Appellants were further roused when Richard ordered Londoners not to have business dealings with Arundel. On 14 November 1387, at Waltham Cross, where many had rallied in their support, the Appellants offered a formal accusation against five of Richard's friends and trusted advisors: Sir Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk (erstwhile chancellor), Robert de Vere, Sir Robert Tresilian (chief justice of the King's Bench), Sir Nicholas Brembre (formerly mayor of London), and Alexander Neville, (Archbishop of York). The chronicler Henry Knighton calls these "the five evil seducers of the king."⁴ At the invitation of mediators, they took their case to parliament, at Westminster

² For a brief survey of the details of this momentous event in British history, see "Literature of Richard II's Reign and the Peasants' Revolt," in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. Dean, pp. 119–22. For extended treatment of the documents, see *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. R. B. Dobson, second ed. (London: Macmillan, 1983).

³ Derek Pearsall, in *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), calls Gloucester, youngest son of Edward III, an "explosion waiting to happen" because he was so frequently ignored or passed over for honors, including the Order of the Garter. Pearsall characterizes Gloucester as "an irascible man at the best of times and a great nurser of grievances" (p. 199).

⁴ Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337–1396*, p. 392. Knighton's phrase is "quinq[ue] nephandi seductores regis."

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Hall, where the king seemed to reach an accord with the Appellants for disposition of their impeachments in February of the new year. But the king failed to arrest the accused, who slipped away (some in disguise), with the exception of Brembre. De Vere fled to Chester and returned with forces, but the Appellants, now joined by Henry Bolingbroke, learned of his plans and blocked his route to London, trapping him at Radcot Bridge, Oxfordshire. He displayed the royal banner but was caught between the forces of Bolingbroke and Gloucester. Although de Vere managed to escape, the royalist forces were routed, forcing Richard to seek safety in the Tower. “The country was, in effect, in a state of insurrection.”⁵ The appellants arranged a parlay with the king in the Tower and apparently uttered strong words to him about his conduct, while the king threw himself on their mercy and asked only that his royal dignity be preserved. At the February parliament the five appellants — Gloucester, Derby, Nottingham, Arundel, and Warwick — charged Richard’s ministers with “accroaching” royal prerogatives, demanding that the accused appear to answer the indictments against them; but this they failed to do. The lords temporal pondered thirty-nine articles against the accused and pronounced the four absentee lords guilty of treason and subject to full penalties of the law (the archbishop, however, subject to papal judgment). After some political maneuvering, including a cascade of gloves thrown at Richard’s feet by the Appellants and others when he defended Brembre, the lords found Brembre guilty of treason, and he was condemned on 20 February. When Tresilian was discovered in hiding in Westminster, he was executed at Tyburn; Brembre was similarly dispatched the next day. Others also lost their heads as a result of this parliament, which has come to be known as the Merciless Parliament (*sine misericordia*). Despite Richard and the queen’s intercession, Sir Simon Burley, formerly the king’s tutor, was executed along with three other chamber knights.

The final crisis of Richard’s reign occurred in the years 1397–1400, when Richard settled old scores with the Appellants, became increasingly autocratic and tyrannical, and lost his throne and then his life in the Lancastrian revolution. The extended crisis might be said to begin when Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, one of the original Appellants, reported to the king that the Appellants had met and devised plots against him at Arundel Castle. There the Appellants, by report, agreed to make common cause against the king and the Duke of Lancaster. When he learned of this, Richard ordered the arrest of Arundel and Warwick, imprisoning them in the Tower. The king himself went to Pleshey in Essex to secure Gloucester (the “Swan” in *Richard the Redeless*’ beast allegory),⁶ who, when he begged for clemency, was told he would receive just the same mercy he had shown to Simon Burley at

⁵ D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Chaucer’s London*, p. 165. For an extended treatment of the events involving the appellants, see Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 185–96.

⁶ See Passus III, lines 26–29 and notes to those lines and *There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe*, in *Medieval English Political Writings*, pp. 150–51, lines 13, 20, and 25, and notes to those lines.

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the Merciless Parliament; and though his uncle was ill, Richard sent him to Calais where he died under suspicious circumstances in Nottingham's custody. Richard held his last parliament in London at Westminster Hall in September of 1397, with his Cheshire archers allegedly in attendance, armed and badged. Richard had formed his own band of appellants, who impeached the Earl of Arundel, Richard Fitzalan (the "Horse"). Arundel was denied a trial by combat and, on orders of John of Gaunt, executed on Tower Hill. Warwick (the "Bear") confessed to treason and was sentenced to perpetual exile on the Isle of Man. At the Shrewsbury Parliament (1398), Henry Bolingbroke, now Duke of Hereford, accused Mowbray (now Norfolk) of informing him that Richard intended to do away with both of them. Norfolk denied this and a judicial duel was arranged for 16 September at Coventry, but Richard halted the duel at the last minute and banished Norfolk for life and Bolingbroke for ten years (later commuted to six). John of Gaunt, who had managed the kingdom during Richard's minority, died in February of 1399, leaving Richard to his own counsel. Richard in quick order demanded "blank charters" of lords (in effect, blank checks) and seized the duchy of Lancaster, thereby depriving Henry Bolingbroke, in exile in France, of his inheritance while at the same time altering Bolingbroke's sentence to banishment for life. These measures alarmed the temporal lords as they became aware that their property and inheritances were no longer secure. Meanwhile Richard took this opportunity to sail to Ireland for a second expedition. While he was there Henry Bolingbroke decided to return to England to look after his interests, landing at Ravenspur in Yorkshire. He made his way across country to Pontefract, his ancestral seat, and then quickly to Bristol, which is when and where *Richard the Redeless* begins. When the king returned to England from Ireland, events rapidly overtook him: Hereford arrived in Chester before Richard and his troops; the Duke of Aumale (the Duke of York's son) and Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, deserted Richard for Henry; Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Thomas Arundel trapped Richard in Conway castle in North Wales, offering him terms from Bolingbroke; Richard departed Conway only to fall into a trap and was conveyed to Flint Castle as a prisoner and then transferred to the Tower in London; documents were composed stating that Richard voluntarily resigned his crown and that he wished his heir to be Henry of Lancaster; Henry assumed the throne as Henry IV, his accession backdated to 30 September 1399 in the Rolls of Parliament.

While these historical particulars are important for understanding the milieu of *Richard the Redeless*, the poem is not a verse chronicle but a critique of Richard's kingship and his court. The narrator, who terms his poem a "writte" (Prol.31) or a "tretis" (Prol.51), is very explicit about blaming — and identifying — Richard as the source of problems. In the line that includes the poem's modern title, he accuses Richard of "lawlessly" conducting his life — not just of being poorly advised — and of governing his people with equal disregard for law and custom (I.2). At the beginning of Passus I the narrator assembles the accusations against Richard: greed and waste have ruined his kingship (I.3–8); fiscal deceit, treachery, and theft have impoverished the realm, along with heavy taxation in peacetime, all for the extravagance

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and waste of Richard's court (lines 11–18). The narrator skillfully distinguishes between a specific monarch, Richard, and his kingship, symbolized by the royal crown with its virtuous gems. He depicts Richard's court as corrupt and self-indulgent, pillaging from common people, including farmers, and lavish in its amusements. Other authors of this time wrote satires about the English court — for example, the anonymous composer of *On the Times* ("Syng I wolde, butt, alas!"), *Tax Has Tenet Us Alle*, or *There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe* (On King Richard's Ministers);⁷ but perhaps no Ricardian writer, not even John Gower, was so critical of Richard himself as was the author of *Richard the Redeless*. Others emphasize how evil ministers have misled the king rather than how the king in person has gone grievously wrong. "Wytteth it not youre conceill but wytteth it more youreself," says the narrator of *Richard* (I.80). He wants his king to show more valor against malefactors both inside and outside the court — to, in Chaucer's phrase in *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, "Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun" (line 26). The first person to advise Richard badly should "have hadde hongynge on hie on the forckis" (I.108).

Richard the Redeless includes satire on court manners and clothing fashions. The author repeats the charge — familiar from complaint literature — that the court has abandoned conventional distinctions between and among degrees, allowing people of inferior birth to occupy high positions and to exert undue influence on the kingship. Richard scandalized court observers when he elevated his favorite, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, to the rank of marquis of Dublin (1385) and then Duke of Ireland (1386). Similarly he invited scorn when in 1397 he elevated a group of earls to the rank of duke — the "duketti" or "dukelets," as Thomas Walsingham, monastic chronicler of St. Albans, disdainfully termed them. Shortly after his promotion to Duke of Ireland, de Vere put aside his popular wife, Philippa de Coucy, for a Bohemian woman who was said to be of low birth. (The accusation of newly advanced persons unfit for such elevation occurs in *Piers Plowman* and in *Piers the Plowman's Crede* among other writings.⁸) One of the "lawless" aspects of the English court during Richard's reign was the creation of factions or affinities similar to political parties. Although parliament in 1390 enacted a statute outlawing private retainers (a practice termed maintenance) together with identifying livery and badges, the king himself had recourse to a special guard, livery, and badges. Richard bestowed this honor on his Cheshire archers and Welsh pikemen, giving them gold badges; by report they could be an intimidating presence in or around the court and parliament. The author of *Richard* devotes a colorful section of his poem to the evils of livery and maintenance with a special focus on the "chyders of Chester" (III.317) — the brawlers from Chester who allegedly packed rural courts to discourage witnesses. These men

⁷ See *Medieval English Political Writings*, pp. 140–52.

⁸ See *Piers the Plowman's Crede*, lines 744–59 and note to lines 748–49, in *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*, ed. Dean, pp. 30–31, 47–48.

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“constrewed quarellis to quenche the peple, / And pletid with pollaxis and poyntis of swerdis” (III.327–28). In another place similar types “schedwed her signes [badges] for men shulde drede / To axe ony mendis for her mysdedis” (II.33–34). The narrator lays blame for their disorder on the king: “They leid on thi leidis, Richard, lasshis ynow, / And drede nevere a dele the dome of the lawe” (III.338–39). He declares that for every man that he “merkyd” with a badge, he alienated “ten schore / Of homeliche hertis that the harme hente” (II.42–43). The narrator also critiques the court fashions and those who affect the new “guysis” (III.192). Here we find familiar complaints about “painted sleeves” and dagged clothing — clothing with holes or ornamental shapes and the kind of fashion that Chaucer’s Parson deplores, including non-English items like “Duche,” that is, German coats (III.193).⁹ But the narrator’s real object of attack is the arrogance and presumption behind the fashions, the “stroutynge” (III.177) and viciousness that keep Witt from even entering the court. “‘Lete sle him!’” say the “sleves that slode uppon the erthe” (III.234) — these “sleves” being a synecdoche for overweening courtiers.

The author claims that his poem is “derklich endited” (I.20), obscurely composed, a phrase which seems to anticipate Spenser’s “darke conceite” in his Letter to Raleigh concerning *The Faerie Queene* but which also echoes the narrator of *Piers Plowman*’s confusion as to the nature and location of Dowel: “Where Dowel is or Dobet derkeliche ye shewen” (B 10.372), he says to Experience. *Richard the Redeless*’ “derke” style includes beast allegories and wordplay drawn from the prophetic tradition. The author uses beast allegory in at least two ways. He categorizes classes of people according to their characteristics. The most elaborate sequence of this kind is a passage on two partridges, one of which stands for Richard and the other for Henry (III.37–61). The partridge — the evil Richard — steals the baby partridges from the nest until the “true mother” (Henry) returns to feed them properly. Similarly, specific individuals receive an animal designation according to their symbolic badges. Because Richard’s emblematic badge was the white hart — and those of his faction received badges displaying white harts — Richard’s men are harts in the poem. But so are his people deer. From the poet’s point of view it is these “homeliche hertis” (II.43), the loyal subjects of

⁹ See The Parson’s Tale on both “superfluitee of clothyng” and “horrible disordinat scantnesse of clothyng” in *The Canterbury Tales* (in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson et al. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1987]), X [I] 416–29. See also *Huff! A Galaunt* and *The Pride of Women’s Horns in Historical Poems of the XIV and XV Century*, ed. R. H. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 138–39; and *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume from the 13th to the 19th Century*, ed. F. W. Fairholt (London: Percy Society, 1849). For critical discussions, see Scattergood, “Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages,” and Davenport, “Lusty fresche galaunts.” For brief summaries and bibliography (to about 1975), see R. H. Robbins, “Poems on Contemporary Conditions,” §§159–63, in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. Hartung, pp. 1469–70, 1686–87.

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Richard (loyal hearts), who need careful guidance. Henry Bolingbroke is the Eagle (capitalized in the manuscript), the falcon, or the greyhound, while Arundel is the Horse, Warwick the Bear, and Gloucester the Swan. These emblems for the magnates are familiar from other allegorical writings, appearing for example in John Gower's *Cronica tripertita* and in the anonymous *There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe*. The author of *Richard* often employs a special kind of wordplay, although these quibbles also appear in other writings of the period. A favorite (one that appears in the first-line "title" of *There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe*) is "busch" for Sir John Bushy (or Bussy), one of Richard's minions, who was speaker of parliament in 1394 and again in 1397. The narrator turns "bussh" into a verb meaning to beat down or oppress: "busshinge adoun of all youre best frendis" (I.99) and "busshid with her brestis and bare adoun the pouere" (II.39).

The anonymous author of *Richard the Redeless* chose the alliterative style of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* as his poetic vehicle. This style is appropriate for the content because so many other political-satiric writings, from *Song of the Husbandman* to *The Crowned King*, were composed in it. Most alliterative lines contain three stressed syllables that alliterate and one that does not. In the first line — "And as I passid in my preiere ther prestis were at messe" — "passid," "peiere," and "prestis" alliterate, while "messe" does not. (The number of unstressed syllables may vary.) In the manuscript the scribe has placed a virgule or caesural mark (/) between "preiere" and "ther." Usually the virgule falls after the first two stressed words and before the last two. Sometimes the alliteration seems defective, as in I.49 and 50. In line 49, "But where this croune bicome a clerk were that wuste," the alliteration is probably on *c* but with some competition from *b*. In the next line, "But so as I can, declare it I thenke," there is no alliteration, unless we count "can" and the *c* of "declare." The poet has excellent facility with his alliterative lines to the extent that the sense can move easily from one line to the next without end-stopping. In a passage on the origins of rulers in Passus III, lines 263–66, one verse line naturally falls into the next:

It is not unknownen to kunnynge leodis That rewlers of rewmes around all the erthe Were not yffoundid at the frist tyme To leve al at likynge and lust of the world.	<i>discerning people</i> <i>created</i> <i>live; pleasure</i>
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The poet was also skilled in the rhetorical technique of *anaphora* (also termed *repetitio* or *iteratio*) — the repetition of opening words from line to line. A good example occurs in Passus III, lines 27–31, with *anaphora* on *Ne*:

Ne to hurlle with haras, ne hors well atamed, Ne to stryve with swan, though it sholle werre, Ne to bayten on the bere, ne bynde him nother,	<i>hurtle at stallions; tamed</i> <i>shall go to war</i> <i>bait; bear; nor bind</i>
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Ne to wilne to woo that were hem ny sibbe,
Ne to liste for to loke that her alie bledde.

*desire misfortune; near kin
desire to see their allies*

Richard the Redeless exists in an incomplete, unique copy in Cambridge University Library MS L1.iv. 14, a quarto paper manuscript of the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The dialect is East Midland—Cambridgeshire, according to the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*. The poem begins, on fol. 107b, just after a B version of Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and concludes on fol. 119. Six blank pages follow. The main text is executed in a single book hand “combining letter forms of secretary and Anglicana scripts,” according to Linne Mooney.¹⁰ The scribe writes an Anglicana g (with a double loop) and sometimes a long-tailed r (or final r with a flourish) but a Secretary a, s, and d (with a looped descender which connects with the following letter).¹¹ There are two glossators of the manuscript. The first, in a secretary book hand of the fifteenth century, contributes glosses such as “kew kaw,” “Takynge of presentes,” “passus Tercius,” and Latin glosses. This glossator provides definitions for many words, writing his equivalents above the MS term (*ffayled* above MS *ffolwyd* at II.61 or *deserved* above MS *served* at II.185). The second glossator, in a later hand (perhaps sixteenth century), offers “Agaynste yoninge Counsaylorz” on fol. 116b. In addition a glossator — probably the first — has underlined words in the text, sometimes in red (e.g., *Richard* [Prol.9], *Henrri* [Prol.11], *prince*, *Walis*, [Prol.23] *kynge* [Prol.24]). There are nine large rubricated capital letters: at Prol.1; Passus I.1, 20, 49; II.1; III.1, 37, 110; IV.1. The MS scribe or first glossator has indicated passus divisions only for II, III, and IV, so Barr in her edition has designated the opening of the poem as “Passus I” rather than “Prologus” (like Skeat and Day & Steele). I have found it more useful in this edition to retain Skeat’s divisions of Prologus for the opening 87 lines and “Passus Primus” at line 88, with its rubricated letter and mention of “Richard the redeles.”

The text of the present edition is based on a good photocopy from Cambridge University Library, checked against Paul Szarmach’s careful transcription of it which he generously provided to me. I have also consulted the editions of Thomas Wright (1838 for the Camden Society and 1859 for the Rolls Series); W. W. Skeat (1873 for the Early English Text Society and 1886 for Oxford University Press); Mabel Day and Robert Steele (1936 for the Early English Text Society); and Helen Barr (1993 for Everyman’s Library). I have sometimes retained manuscript readings that Skeat, Day and Steele, and Barr reject — for example, at

¹⁰ In private correspondence of 3 August 1999. Her dating of the script coincides with the appraisal of Ian Doyle, “The Manuscripts,” in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), p. 98.

¹¹ M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250–1500* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), Introduction, pp. xiv–xxi.

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Prol.42; Passus I.26; II.25, 55, 57, 117, 140, 148, 167; III.13, 111, 145, 163, 254, and 293. On other occasions — notably at II.64 and III.18 and 26 — I adopt previous readings.

In accordance with the editorial practices of the Middle English Texts Series, I have regularized thorn (*b*) to *th*. The yogh (*ȝ*) I have transliterated as *gh* (*myghte* for MS *myȝte*), *g* (*ageins* for MS *aȝeins*), *y* (*ye* for MS *ȝe*), or *z* when it appears as a plural indicator (*doctourz* for MS *doctourȝ*); and *ff* as *f* when it appears in the initial position (*for* and *folowe* for MS *ffor* and *ffolowe*). Hyphens join words that need to be compounds in order to be easily interpreted (*ho-so* for MS *ho so*; *Thoru-oute* for MS *Poru oute*). I have silently joined past participles with the *y-* prefix (which Skeat and Barr join with a hyphen); hence, *ylaughte*, *yluggyd* and *ymummyd* for MS *y lauȝte*, *y luggyd*, and *y mummyd*. But I have included a hyphen when the *y-* prefix might cause confusion (*y-yokyd* for MS *y yokyd*). Because the scribe was sometimes careless in writing words, I have on some occasions silently supplied a missing letter or deleted a letter to correct an obvious mistake. Hence, at IV.25 the scribe wrote *propfitt* for *proffitt*; and on three occasions he wrote *clergie* for *clerlie* (I.83, III.26, and III.190). I have on a number of occasions adopted one of Skeat's emendations for purposes of alliteration or of sense. For example, at II.170 the MS reads, "This lorell þat hadde / þis loby awey," which Skeat sensibly emends to "This lorell that ladde this loby awey." At III.272 the MS reads, "And to rewle as reremys · and rest on þe daies," which Skeat has emended by inserting "not" before "to rewle," thus restoring sense to the line. The scribe seems to have fallen victim frequently to dittography (erroneously repeating a word or phrase from a previous line), and I have usually followed Skeat's suggestions for emendations. An example occurs at III.281–82: "And evere shall thou fynde, as fer as thou walkiste, / That wisdom and overewacche wonneth fer asundre," where Skeat substitutes "That" for MS "And" before "wisdom." (The previous two lines have started with "And.") But I have not adopted Skeat's emendations for defective meter, as when a line is truncated. I have let stand the (perhaps) not entirely satisfactory line III.254 — "Thanne wolde reule, if reson where amongis us" — rather than include Skeat's wholly invented insertions: "Thanne wolde [right dome] reule if reson were amongis us." (Skeat's textual comment on this emendation reads: "We must supply *right dome*, i.e. just judgment, or some such words.") Although the syntax is difficult in that line, there are many places in the MS where the syntax seems difficult or faulty. Skeat even writes a line of his own at III.346, a practice which raises more difficulties than it puts to rest. But I have in the following line adopted a suggestion from Barr and inserted two words for sense ("they werched"; see the note to line 347). I have on certain occasions let stand odd MS spellings because I have glossed the words in the margin or in an explanatory note. Examples include MS *counnis*, which Skeat and Barr emend to *countis* (III.279), and *serigauntis*, which Skeat and Barr emend to *sergiauntis* (III.348).

Richard the Redeless

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Richard the Redeless

[Prologus]

	And as I passid in my preiere ther prestis were at messe,	<i>prayer where priests; mass</i>
	In a blessid borugh that Bristow is named	<i>Bristol</i>
5	In a temple of the Trinité the toune even amyddis,	<i>i.e., in the town's center</i>
	That Cristis Chirche is cleped amoneghe the comune peple,	<i>called; common</i>
	Sodeynly ther sourdid selcouthe thingis,	<i>Suddenly; arose strange</i>
	A grett wondir to wyse men, as it well myghth,	<i>great wonder; might seem</i>
	And dowtes for to deme for drede comyng after.	<i>to assess for fearful things</i>
10	So sore were the sawis of bothe two sidis,	<i>bitter; words of both sides</i>
	Of Richard that regned so riche and so noble,	<i>who reigned</i>
	That wyle he werrid be west on the wilde Yrisshe, ¹	
	Henrri was entrid on the est half,	<i>Henry advanced from the east</i>
	Whom all the londe loved, in lengthe and in brede,	<i>land; everywhere</i>
	And rosse with him rapely to rightyn his wronge,	<i>rose up; quickly</i>
15	For he shulld hem serve of the same after.	<i>in the same way later on</i>
	Thus tales me troblid, for they trewe where,	<i>disturbed; were true</i>
	And amarride my mynde rith moche and my wittis eke. ²	
	For it passid my parceit and my preifis also	<i>surpassed my understanding; experience</i>
	How so wondirfull werkis wolde have an ende.	<i>astonishing deeds</i>
20	But in sothe whan they sembled some dede repeute,	<i>gathered; considered</i>
	As knowyn is in cumpas of Cristen londis,	<i>is known throughout</i>
	That rewthe was, if reson ne had reffourmed	<i>pity; reformed</i>
	The myssecheff and the mysserule that men tho in endurid.	<i>misfortune; misrule; then</i>
	I had peté of his passion that prince was of Walis,	<i>pity; suffering; Wales</i>
	And eke our crouned kynge, till Crist woll no lenger.	<i>also; longer</i>
25	And as a liage to his lord, though I lite hade,	<i>liege; possessed little</i>
	All myn hoole herte was his while he in helthe regnid.	<i>whole heart</i>
	And for I wuste not witterly what shulde fall,	<i>did not know clearly; happen</i>

¹ That he made war in the west on the wild Irish

² And confused my mind very much and also my wits

Richard the Redeless

Whedir God wolde geve him grace sone to amende, ¹	
To be oure gioure ageyn or graunte it another,	<i>leader; i.e., the kingdom</i>
30 This made me to muse many tyme and ofte,	
For to written him a writte, to wissen him better,	<i>write; treatise, to instruct</i>
And to meuve him of mysserewle, his mynde to reffresshe	<i>apprise him</i>
For to preie the prynce that paradise made	<i>beseech</i>
To fullfill him with feith and fortune above,	<i>fill</i>
35 And not to grucchen a grott ageine Godis sonde,	<i>complain a bit; dispensation</i>
But mekely to suffre what-so him sente were.	<i>whatsoever happens to him</i>
And yif him list to loke a leef other tweyne,	<i>if he pleases to look over a page or two</i>
That made is to mende him of his myssedesdis,	<i>composed; correct; misdeeds</i>
And to kepe him in confforte in Crist and nought ellis,	<i>comfort; nothing else</i>
40 I wolde be gladde that his gost myghte glade be my wordis,	<i>spirit; be gladdened by</i>
And grame if it greved him, be God that me boughte.	<i>sorry; grieved; redeemed</i>
Ther nys no governour on the grounde ne sholde gye him the better; ²	
And every Cristen kyng that ony croune bereth,	<i>any; bears</i>
So he were lerned on the langage, my lyff durst I wedde, ³	
45 Yif he waite well the wordis and so werche therafter,	<i>If; consider; act</i>
For all is tresour of the Trinité that turneth men to gode.	
And as my body and my beste oute to be my liegis,	<i>soul (best part) ought; liege's</i>
So rithffully be reson my rede shuld also,	<i>rightfully; reason; advice</i>
For to conceill, and I coughthe, my kyng and the lordis;	<i>counsel, if I could</i>
50 And therfor I fondyd with all my fyve wyttis	<i>strove; five wits (see note)</i>
To traveile on this tretis, to teche men therafter	<i>work; instruct</i>
To be war of wylffulnesse, lest wondris arise.	<i>on guard against wilfulness</i>
And if it happe to youre honde, beholde the book onys,	<i>comes into your hands; once</i>
And redeth on him redely rewis an hundrid,	<i>read it quickly a hundred lines</i>
55 And if ye savere sumdell, se it forth overe,	<i>relish some of it, read all of it</i>
For reson is no repreff, be the rode of Chester.	<i>reproach; cross</i>
And if ye fynde fables or foly ther amonge,	<i>find fables</i>
Or ony fantasie yffeyned, that no frute is in,	<i>feigned; profit</i>
Lete youre conceill corette it, and clerkis togedyr, ⁴	
60 And amende that ys amysse, and make it more better.	<i>what is wrong</i>

¹ Whether God would give him grace soon to make amends

² There is no ruler alive who might conduct himself better

³ So long as he can read English, my life dare I wager

⁴ Let your wisdom correct it, together with learned men

Passus Primus

	For yit it is secrete and so it shall lenger, Tyll wyser wittis han waytid it overe, That it be lore laweffull and lusty to here. For witterly, my will is that it well liked	<i>As yet; secret; shall be longer Until wiser men have scrutinized it lawful teaching; delightful certainly; should please</i>
65	You and all youris and yonge men leveste, To benyme hem her noyes that neweth hem ofte. For and they muse theron to the myddwardis, They shall fele fawtis foure score and odde,	<i>best take away; their troubles; renew if; middle discover faults eighty and more</i>
	That youghe the weneth alwey, that it be witt evere.	<i>youth always thinks</i>
70	And though that elde opyn it otherwhile amonge, And poure on it prevly and preve it well after, And constrewe ich clause with the culorum, It shulde not apeire hem a peere, a prynce though he were,	<i>old men think it sometimes pore over it in private; prove interpret each; significance harm them a bit</i>
	Ne harme nother hurte the hyghest of the rewme, But to holde him in hele and helpe all his frendis.	<i>Nor; most noble; realm health; friends</i>
75	And if ony word write be that wrothe make myghte My sovereyne, that suget I shulde to be, I put me in his power, and preie him, of grace, To take the entent of my trouthe, that thoughte non ylle,	<i>is written; angry king, whose subject I should be meant nothing ill</i>
	For to wrath no wyght be my wyll nevere, As my soule be saff from synne at myn ende.	<i>anger no person saved</i>
80	The story is of non estate that stryven with her lustus, But tho that folwyn her flessh and here frelle thoughtis; ¹	<i>advice; clear</i>
	So if my conceyll be clere, I can saie no more,	<i>whoever is distressed; soul</i>
85	But ho be greved in his gost, governe him better, And blame not the berne that the book made, But the wickyd will, and the werkis after.	<i>man consequent effects</i>

[*Passus Primus*]

Now, Richard the redeles, reweth on you-self,
That lawlesse leddyng youre lyf and youre peple bothe.²
For thorw the wyles and wronge and wast in youre tyme,
Ye were lyghtlich lyfpte from that you leef thoughte,

*unadvised; pity yourself
through; deceits; waste
quickly deprived; dear*

¹ *But those who pursue their flesh and their frail thoughts*

² *Who lawlessly led your life and that of your people also*

Richard the Redeless

5	And from youre willfull werkis, youre will was chaungid, And rafte was youre riott and rest, for youre daiez weren wikkid, ¹	cares; renewed greed has broken
	Thoru youre cursid conceill youre karis weren newed, And coveitise hath crasid youre croune for evere.	<i>Radix omnium malorum cupiditas</i> <i>Greed is the root of all evil</i>
10	Of alegeaunce now lerneth a lesson other tweyne Wherby it standith and stablithe moste —	remains most stably fear; blows; bad judgments
	By dride, or be dyntis, or domes untrewe, Or by creaunce of coyne for castes of gile,	monetary credit; tricks; guile
	By pillynge of youre peple, youre prynces to plese, Or that youre wylle were wroughte, though wisdom it nolde;	robbing; people executed; says no
15	Or be tallage of youre townnes without ony werre, By rewhles routus that ryffled evere,	taxing; towns in peacetime pitiless gangs; ransacked
	Be prey singe of polaxis that no peté hadde, Or be dette for thi dees, deme as thou fyndist,	By appraising of pole-axes
	Or be ledinge of lawe with love well ytemprid. ²	debt; dice, judge
20	T hough this be derklich endited for a dull nolle, Miche nede is it not to mwse ther-on,	darkly set down; head There is not great need; muse
	For as mad as I am though I litill kunne, I cowde it discryve in a fewe wordys;	insane; know little could describe; words
	For legiance without love litill thinge availith.	fealty; avails little
25	But graceles gostis, gylours of hemself, That nevere had harnesse ne hayle-schouris,	persons; deceivers armor; hail-showers
	But walwed in her willis forweyned in here youthe, They sawe no manere sighth saff solas and ese,	wallowed; pampered sight; except pleasure and ease
	And cowde no mysse amende whan mysscheff was up,	correct no wrong; afoot
30	But sorwed for her lustus of lordschipe they hadde, And nevere for her trespass oo tere wolde they lete.	pleasures; sovereignty their; one tear; let fall
	Ye come to youre kyngdom er ye youreself knewe, Crouned with a croune that kyng under hevene	became king; before
	Mighte not a better have boughte, as I trowe;	believe
35	So full was it filled with vertuous stones, With perlis of prise to punnysshe the wrongis,	gems with special properties precious pearls
	With rubies rede the righth for to deme, With gemmes and juellis joyned togadir	red; right; judge gems; jewels

¹ And taken away was your revelry and rest, because your days were wicked

² Or by legal proceedings well tempered with love

Passus Primus

	And pees amonge the peple for peyne of thi lawis.	<i>peace; penalty</i>
40	It was full goodeliche ygrave with gold al abought;	<i>goodly engraved; about</i>
	The braunchis above boren grett charge;	<i>carried; weight</i>
	With diamauntis derive ydouutid of all	<i>precious feared</i>
	That wroute ony wrake within or withoute;	<i>committed; evil</i>
	With lewté and love yloke to thi peeris,	<i>loyalty; locked; peers</i>
45	And sapheris swete that soughte all wrongis,	<i>sapphires; sought out</i>
	Ypouudride wyth peté ther it be oughte,	<i>Powdered over; where</i>
	And traylid wyth trouthe and treste al aboute:	<i>patterned; decorated</i>
	For ony Cristen kynge a croune well ymakyd.	<i>made</i>
	B ut where this croune bicome a clerk were that wuste; ¹	
50	But so as I can, declare it I thenke,	<i>think</i>
	And nempne no name; but tho that nest were,	<i>name; those; nearest</i>
	Full prevyly they pluckud thy power awey,	<i>secretly</i>
	And reden with realté youre rewme thoru-oute,	<i>rode; royalty</i>
	And as tyrauntis, of tiliers token what hem liste, <i>from husbandmen took; they pleased</i>	
55	And paide hem on her pannes whan her penyes lacked. ²	
	For non of youre peple durste pleyne of here wrongis,	<i>none; dare complain; their</i>
	For drede of youre dukys and of here double harmes.	<i>fear; dukes</i>
	Men myghtten as well have him huntyd an hare with a tabre	<i>tabor (drum)</i>
	As aske ony mendis for that thei mysdede,	<i>restitution; what; did wrong</i>
60	Or of ony of her men though men wulde plete,	<i>plead</i>
	For all was felawis and felawschepe that ye with ferde,	<i>accomplices; evil fellowship</i>
	And no soule persone to punnyshe the wrongis;	<i>single</i>
	And that maddid thi men, as thei nede muste.	<i>your subjects</i>
	For wo, they ne wuste to whom for to pleyne.	<i>woe; did not know; complain</i>
65	For, as it is said by elderne dawis,	<i>from the old days</i>
	“Ther gromes and the goodmen beth all eliche grette,	
	Woll wo beth the wones, and all that woneth ther-in!” ³	
	They ladde you with love that youre lawe dradde ⁴	
	To deme youre dukys myssdedis so derive thei were.	<i>dukes' crimes; forthright</i>
70	Thus was youre croune crasid till he was cast newe,	<i>cracked; it</i>

¹ *But what became of this crown there is a clerk who knows*

² *And paid them on their heads when their pennies failed*

³ Lines 66–67: “*When serving-men and nobles be equally powerful, / Most wretched are the homes and all who live in them!*”

⁴ *Those who feared your law guided you with love*

Richard the Redeless

	Thoru partninge of youre powere to youre paragals.	parceling out; peers
	Thus lacchide they with laughinge, and lourid longe after,	seized; glowered
	But frist sawe they it not, ne youreself nother;	first; neither
75	For all was wisliche ywroughte as youre witte demed,	wisely done, as you believed
	And no fautis yffounde till fortune aperid.	faults; worsened
	But had youre croune be kepte that comons it wiste,	guarded; knew
	Ther nadde morder ne mysscheff be amonge the grette. ¹	had not
	Thus youre cautell to the comoune hath combred you all,	deceit; troubled
	That, but if God helpe, youre hervest is ynne.	unless; harvest has come in
80	Wyttheth it not youre conceill but wyteth it more youreself,	Blame not
	The fortune that fallyn is to feitheles peple;	
	And wayte well my wordis and wrappe hem togadir,	heed
	And constrwe clerlie the clause in thin herte.	construe
	Of maters that I thenke to meve for the best	issues; put forward
85	For kyngis and kayseris comyng hereafter.	emperors
	Whane ye were sette in youre se as a sir aughte,	throne as a lord ought
	Ther carpinghe comynliche of conceill arisith,	discussion in common
	The chevteyns cheef that ye chesse evere,	principal advisors; chose
	Weren all to yonge of yeris to yeme swyche a rewme;	too young; years; govern such
90	Other hobbis ye hadden of Hurlewaynis kynne,	(see note)
	Reffusyng the reule of realles kynde. ²	
	And whane youre conceill iknewe ye come so at ones	realized; at once
	For to leve on her lore and be led be hem,	believe their teachings
	For drede that they had of demynghe therafter,	punishment at a later time
95	And for curinge of hemself cried on you evere	protection; appealed to
	For to hente hele of her owen greves,	To get a remedy of their own grievances (<i>Sk</i>)
	More than for wurschephe that they to you owed.	respect
	They made you to leve that regne ye ne myghte	believe; could not rule
	Withoutte busshinge adoun of all youre best frendis,	striking down (see note)
100	Be a fals colour her caris to wayve,	pretense; troubles; remove
	And to holde hem in hele if it happe myghte.	health
	For trostith rith treuly and in no tale better,	trust very; version
	All that they moved or mynged in that mater	urged; spoke
	Was to be sure of hemself and siris to ben yeallid;	to be called lords

¹ There would have been neither murder nor knavery among the powerful

² Lines 90–91: Or common fellows you consortedit with of Harlequin's ilk, / Scorning the laws pertaining to royal governance

Passus Secundus

105	For that was all her werchinge in worde and in dede. But had ye do duly and as a duke oughte, The frist that you formed to that fals dede, He shulde have hadde hongyng on hie on the forckis, Though youre brother yborn had be the same.	<i>their working acted appropriately; should first one who instigated you high on the gallows</i>
110	Than wolde other boyndaris have been abasshyd To have meved you to ony maters that myssheff had ben ynne. But for ye cleved to knavis in this cas, I avowe ¹ That boldid thi burnes to belde uppon sorowe, And stirid you stouttely till ye stombled all.	<i>miscreants; discouraged advised; mischief emboldened; men; become strong stirred you up stoutly</i>

Passus Secundus

Bot moche now me merveilith and well may I in sothe,	<i>I wonder; in truth</i>
Of youre large lyverey to leodis aboughte	<i>livery (see note); men in various places</i>
That ye so goodliche gaf but if gile letted,	<i>provided; guile prevented</i>
As hertis yheedyd and hornyd of kynde,	<i>harts; antlered; nature</i>
5 So ryff as they ronne youre rewme thoru-oute,	<i>many; ran; realm</i>
That non at youre nede youre name wolde nempne	<i>none when you needed; name</i>
In fersnesse ne in foltheed but faste fle awayward;	<i>fierceness; folly; flee away</i>
And some stode astonyed and stared for drede,	<i>stood astonished</i>
For eye of the Egle that oure helpe brouute.	<i>eagle; brought</i>
10 And also in sothe the seson was paste	<i>season; passed</i>
For hertis yheedid so hy and so noble	<i>high</i>
To make ony myrthe for mowtyng that nyghed.	<i>molting; drew near</i>
That bawtid youre bestis of here bolde chere; ²	
They severid and sondrid for somere hem faylid, ³	
15 And flowen into forest and feldis aboughte,	<i>fields here and there</i>
All the hoole herde that helde so togedir;	<i>whole herd</i>
But yet they had hornes half yere after.	
Now liste me to lerne ho me lere coude,	<i>Now I wish to learn who could instruct me</i>
What kynnes conceyll that the kyng had,	<i>kind of</i>
20 Or meved him most to merke his liegis,	<i>caused; mark; liege-men</i>

¹ But because you listened to knaves in this case I affirm

² That (the molting) deprived your beasts of their bold demeanor

³ They separated and went different ways for summer was slipping away

Richard the Redeless

	Or serve hem with signes that swarmed so thikke	
	Thoru-oute his lond in lengthe and in brede,	<i>breadth</i>
	That ho-so had hobblid thoru holtes and tounes	<i>whoever; stumbled; woods</i>
	Or ypassid the patthis ther the prynce dwellyd,	<i>paths; where</i>
25	Or hertis or hyndis on hassellis brestis,	<i>retainers' breasts</i>
	Or some lordis lyveré that the lawe stried,	<i>livery; destroyed the law</i>
	He shulde have ymette mo than ynowe.	<i>encountered more; enough</i>
	For they acombebrede the contré and many curse servid,	<i>oppressed</i>
	And carpéd to the comounes with the kyngys mouthe, ¹	
30	Or with the lordis ther they belefte were,	<i>with whom they dwelt</i>
	That no renke shulde rise reson to schewe.	<i>man</i>
	They plucked the plomayle from the pore skynnes,	<i>plumage; skins of the poor</i>
	And schedewd her signes for men shulde drede	
	To axe ony mendis for her mysdedis.	<i>To demand any redress for their misdeeds</i>
35	Thus lyverez overeloked youre liegis ichonne;	<i>scorned; each one</i>
	For tho that had hertis on hie on her brestis,	<i>high up; breasts</i>
	For the more partie, I may well avowe,	<i>part</i>
	They bare hem the bolder for her gay broches,	<i>brooches</i>
	And busshid with her brestis and bare adoun the pouere ²	
40	Liges that loved you the lesse for her yvell dedis.	<i>Subjects; evil deeds</i>
	So, trouthe to telle, as toune-men said,	<i>townsfolk</i>
	For on that ye merkyd, ye myssed ten schore	<i>one; score</i>
	Of homeliche hertis that the harme hente.	<i>simple; received</i>
	Thane was it foly in feith, as me thynketh,	
45	To sette silver in signes that of nought served.	<i>served no purpose</i>
	I not what you eylid, but if it ese were; ³	
	For frist at youre anoyntyng alle were youre owen,	<i>all were with you</i>
	Bothe hertis and hyndis, and helde of non other;	<i>hinds; adhered to no other</i>
	No lede of youre lond but as a liege aughte, ⁴	
50	Tyl ye, of youre dulnesse, deseveraunce made	<i>Until; separation</i>
	Thoru youre side signes that shente all the browet,	<i>widespread; ruined; broth</i>

¹ And spoke to the common people as the king's spokesmen

² And thrust out their chests [with the badges] and oppressed the poor

³ I do not know what ailed you, unless it was loose living

⁴ There was no person of your land who did not behave as a subject should

Passus Secundus

	And cast adoun the crokk the colys amyd. ¹	
	<i>Omne regnum in se diuisum desolabitur (luce eleven)</i> ²	
55	Yit am I lewde and litill good schewe To coveyte knowliche of kyngis wittis, Or wilne to witte how was the mevyng That ladde you to lykyngre youre liegis to merke, That loved you full lelly or lyverez begynne, ³	<i>ignorant</i> <i>wish to know; it came about</i> <i>possessed; desire</i>
60	And as redy to ride or renne at youre heste As wyghte myghte wilne wonnyngre uppon erthe, Tyll lyverez hem lette and lordyns wrongis, As youreself fonde well whane fortune you fayled. For whan ye list to lene to youre owen lymes, ⁴	<i>ready; run; bidding</i> <i>a person; wish living</i> <i>prevented; of lords</i> <i>found</i>
65	They were so feble and feynte for faughte of youre lawe, And so wankel and wayke, wexe in the hammes, That they had no myghte to amendre youre greves Ne to bere byrthen youre banere to helpe. But it longith to no liegeman his lord to anoye	<i>feeble; weak; default</i> <i>unsteady; grown; thighs</i> <i>sufferings</i> <i>bear the burden; banner</i> <i>belongs; annoy</i>
70	Nother in werk ne in word but if his witt faille. “No, redely,” quod Reson, “that reule I alowe: Displease not thi demer in dede ne in wordis But if thee liste for to lede thi lyf in dissesse.	<i>Neither; nor</i> <i>advisedly; approve</i> <i>Displease not your judge</i> <i>you wish; lead; distress</i>
75	But yif God have grauntyd thee grace for to knowe Ony manere mysscheff that myghte be amendyd, Schewe that to thi sovereyne to schelde him from harmes; For and he be blessid, the better thee betydyth	<i>Show; shield</i> <i>if; the better for you</i>
80	In tyme for to telle him for thi trewe herte.” Now for to telle trouthe, thus than me thynketh, That no manere meyntenour shulde merkis bere, Ne have lordis lyveré the lawe to apeire, Neither bragger ne boster, for no brymme wordis.	<i>then I think</i> <i>maintainer; marks (badges)</i> <i>lords' livery; damage</i> <i>boaster; fierce</i>
	But ho-so had kunnynge and conscience bothe To stonde unstombled and stronge in his wittis, Lele in his levynge, levyd by his owen,	<i>surely</i> <i>Loyal; life, living on</i>

¹ *And cast down the crock (soup pot) amid the coals*

² *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation (Luke 11)*

³ *Who loved you with full loyalty before the practice of livery began*

⁴ *For when you wished to be supported by your own limbs (see note)*

Richard the Redeless

	That no manere mede shulde make him wrye,	
85	For to trien a trouthe betwynne two sidis, And lette for no lordschep the lawe to susteyne ¹ Whane the pore pleyned that put were to wrongis, And I were of conceill, by Crist that me boughte, He shuld have a signe and sumwhat be yere	<i>reward; turn corrupt judge a legal conflict</i>
90	For to kepe his contré in quiete and in reste. This were a good grounde, so me God helpe! And a trewe tente to take and to geve, For ony lord of this londe that lyverez usith.	<i>If; judge; redeemed badge; annual salary</i>
95	But how the gayes han ygon, God wotte the sothe ² Amonge myghtfull men alle these many yeris; And whedir the grounde of gifte were good other ille, Trouthe hathe determinyd the tente to the ende, And reson hath rehersid the resceyte of all.	<i>purpose intent receiving intention</i>
100	Yit I trowe youre entente at the frist tyme Was, as I wene, yif I well thenke in multitude of peple, That ye were the more myghtier for the many signes That ye and youre servauntis aboughte so thikke sowid; And that they were more tristi and trewer than other	<i>thickly spread around trustworthy; others destroyed</i>
105	To love you for the lyverey that legaunce stroied; Or ellis for a skylle that skathed youreself, That comounes of contré had costis aboughte Sholde knowe be hir quentise that the kyg loved hem For her privy prynnte passinge another.	<i>reason; harmed districts</i>
110	Yif that was youre purpos, it passith my wittis To deme discretion of youre well-doynge. Thus were ye disceyved thoru youre duble hertis, That nevere weren to truste, so God save my soule!	<i>judge discretion deceived; false harts/hearts</i>
115	But had the good greehonde be not agreved, But cherischid as a cheffeteyne, and cheff of youre lese, Ye hadde had hertis ynowe at youre wille to go and to ride. ³ And also in serteyne, the sothe for to telle, I wondir not hyly, though heed-dere thou failid;	<i>greyhound (see note); offended group of hounds highly; horned-deer</i>

¹ And fail to uphold the law because of powerful lords

² But how the lords have comported themselves, God knows the truth (see note)

³ You would have had hearts (supporters) enough at your pleasure to walk and to ride

Passus Secundus

	For litill on youre lyf thee list for to rewe On rascaile that rorid with ribbis so lene,	pleases you to take pity young deer; ribs; thin
120	For faughte of her fode that flateris stelen, And evere with here wylis and wast ofte they hem anoyed, That poverte hem prickid full prevyliche to pleyne, But where, they ne wyste ne ho it wolde amende.	lack; food; flatterers steal their wiles; waste poverty spurred them on did not know nor who vexed
125	Thus ye derid hem unduly with droppis of anger, And stonyed hem with stormes that stynted nevere, But plucked and pulled hem anon to the skynnes, That the fresinge frost freted to here hertis.	confounded; stopped
130	So whanne youre hauntelere-dere where all ytakyn, Was non of the rasskayle aredy full growe To bere ony breme heed, as a best aughte, So wyntris wedir hem wessh with the snowis,	So that; freezing; ate harts (antler-deer); taken none; young deer ready; grown strong head; beast should
135	With many derke mystis that maddid her eyne. For well mowe ye wyttynd so mowe we all, That harde is the somer ther sonne schyneth nevere. Ye fostrid and fodid a fewe of the best,	winter's weather; washed; snows bedeviled their eyes may you know in which sun never shines
	And leyde on hem lordschipe a leyne uppon other, And bereved the raskall that rith wolde thei hadde, And knewe not the caris ne cursis that walkyd. But mesure is a meri mene, though men moche yerne.	nurtured; provided food to bestowed; one benefice afflictions moderation; mean; yearn
	<i>Deus exaudit clamorem pauperum, et iudicat causam eorum; David in Psalms²</i>	
140	Thus be the rotus youre raskall endurid, Tyll the blessid bredd brodid his wyngis To covere hem from colde, as his kynde wolde. Rith as the hous-hennes uppon londe hacchen	by eating roots; survived bird spread its protect them; nature
145	And cherichen her chekonys fro chele of the wynter, Ryth so the hende Egle the eyere of hem all, Hasteth him in hervest to hovyn his bryddis, And besieth him besely to breden hem feedrin, ³	Just; domestic hens; hatch cherish; chickens; chill noble; most genteel autumn; brood over
	Tyll her fre fedris be fulliche ypynned, That they have wynge at her wyll to wonne uppon hille;	noble feathers; fledged dwell

¹ And dispossessed the young deer that wanted justice

² God hears the cry of the poor, and he judges their cause; David in Psalms

³ And occupies himself earnestly to mantle them with feathers

Richard the Redeless

150	For venom on the valeye hadde foule with hem fare, Tyll trouthe the triacle telde somme her sothes. Thus baterid this bred on busshes aboughte, And gaderid gomes on grene ther as they walkyd, That all the schroff and schroup sondrid from other.	venom; foully; dealt remedy; told; truths battered; bird (see note) men on the green scruff; riff-raff
155	He mellid so the matall with the hand-molde That they lost lemes the levest that they had. Thus foulyd this faukyn on fyldis aboughte, ¹ And caughte of the kytes a cartfull at ones, That rentis and robis with raveyn evere laughte. ²	spoke; metal; crusher (see note) limbs; dearest kites
160	Yit was not the fawcon full fed at his likynge, For it cam him not of kynde kytes to love. Than bated he boldeliche, as a brid wolde, To plewme on his pray the pol fro the nekk;	flew down pull; prey; head from
165	But the blernyed boynard that his bagg stall, Where purraile-is pulter was pynnyd full ofte, Made the fawcon to floter and flussh for anger That the boy hadd be bounde that the bagge kepte.	blear-eyed scoundrel; stole (see note) poor folks' rags; fastened flutter (to be anxious) rogue should be bound
170	But sone therafter, in a schorte tyme, As fortune folwith ech fode till his ende, This lorell that ladde this loby awey Overe frithe and forde for his fals dedis,	person wretch; rag-man woodland; stream
175	Lyghte on the lordschepe that to the brid longid, And was felliche ylaughte and luggid full ylle, And broughte to the brydd and his blames rehersid Prevyly at the parlement amone all the peple.	Seized; inheritance; belonged cruelly caught; baited wrongs
180	Thus hawkyd this Egle and hoved above That, as God wolde that governeth all thingis, Ther nas kyte ne krowe that kareyne hauntid, For wherso they ferde, be fryth or be wones,	hovered was not; crow; fed on carrion kindred; humiliated wood; dwellings
	Was non of hem all that him hide myghth, But cam with him a reclayme fro costis aboughte, And fell with her fetheris flat upon the erthe, As madde of her mynde, and mercy besoughte.	a call to return; regions

¹ Thus this falcon hunted wild fowl in fields all around

² That rapaciously always seized revenues and fine robes

Passus Tercius

185	They myghte not aschonne the sorowe they had served, So lymed leves were leyde all aboughte, And panteris prevyliche pight upon the grounde, With grennes of good heere that God himself made, That whereso they walkid, they walrid dounwardis;	<i>evade; deserved leaves spread with lime traps; set snares; hair stumbled</i>
190	And evere hoved the Egle on hie on the skyes, And kenned clerliche, as his kynde axith, Alle the prevy poyntis that the pies wroughth.	<i>on high saw clearly; requires strategems; magpies</i>

Passus Tercius

Now	Now leve we this beau brid till I restore,	<i>beautiful bird; return to the subject</i>
	For mater that my mynde is meved in now,	<i>ponders</i>
	That whi the hie hertis her hele so mysside,	<i>health; failed</i>
	That pasture axid rith to here pure wombis,	<i>food; stomachs</i>
5	I wolle schewe as I sawe, till I se better;	<i>show</i>
	And if I walke out of the wey, I wolle me repente.	<i>i.e., stray</i>
	Now herkeneth, hende men, how that me thynkyth,	<i>listen; noble</i>
	Savynge sovereynes and sages avise,	<i>Except; wise men's opinion</i>
	That the moste myscheff uppon molde on	<i>on earth</i>
10	Is demed the dede ydo ageins kynde.	<i>committed; done contrary to nature's laws</i>
	Yit clereth this clause no thinge my wittis,	
	Without more mater what it mene wolde.	
	I mene of the hertis that hautesse of yeris,	<i>stateliness</i>
	That pasture prikyth and her prevy age,	<i>incites; manifest</i>
15	Whan they han hoblid on the holte an hundred of yeris,	<i>hobbled; wood</i>
	That they feblen in fleissh, in felle and in bones.	<i>weaken; flesh; skin</i>
	Her kynde is to kevere if they cacche myghth	<i>recover; catch</i>
	Adders that harmen alle hende bestis:	<i>noble creatures</i>
	Thoru busschis and bromes this beste, of his kynde,	<i>brooms</i>
20	Secheth and sercheth tho schrewed wormes	<i>Seeks; wretched snakes</i>
	That steleth on the stedis to stynge hem to deth.	<i>sneak up; horses</i>
	And whanne it happeth the herte to hente the edder,	<i>chances; seize; adder</i>
	He putyth him to peyne, as his pray asketh,	<i>death; prey requires (see note)</i>
	And fedith him on the venym, his felle to anewe,	<i>feeds; skin to renew</i>
25	To leve at more lykyng a longe tyme after.	<i>live in greater happiness</i>
	This is clerlie hir kynde, coltis nat to greve,	<i>colts; injure</i>
	Ne to hurlle with haras, ne hors well atamed,	<i>hurtle at stallions; tamed</i>

Richard the Redeless

	Ne to stryve with swan, though it sholle werre, Ne to bayten on the bere, ne bynde him nother,	shall go to war bait; bear; nor bind
30	Ne to wilne to woo that were hem ny sibbe, Ne to liste for to loke that her alie bledde; This was ageins kynde, as clerkis me tolde —	desire misfortune; near kin desire to see their allies
	<i>Propter ingratitudinem liber homo reuocatur in seruitutem, ut in stimulo compunctionis, et in lege ciuili</i> — ¹	
	And therfor the hertis here hele so myssid, And myghte nat passe the poynte of her prime age.	their recovery condition
35	Now constrew ho-so kunne — I can saie no more, But fare I wolle to the fowle that I beffore tolde. O ff all billid breddis that the bough spareth, The propirté of partriche to preise me lustith, ²	construe whoever can proceed; bird beaked; avoids
	That in the somer seson whan sittinge nyeth, That ich foule with his fere folwith his kynde, This brid by a bank bildith his nest, And heipeth his eiren, and hetith hem after.	egg-laying nears mate by gathers together its eggs; warms mother
40	And whane the dame hath ydo that to the dede longith, And hopith for to hacche or hervest begynne, Thane cometh ther a congioun with a grey cote, As not of his nolle as he the nest made,	before the beginning of autumn villain closely cropped head so presses
	Another proud partriche, and precyth to the nest, And prevylich pirith till the dame passe, And sesith on hir sete with hir softe plumes, And hoveth the eyren that the hue laide,	observes; leaves seizes; seat broods over; eggs; mother bird
45	And with hir corps kevereth hem, till that they kenne, And fostrih and fodith till fedris schewe, And cotis of kynde hem kevere all aboughte.	body; covers; hatch feeds; feathers coats
	But as sone as they styffe and that they steppe kunne,	grow strong; know how to walk
50	Than cometh and crieth hir owen kynde dame, And they folwith the vois at the frist note, And leveth the lurker that hem er ladde,	their own birth mother sound skulker; earlier led [astray]
	For the schrewe schrapid to selde for her wombis, ³	

¹ *The free man is called again into slavery because of ingratitude, as in The Prick of Conscience and the civil law*

² *I wish to praise the nature of the partridge*

³ *Because the wretch too seldom scraped up food for their stomachs*

Passus Tercius

	That her lendys were lene and leved with hunger.	
60	But than the dewe dame dineth hem swythe, And fostrith hem forthe till they fle kunne. “What is this to mene, man?” maiste thou axe, “For it is derklich endited for a dull panne; Wherffore I wilne, yif it thi will were,	<i>loins; thin; weakened rightful mother feeds; quickly fly</i>
65	The partriche propurtés by whom that thou menest?” A, Hicke Hevyheed, hard is thi nolle To cacche ony kunnynge, but cautell bigynne! Herdist thou not with eeris how that I er tellde How the Egle in the est entrid his owen,	<i>obscurely written; head partridge’s qualities head learning unless trickery begins [it] ears; said earlier own possessions (see note)</i>
70	And cried and clepid after his owen kynde briddis, That weren anoyed in his nest and norished full ille, And well ny yworewid with a wronge leder? But the nedý nestlingis, whan they the note herde, Of the hende Egle, the heyer of hem all,	<i>abused very nearly destroyed heir</i>
75	Thei busked fro the busches and breris that hem noyed, And burnisched her beekis and bent to-him-wardis, ¹ And folowid him fersly to fighte for the wrongis; They bablid with her billis, how thei bete were, And tenyd with twiggis two and twenty yeris.	<i>hurried; briars; troubled twittered; beaks; beaten oppressed; rods</i>
80	Thus lafte they the leder that hem wrong ladde, And tyned no twynte, but tolled her cornes, And gaderid the grotus with gyle, as I trowe. Than folwid they her fre fader, as good feith wolde, That he hem fede shulde and fostre forther,	<i>left; misgoverned them lost not a jot; taxed their grain money; guile noble</i>
85	And bringe hem out of bondage that they were broughth inne. Thanne sighed the swymmers, for the swan failid, And folwid this faucon thoru feldus and tounes, With many faire fowle, though they feynete were, And hevy for the hirte that the hors hadde.	<i>water birds (see note) fields; towns injury (see note)</i>
90	Yit they ferkyd hem forth as faste as they myghte, To have the Egles helpe of harme that they hadde; For he was heed of hem all and hieste of kynde To kepe the croune, as cronecle tellith. He blythid the beere and his bond braste,	<i>hastened themselves forth because of their injuries head chronicle gladdened; bear; broke</i>

¹ And polished their beaks and turned towards him

Richard the Redeless

95	And lete him go at large, to lepe where he wolde.	<i>leap</i>
	But tho all the berlingis brast out at ones,	<i>But then all the bear cubs burst</i>
	As fayne as the foule that flieth on the skyes	<i>glad; bird</i>
	That Bosse was unbounde and brouute to his owen.	<i>Bear; brought</i>
	They gaderid hem togedir on a grette roughe,	<i>great company</i>
100	To helpe the heeris that had many wrongis;	<i>heirs</i>
	They gaglide forth on the grene, for they greved were	<i>cackled; aggrieved</i>
	That her frendis were falle thoru felouns castis.	<i>friends; fallen; evil strategems</i>
	They mornyd for the morthir of manfull knyghtis,	<i>mourned; murder</i>
	That many a styff storme withstode for the comunes;	<i>strong</i>
105	They monside the marchall for his myssedede,	<i>cursed; Earl Marshall (see note)</i>
	That evell coude his craft whan he clothed the stede.	<i>knew; blindfolded; horse</i>
	And evere as they folwide this faucon aboughte,	
	At iche mevinge fotte, venyanunce they asked	<i>each step (moving foot), vengeance</i>
	On all that assentid to that synfull dede.	
110	A rere now to Richard and reste here while,	<i>Let us return</i>
	For a prevy poynt that persith my wittis,	<i>obscure (hidden); pierces</i>
	Of fautis I fynde that frist dede engendre	<i>faults; first did</i>
	Cursidnesse and combraunce amongo the yonge lordis,	<i>oppression</i>
	And the wikkid werchinge that walmed in her daies,	<i>deeds; boiled up</i>
115	And yit woll hereafter, but wisdom it lette.	<i>unless; forestalls</i>
	That were a lord of lond that lawe hathe in honde,	<i>That would be</i>
	That to lyghtliche leveth or lewté apere,	<i>That too easily trusts before loyalty is shown</i>
	The tale of a trifflour in tormentours wede,	<i>trifler; tormentor's clothes</i>
	That nevere reed good rewle, ne resonis bookis! ¹	
120	For ben they rayed arith, they recchith no farther, ²	<i>strutting; stir up trouble</i>
	But studieth all in strouutyng and stireth amys evere;	
	For all his witte in his wede ys wrappid for sothe, ³	<i>it seems to me</i>
	More than in mater to amende the peple that ben mysled.	
	For I say for myself, and schewe, as me thynchith,	
125	That ho is riall of his ray, that light reede him folwith.	<i>regal; raiment; poor advice</i>
	Yit swiche fresshe foodis beth feet into chambris,	<i>gaily dressed people are fetched</i>
	And for her dignesse endauntid of dullisshe nollis,	<i>display admired; foolish pates</i>
	And, if thou well waite, of no wight ellis.	<i>consider; person</i>

¹ Who never studied good government, nor reason's books

² Provided they are dressed appropriately, they care no further

³ For all his wit in truth is wrapped up in his clothing

Passus Tercius

	<i>Qui mollibus vestiuntur in domibus regum sunt: in Euangelio¹</i>	(see note)
	Than waite mo wayes, how the while turneth	wheel
130	With gyuleris joyfull for here gery jaces:	beguilers; changeable ribbons
	And for her wedis so wyde, wise beth yholde.	are deemed
	They casteth hem to creaunce, the courte for to plesse,	resort to credit
	And hopen to be hied in hast, yif they myghthe,	quickly favored
	Thoru swiche stif strouutyng, that stroyeth the rewme; ²	
135	But here wey is all wronge ther wisdom is ynned,	where; lodged
	For they lepith als lyghtly at the longe goynge,	leap as; in the end
	Out of the domes carte, as he that throff nevere.	hangman's cart; thrived
	For they kepeth no coyne that cometh to here hondis,	
	But chaunchyth it for cheynes that in Chepe hangith,	exchange; Cheapside
140	And settith all her silver in seintis and hornes,	ornaments (see note); drinking horns
	And for-doth the coyne and many other craftis,	clip the coins; ploys
	And maketh the peple for pens-lac in pointe for to wepe.	lack of money
	And yit they beth ytake forth and her tale leved,	favored; believed
	And for her newe nyseté nexte to the lordis,	foolishness
145	Now, be the lawe of Lydfford, in londe ne in water,	law of no standing (see note)
	Thilke lewde ladde oughte evyll to thryve	That ignorant
	That hongith on his hippis more than he wynneth,	hips; earns
	And doughteth no dette, so dukis hem preise,	fears; provided that
	But beggith and borwith of burgeis in tounes	burgesses
150	Furris of foyne and other felle-whare,	Furs of marten; furs
	And not the better of a bene, though they boru evere.	bean; borrow
	And, but if the slevis slide on the erthe,	sleeves (see note)
	Thei woll be wroth as the wynde and warie hem that it made;	curse
	And but yif it were elbowis adoun to the helis,	unless; heels
155	Or passinge the knee, it was not accounted.	
	And if Pernell preisid the plytis bihynde,	Pernell (see note); pleats
	The costis were accountid, paye whan he myghth.	
	The leesinge so likyde ladies and other	fashion so pleased
	That they joied of the jette and gyside hem therunder;	apparel; disguised
160	And if Felice fonde ony faute thenne of the makynge,	fault
	Yt was ysent sone to shape of the newe.	refashioned soon to the new style
	But now ther is a gyse, the queyntest of all,	fashion; most stylish

¹ Those dressed in soft clothing are in the houses of kings: in the Gospel

² Through such insufferable swaggering, which destroys the kingdom

Richard the Redeless

	A wondir coriouse crafte, ycome now late,	
165	That men clepith kervyngh the clothe all to pecis,	<i>call slashing; pieces</i>
	That sevene goode sowers sixe wekes after	<i>seamstresses</i>
	Moun not sett the seemes, ne sewe hem ageyn.	<i>Might; fix; seams</i>
	But ther is a proffith in that pride that I preise evere,	<i>profit; apprise</i>
	For thei for the pesinge paieth pens ten duble	
	That the clothe costened, the craft is so dere. ¹	
170	Now if I sothe shall saie, and shonne side tales,	<i>shun digressions</i>
	Ther is as moche good witte in swyche gomes nollis	<i>common sense; men's heads</i>
	As thou shuldyst mete of a myst fro morwe tyll even.	<i>encounter in a mist</i>
	Yit blame I no burne to be, as him oughte,	<i>person</i>
	In comlich clothinge, as his statt axith;	<i>attractive; estate requires</i>
175	But to ledyn her lust all here lyff-daiies ²	
	In quentise of clothinge for to queme Sir Pride,	<i>exquisiteness; gratify</i>
	And everemore stroutynge and no store kepe,	<i>strutting vainly; assets</i>
	And iche day a newe devyse; it dullith my wittes	<i>costume</i>
	That ony lord of a lond shulde leve swiche thingis,	
180	Or clepe to his conceill swiche manere cotis,	<i>coats (i.e., men)</i>
	That loveth more her lustis than the lore of oure Lord.	<i>their pleasures; teachings</i>
	And if a lord his lyverey lyste for to geve,	<i>livery; give</i>
	Ther may no gome for goodnesse gette therof but lite	
	For curtesie, for comlynnesse, ne for his kynde herte,	
185	But rather for his rancour and rennynghe overe peple,	<i>running</i>
	For braggynghe and for bostynge and beringe uppon oilles,	<i>flattering (see note)</i>
	For cursidnes of conscience and comynge to the assises.	<i>going to court (see note)</i>
	This makyth men mysdo more than oughte ellis,	
	And to stroute and to stare and stryve ageyn vertu.	
190	So clerlie the cause comsith in grette,	<i>commences in the nobility</i>
	Of all manere mysscheff that men here usyn.	
	For wolde they blame the burnes that broughte newe gysis,	
	And dryve out the dagges and all the Duche cotis,	<i>slashed fashions; German</i>
	And sette hem aside and scorne of hem telle,	
195	And lete hem pleye in the porche and presse non ynnere,	<i>enter no further</i>
	Ne no proude peniles with his peynte sleve;	<i>penniless person; painted</i>

¹ Lines 168–69: *For they for the piecing pay twenty times more / Than the cloth itself cost, so expensive is the craft*

² *But to pursue their pleasure all the days of their life*

Passus Tercius

	And eke repreve robbers and riffleris of peple, Flateris and fals men that no feith useth.	<i>reprove; despoilers</i>
	And alle deabolik doeris, dispise hem ichone, 200 And coile out the knyghtys that knowe well hemself, That were sad of her sawis and suffre well couude, ¹ And had traveilid in her tyme and temprid hemself, And cherliche cheriche hem, as cheff in the halle For to ordeyne officeris and all other thyngis,	<i>diabolical agents</i>
	205 Men shuld wete in a while that the world wolde amende; So vertue wolde flowe whan vicis were ebbid. But now to the mater that I before meved, Of the gomes so gay that grace hadde affendid 210 And how stille that stedeffaste stode amonge this reccheles peple, ²	<i>select</i>
	That had awilled his wyll, as wisdom him taughte: For he drough him to an herne at the halle ende, Well homelich yhelid in an holsum gyse, Not overelonge, but ordeyned in the olde schappe, 215 With grette browis ybente and a berde eke,	<i>labored; restrained</i>
	And ywounde in his wedis, as the wedir axith. He wondrid in his wittis, as he well myghthe, That the hie houusinge herborowe ne myghte Halfdell the houshould but hales hem helped; 220 But for craft that he couude caste thenne, or bethenke,	<i>cheerfully cherish; chief</i>
	He myghte not wonne in the wones, for witt that he usid, But, arouutyd for his ray and rebuked ofte, He had leve of the lord and of ladies alle For his good governaunce to go or he drank.	<i>appoint</i>
	225 Ther was non of the mené that they ne merveilid moche How he cam to the courte and was not yknowe. But als sone as they wiste that Witt was his name,	<i>know</i>
	And that the kyng knewe him not, ne non of his knyghtis, He was halowid and yhuntid and yhotte trusse, And his dwellinge ydemed a bowe-drawte from hem,	<i>mentioned</i>
	230 And ich man ycharchid to schoppe at his croune; Yif he nyhed hem ony nere, than they had him nempned.	<i>men so wanton; offended</i>
		<i>modestly covered; sensible costume</i>
		<i>conceived; style</i>
		<i>eyebrows; beard</i>
		<i>wrapped</i>
		<i>building lodge</i>
		<i>Half of; unless cabins</i>
		<i>dwell; place; discretion</i>
		<i>banished; dress</i>
		<i>permission</i>
		<i>before</i>
		<i>company; marveled</i>
		<i>knew; i.e., Wisdom</i>
		<i>hooted at; sent away</i>
		<i>bow-shot away</i>
		<i>ordered; chop; head</i>
		<i>came any closer; identified</i>

¹ Who were serious in their statements and knew how to be patient

² And how calmly that steadfast one stood among this frivolous crowd

Richard the Redeless

	The portir with his pikis tho put him uttere, And warned him the wickett while the wacche durid; “Lete sle him!” quod the sleves that slode uppon the erthe,	<i>pikes; outside denied; gate; lasted</i>
235	And alle the berdles burns bayed on him evere, And schorned him, for his slaveyn was of the olde schappe. Thus Malaperte was myghtfull and maister of hous, And evere wandrid Wisdom without the gatis.	<i>beardless boys scorned; hood dominating outside</i>
	“By Him that wroughte this world!” quod Wisdom in wrath, “But yif ye woll sumtyme I walke in amonge you, I shall forbede you burnesse the best on this erthe, That is, governance of gettinge and grace that him follwith: ¹	<i>men; best thing</i>
240	For these two trewly twynned yet nevere.” And so it fell on hem, in feith, for faughtis that they usid, That her grace was agoo for grucchinge chere, For the wrong that they wroughte to Wisdom affore.	<i>divided happened; faults; had gone; grudging conduct did; before</i>
	For tristith, als trewly as tyllinge us helpeth, That iche rewme under roff of the reynebowe ² Sholde stable and stonde be these thre degrés:	<i>trust; plowing helps us be stable; ranks (see note)</i>
245	By governaunce of grete and of good age; By styffnesse and strengthe of steeris well y-yokyd, That beth myghthfull men, of the mydill age; And be laboreris of lond that lyfflode ne fayle. ³	<i>the nobility well-paired oxen powerful</i>
	Thanne wolde reule, if reson where amongis us, That ich leode lokide what longid to his age, ⁴ And nevere for to passe more oo poynt forther	<i>were among</i>
250	To usurpe the service that to sages bilongith, To become conselleris er they kunne rede, In schenshepe of sovereynes, and shame at the last.	<i>one step</i>
	255 That ich leode lokide what longid to his age, ⁴ And nevere for to passe more oo poynt forther To usurpe the service that to sages bilongith, To become conselleris er they kunne rede, In schenshepe of sovereynes, and shame at the last.	<i>destruction</i>
260	For it fallith as well to fodus of twenty four yeris, ⁵ Or yonge men of yistiday to geve good redis, As becometh a kow to hoppe in a cage!	<i>advice cow</i>

¹ *That is, prudent management of revenues and the favor that follows from it*

² *That each realm under the arch of the rainbow*

³ *And by laborers on the land so that livelihood does not fail*

⁴ *That each person attended to what pertained to his age*

⁵ *For it is as appropriate for men of twenty four years*

Passus Tercius

	It is not unknownen to kunnynge leodis	<i>discerning people</i>
	That rewlers of rewmes around all the erthe	
265	Were not yffoundid at the frist tyme	<i>created</i>
	To leve al at likynge and lust of the world,	<i>live; pleasure</i>
	But to laboure on the lawe, as lewde men on plowes,	<i>unlettered</i>
	And to merke meyntenourz with maces ichonne,	
	And to strie strouters that sterede ageine rithis, ¹	<i>strike maintainers (see note)</i>
270	And alle the myssedoers that they myghte fynde,	
	To put hem in preson, a peere though he were;	<i>prison; peer of the realm</i>
	And not to rewle as reremys and rest on the daies,	<i>bats (see note)</i>
	And spende of the spicerie more than it neded,	<i>spices</i>
	Bothe wexe and wyn, in wast all aboughte,	
275	With deyntés ydoublid and daunsinge to pipis,	<i>[candle] wax; wine; waste</i>
	In myrthe with moppis, myrrours of synne.	<i>dainties multiplied; dancing</i>
	Yit forbede I no burne to be blithe sum while;	
	But all thinge hath tyme, for to tempre gles:	<i>buffoons</i>
	For caste all the counntis that the kyng holdith,	<i>person; festive</i>
280	And loke how these lordis loggen hemself,	<i>merriment</i>
	And evere shall thou fynde, as fer as thou walkiste,	<i>reckon; accounts</i>
	That wisdom and overewacche wonneth fer asundre; ²	<i>lodge themselves</i>
	But whanne the governaunce goth thus with tho the hous gie shulde,	<i>administer</i>
	And letith lyghte of the lawe and lesse of the peple,	<i>think lightly</i>
285	And herkeneth all to honour and to ese eke,	<i>heed only; leisured folk (i.e., powerful)</i>
	And that ich wyght with his witt waite on him evere,	
	To do hem reverence aright, though the rigge brest.	<i>back break (see note)</i>
	This warmnesse in welth with wy upon erthe	<i>glow of wealth; any person</i>
	Myghte not longe dure, as doctourz us tellith.	<i>last; learned men</i>
290	For ho-so thus leved his lyff to the ende,	
	Evere wrappid in welle, and with no wo mette, ³	<i>what was never seen</i>
	Myghte seie that he sawe that seie was nevere:	<i>off its hinges</i>
	That hevene were unhonge out of the hookis,	<i>ready</i>
	And were boun at his bidding yif it be myghte.	<i>yet</i>
295	But clerkis knew I non yete that so couude rede	
	In bokis ybounde, though ye broughte alle	

¹ And to ruin arrogant men who acted against right

² That wisdom and late hours dwell far apart

³ Always surrounded with advantages, and never encountering setbacks

Richard the Redeless

	That ony wy welldith wonnynge uppon erthe; For in well and in woo the werld evere turneth.	man possesses living weal
300	Yit ther is kew-kaw, though he come late, A new thing that noyeth nedy men and other, Whanne realles remeveth and ridith thoru tounes, And carieth overe contré ther comunes dwelleth, To preson the pillourz that overe the pore renneth; For that were evene in her weye if they well ride.	reversal (see note) annoys nobles travel wander; where imprison; looters exactly flaw
305	But yit ther is a foule faughte that I fynde ofte: They prien affter presentis or pleyntis ben yclepid, And abateth all the billis of tho that nougth bringith; ¹ And ho-so grucche or grone ageins her grette willes May lese her lyff lyghtly and no lesse weddis.	demand; pleadings
310	Thus is the lawe loyvd thoru myghty lordis willys, That meyneteyne myssdoers more than other peple. For mayntenaunce many day --- well more is the reuthe! --- Hath yhad mo men, at mete and at melis, Than ony Cristen kynge that ye knewe evere:	their powerful wills (?) pledges (see note) brought low miscreants
315	For, as reson and rith rehersid to me ones, Tho ben men of this molde that most harme worchen.	undone more earth; work
	For chydres of Chester where chose many daies	brawlers; were chosen (see note)
	To ben of conceill for causis that in the court hangid,	
	And pledid pipoudris alle manere pleyntis. ²	
320	They cared for no coyffes that men of court usyn, But meved many maters that man never thoughte, And feyned falshed, till they a fyne had,	coifs; wear brought up; issues concocted falsehood; settlement (see note)
	And knewe no manere cause, as comunes tolde. ³	
	Thei had non other signe to schewe the lawe	
325	But a prevy pallette her pannes to kepe, To hille here lewde heed in stede of an hove.	head-piece; heads; protect cover; lawyer's coif
	They constrewed quarellis to quenche the peple,	contrived (legal) disputes; squelch
	And pletid with pollaxis and poynjis of swerdis,	pleaded their cases
	And at the dome-gevynge drowe out the bladis,	judgment drew
330	And lente men lyverey of her longe battis.	allowed men to experience; clubs

¹ And cancel all the legal accusations of those who bring nothing

² And pled at piepowder courts all manner of complaints (see note)

³ "They understood no legal pleading, as the commons reported" (D&S)

Passus Tercius

	They lacked alle vertues that a juge shulde have:	<i>powers of evaluation</i>
	For, er a tale were ytolde, they wolde trie the harmes,	<i>legal case; assess the damages</i>
	Withoute ony answeare but ho his lyf hatid. ¹	
335	And ho-so pleyned to the prince that pees shulde kepe,	
	Of these mystirmen, medlers of wrongis,	<i>men like this, provokers</i>
	He was lyghtliche ylaughte and yluggyd of many,	<i>quickly seized; goaded</i>
	And ymummyd on the mouthe and manaced to the deth.	<i>silenced; menaced</i>
	They leid on thi leegis, Richard, lasshis ynow,	<i>laid; subjects; lashings</i>
	And drede nevere a dele the dome of the lawe.	
340	Ther nas rial of the rewme that hem durste rebuke,	<i>noble</i>
	Ne juge ne justice that jewis durste hem deme	<i>punishment; judgment</i>
	For oute that thei toke or trespassid to the peple.	<i>anything; stole; against</i>
	This was a wondir world, ho-so well lokyd,	
	That gromes overegrewe so many grette maistris;	<i>serving-men</i>
345	For this was the rewle in this rewme while they here regnyd.	
	Though I satte sevenenyght and slepte full selde,	<i>sat up a week</i>
	Of many mo wrongis they werched than I write couude;	
	For selde were the serigauntis soughe for to plete,	<i>serjeants-at-law</i>
	Or ony pretise of courte preied of his wittis,	<i>apprentice; requested</i>
350	The while the degony sdomes weren so endauntid,	<i>churls'; esteemed</i>
	Tille oure Sire in His see above the seven sterries,	<i>throne; stars</i>
	Sawe the many mysschevys that these men dede,	
	And no mendis ymade, but menteyned evere	<i>amends</i>
	Of him that was hiest, yholde for to kepe	<i>safeguard</i>
355	His liegis in lawe, and so her love gette.	<i>subjects</i>
	He sente for his servauntis that sembled many,	<i>assembled</i>
	Of baronys and baccheleris, with many brighth helmes,	<i>young knights; helmets</i>
	With the comunes of contres they cam all at ones;	<i>districts</i>
	And as a duke doughty in dedis of armes,	<i>formidable</i>
360	In full reall aray he rood upon hem evere,	<i>royal; rode against</i>
	Tyll Degon and Dobyn, that mennys doris brastyn,	<i>doors break down (see note)</i>
	And were ydubbid of a duke for her while domes, ²	
	Awakyd for wecchis and wast that they usid,	<i>night revels</i>
	And for her breme blastis buffettis henten.	<i>bitter; received blows</i>
365	Than gan it to calme and clere all aboughe,	

¹ Without any answer except for the person who hated his life

² And were dubbed by a king (leader) for their erstwhile judgments

Richard the Redeless

That iche man myghte, ho-so mynde hadde,
 Se, be the sonne that so brighte schewed,
 The mone at the mydday meve, and the sterris,
 Folwinge felouns for her false dedis,
 Devourours of vetaile that foughten er thei paide.

had a mind to
See
move
Pursuing criminals
provisions

370

Passus Quartus

For where was evere ony Cristen kynge that ye evere knewe
 That helde swiche an household be the halfdelle
 As Richard in this rewme, thoru myserule of other,
 That alle his fynys for faughtis, ne his fee-fermes,
 5 Ne for-feyturis fele that felle in his daies,
 Ne the nownagis that newed him evere —
 As March and Mounbray, and many mo other,¹
 Ne alle the issues of court that to the kyng longid,
 Ne sellynge, that sowkid silver rith faste,
 10 Ne alle the prophete of the lond that the prince owed,
 Whan the countis were caste with the custum of wullus,²
 Myghte not areche ne his rent nother,
 To paie the pore peple that his purvyours toke,
 Withoute preiere at a parlement a poundage biske,
 15 And a fifteneth and a dyme eke,
 And with all the custum of the clothe that cometh to fayres?
 And yet, ne had creaunce icome at the last ende,
 With the comunes curse that cleved on hem evere,
 They had be drawe to the devyll for dette that they owed.
 20 And whanne the reot and the reevell the rent thus passid,³
 And no thing ylafte but the bare baggis,
 Than felle it afforse to fille hem ageyne,
 And feyned sum folie that failid hem never,
 And cast it be colis with her conceill at evene,
 25 To have prevy parlement for proffitt of hemself,

¹ As for example [the earls of] March and Mowbray, and many others as well (see note)

² When the accounts were reckoned, with the wool customs

³ And when the riot and the revels thus surpassed their income

Passus Quartus

	And lete write writtis all in wex closid,	<i>sealed with wax</i>
	For peeris and prelatis that thei apere shuld,	<i>peers of the realm</i>
	And sente side sondis to schrevys aboughte	<i>messages; sheriffs (see note)</i>
	To chese swiche chevalleris as the charge wold,	<i>knights</i>
30	To schewe for the schire in company with the grete.	<i>represent; nobility</i>
	And whanne it drowe to the day of the dede-doyng,	<i>drew; action</i>
	That sovereynes were semblid and the schire-knyghtis,	
	Than, as her forme is frist, they begynne to declare <i>their; according to initial protocol</i>	
	The cause of her comyng and than the kyngis will.	
35	Comliche a clerk than comsid the wordis,	<i>Appropriately; commenced</i>
	And pronouncid the poyntis aperte to hem alle,	<i>issues; openly</i>
	And meved for mony more than for out ellis,	<i>money; anything else</i>
	In glosing of grette, lest greyves arise. ¹	
	And whanne the tale was tolde anon to the ende,	
40	Amorwe thei must, affore mete, mete togedir,	<i>Next morning; dinner; meet</i>
	The knyghtis of the comuneté and carpe of the maters,	<i>shire-knights; discuss</i>
	With citiseyns of shiris, ysent for the same,	<i>citizens; same purpose</i>
	To reherse the articlis and graunte all her askynge.	<i>go over; all their demands</i>
	But yit for the manere to make men blynde,	
45	Somme argued agein rith then a good while,	<i>receive a salary</i>
	And said, “We beth servautis and salleré fongen,	<i>what is troubling them</i>
	And ysent fro the shiris to shewe what hem greveth,	<i>speak; profit</i>
	And to parle for her prophete and passe no ferthere,	<i>people</i>
	And to graunte of her gold to the grett wattis	<i>there were war</i>
50	By no manere wronge way but if werre were;	<i>those who fund us</i>
	And if we ben fals to tho us here fyndyth,	
	Evyll be we worthy to welden oure hire.” ²	
	Than satte summe as siphre doth in awgrym,	<i>zero; arithmetic (see note)</i>
	That noteth a place, and no thing availeth;	
55	And some had ysoupid with Symond overe even,	
	And schewed for the shire and here schew lost; ³	<i>tattletales</i>
	And somme were tituleris and to the kyng wente,	<i>informed; foes</i>
	And formed him of foos that good frendis weren,	

¹ “In deceiving the great, lest [legal] grievances arise” (*Sk*)

² We are hardly worthy to receive our payments

³ Lines 55–56: And some had supped with Simon (ecclesiastics) the night before / And appeared for the shire and gained nothing thereby

Richard the Redeless

	That bablid for the best and no blame served	talked; observed
60	Of kynge ne conceyll ne of the comunes nother, Ho-so toke good kepe to the culorum.	paid close attention; meaning
	And somme slombrid and slepte and said but a lite;	mumbled; knew not
	And somme mafflid with the mouth, and nyst what they ment;	payment; clung
	And somme had hire and helde therwith evere,	do no more; fear; masters
65	And wolde no farther affoott for fer of her maistris;	sullen
	And some were so soleyne and sad of her wittis	end; addled
	That er they come to the clos acombrid they were,	could not construe
	That thei the conclusion than constrewe ne couthe,	
	No burne of the benche of borowe nother ellis, ¹	
70	So blynde and so ballid and bare was the reson.	bald
	And some were so fers at the frist come	aggressive
	That they bente on a bonet and bare a topte saile	spread an extra sail; bore a top sail
	Affor the wynde fresshely to make a good fare.	journey
	Than lay the lordis ale, with laste and with charge,	to leeward; heavy cargo
75	And bare aboughte the barge and blamed the maister,	put about (see note)
	That knewe not the kynde cours that to the crafte longid,	belonged
	And warned him wisely of the wedir-side.	windward-side
	Thanne the maste in the myddis at the monthe-ende,	midships
	Bowid for brestynge and broughte hem to lond;	Bent to breaking
80	For ne had thei striked a strake and sterid hem the better,	taken in a reef; steered
	And abated a bonet or the blast come,	struck sail; storm
	They had be throwe overe the borde backeward ichonne. ²	
	And some were acombrid with the conceill before,	troubled
	And wiste well ynow how it sholde ende,	knew
85	Or some of the semblé shulde repente.	Before; company the majority
	Some helde with the mo how it evere wente,	
	And somme dede rith so and wolld go no farther.	
	Some parled as perte as provyd well after,	openly; proved
	And clappid more for the coyne that the kyng owed hem	spoke up (see note)
90	Thanne for comfforte of the comyne that her cost paied,	expenses
	And were behote hansell if they helpe wolde	promised reward
	To be servyd sekirly of the same silvere.	compensated assuredly
	And some dradde dukis, and Do-well forsoke . . .	fearred

¹ No judge (*man of the judge's bench*) from the borough or somewhere else

² Each one of them would have been thrown backwards overboard

Notes

Abbreviations: **B**: Barr's edition of *RiR*; **D&S**: Day and Steele's edition of *RiR*; **IMEV**: Carlton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *Index of Middle English Verse*; **MED**: *Middle English Dictionary*; **MEPW**: Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings*; **MS**: Cambridge University Library MS Ll.iv.14; **OED²**: *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.; **PP**: *Piers Plowman*, ed. Schmidt; **6ES**: Dean, ed., *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*; **Sk**: Skeat's 1886 edition of *RiR*; **Sz**: Paul Szarmach's transcription of the MS; **Usk**: *The Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. Given-Wilson; **WGO**: Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*; **Wr**: Wright's 1838 edition of *RiR*

[Prologus]

Prologus. I use Sk's and D&S's editorial designations for poem divisions — here indicated within brackets — toward the beginning of the work because some of the material in the traditional Prologue seems roughly parallel to the Prologue of Langland's *PP*. The MS does include passus markers after I.114 ("Passus secundus"), after II.192 ("Passus Tercius"), and after III.371 ("Passus quartus"). B argues against a Prologue, designating the first unit as Passus I. She makes no division after line 87 (beginning "Now Richard þe redeles"). The MS contains large capital letters at Prologue line 1; Passus I lines 1, 20, 49; Passus II line 1; Passus III lines 1, 37, 110; Passus IV line 1.

- 1 *And as I passid.* The poem begins abruptly, which has suggested to some editors that material has been lost before the manuscript's first lines. But other poems begin with the word "And"; for example, "And by a chapell as Y Came / Mett Y whyte Iesu" (*IMEV* 298) or John Audelay's "And loue þi god ouer al þyng / þi neȝbore as þi self I say" (*IMEV* 304). The large capital "A" of "And" is in red.
- 2 *Bristow.* The author is familiar with Bristol and the location of Christ Church. This town also is important in the conflict between Henry Bolingbroke, the duke of Lancaster, and Richard after Henry's return from exile. Bolingbroke, along with the Percies of Northumberland, the Earl of Westmoreland, and the Duke of York (whom Richard had appointed as Regent when he went to Ireland), trapped Richard's favorites and advisors — William Scrope, treasurer of England, Sir John Bushy,

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formerly Speaker of Parliament, and Sir Henry Green — as prisoners at Bristol on 28 July 1399. These were executed as traitors to the realm on the following day.

- 9 *Richard*. The scribe or a reader has underlined this proper name and many other names and terms in red. In the opening 25 lines the following words are so underlined: “Richard” (line 9); “Henrri” (line 11); “prince” and “Walis” (line 23); and “kynge” (line 24). For this and other details about the manuscript I am indebted to Paul Szarmach for his close inspection and transcription of it.
- 11 *Henrri . . . est half*. Henry of Lancaster landed at Ravenspur on the lower Humber on 4 July 1399, while Richard was waging a campaign against the “wilde Yrisshe” (line 10). He quickly set out for Pontefract Castle — a Lancastrian bastion — and thence to Bristol. The Percies joined him at Pontefract. His rapid progress south through the midlands perhaps caused the author of *RiR* to proclaim him the “greehonde” (greyhound). See below II.113 and note.
- 17 *parceit*. This word, which Sk glosses as “power of perception” and B as “perception,” means “the power of understanding” or “comprehension” (MED, s.v. *parceit*, 1, citing this line from *RiR*).
- 25 *as a liage to his lord*. MS: *as a lord to his liage*. Sk follows the MS, but D&S, B, and Sz all transpose since the poet is liege rather than lord.
- 27 *wuste*. D&S and B emend MS: *wost* (2 singular pres. indicative) for the past tense. “MS. *wost*; but see Pass. i. 11.49 and 64, below” (Sk, I, p. 604).
- 28 *geve*. So D&S and B; MS and Sk: *ȝeue*; Wr: *ȝeve*. The “g” sound rather than the “y” sound is required for the alliteration, as in *ageyn* in line 29.
- 33 *preie*. MS: *preise*. B’s emendation.
- 42 D&S move this line to line 45.
- 43 *croune*. So Sk, D&S, and B. MS and Wr: *grounde*. *Grounde* in this line is dittography (inadvertent repetition) from *grounde* in the previous line and does not alliterate, as *croune* does, with *Cristen* and *kyng*.
- 50 *fondyd*. So Sk, D&S, and B. MS: *fordyd*, with *n* written above the *r*. The *fyve wyttis* here means, as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (lines 640 and 2193), the five

Notes to Prologus

senses. The senses can have moral as well as physical value, for example, as guardians of the soul in *PP*. Sir Inwit (conscience, moral sense) has “fyve faire sones”:

Sire Se-wel, and Sey-wel, and Sire Here-wel þe hende,
Sire Werch-wel-wib-pyn-hand, a wiȝt man of strengþe,
And Sire Godefray Go-wel . . .
(B 9.19; 20–22)

*See; Say; Hear
Work; powerful*

- 51 *tretis*. David Lawton has argued that alliterative poets, claiming to be “God’s instrument,” would refer to their work in “the morally elevated term ‘tretyse’” (“The Unity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry,” p. 80).
- 56 *rode of Chester*. B notes that the same oath is used by Sloth in *PP*, V.460 (p. 251), though, given the author’s apparent concern for the king whom he would counsel in this section of the poem and the loyalty of the Chester retainers to Richard, the oath may have additional significance.
- 60 *make it more better*. The humility trope is common in late fourteenth-century poetry as the author presents his work for amendment or correction.
- 68 *shall fele fawtis*. Sk, I, p. 605, suggests that *fynde* has been omitted and emends the line. The sense of *fele* (adj.) in his reading would be “many.” B reads *fele* as a verb (albeit not in the usual participial form) and glosses the term “discover.” I have followed her reading.
- 69 *youghthe*. So Sk, D&S, and B; MS, Wr: *youghē*.
- 72 *culorum*. Short for *in saeculum saeculorum*. This contraction (*'culorum*) signifies, as in passus IV.61 (or in *PP* A III.258, B III.280, C III.432), “final meaning,” conclusion, or “when all is said and done” and which closes prayers, hence the essence of something. In the MS “culorum” is underlined.
- 77 *My sovereyne*. Ostensibly his king is Richard; but since he will attack Richard and his government so forcefully at the beginning of passus I, he might be referring to Henry. In another sense the appeal might be to a Lord whose reign will never go astray.

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[**Passus Primus**]

6 *daiez.* MS: *daie3.*

weren wikkid. I follow D&S and B in adding these two words to the end of line 6. In the MS, *Weren wikkid* begins line 7.

8a *Radix omnium malorum cupiditas.* In the margin, glossing “coveitise” (line 8).

17 *peté.* A corrector has somewhat clumsily emended this to *pyte*. The phrase *preysinge of polaxis* is in this context ironic.

20 *derklich endited.* “obscurely composed,” an important phrase repeated at III.63. The MED glosses *derkliche* in signification 2 as “Of speaking or writing: (a) in a veiled or figurative manner; allusively, mysteriously, subtly; (b) vaguely, obscurely.” The author, who seems to draw on both significations in his narrative, foregrounds his technique of alluding to historical persons through heraldic animals (Henry of Hereford is variously the greyhound, the eagle, the hen, and the falcon; his supporters are chickens or waterfowl; and so forth). His metaphors can become extended and mixed. See the Introduction.

25 *gostis.* So Sk, B; Wr reads *gestis*, and this might be the correct reading. It appears that a corrector has altered the *e* of *gestis* to *o*.

26 *harnesse.* So the MS, Wr, Sk, and B. D&S emend to *harmesse* (“harms,” “injuries”).

32 *Ye come . . . knewe.* Richard’s father, the Black Prince, died in 1376 and King Edward III, Richard’s grandfather, died in 1377, elevating Richard to the kingship at the age of eleven. The sentiment here echoes the biblical admonition, “Woe to thee, O land, when the king is a child” (Eccl. 10.16; and see PP Prol. 195a). Usk frames his chronicle as follows: “Many great things were hoped for in the time of this Richard’s reign; but, because he was tender of age, other persons who had charge of him and of the kingdom did not cease to inflict wanton evils, extortions, and other intolerable injustices upon the realm” (p. 3).

35 *vertuous.* MS: *vertus*, with *ou* written above the *u*.

42 *derve.* So Sk, D&S, and B (*derue*). Wr in this line and at line 69 reads *derne*, dark, secret, hidden. The MS minims can support either reading but *derve*, from OE

Notes to Passus Primus

deorfan, makes best sense in this context, and this is the sense supported by the MED (s.v. *derve*, 2, and glossed as “precious” [jewel]).

- 46 *ther it be oughte.* B, noting the defective alliteration in the half-line, inserts “pounced” (embossed) after *it* and before *be*.
- 51 *nest.* So MS; Wr: *neft*.
- 55 *pannes.* With a quibble on *pence*.
- 58 *huntyd.* So Wr, Sk, D&S, and B; MS: *hunyd*.
- 61 *that ye with ferde.* As with language elsewhere in *RiR*, this line contains echoes of moral lyrics on the transitoriness of the world such as “Al es bot a fantum þ^t we with ffare” (*IMEV* 189; compare 190).
- 66–67 The charge of social climbing and a ruinous leveling of class distinctions as a sign of social decay was common in satirical and prophetic literature. See *PP* B III.203–05; *Piers the Plowman’s Crede*, lines 748–51 and note to lines 748–49, and *The Plowman’s Tale*, lines 301–08, in *6ES*; and *Thomas of Erceldoune’s Prophecy*, line 15 and note, in *MEPW*. These two lines are bracketed in the MS.
- 67 *Woll wo.* Sk emends to *Well wo.*
- 73 *not.* So D&S, B; MS: *nott* (?). It is not clear that the scribe intended the second *t*, which is faint.
- 77 *nadde.* MS: *had not* written above in a different hand.
- 78 *cautell.* MS: *crafte* written above in a different hand.
- 79 *youre hervest is ynne.* The clear implication is that it is a bitter harvest: as you sow, so shall you reap. Also, as Sk observes, “you need not expect further help” (II, p. 290).
- 80 *wyteth.* So Wr, Sk, D&S, B (*wyte[tjh]*); MS: *wytek*. Sk translates: “Blame not your council, but rather yourself for it, viz. for the fact that ill fortune has befallen the faithless” (II, p. 290).

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- 83 *clerlie*. So D&S and B. MS and Wr: *clergie*. Sk: *[poru] clergie*. The scribe regularly spells this word *clergie*, including at III.26 and 190.
- 85 *kayseris*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *Kayseceris*. In the MS *lordes / rulers* is written in a different hand above *Kayseceris*. As the author anticipates a future readership for his poetic treatise, he situates it in a “mirror for princes” tradition. See Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp. 36–37.
- 86 *sir*. MS: *lorde* written above in a different hand.
- 89 *yeme*. MS: *guyde/rule* written above in a different hand.
- 90 *Hurlewaynis kynne*. The kin of Harlequin would be goblins or sprites who cause mischief in the night. B thinks this phrase applies especially well to Richard’s much-criticized favorites Robert de Vere, John Bushy, William Bagot, and Henry Green (the latter three comprising Shakespeare’s “caterpillars of the commonwealth”). The further implication from the entire passage is that these ministers are too common to help Richard govern effectively; hence they remain strangers to the nature (“kynde”) of statecraft.
- 99 *busshinge adoun*. This phrase refers to Richard’s ruthless treatment of those who, in the poet’s judgment, were most loyal to him: the Appellants Arundel (executed), Gloucester (murdered), and Warwick (banished). In *busshinge* — explained by Sk as “pushing, butting” — there is wordplay on John Bushy, one of “Hurlewaynis kynne” (line 90). Richard’s despised favorites were often the subject of such wordplay, as in *There is a Busch That Is Forgrowe* (in MEPW), whose anonymous author attributed Gloucester’s death to Bushy.
- 100 *a fals colour* means “false pretence; as in Acts xxvii.30. This *false colour* was *Green*; see Pass. ii. 153” (Sk, II, p. 290).
- 113 *burnes*. MS: *barons* written above in a different hand.

Passus Secundus

- 2 *lyverey*. MS: the first *y* written over an *e*, here and in most other instances of the word (II.26, 35, 57, 60, 79, 93, 104; III.182, 330). So too the *y* in *by* (II.83 and III.41) and *brymme* (II.80). Sk, D&S, B, and Sz all read *e*, as in *levere*, *be*, and *bremme*, all of

Notes to Passus Secundus

which instances are suited to the dialect. I have followed the *y* forms (which also suit the dialect) on grounds that it is not possible to determine whether the correction has been made by the original scribe or a later normalizer. It is perhaps of interest that the use of *y* in these instances brings *RiR* into conformity with practices in *Mum*.

Livery were uniforms identifying men used as a private army; and the liveries usually included identifying badges as well as colors. King Richard provided livery to special troops or household retainers — such as the Cheshire guard — who wore badges as well. The king's special badge was a white hart (see II.4). The hart in Passus II becomes the chief element in an extended metaphor of hunting and exploitation of the poor by violent retainers, either those of Richard or of powerful barons. Magnates retained their own armies, which made for considerable complaint in the late fourteenth century. In 1390 Parliament passed the Statute of Livery and Maintenance outlawing private armies and their uniforms. For a discussion of the social implications of this statute, see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 18–20. See also *Mum* line 803 and note.

- 3 *gaf*. So D&S, B: *[g]af*; MS, Wr, Sk: *ȝaf*. The alliteration in this line and in Prol.28 requires the “g” rather than the “y” sound.
- 9 *Egle*. The Eagle is Henry Bolingbroke. “That the *Eagle* means Bolingbroke is placed beyond all doubt by Pass. iii. l. 69. An eagle was one of the numerous badges of his grandfather Edward III” (Sk, II, p. 292). The Eagle is capitalized by the scribe in this line and elsewhere in the poem. It is also sometimes underlined in red.
- 14–17 *They severid . . . half yere after*. Richard’s ministers flee, but they retain their horns (i.e., they are still dangerous).
- 16 *togedir*. *to* was inserted above the line.
- 17 *yere*. MS: *a* inserted above *yere* to indicate *a yere*.
- 20 *merke his liegis*. This refers to the sign of the White Hart, Richard’s special badge or emblem, which identified his special liege-men.
- 25 *Or*. So MS, Wr, Sk, D&S, and B emend to *Of*, which is possible (dittography from lines 24 and 26); but the difficulties of syntax and meaning in this passage are not eliminated by the emendation.

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- 28 *many curse servid*. Although an early reader has written “deserved” above *servid* in the MS, the sense is that people were served curses as if they were receiving legal writs of summons. See also II.185 and note.
- 40 *Lieges*. So Sk, Wr; D&S and B read *Liages*. The MS vowel is either an *a* or an imperfectly formed *e*.
- 43 *homeliche hertis*. The quibble on *hertis* = Richard’s *harts* and *hertis* = men’s “hearts” is most explicit in this phrase: those of simple heart receive the injuries from Richard’s ravaging *hertis*.
- 50 *Tyl*. So Sk, D&S, B: (Wr: *Ty/lly*). MS: *Ty* with *l* inserted with a caret.
- 53–54 *Yit am I lewde . . . To coveyte*. D&S translate these lines: “Yet I am ignorant, and manifest little of any good quality which could entitle me to covet, &c.”(p. 90).
- 55 *how*. So MS, Wr, Sk; D&S, B: *what*.
- 56 *ladde*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS and Wr omit.
- 57 *begynne*. So MS and Wr; Sk, D&S, B emend to *beganne*.
- 61 *fayled*. So D&S, B; Wr, Sk: *ffolwyd*. The word *ffayled* is written above *ffolwyd* in the MS.
- 62 *lene to youre owen lymes*. This is a figurative expression referring to Richard’s acting with the aid of his supporters (limbs). The king, as director of the body politic, should be the “head,” but Richard has dispersed political authority among his favorites. See Introduction, pp. 8–9.
- 64 *wankel*. D&S’s excellent emendation, adopted by B. MS, Wr, and Sk: *feble*, which is probably dittoigraphy from the previous line and which spoils the alliteration.
- 69–76 *Reson* — here close to the virtue of Prudence — speaks as an allegorical figure, agreeing that a counselor must advise a lord with caution and yet he must speak the truth to protect his lord.
- 93 *For*. So D&S, B; MS, Wr, Sk: *And*.

Notes to Passus Secundus

94 *gayes*. Sk glosses this word as “ornaments”: “a gay signifies anything gaudy or gay, as a highly coloured child’s picture, or a fine piece of clothing It here refers to the badges and privileges already spoken of” (II, p. 293). Although this is doubtless the case, the syntax in this line requires personification of *gayes* or persons who wear the badges.

102 *sowid*. MS: *shewed* written above.

106 *had costis*. MS: *had* may be stricken, though it is unclear; *in* appears in a later hand in superscript. Sk, D&S, and B all read *in costis*, which is satisfactory, but so is *had costis*. Sk emends *aboughte* at end of the line to *aboute*, as does B.

108 *privy*. D&S gloss this word as “manifest” rather than “secret” or “special” and explain: “Apparently a ME. adjective ‘preue,’ proved, manifest, was confused by scribes, with ‘preue,’ *privy*” (p. 90). Sk glosses as “secret, special.”

113 *good greehonde*. Henry of Lancaster (Bolingbroke), even though he has already been cast as the eagle (II.9). He may be called the “greehonde” because of his swift progress through England from Ravenspur to Bristol after his return from exile. But the chronicler Adam of Usk explains the eagle and greyhound symbolism for Henry in terms of the prophecies of Merlin and John of Bridlington:

According to the prophecy of Merlin, this duke Henry is the eaglet, for he was the son of John; following Bridlington, however, he should rather be the dog, because of his livery of linked collars of greyhounds, and because he came in the dog-days, and because he drove from the kingdom countless numbers of harts — the hart being the livery of King Richard (p. 53).

For the prophecies of Merlin, see *MEPW*, pp. 9–10; for a Lancastrian application of the prophecy of Merlin involving Henry, see Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne*, pp. 12–13. The author of *Mum* includes a section mocking Merlin prophecies such as these (see lines 1723–33). In the MS lines 113–14 are joined with a bracket in the left margin.

114 *lese*. The MED, referring to this line, defines *lese* as “An establishment, or department in the king’s household, for keeping of coursing hounds” (signification 3).

117 *thou*. So MS (*b^u*), Wr, Sk, B. D&S emends to *you* based on past practice of addressing the king with *ye*, *you*.

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- 118 *For litill on youre lyf.* Sk translates this line, “For little, during your life, it pleased you to have pity on the inferior sort of deer”; and he comments, “A *rascal* was a lean deer, fit neither for hunting nor eating. So also in l. 129” (II, p. 293). See II.129n.
- 129 *rasskayle.* “The young, lean, or inferior deer of a herd, distinguished from the full-grown antlered bucks or stags” (OED²).
- 139 *a meri.* MS: *ameri*. The idea behind this expression, which becomes proverbial, is that moderation brings joy and happiness in ways that excess does not.
- 139a *Deus exaudit clamorem pauperum.* D&S: “Cp. Ps. ix.37–8, ‘Desiderium pauperum exaudivit Dominus . . . judicare pupillo et humili.’” (The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor . . . To judge for the fatherless and for the humble.) There is an insert sign from the marginal quotation that lines up between lines 139 and 140.
- 140 *Thus be the rotus.* So MS, Wr, Sk; D&S, B: *Thus rend be the rotus.*
- 144 *chele.* MS: *colde* written above.
- 145 *Egle the eyere.* So Wr; MS, B: *Egle þe Eyere*; Sk, D&S: *Egle the heyere.* *Egle* is one of the words underlined in the MS; it is similarly capitalized and underlined in lines 176 and 190. B, defending the MS reading, argues that “*Eyere* must mean ‘female’ in the restricted sense of ‘mother’” (p. 267). The eagle is depicted as tending the brood of chicks like a mother hen.
- 148 *yppynned.* B emends to *[un]-y-pynned* because a negative sense seems to be required. The meaning of the passage is clearly “until they have fully fledged” and are ready to exercise their wings.
- 151 *Tyll trouthe the triacle.* Sk translates: “Till Truth, the remedy (for slander), told her true tales to some” (II, p. 294).
- 152–54 *Thus baterid . . . sondrid from other.* There is obvious wordplay on Bushy, Green, and Scrope in these lines (see above, notes to Prol.2 and I.99). Sk translates so as to highlight this wordplay: “Thus this bird battered the *Bushes* around, and gathered up men as they walked on the *Green*, till all the ‘scruff’ and *Scrope* parted asunder” (II, p. 294). The poem *There Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe — On King Richard’s Ministers* — begins:

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There is a busch that is forgrowe;
Crop it welle, and hold hit lowe,
Or elles hit wolle be wilde.
The long gras that is so grene
Hit most be mowe, and raked clene —
For-grownen hit hath the fellde.

155–56 *He mellid . . . that they had.* Sk translates: “‘He so mixed the metal with the hand-mould, (i.e. so moulded events) that they lost, of their limbs, the dearest that they had,’ i.e. their heads” (II, p. 294).

156 *That they lost lemes.* So D&S, B; Sk: *That [they] lost [of their] lemes*; MS and Wr: *That lost lemes.* Those who lost their heads were Bushy, Green, and Scrope.

157 *foulyd.* Henry, as falcon, acted as a “fowler” or one who hunts birds. The wild birds are described as kites or predatory birds.

158 *kytes.* MS: *kuyttes*, with *kytes* written above.

159 *laughte.* MS: *caught* written above.

164 *boynard that his bagg stall.* “Bagg” refers to Sir William Bagot, Sheriff of Leicestershire, who went to Ireland to inform Richard of Henry of Lancaster’s return from exile.

164–75 *But the blenyed . . . all the peple.* Sk paraphrases: “The eagle was striving to seize his prey (Lord Scrope), that he might rend his head off; but the blear-eyed scoundrel (Bagot) who had stolen the treasurer’s bag, in which the spoils of the poor were often fastened tightly, made the falcon angry, and anxious that Bagot should be bound. But soon after, this wretch (*lorell*, viz. Bagot) who had led away this looby (Scrope) all the way over forest and ford, fell, on account of his false deeds, into the domain belonging to Henry, and was caught and brought before him and publicly reproved” (II, p. 295).

165 *Where purraile-is . . . full ofte.* “Wherein the very rags of the poor were often penned or fastened” (Sk, II, p. 295).

167 *hadd.* So MS, Wr, Sk; D&S, B: *nadd.* The word *hadd* seems to be governed by “floter” in the previous line: Henry is anxious that this scoundrel be brought to justice.

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- 170 *ladde*. MS: *hadde*. Sk's emendation.
- 179 *ne with*. Sk emends to *ne [lauȝte] with*.
- lovyd*. From *lowe*, humiliate, abase.
- 182 *reclayme* means a call to return to court (and derives from a French word for recalling a falcon).
- 185 *served*. A reader has written "deserved" above this word, which seems like the correct interpretation of it. See also II.28 and note.
- 186 *lymed leves*. Birds were trapped by spreading branches and leaves with birdlime.

Passus Tercius

- 1 *beu brid*. Henry, the "beau" bird (Eagle or falcon). The author says he will turn to the other animals — the harts (noblemen) — and question why they have acted contrary to their interests.
- 9–10 These two lines are underlined in the MS, as if the reader regarded the sentiment as proverbial or particularly noteworthy.
- 11–12 *Yit clereth . . . mene wolde*. The sense of these lines is that just articulating the problem (saying the *clause*) does not clear up the author's confusion until he investigates further (*more mater*).
- 13 *that*. So MS, Wr, Sk; D&S, B: *of*. It is possible that the scribe wrote "þ" anticipating the first word of the next line, but the sense is clear with the MS reading. D&S paraphrase lines 13–16: "I mean, with regard to the harts of strength that has come with years, pricked on by good living and their lusty age, that when they have lived 100 years, they grow weak, etc." (p. 95).
- 18 *harmen*. So Wr, Sk, B; MS, D&S: *armen*. Medieval bestiaries contain the legend about stags — first formulated by Pliny and transmitted by Isidore of Seville and others — that the stag, when it grows old, seeks poisonous snakes in order to drink the venom and so renew its aged skin.

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- 23 *as his pray asketh.* Sk: “as his prey (i.e. the necessity of swallowing his prey) requires” (II, p. 296).
- 26 *clerlie . . . nat.* I adopt two emendations in this line. The scribe once again has written *clergie* for *clerlie* (see also I.83 and note), although Wr and Sk retain the MS reading. A corrector has inserted *nat* above the line in the MS, marked with a caret.
- 26–29 *coltis . . . hors . . . swan . . . bere.* The references in these lines are to nobles executed, murdered, or exiled in 1397 because of their complicity in events of 1388 at the Merciless Parliament. The horse is the Earl of Arundel, Richard Fitzalan, beheaded on Tower Hill, whose badge was a white horse; the colt stands for his son Thomas, who escaped and joined Henry; the swan is Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, murdered at Calais under the ostensible protection of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk; and the bear is Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, exiled to the Isle of Man, whose badge was a black bear. These same symbols appear in *Ther Is a Busch That Is Forgrowe* and in the prose headnote to John Gower’s *Cronica tripertita*: “There were then three nobles of the realm who were especially disturbed about all this [the events surrounding Richard’s deposition], namely, Thomas Duke of Gloucester, who is commonly called the Swan; Richard Earl of Arundel, who is called the Horse; and Thomas Earl of Warwick, whose name is the Bear” (trans. Stockton). The justification for Arundel’s execution was his responsibility for the death of Simon Burley, who was executed in 1388 with the connivance of Gloucester, Arundel, and Warwick, despite Queen Anne’s alleged begging for mercy on her knees. For more on the swan, horse, and bear, see below, lines 86, 89, 94, and notes to those lines.
- 32a *Propter ingratitudinem . . . in lege ciuili.* “The free man is called again into slavery because of ingratitude, as in the Prick of Conscience and the civil law.” In the MS the quotation is in the right hand lower margin of fol. 113a. Although the quotation begins on the same line as 30, I place the Latin quotation, with Sk and B, after line 32 (Wr omits). The anaphora of the English lines (“Ne to”) would be broken up by inserting the quotation after 30.
- 37–61 The metaphor now shifts from deer to partridges and their nature as described in medieval bestiaries (books about beasts). The two partridges in this passage stand for Richard, who loses — deservedly — the young partridges to Henry Bolingbroke, the “true mother.” In bestiaries the partridge is said to be a “cunning” and “disgusting” bird and “perverted creature” whose male “sometimes mounts the male, and thus the chief sensual appetite forgets the laws of sex.” The female will “steal the eggs of

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another female” even as Richard is said to do in this passage. See T. H. White, *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* (New York: Putnam/Capricorn, 1954), pp. 136–37.

- 37 *bough spareth*, that is, birds who build nests on the ground rather than in trees.
- 42 *eiren*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *heires*. Sk’s textual note: “MS. *heires*, which is obviously a blunder; for see l. 50 below. *Heires* = heirs; but *eiren* = eggs” (I, p. 616). But *heires* makes sense too insofar as egg-bearing partridges are concerned with their lineage.
- 45 *congioun*. Wr reads this word, which is underlined in the MS (indicating an unfamiliar or doubtful term to the reader), as *cougioun*.
- 69 *Egle in the est entrid his owen*. See the note to Prol.11. Henry of Hereford returned to England to claim the Lancastrian estates after Richard confiscated his inheritance. These lines addressed to the dull-witted Hicke Hevyheed (line 66) — a type — explain and try to justify the author’s method of referring to historical personalities in heraldic cypher.
- 74 *hende*. MS: the *h* is in superscript.
- 79 *tenyd . . . twenty yeris*. Richard governed from 1377–99. The nestlings — those who follow Henry, the true leader — have complained about Richard’s reign for twenty-two years. *Tenyd* appears in the opening line of the macaronic lyric “Tax has tenet us alle” (*MEPW*, page 147), a poem on the Great Rising of 1381.
- 81 *tyned*. So D&S, B; MS, Wr, Sk: *tymed*.
- 82 *grotus*. MS: *e* in superscript above the *u*.
- 86 *swan*. The swan refers to Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, who *failid* because he died — doubtless murdered — at Calais in 1397 under the ostensible protection of the Earl of Nottingham. In the margin of the MS next to this line: “þe Swan.”
- 87 *faucon*. MS: *ffaucon*, underlined in red.
- 89 *hors*. The horse refers to Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, who was beheaded in 1397 under escort by King Richard’s Cheshire guards and in the presence of his own

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son-in-law, the Earl of Nottingham. The poem's assertion that people were upset because of the horse's *hirte* is an example of understatement. In the margin next to this line: "þe horse."

- 93 *cronycle*. Many chroniclers were eager to support Henry of Lancaster as ablest to govern England in 1399. Adam Usk reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered a sermon of the theme "A man shall rule over them," in which "he praised unreservedly the vigour, good sense, and other qualities of the duke of Lancaster, commanding him, and deservedly, as ruler" (p. 69). In the same sermon he censures King Richard.
- 94 *bond*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS: *brond*; Wr: *broud*. The *beere* refers to Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, whom King Richard sentenced to perpetual banishment on the Isle of Man. In the margin next to this line: "þe Bear." Henry *blythid* the bear because he revoked Warwick's banishment (*his bond braste*).
- 96 *berlingis*. Warwick's son Richard and his wife Elizabeth.
- 97 *as*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *was*.
- 105 *They*. So Wr, Sk, D&S, B; MS: *b^e*. Wr reads *monside* as *mouside*. The *marchall* refers to Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, the "horse's" (line 106) son-in-law, who was present at Arundel's execution. The Earl Marshall's *mysseedede* was his presence at the execution of Arundel and his blindfolding of him.
- 106 *clothed the stede*. Nottingham is said to have bandaged his father-in-law's eyes at the execution. D&S and B, on the strength of Henry Bradley's suggested emendation, read *cloyed*, "lamed," for MS *closed*, Sk's reading. Wr reads *closed*.
- 111 *persith*. So MS, Wr, Sk, B. D&S emend to *passith*, "surpasses."
- 124 *thynchith*. So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *thyntith*.
- 126 *fresshe foodis*. The author in this section describes what other satirical writers call "gallants": overdressed young men who slavishly follow fashion trends, some of them extravagant and even ridiculous, who affect a certain swagger ("strouutyng") and who announce their presence with "Huff!" or "Hof!" See *On the Times*, lines 117 and 181 (and note) in *MEPW*.

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- 128a *Qui mollibus . . . Euangelio.* The Gospel reference is to Luke 7.25: But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately, are in the houses of kings.
- 136 *For.* So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *But* (repeated from previous line).
- lyghly.* So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *lyghly. at the longe goynge.* “The ‘longe goynge’ here signifies death upon the gallows” (Sk, who translates the phrase as “at their long journey,” II, p. 299).
- 136–37 *lepit . . . domes carte.* The idea is that the person to be hanged, whether finely clothed or dressed in rags (he who never thrived), will swing in the same way from the gallows’ rope (leap as lightly) when the hangman’s cart drives away. B observes, “The line draws an ironic contrast between the *strouutyng* of line 134 and the leap made by a criminal from the cart which takes him to the gallows. For all the antics of the overdressed courtiers, they will overreach themselves and come to an unfortunate end” (p. 277).
- 140 *seintis.* Sk, who reads *seimtis* or *semitis* (Wr: *seimtis*), comments “perhaps samites. *Samite* was a rich silk, into which silver was sometimes interwoven. The line perhaps means ‘And use all their silver for interweaving with samites or for ornamenting drinking-horns’” (II, p. 299). D&S translates *seintis* as “belts.” It is clear that the finely dressed courtiers are wasting their money rather than using it prudently.
- 141 *for-doth the coyne.* A frequent complaint in satirical literature was the debasement of currency through shaving or clipping gold from existing coins or the introduction of coins with debased metals such as the “lushburnes.” See *WGO*, pp. 216–17; *Statutes of the Realm*, 2:87 (against melting down money and against foreign currency, 1393, anno 17 Richard II); and “Poems against Simony and the Abuse of Money,” in *MEPW*, pp. 179–242.
- 145 *lawe of Lydfford, in londe ne in water.* The allusion is apparently to a proverbial legal practice in the court at Lydford: “First hand and draw, / Then hear the cause of Lydford Law” (Sk II, p. 299). Skeat goes on to point out that the court had jurisdiction only in cases “that did not affect land, life, or limb.” Sk, D&S, and B emend MS *ne* to & because *ne* “seems to have been written over an erasure” (Sk, II, p. 299) and because “in land and in water” is “closer to the legal formula” (B, p. 277). See Alford, p. 89, who notes that “*in londe and in water* is a legal formula expressing exclusive jurisdiction.”

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152 *slevis slide on the erthe.* Fashion dictated long, dangling sleeves for women but also for men, as in British Library MS Harley 1319, fol. 57, showing the empty throne just after Richard's deposition and fashionably-dressed courtiers with elaborate sleeves extending almost to the floor. The fashion began in France, which provided further weapons to those who would denounce the new trends as degenerate imports. See also Chaucer's *The Parson's Tale*, which denounces "the superfluitee in lengthe of the forseide gownes, trailynge in the dong and in the mire, on horse and eek on foote, as wel of man as of womman" (X [I] 419). For more on these sleeves, see below line 196 and note and line 234.

154 *but.* Wr's emendation, adopted by Sk and B. The sense of the line requires "unless."

156 *Pernell.* Pernell, like Felice (line 160) was a "type" in medieval literature: a woman who loves fine clothes, as Pernell in *PP* who fails to put her "purfill" (trimming) "in hire hucche" (chest); see B IV.116 (A IV.102). In B V.26–27 (A V.26–27), similarly, Waster asks Pernell to put aside "hir purfile" and "kepe it in hire cofre for catel at hire nede." In *RiR*, Pernell, Felice, and Sir Pride comprise a little fashion group of their own.

159 *the jette.* This is a term used satirically to describe Chaucer's Pardoner in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*: "Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet" (I [A] 682). See also *The Simonie*, line 118, and *Above all thing thow arte a kyng*, line 10 (as a verb), with the sense of "to swagger": money "makyth the galandes to jett." See *MEPW*, pp. 197 and 213. In *Above all thing thow arte a kyng* (*MEPW*) occurs the following stanza:

In kynges corte, where money dothe route,
Yt makyth the galandes to jett,
And for to were gorgeouse ther gere,
Ther cappes awry to sett.
*gallants; swagger
their gorgeous clothing*

160 *Felice.* Another "type," like Pernell, from *PP*: "Felice hir fairnesse fel hire al to sclaundre" (B XII.46).

163 *now late.* Either the scribe or the reader/corrector has inserted, with a caret, *of* above the line between *now* and *late* (and very possibly in the same hand as the MS); and Sk and D&S read *now of late*. Wr and B read *now late*. Since "now late" is a common Middle English expression — see, for example, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, line 45 — I retain the uncorrected reading.

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- 164 *kerving . . . to pecis.* Another important new style of men's clothing involving the sleeves was called "daggering" (see below, line 193). The cloth was cut — wastefully, according to satirical writers — to put curves or ruffles on the edges or holes in the fabric at strategic locations. Chaucer's Parson complains of "so muche pownsonyng [piercing] of chisels to maken holes, so muche daggyng of sheres" (X[I]418). In the margin, a reader has written "kervinge of clothes."
- 167 *proffith.* So Wr: (*pr[o]ffith*); Sk, D&S, B: *proffit*. MS: *prffith*.
- 186 *beringe uppon oilles.* To bear or hold up oil(s) means to use flattering speech, as in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, when men speak not honestly and forthrightly, "Bot holden up his oil and sein / That al is wel, what evere he doth" (7.2194–95; see also 7.2584–85).
- 187 *assises.* The court of assizes determined legal matters of fact by means of assessors or jurymen ("sisours"). See Alford, *Glossary*, siv. *Sise*, and *The Simonie* line 469 and note, in *MEPW*. Assizers were proverbial for bringing false and malicious testimony into court.
- 190 *clerlie.* MS: *clergie*.
- 193 *Duche cotis.* That is, German coats. Observers of the English court sometimes wrote satires against extravagant or foreign (hence allegedly outlandish) dress. The point about the "Duche" coats is that they were alien, not English. In 1337 and 1363 the English parliament felt so strongly about clothing that they passed legislation — called sumptuary laws — to restrict dress according to class.
- 194 *scorne.* So D&S: (*schorn*); MS, Wr, Sk, B: *scorte*. B glosses as "speak slightly," (p. 123). D&S cite the *Paston Letters* for the phrase "tell scorn" and comment, "No such phrase as 'tell short' is recorded, though *Piers Plowman*, B. xii. 124 has 'sette short be here science'" (p. 101).
- 196 *peniles.* *Peniles* may or may not be a personification of a "type," like *Sir Pride* (line 176), *Witt*, *Malaperte*, and *Wisdom* (lines 226, 237, and 238 below). *On the Times* mentions a "Purs Penyles" who, with "Galauntes," "behold, wander through the countriside" (*per vicos ecce vagantur*; lines 117–18 in *MEPW*). The phrase *peynete sleeve* also appears in *On the Times*, line 85, for "Jurrers with paynyt sleves" are the retainers of noblemen (*inopes famuli dominorum*), a fashion detail which indicates both their status and their ruthlessness.

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- 201 *couude*. So Wr, D&S, B; Sk: *coude*; MS: *coñude*; same at line 219.
- 218 *hales*. These are structures, sometimes hastily constructed, for specific purposes. See MED s.v. *hale* n. (2): “A temporary structure for housing, entertaining, eating meals, etc.” The first entry is from the Middle English *Yvain*: “Arthure . . . made a feste . . . in Wales, / And after mete, þare in þe hales.”
- 220 Next to this line, in the MS right margin, appears “Wytt was banysshed oute of the courte.” In venality satires, the door and doorkeepers — *janitores* — can be obstacles for the poor or virtuous. See *Beati qui esuriunt*, line 78 and note, in *MEPW*, pp. 190, 226.
- 221 *arouutyd*. “driven out of the assembly” (Sk). At lines 207–10, D&S speculate that “Somewhere earlier a passage seems to have been omitted describing how Wisdom came to the court and was slighted by graceless courtiers” (p. 101). But the sudden arrival, otherwise unannounced, of a figure of authority is typical of abrupt appearances of Piers Plowman in Langland’s poem. Moreover, the narrator here alludes to the story of his expulsion from the court.
- 222–23 *leve . . . he drank*. Ironic: the lord and ladies are not pleased with men of discernment and good judgment such as Witt.
- 228 *yhotte trusse*. A “trusse” is a pack or a bundle, so Witt is “sent packing” or given the “bum’s rush.” For this use of *yhotte* — commanded — see MED s.v. *hoten* 3a (f).
- 234 *sleves . . . erthe*. The rhetorical device of synecdoche, or part for whole, a favorite of Langland’s in *PP*. “Sleves” here are collectively those with fashionable garments featuring long, trailing sleeves. They might be capitalized (like Malaperte in line 237) and hyphenated: “Sleves-that-slode-uppon-the-erthe.” For comparable characters in *PP*, see B IV.20 (“Suffre-til-I-se-my-tyme”) and B XX.312 (“Sire Leef-to-lyue-in-lecherie”).
- 237 *Malaperte*. A personification of an impudent, bold person.
- 242 *governance of gettinge*. I.e., “a just mode of getting money, by imposing moderate taxes; a proceeding which will win *grace*, i.e. favour. In l. 250 it means government, counsel” (Sk, II, p. 300).

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- 249 *these thre degrés.* The social ranks mentioned in lines 249–53 include wise counsellors of high standing (“of good age”; “grete”); a warrior class in middle age; and laborers to sustain themselves and the other degrees. In the left-hand margins of the MS the degrees are numbered “1,” “2,” and “3.”
- 254 *Thanne wolde reule.* So MS, Wr; Sk, D&S, B: *Thanne wolde [right dome] reule.* The emendation is unnecessary if we understand line 255 as a noun-clause subject of *wolde reule* (with anacalusion or shift in syntax). In the right-hand margin of the MS is written “Agaynste yonnge Counsaylorz.”
- 260–61 *For it fallith . . . geve good redis.* The scribe or a reader has marked off these two lines with a connector ({}), as if they were proverbial or worthy of special note.
- 262 *kow to hoppe in a cage.* Proverbial figure of ungainliness. See B. J. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), C499. See also *The Storie of Asneth*, line 14 (in *Heroic Women from the Old Testament in Middle English Verse*, ed. Russell A. Peck [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991], p. 22).
- 265 *not yffoundid . . . tyme.* Augustine notably discusses the origins of kingship in *The City of God* 4 and 19, which he attributes to lawlessness and *Realpolitik*. See *WGO*, pp. 151–52. *RiR* in this section argues that kings were not ordained originally to follow a pleasure principle but to work, like plowmen, for the common profit. For a discussion of the common good in the Ricardian period, see Russell A. Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. xxi–xxv.
- 268 *meyntenourz.* MS: *meyntenour3.* “‘To mark “maintainers” with maces;’ i.e. to beat them; in contradistinction to the marking with badges mentioned above” (Sk, II, p. 300). “Maintainers” were men who served as a private army for the king or powerful lords; they often wore special livery and distinctive badges.
- 272 *And not . . . daies.* “The word *not* has been dropped, making nonsense of the whole. Restore it, and we have — ‘And not to rule like bats (awake only at night), and rest all day,’ etc.” (Sk, II, p. 300). B glosses *daies* as “dais.”
- 282 *That.* So Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *What.* In the right-hand margin in the same hand as the MS: “nota, nota, nota / Over Watchyng.”

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- 287 *To do . . . brest.* “‘To do them right reverence, though his back break,’ viz. with stooping. We ought to read *hem* for *him* in l. 286, or else *him* for *hem* here” (Sk, II, p. 300).
- 288–89 *This warmnesse . . . longe dure.* “This glow of wealth may not last long with any mortal wight” (Sk, II, p. 300).
- 293 *hevene.* So MS, Wr, Sk; D&S: *heuene-[ȝate]*; B: *hevene-[gate]*. B in support of her emendation cites *PP V.594*: “Of almesdedes ar the hokes that the gates hangen on.”
- 295 *knew.* So Wr, Sk, D&S, B; MS: *kne.*
- 299 *kew-kaw.* This term also appears in the margin. D&S: “the sense of the passage is that the justices have to be bribed” (p. 102). Sk and B understand the term as “sudden change,” “subversion,” or “reversal.” B moves line 305 to line 300.
- 306 *prien affter presentis.* In margin: “Takynge of presentes.”
- 307 *abateth all the billis.* “And put down (refuse) all the complaints” (Sk, II, p. 300).
- 309 *weddis.* Legal pledges as surety for some legal action. The syntax of this passage is difficult, but the sense seems to be that people will lose their lives all too easily and that pledges will do them no good. In margin: “mayntenance.”
- 317 *chyders of Chester.* The Chester guard constituted Richard’s personal army of archers who were noted for their arrogance and brutality. The chronicler Adam Usk regards them as a ruthless gang who unwittingly contribute to Richard’s downfall: “The king, meanwhile, ever hastening to his fall, among the many burdens which he inflicted upon his realm also kept about him in his following four hundred supernumeraries from the county of Cheshire, men of the utmost depravity who went about doing as they wished, assaulting, beating, and plundering his subjects with impunity; wherever the king went, night and day, they stood guard over him, armed as if for war, committing adulteries, murders, and countless other crimes; yet so inordinately did the king favour them that he would not listen to anyone who complained about them, indeed he regarded such people with loathing; and this was the chief cause of his ruin” (p. 49).
- 319 *pledid pipoudris.* The summary court of “Pie-Poudre” — held at fairs and markets — was so called because those who attended the court had dusty feet. The author of *RiR*

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imagines that the Cheshire guard disrupts the already-corrupt proceedings with their intimidating presence. As B observes: “To plead *pipoudris* for all *pleyntis* . . . is tantamount to disregarding proper legal procedure altogether” (p. 285).

- 320 *coyffes . . . usyn*. This line is vaguely reminiscent of PP B Prol.211–13: “Yet houed þer an hundred in howues [hoods] of selke — / Sergeantȝ, it seemed, þat serueden at þe Barre, / Pleteden for penyes and pounds þe lawe.” The passage is unique to the B version. Of the *coyffes*, Sk declares, “coifs such as were worn by the sergeants-at-law; cf. B. prol. 210; and see *houe*, i.e. hood, in l. 326” (II, p. 301). See also *Mum*, lines 1141–44.
- 322 *fyne*. The implication is that the Cheshire guard raises such a ruckus in court with their false pleading that they bring about a final settlement, a *fyne*, although that settlement is unjust.
- 330 *And lente . . . battis*. “‘And gave men the free experience of their long staves.’ To *lend leverè* is to *deliver blows*; see Wm. of Palerne, ed. Skeat; ll. 1233, 3822” (Sk, II, p. 301).
- 336 *lyghtliche*. MS: *lyghliche*. For the phrase *lyghtliche ylaughte*, compare PP and the belling of the cat episode: “And ouerleap hem liȝtliche and laȝte hem at his wille” (B Prol. 160; not in the A version).
- 346–47 Between these two lines Sk adds a “missing” line: [“I myȝte not reche redili to rekene the nombre”]. His line count is hereafter off by one from this edition.
- 347 *Of many . . . couude*. The MS reads, *Of many mo wrongis / þan I write couude*, which Wr retains. D&S adopt Sk’s insertion of a line before this: *I miȝte not reche redili / to rekene þe nombre*. B has [*They wrought*] *many mo wrongis than I write couude*, which I revise for my reading. The *Of* is pleonastic.
- 351 *seven sterriſ*. Medieval writers use “stars” and “planets” indistinguishably. The seven heavenly bodies alluded to in this line are the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. “Apparently God is the sun, and Bolingbroke and his army the moon and stars” (D&S, p. 104). See below lines III.367–68.
- 353 *menteyned*. Sk, D&S, B; MS, Wr: *menteyne it*.

- 361 *Tyll Degon . . . brastyn.* Degon and Dobyn (Diggon and Dobbin) must be names for violent rustic types — similar to Chaucer’s Miller or Robin of The Miller’s Tale — who are noted for breaking doors in. The difference here, of course, is that these are courtroom doors and part of the Cheshire guard’s attempts to derail legal procedure.
- 363 *Awakyd for.* So D&S: *Awakyd [fro].* MS: *And awakyd ffor;* Wr: *And a-wakyd ffor;* Sk: *Awakyd ffor,* B: *And awakyd [fro].* The initial *And* may be dittography from the previous line or eyeskip from the next line.

Passus Quartus

- 1–16 *For where . . . cometh to fayres?* This is one long verse sentence, with considerable anaphora (repetition of first words of poetic lines) on *ne* and *nother*.
- 4 *fynys . . . saughtis . . . fee-fermes.* These terms seem to refer to Richard’s attempts to extort money from those who were involved with the challenge to the crown in 1387–88. After the Shrewsbury Parliament dissolved in 1398, Richard demanded that such persons and the seventeen counties that supported his foes seek pardons from him — his *pleasance* — by midsummer. *Fee farms* were estates that yielded an annual rent due the crown. In Shakespeare’s Richard II, John of Gaunt complains to Richard that England “Is now leas’d out” and “Like to a tenement or a pelting farm” (2.1.59–60).
- 6 *nownagis.* Nounages were revenues to the crown on land a minor inherited. See also the note to line 7.
- 7 *March and Mounbray* are two examples of men elevated to titles and estates at a very young age, thus yielding nounages. Roger Mortimer became fourth Earl of March in 1381, age seven, while a ward of the Earl of Arundel; Thomas Mowbray (spelled *mouibray* in the MS), at the age of seventeen, inherited the barony of Mowbray in 1383. “The Chancellor, Richard, Baron Scrope, father of the Scrope who was later King Richard’s favourite, objected to the king’s extravagant action in thus granting the lands, and was deprived of his office” (D&S, p. 104). Richard seized Mowbray’s properties in 1385, when he married against the king’s desires. This is an example of the “*for-feyturis*” mentioned in line 5.
- 13 *purvyours.* Sk translates lines 12–13: “Might not go far enough, even with the addition of his rent, to repay the poor for that which his purveyors took from them” (II, p. 302). Purveyors were officials who seized property; the act of “*purveyaunce*” — the carrying off of property — was a subject of complaint literature. In *God Spede the*

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Plough, for example, the narrator says, “The kyngis purviours also they come, / To have whete and otys at the kyngis nede; / And over that befe and mutton, / And butter and pulleyn, so God me spedel!” (*MEPW*, p. 254).

- 14 *poundage*. “In the Parliament of 1397 the Commons granted Richard 12*d.* on every pound of merchandise and 3*s.* on every tun of wine entering or leaving the kingdom for the next three years” (D&S, pp. 104–05).
- 15 *a fifteenth . . . eke*. Two kinds of taxes: a fifteenth and a tenth. At the Shrewsbury Parliament, “Richard had previously demanded an aid of the commons; and on the fourth day (i.e. Jan. 31, 1398) they voted him, with the assent of the lords, *a tenth and a half, and a fifteenth and a half*; and in addition, as if they sought to make him independent of parliament, granted him the tax on wool, wool-fells, and hides, not for a short and determinate period as usual, but for the whole term of his natural life” (Sk quoting Lingard). “This is clearly,” Sk adds, “the very occasion to which our author is referring” (II, p. 302)
- 17–19 *ne had creaunce . . . dette that they owed*. This means, says Sk, “that the court-revellers spent so much that they would have been utterly ruined by debt if they had not paid some of it by promises only” (II, p. 302). Bolingbroke in Shakespeare’s *Richard II* characterizes Richard’s spendthrift friends as “the caterpillars of the commonwealth” (2.3.165).
- 28 *sente . . . aboughte*. In defiance of custom and law, Richard allegedly appointed knights of the shire and others to sit in the 1397 parliament. See McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, pp. 486–87 and Saul, *Richard II*, pp. 383–84. His purpose was to ensure that the Parliament acceded to his wishes. Sir John Bushy, from Richard’s faction, was the Speaker of this parliament. The official record of this Parliament is in *Rotuli parliamentorum*, 3: 347–85. Also in this parliament Richard promoted a number of earls to the rank of duke. Walsingham reports that the common people referred to these men not as dukes but as “duketti,” the little dukes (*Annales*, p. 223). Among the promotions were Thomas Mowbray, the Earl of Nottingham (to Duke of Norfolk) and Henry Bolingbroke, the Earl of Derby (to Duke of Hereford); the last of the “duketti” became king of England.
- 44–45 *But yit . . . while*. The idea behind these lines is that members of parliament went through the motions of presenting arguments, even though their intent was to ratify the actions. “Some argued *against* the king’s right of taxation, but this was merely a blind” (Sk, II, p. 303).

Notes to Passus Quartus

- 53 *siphre . . . awgrym*. The cipher has no meaning in itself but only in relation to other numbers, just as some of the members of parliament take up space but contribute nothing.
- 55 *ysoupid with Symond*. “Supping with Simon” means hobnobbing with ecclesiastics — “to share in the revels which some churchmen indulged in” (Sk, II, p. 303). This scene recalls Will’s meal with Patience, friars, and a gluttonous Doctor of Divinity (*PP B XIII*) or the narrator’s encounter with a huge Dominican friar, “With a face as fat as a full bledder” in *PPCr* (line 222). D&S think the reference is to Simon Magus and simony (pp. 105–06).
- 57–59 *somme were tituleris . . . no blame served*. “These went to the king, and informed him of foes, who were really friends and spoke for the best, and deserved no blame at all” (Sk, II, p. 303).
- 66–70 *some . . . the reson*. Sk says these lines refer to “the logic-splitters” (II, p. 303).
- 71–82 *And some . . . ichonne*. D&S remark, “This nautical metaphor is especially appropriate on the lips of a Bristol man” (p. 106). The metaphor of the “ship of state” was common as a way of expressing the situation of the commonwealth. See, for example, “A dere God what may this be,” a lament on the death of Edward III (*IMEV* 5).
- 74–77 *Than lay . . . wedir-side*. “This seems to mean that the lords lay comfortably sheltered on the lee-side, and warned the steersman as to what was going on on the weather-side; doing so, probably, by guess. Yet the line [77] is rather obscure. The result was that the mast bent, and nearly broke (l. 79); and if they had not taken in the additional sails in time, they would have fallen overboard owing to the lurching of the vessel” (Sk, II, pp. 303–04).
- 75 *bare aboughte . . . maister*. As the lords sheltered their boats around the king’s barge, they altered the course of (*bare aboughte*) the barge and then blamed the steersman.
- 89 *owed*. So D&S, B; Sk: *oweth*; MS: *owen*. “Some, instead of looking after the money due to the commons, asked for what the king owed *themselves*, and so far succeeded that they were promised an earnest of money (*hansell*) if they would help the king; for they should be helped to some of the same silver as he received himself” (Sk, II, p. 304).

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- 93 *And some . . . for-soke.* “And some forsook well-doing, because they feared the great” (Sk, II, p. 304). The poem breaks off on the eleventh line of fol. 119b. The rest of the page is blank. Six blank pages follow.

Mum and the Sothsegger

Introduction

Mum and the Sothsegger, ostensibly a debate poem on the merits of holding one's tongue (keeping mum) or speaking out (soothsaying or telling the truth), is in fact an alliterative verse meditation on statecraft and an often satirical anatomy of contemporary institutions, especially the estates and courts of law. The anonymous early fifteenth-century author does include the trappings of a debate between Mum and the Sothsegger, hence the poem's conventional (and scribal) title. But as with the "debate" between Griffon and Pelican in the pseudo-Chaucerian *Plowman's Tale*, the debate in *Mum* is one-sided: the scorned, derided Sothsegger is a figure of truth, a voice crying in the wilderness, whereas the popular, influential Mum is an exemplar of all that is wrong with the author's society. The narrator of *Mum* goes on a search for the nature and qualities of both Mum and the Sothsegger with the particular goal of determining which of these two ways of self-expression should, in the poem's words, "have / The maistrie" (lines 574–75). Although the poem is fragmentary — we have neither the beginning nor the end of it — the clear victor is the Sothsegger. An interesting feature of the poem is that the narrator, who seeks the Sothsegger, represents himself as a truth teller.

Mum upholds the virtues of reticence and silence, which can be admirable qualities. No less an authority than "Cato" — pseudonymous author of the *Distichs of Cato* whose sayings appear several times in *Mum* — championed speaking little. Probably the best known of Cato's adages (1.3 of *Cato major*) proclaims, "I think the first virtue is to guard your tongue: he is close to God who can be advisedly silent." Every medieval schoolchild encountered this and other distichs of Cato among their very first exposures to studying Latin. Yet in *Mum* those who are guarded in their speech get no credit for it: they are time-servers, men too timid or duplicitous to speak the truth forthrightly and sincerely. Mum becomes a synonym for hypocrisy and fraud. Unlike a soothsayer, who is difficult to find, figures of "mum" abound and are everywhere prosperous. They are, like Placebo from Chaucer's The Merchant's Tale, the yes-men who advise the king, princes, and dukes of the realm with flattery. Their teachings undermine the commonwealth, rather than sustain it.

The poem is structured around the narrator's travels to individuals and groups who might help illuminate the nature of Mum and the Sothsegger; these travels include a series of powerful scenes or vignettes as part of estates satire. After the initial section on protecting the crown and the necessity of identifying truth tellers, the narrative moves to a dialogue between the narrator and Mum, a sequence identified by a scribe as "the disputacion bitwyne Mum and the Sothsigger." This encounter leaves the narrator troubled — "in a wyre" (line 296), in

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perplexity. He wanders to universities in search of enlightenment about keeping silent or speaking out, and he consults the Liberal Arts, including a curmudgeonly Grammarian ("Sire Grumbald" [line 330]) and an unharmonious Music (line 332). A rather too literal-minded and narrowly focused Doctor of Philosophy (lines 360 ff.) acknowledges that he has never heard of this debate, so the narrator travels to his next chosen group, the friars (lines 392–535). The narrator's movement from one group to the next as he seeks instruction is reminiscent of another poem in the "Piers Plowman tradition," *Piers the Plowman's Crede*.¹ In the latter a narrator visits four orders of mendicants trying to learn the Creed, all to no avail because the friars spend their time attacking the other orders rather than teaching him his Creed, which they do not seem to know in any case. He finally learns the Creed from Piers the Plowman, who instructs him on the evils of friars as well. The friars in *Mum* similarly have no good answer for the narrator but they have more of an answer than the academic clerks. "Bestow the prize on Mum," they urge, "since he generously endows our convents." The narrator regards friars as hapless: they interpret riddles as poorly as Lollards, and for their ineptitude they end up just as dead. He takes the opportunity to deliver a philippic against mendicants which includes the familiar charge that friars take their origins from Cain, architect of the City of Man. He fares no better among the monks (lines 536–52), for they are interested only in enhancing their great monastic houses, or among the secular clergy and those who hold more than one benefice (pluralists).

When the narrator tires of his search, he listens to a parish priest's sermon, which concerns tithing and offering gifts to the priest. Instead of finding solace in his local church, he is asked to offer gifts of all kinds, including, in a bizarre passage, a cornucopia of vegetables and meats. For this parish priest the road to heaven is paved with grapes, garlic, geese, and pigs (line 604). When the narrator reflects upon virtuous ecclesiastics of previous eras, Mum (or one of his students) drifts in like an unwanted alter ego to debate him. This section provides a conclusion to the narrator's inquiries among clerics. His next stop on his picaresque journey to learn answers about Mum and the Sothsegger is the town and its citizens (lines 788–840). As was the case with the friars and monks, Mum is master in the towns as well, for he controls the mayor and city councils with the result that the poor never receive a proper hearing concerning their grievances. Soothsayers do not sup in the halls of burgesses; the Sothsegger "[d]yneth . . . with Dreede" in a separate room and drinks not fine ale but "dum-seede" or a drink of silence (line 838–39). The narrator is outraged and ponders all the places he has been (lines 841–70). In a long sequence reminiscent of Will's dream of the world in *Piers Plowman* B XI, the narrator falls asleep and dreams about the commonwealth in a moralized allegory of bees and a beekeeper (lines 871–1287). The beekeeper stands for the prudent sovereign who exterminates, ruthlessly if need be, the unproductive drones who infiltrate the hive bent on

¹ The origins of the quest in *PPCr* may be found in *Piers Plowman* B VIII.1–61 (A IX.1–52).

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taking the honey the other bees have worked so hard to manufacture. The drones represent the wasters in Henry's realm — those who subvert the commonwealth by despoiling its substance. The beekeeper — a sage and “An olde auncyen man of a hunthrid wintre” (line 956) — is a version of the Sothsegger. He is also a gardener, who roots out “the wedes that wyrwen my plantes” (line 979). The narrator asks the beekeeper to explain the “propriété” (lines 990, 993) of bees, which leads to a lengthy description chiefly drawn from a medieval encyclopedia by Bartholomaeus Anglicus (Bartholomew the Englishman). After a brief discussion of medieval dream theory concluding that dreams are significant, there is an anticlerical passage on abuses within the church hierarchy, including visitations by the archbishop that fail to uncover patent wrongs. The narrator claims to have found secret written documents that detail these abuses — “a prývē poysē” (line 1344) and “a volume of visitacion” (line 1353). These are the first of a number of alleged documents he will cite in his satirical critiques. In some the narrator learns of false rumors told about lords and the king, which leads him to muse that such rumor-mongers would not thrive under the regime of Genghis Khan; as an exemplum for rulers, he tells the story of the Great Khan (derived from the popular *Travels* of John Mandeville). This section harmonizes with the beekeeper episode, since Genghis as a ruler governs on the principle that might makes right, a philosophy that the author of *Mum* seems to endorse. Genghis demands that his lords slay their sons as proof of their loyalty, and this they do. “Thay sparid not to spille blode that spongē of thaymself” (line 1442), declares the narrator approvingly. He deplores pride and lack of humility shown by some who refuse to yield to authority; and he observes that this surquidry has damaged the crown on many occasions. He finds other documents, including a “raggeman rolle” (line 1565) composed by the devil himself which brings everyone to ruin. In a most interesting passage toward the end of the extant fragment, he archly dissects a Merlin prophecy. He identifies the prophecy as popular — “how the peopple construeth / And museth on the mervailles that Merlyn dide devyse” (lines 1723–24). The result of their confused musings is lethal — “heedes been hewe of and hoppe on the grene” (line 1732).

Richard the Redeless contains specific allusions to events and personalities of Richard II's reign, but this is not the case with *Mum*, at least not in the same way. One passage — lines 206–31 — includes cautious praise of Henry IV, especially of his martial, manly qualities. The author of *Mum* claims he described Henry's court and its ministers in detail before the poem as we have it begins. He says: “And next I have ynamed as nygh as I couthe, / And the condicions declarid of alle, / Rehershing no rasaille ne riders aboute” (lines 208–10). It is significant that precisely those names and the conditions “of alle” have not survived in the manuscript, either because that section is missing (by accident or design) or because the author never got around to writing it. The author himself may have reconsidered the passage — to be a truth teller and name names may have proved too much for him. He prefers more general, satirical attacks to explicit personalities or incidents. He does mention taxation on several occasions; and the extant part of the poem begins with this financial issue. Those who petition

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the crown for monies the crown does not have will eventually come to grief when tax “collectours comen to caicche what thay habben” (line 8). The author observes that the commons are especially hard hit by some levies: “Of custume and of coylage the comunes shuld be easid” (line 149), and these folk “collectours haten” (line 1663). There is also a significant anticlerical strain in *Mum* that manifests itself not only in criticism of the friars but also the portrayal of Mum as a bishop (“Mum with his myter” [line 579]; “Mum wol be no martir while mytres been in sale” [line 1236]).

Since the discovery of the British Library manuscript, scholars have identified and proclaimed connections between *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum*. Often when people speak of *Mum* they mean both poetic fragments; and Day and Steele and others were convinced that “the two fragments form part of one larger composition.”² John Bale (1495–1563), an important early antiquarian and bibliographer, identified what Skeat named *Richard the Redeless* as “Mum, Soth-segger!”³ The two alliterative fragments do have much in common. They both presume to advise a king, include satirical critiques (for example, clothing satire), and imitate *Piers Plowman*, by far the most important source for both poems. They both have an intimate knowledge of law and the courts, which has led some to believe that the author or authors were law clerks.⁴ Both poems manifest a delight in word play, though this is typical of alliterative poems generally. But the differences between the poems are striking as well. *Richard the Redeless* focuses wholly and exclusively on Richard II and the latter part of his regime, whereas *Mum* ignores Richard’s rule to concentrate exclusively on problems during Henry IV’s administration.⁵ It seems best to hold open the possibility that there may be a connection between them, but there may not be.

² Day and Steele, p. x.

³ Day and Steele, p. xn3 (continued from p. ix) and note 1 (which includes Bale’s translation into Latin of the first two lines of *RiR*). See also Barr’s discussion, p. 15. Embree points out that the title Bale cites is appropriate only for the *Mum* text and not at all for *RiR* (“*Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger*,” p. 5).

⁴ See “The Law Courts and Their Abuse,” in Day and Steele, pp. xxvi–xxix; Barr, with help from John A. Alford (*Piers Plowman: a Glossary of Legal Diction* [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988]), has chronicled the many legalisms and words with legal nuance to be found in both poems. Of *RiR* she says: “Throughout the poem a keen interest in legal matters and an abundance of legal diction suggest that its author could have been a parliamentary clerk. There is no evidence of the advanced learning that would have come from a university education” (p. 17). See also her Chapter 5, “Legal Fictions,” in *Signes and Sothe*, pp. 133–66.

⁵ For the case for two separate poems, see Dan Embree, “*Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger*.” Doyle may have it right when he characterizes *Mum* as a “sequel” to *RiR* (“The Manuscripts,” p. 98).

Introduction

* * *

MS BL Additional 41666 exists in a unique vellum manuscript, whose quality has deteriorated over the years. Editing *Mum* requires a different approach from editing *Richard the Redeless*. A reader or editor has carefully marked up the British Library manuscript, perhaps preparing to recopy it. Sometimes the corrector seems to want to alter spellings (e.g., “Hough” is marked for replacement with “How” in line 1); sometimes, to gloss or replace an unfamiliar word (e.g., “caicche” is marked as “caste” in line 8); and sometimes, to substitute a reading that makes better sense to him (e.g., manuscript “come yn and” of line 5 is marked to be replaced with “comyn,” the commons). A modern editor’s dilemma is knowing when to retain the manuscript reading and when to emend based on a corrector (or to emend *not* based on a corrector).⁶ Previous editors have many times chosen to adopt readings based on a corrector; and I do the same for this edition but more conservatively than previous editors. Because of uncertainties as to the status of corrections, I have as much as possible kept to the manuscript readings, explaining early corrections and modern emendations in the Notes. Test cases occur at lines 5 and 169. Line 5 reads, in the manuscript, “Leste vncunnyng come yn and caste vp þe halter,” which Day and Steele and Barr, based on a corrector, emend to “Leste uncunnyng [comyn] caste vp þe halter.” I retain the uncorrected manuscript version (save for the normalized orthography) and read “uncunnyng” as a substantive — ignorant people — rather than an adjective modifying “comyn” (commoner). Line 169 in the manuscript reads “Or y blent or y shent or sum sorowe haue.” A corrector or editor has placed a dot over “blent,” blinded, to be replaced with “brent,” burned. This is a plausible emendation, and Day and Steele and Barr adopt “y brent” for their editions. Barr, following David Lawton, notes that blinding was not a legal punishment at the time of *Mum*’s composition but that William Sawtrey was burned as a heretic in 1401 just prior to the statute *De haeretico comburendi*, which licensed the burning of heretics.⁷ I retain MS “y blent” (spelled “ybrent”) on the grounds that historical circumstances may not govern word choice here.

The BL Additional MS contains a number of pertinent Latin quotations and English remarks which, in the manner of *PP*, *Friar Daw’s Reply*, or *Upland’s Rejoinder*, comment on the main action of the text and offer biblical support and proverbial wisdom. In the manuscript the quotations appear in the margins with indications as to which line they illuminate, but I have placed them within the text and in italics at the indicated locations. Following the precedent of *PP* editions, I assign line numbers to these quotations with *a*. I have also placed one English

⁶ Another way of stating the dilemma: do the corrections indicate the author’s final intentions or are intentions better reflected in the marginal corrections? A case could be made for each. I emend only if a corrector suggests a reading or if a previous editor has resolved a great difficulty in the MS.

⁷ See Lawton’s analysis in “Lollardy and the *Piers Plowman* Tradition,” p. 788. For a discussion of this crux, see James Simpson, “The Constraints of Satire,” p. 14n7.

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marginal comment at line 205 — “Here bigynneth the disputacion bitwyne Mum and the Sothsigger” — in the text, something that previous editors have not done. It furnishes a point of reference in a poem without *passus*.

The dialect of *Mum*, like that of *Richard the Redeless*, is Midlands. Like most other Midlands poems it contains words not found, or found only rarely, in Chaucer’s London vocabulary. The distinctive Midlands vocabulary can be observed in the many words for “man” that appear in the work: *berne* (also spelled *barne* and *burne*), *fode*, *freke*, *gome*, *kempe*, *lede*, *renke*, *segge*, and *wyghte* (*wight*, *wy*) alongside *man*.⁸ Some other words to be found in *Mum* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* but not in Chaucer’s or Gower’s writings include *melle*, to speak (OE *meðlan*); *laughte*, took (OE *laeccan*); *dwele*, illusion (OE *gedwela*).⁹

Some eccentricities of spelling by the manuscript’s scribe include separating the *y*- prefix for the past participle from the verb form. Hence *y shent* and *y kidde*, which I have rendered *yshent* and *ykidde*. I have used a hyphen to join the *y*- prefix to a vowel, however (*y-usid* rather than *yusid* at line 1463). The scribe also separates the possessive form *is* from the noun or pronoun it modifies: *kyng is* for *kyngis*, which is how I spell such possessives. Line 880 in the MS reads “By a cliffe vn y knowe of Crist is owen makyng,” which I have spelled “By a cliffe unyknowe of Cristis owen makyng.” I have not, however, elided the possessive form when the noun ends with an *e*; hence *wyke-is* not *wykeis* (“week’s,” line 10). I have rendered MS *ff* with capital *F* at the beginning of lines except in Latin marginal comments included in the text. I have not recorded mid-line virgules (caesurae), although I have sometimes taken my cue for punctuation from these, with a comma or even a semicolon. For example, on a number of occasions I have followed the scribe’s practice of using virgules or caesurae as partial stops in mid-line. On the basis of virgules, I have rendered MS line 1312, “Dreemes / and vndide þaym / as deede provid after,” as “Dreemes, and undide thaym, as deede provid after.” I transcribe MS line 1573, “And drawen hym clene fro his dees / he dysneth þere nomore,” as “And drawen hym clene fro his dees; he dysneth there nomore.” At key moments in the MS, the scribe left a small letter indicator, along with two lines of indent, for the rubricator to fill in with a larger letter later on. I have inserted large capital letters at these points, as did Day and Steele in their edition for EETS.

⁸ Of this list Chaucer and Gower use only *man/men* and *wight*. The others are “upland” terms appropriate to the “rum, ram, ruf” of alliterative verse. Of the list, *freke*, *kempe*, *segge*, and *wyghte* do not appear in *RiR*.

⁹ But see Chaucer’s The Reeve’s Tale I [A] 4161: “hem nedede no dwale” (they did not need a sleeping potion), perhaps an imitation of Midlands speech.

Introduction

Select Bibliography

Manuscript

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Mum and the Sothsegger

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Ferguson, Arthur B. "The Problem of Counsel in *Mum and the Sothsegger*." *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955), 67–83. [The poem is almost a "treatise on counsel except for the fact that the author is concerned less with the technicalities of government than with the general problem of truth-telling in public life" (p. 67). He regards the poem as neglected but as interesting and important for social and political theory.]

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For Source and General Studies of *Mum and the Sothsegger* in relation to *Richard the Redeless*, see Select Bibliography for *Richard the Redeless*, pp. 17–21.

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Hough the coroune moste be kepte fro covetous peopple Al hoole in his hande and at his heeste eke, That every knotte of the coroune close with other, And not departid for prayer ne profit of grete,	<i>How; crown must whole; command also ornament; interlock distributed; the nobility</i>
5	Leste uncunnyng come yn and caste up the halter And crie on your cunseil for coigne that ye lacke, For thay shal smaicche of the smoke and smerte thereafter Whenne collectours comien to caicche what thay habben. ¹	<i>ignorant folk; cast off restraint demand; funds taste; have pain</i>
10	And though your tresorier be trewe and tymbre not to high, ² Hit wil be nere the worse atte wyke-is ende, For two yere a tresorier twenty wyntre aftre May lyve a lordis life, as leued men tellen.	<i>It; never; at the week's lord's; as common folk say</i>
15	Now your chancellier that chief is to chaste the people With conscience of your cunseil that the coroune kepit, And alle the scribes and clercz that to the court longen, Bothe justice and judges yjoyned and other,	<i>chancellor; discipline knowledge; guards clerks; are attached</i>
20	Sergeantz that serven for soulde atte barre, And the prentys of court, prisist of alle, Loke ye reeche not of the riche and rewe on the poure ³ That for faute of your fees fallen in thaire pleyntes.	<i>appointed and otherwise serve; money at the bar junior barrister, best lack; fail; legal pleas complaint listen to</i>
25	Have pitie on the penylees and thaire pleynte harkeneth, And hire thaym as hertly as though ye hure had, ⁴ For the love of Hym that your life weldeth; And graunteth thaym for Godis sake and with a good chiere	<i>controls God's; will</i>
	The writing of wrizz and the waxe eke; And thay wil love you for the lawe as liege men aughte, More thenne for mayntenance that any man useth,	<i>legal writs; wax seals also should than; maintenance (see note)</i>

¹ When tax collectors arrive to take what they have

² And though your treasurer be loyal and builds not too high

³ Be sure that you do not advantage the rich and [that you] take pity on the poor

⁴ And hear them out as sincerely as though you had payment (hire) from them

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Or for any frounting for faute of the coigne. Now ye have yherde of the haselle names Of officiers withynne and withoute eke, But yit of alle the burnes the beste is behinde Fortho serve a souvrayn in somer and in wintre, And most nedeful at eve and at morowe eke, And a profitable page for princes or for ducz	insulting; lack of money heard about; retainers' outside [of court] also men; yet to come lord; summer morning
30	Or for any lay lord, lettrid or elles, That litel is ytake fourth or his tale lyeyed. And yf ye willeth to wite what the wight hatte, ¹ Hit is a Sothesigger that seilde is yseye To be cherisshid of chief in chambre or in halle,	court official; dukes educated or not furthered; believed
35	But for his rathe reasons is rebukid ofte, And yf he fable to ferre, the foote he goeth undre. ² There is no cleric with the king that clothid hym ones, But clothid hym at Cristmasse and al the yere after. ³ “Saunder the serviselees” shuld be his name,	Soothsayer; seldom; seen honored above all blunt assertions
40	For he abideth in no houshold half a yere to th'ende But the lord and the lady been loeth of his wordes, And the meyny and he mowe not accorde, But al to-teereth his toppe for his trewe tales. He can not speke in termes ne in tyme nother,	“Alexander without livery” the end [of the year] do not like
45	But bablith fourth bustusely as barn un-ylerid; ⁴ But ever he hitteth on the heed of the nayle-is ende, That the pure poynt pricketh on the sothe Til the foule flessh vomy for attre. Thenne is this freeke afrountid for his feithful tale,	household; do not agree [the household] tears out its hair formally; appropriately
50	And yfulled undre foote while falsenes goeth aboute With cautelle and with coigne forto caste deceiptz ⁵	i.e., hits the nail on the head truth vomit; poison bold man impugned stomped; roams abroad
55		

¹ And if you wish to know what the man is called

² And if he speak too forthrightly, he is turned out

³ Lines 42–43: There is no clerk of the king's who ever clothed him [the Soothsayer] even once / Although he [the clerk] clothed himself at Christmas and all the next year

⁴ But babbles on boisterously like an unschooled child

⁵ With trickery and with bribery to devise deceptions

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Hough trouthe might be traversid and tournid of the weye. ¹	
	Thenne fareth fals fourth and flatereth atte beste,	<i>falseness</i>
	And lightly is ylyved withoute long tale,	<i>blithely; believed</i>
60	And every gome of hym glad, so glorieusely he loketh	<i>man</i>
	Thorough the peynture of the preynte that in the palme hongeth. ²	
	Right as the cockil cometh fourth ere the corne ripe,	<i>cockleseed; ripens</i>
	With a cleer colour, as cristal hit semeth,	<i>clear</i>
	Among the grayne that is grene and not ful growe,	<i>grain; green; fully grown</i>
65	Right so fareth falsnesse that so freysh loketh	<i>Just; fresh</i>
	Thorough the colour of the crosse that many men incumbreth.	<i>ensnares</i>
	But whenne trouthe aftre tornement hath tyme forto kerne	<i>reversal; grow seed</i>
	And to growe fro the grounde anone to th'ende,	<i>full height</i>
	Thenne fadeth the flour of the fals cockil.	
70	That lykne I to lyers, for atte the long goyng,	
	Of every segge-is sawe the sothe wol be knowe. ³	
	Yit is hit not my cunseil to clatre what me knoweth	<i>counsel; chatter</i>
	In sclaundre ne scathe ne scorne of thy brother,	<i>slander; injury</i>
	For though thy tale be trewe, thyn tente might be noyous,	<i>intent; harmful</i>
75	For whiche thou mighte be harmed and have that thou serves. ⁴	
	For go to the Gospel, that ground is of lore,	<i>basis; teaching</i>
	And there shal thou see thyself, yf thou can rede,	<i>for yourself</i>
	Whethir I wisse thee wel wisely or elles.	<i>direct you; or not</i>
	He seith that thou shuldes the synne of thy brother	
80	Telle hym by tyme and til hymself oon,	<i>quickly; to; alone</i>
	Yn ful wil to amende hym of his myssedeedes.	
	<i>Si peccauerit in te frater tuus corrige etc.</i> ⁵	
	And yf he chargeth not thy charité but chideth thee agaynes,	<i>credit; berates you</i>
	Yit leve hym not so lightly though he loure oones,	<i>abandon; glower once</i>
	But funde hym to freyne eftre of the newe,	<i>strive to question him again in a new way</i>
85	And have wittenes thee with that thou wel knowes,	<i>hold your purpose with what</i>
	And spare not to speke, spedē yf thou mowe,	<i>succeed; may</i>

¹ How truth might be contravened and turned aside

² Through the image of the impression that remains in the palm (see note)

³ Lines 70–71: *I liken that to liars, for in the long run, / Of every man's speech the truth will be known*

⁴ For which you might be harmed and receive back what you deliver

⁵ If your brother sins against you set him straight etc.

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And he that moost is of might thy mede shal quite For suche soeth sawes that sounen into good, And of a reasonable man rewarde to have.	reward; bestow truthful speech; contribute to
90	For whenne thy tente and thy tale been temprid in oone, And menys no malice to man that thou spekys, But forto mende hym mukely of his missedeedes, Sory for his synne and his shrewed taicches, And the burne be yblessid and balys cunne eschewe	brought into accord you intend; speak correct; meekly wretched vices troubles can shun
95	And thrifty and towarde, thou shal thanke gete. Were I a lord of a lande that lawe aughte gouverne, Suche a siker servant shuld have robes, Though he seide ever sothe and servyd of noon other.	profitable; promising law should govern faithful
100	B ut now wolde I wite of a wise burne, What kynnes creature that me couthe telle Where to finde this freek, yf the king wolde Have hym in housholde, as holsum were.	know sort of
105	“By Crist,” cothe a cleric that conceipte he had, “There is no wiseman, I wene, wolde be ywedid To suche a simple service, asay where the liketh, ¹ For no maniere mede that thereto belongeth,	beneficial said; clerk; understanding joined
110	Ne ferthryng ne frendship while flatryng helpeth. For alle the greet clercz that with the king lendith Knoweth this as kindly as cleric doeth his bokes: Hit is no siker service but for a somer saison,	manner reward comes with [the post] Nor for promotion dwell
115	But yf hit were for a fool that wold not be ferthred. He might sey sothe sum while among thaym And shuld be holde fooly though hit feul after.” But muche now I mervaille, and so mowen other,	naturally; books secure; that lasts only advanced speak; for a while foolish; proved true later might others
120	That oure corouned king is kepte fro tho ludes — <i>Et nunc reges intelligite erudimini qui iudicate terram, etc. David</i> — ² Fortho saye hym the sothe sum while among Hough he shuld grece the griefz er the woundz gunne festre And so to leede his life in love of the royaulme. For the poure people hath prece of thaym many Fortho telle thaym thaire toyes twyes a woke;	crowned; those men realm a multitude trifles twice a week

¹ To such a simple post, look where you please

² And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth, etc. David

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And any neighebourgh be nigh on eve or a morowe,	
	Hit wold not long be lefte, my life durste I wedde;	wager
	And that is grace and thaire good happe to gouverne thaym better	fortune
	And in welthe to be ware, ere that woo falle.	misfortune befall (them)
125	But the king ne his cunseil cunne not mete with thaym,	can not meet
	But clearly the cause I knowe not for sothe,	
	But dreede of the deeth dryveth thaym thens,	fear of death; away
	Or elles looste of thaire likerous life uppon erthe.	gratification; lavish
	Thus is the court accumbrid and knoweth not thaire happes	disturbed; fortunes
130	Ne God neither goodman ne thaymself nothir,	
	Til fortune for foolie falle atte laste,	
	And al the world wondre on thaire wilde deedes.	
	But yf the king might knowe that the comune talketh	
	Hough grotz been ygadrid and no grief amendid	
135	And hough the lawe is ylad whenne poure men pleyne,	groats; gathered
	I bilieve loyally oure liege lord wolde	construed; complain
	Have pitie on his peopple for his owen profit	
	And amende that were amysse into more ease.	a better situation
	But the cause why the king knoweth not the mischief	
140	Is for faute of a fabuler that I bifore tolde of,	lack; soothsayer
	Forto telle hym the texte, and touche not the glose,	commentary (see note)
	How the worde walketh with oon and with other.	
	But whenne oure comely king came furst to londe,	landed (see note)
	Tho was eche burne bolde to bable what hym aylid	what troubled him
145	And to fable ferther of fautz and of wrongz,	speak; failings
	And romansid of the missereule that in the royaulme groved, ¹	promised
	And were behote high helpe, I herde hit myself	Proclaimed; king's
	Ycried at the crosse, and was the kingis wille	customs; taxation; relieved
	Of custume and of coylage the comunes shuld be easid.	agreement; say
150	But how the covenant is ykepte I can not discryve,	seldom
	For with the kingis cunseil I come but silde.	magpies; parrot disputed
	But piez with a papegeay parlid of oones,	feathered; plucked; cage
	And were yplumed and ypullid and put into a caige.	Since; beaten; beak; wing
	Sith the briddes were ybete the beke is undre whinge,	
155	But yf thay parle privly to thaire owen peeris.	Unless; speak; peers
	But the king ne his cunseil may hit not knowe	

¹ And recounted the misrule that grew in the realm

Mum and the Sothsegger

	What is the comune clamour ne the crye nother, For there is no man of the meeyné, more nother lasse, ¹	outray neither advise
160	That wol wisse thaym any worde but yf his witte faille, Ne telle thaym the trouthe ne the texte nothir,	exact words shun; shire folk are saying
	But shony forto shewe what the shire meneth, And beguile thaym with glose, so me God helpe,	flattery
	And speke of thaire owen spede and spie no ferther, But ever kepe thaym cloos for caicching of wordes.	concerns; discern
165	And yf a burne bolde hym to bable the sothe And mynde hym of mischief that missereule asketh,	vigilant; overhearing is so bold as to blurt out
	He may lose his life and laugh here no more, Or yputte into prisone or ypyned to deeth	remind; causes
	Or yblent or yshent or sum sorowe have,	be put; tortured blinded; ruined
170	That fro scorne other scathe scape shal he nevre. Thus is trouthe doune ytroode and tenyd ful ofte,	injury escape; never downtrodden; harmed
	Ybete and ybounde in bourghes and in shires, And principlay of princes ypyned thenne of other,	Beaten; enslaved; towns
	Yhaulid and yhunitid and yhoote trusse,	tortured; by others
175	That he shoneth to be seye forto shewe his harmes, But ever hideth his heede fro the haylstones,	Cried after; sent packing shuns; seen; injuries
	And is overwoxe with wrong and wickid wedes, And tenyd with tares and al amisse temprid.	head; hailstones (see note) overgrown; weeds
	Yit wole he growe fro greve and his grayne bere, And after sowe his seede whenne he seeth tyme.	choked; wholly discordant grief
180	For alle the gomes undre God, goyng uppon erthe, Were never so slygh yit forto sle trouthe:	people; alive canny; slay
	Though thay batre hym with battz and bete on hym ever, Trouthe is so tough and loeth forto teere	batter; clubs; beat loath; tear
185	And so pryvy with the prince that paradis made That he hath graunt of his lyfe while God is in hevene;	close promise
	For though men brenne the borough there the burne loiggeth, ² Or elles hewe of the heede there he a hows had,	chop off; house cause; trouble
	Or do hym al the disease that men devise cunne,	revive; pay back
190	Yit wol he quyke agayne and quite alle his foes And treede over the tares that over his toppe groued,	tread; head grew

¹ For there is no man from the king's retinue, more influential nor less

² For although men burn the town where the man dwells

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And al wickid wede into waste tourne.	weeds; turn
	And therefore my cunseil — though the king knowe hit	
	And alle the lordz of this londe, right lite is my charge —	limited; responsibility
195	Ys to be at oone with trouthe and tarre hym nomore,	one; afflict
	Leste he tucke at your tabart ere two yere been endid,	pull; tabard
	But ye suffre his servant to be seye oones	allow; seen
	Among you in a moneth (but yf ye more wil)	month
	Forto saye you the sothe, though ye shame thenke.	think it
200	For hit wol savere your mouthe swetely withynne short after	savor
	Whenne fortune you fleeth and falleth elleswhere;	
	And yf ye savere on his sawe and serve thereafter	relish his speech
	And eke wirche by his worde, the whele wol tourne	work according to; wheel
	And eke chaunge his cours of care and of sorowe,	away from distress
205	And tourne into tidewel, terme of your lifes. ¹	

Here bigynneth the disputacion bitwyne Mum and the Sothsigger

	Now is Henryis hous holsumly ymade	Henry's house fittingly
	And a meritable meyny of the moste greet,	meritorious company; noblest
	And next I have ynamed as nygh as I couthe,	closely
	And the condicions declarid of alle,	
210	Rehershing no rascaille ne riders aboute.	Rehearsing no riffraff
	But he hymself is souvrayn, and so mote he longe,	[be for] long
	And the graciousist guyer goyng uppon erthe,	most gracious leader
	Witti and wise, worthy of deedes,	
	Ykidde and yknowe and cunnyng of werre, ²	
215	Feers forto fighte, the felde ever kepit,	Fierce; battlefield; dominating
	And trusteth on the Trinité that trouthe shal hym helpe;	
	A doubtful doer in deedes of armes	fearsome participant
	And a comely knight ycome of the grettist,	
	Ful of al vertue that to a king longeth,	manly qualities; belongs
220	Of age and of al thing as hym best semeth.	
	But hit be wel in his dayes we mowe dreede aftre	
	Lest feerelees falle withynne fewe yeres.	
	But God of His goodnes that gouernith alle thingz	

¹ And turn it into good fortune, for the rest of your life

² Well known and notable and astute in warfare

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Hym graunte of His grace to guye wel the people	lead
225	And to reule this royaume in pees and in reste, And stable hit to stonde stille for oure dayes.	<i>stabilize it; remain peaceful</i>
	But I dred me sore, so me God helpe,	
	Leste covetise of cunseil that knoweth not hymself (Of sum and of certayn, I seye not of alle)	<i>itself</i> <i>certain people</i>
230	That of profitable pourpos putteth the king ofte, There his witte and his wil wolde wirche to the beste — “Nomore of this matiere,” cothe Mum thenne, “For I mervaille of thy momeling more thenne thou wenys.	<i>purpose hinders</i> <i>said</i> <i>mumbling; think</i>
	Saides not thou thyself, and sothe as me thoughte, That thees sothesiggers serven noon thankes?”	<i>Did you yourself not say</i> <i>receive no thanks</i>
235	And thou knowes this by clergie, how cans thou thee excuse That thou ne art nycier than a nunne nyne-folde tyme, Ferto wite that thy wil thy witte shal passe?”	<i>excuse yourself</i> <i>more foolish</i> <i>know; will; surpass</i>
	I blussid for his bablyng and abode stille	<i>blushed; words; waited quietly</i>
240	And knytte there a knotte and construed no ferther; But yit I thoughte ere he wente, and he wold abide, To have a disputeson with hym and spie what he hatte. “I am Mum thy maister,” cothe he, “in alle maniere places	<i>paused; pondered</i> <i>see; was called</i>
	That sittith with souverayns and servyd with greete.	
245	Thaire wille ne thaire wordes I withseye never, But folowe thaym in thaire folie and fare muche the bettre, Easily for oyle, sire, and elles were I nyce.	<i>deny</i> <i>flattery; or; foolish</i>
	Thus leede I my life in luste of my herte, And for my wisedame and witte wone I with the beste,	<i>at my own pleasure</i>
250	While sergeantz the sechith to saise by the lappe For thy wilde wordes that maken wretthe ofte. ¹	<i>wisdom; discretion dwell</i>
	Thow were better folowe me foure score wynter	<i>You would do better</i>
	Thenne be a soethsigger, so me God helpe,	
	Oon myle and nomore waye, I Mum wol avowe. <i>For twenty minutes (see note); testify</i>	
255	And therefore I rede, yf thou reste wilnest, Cumpaignye with no contra yn no kynnes wise, ²	<i>advise; wish to rest</i>
	But parle for thy profit and plaise more hereaftre.	<i>speak; please</i>

¹ Lines 250–51: *While sergeants-at-law search for you to drag you into court / Because of your wild words which often cause anger and dissension*

² *Do not hold company with nay-sayers at all*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	For there nys lord of this londe ne lady, I wene,	<i>is not; think</i>
	Prince nether prelat ne peer of the royaulme,	
260	Bachillier ne bourgoys ne no barne elles	<i>Bachelor-knight nor burgess; man</i>
	That yf thay wite what thou arte, that wil thee desire	
	Or coveite to his cumpaignie while contra thee foloweth."	
	"Now to this altercacion," cothe I, "an awnswere behoveth,	<i>is required</i>
	For I fele by thy fabelyng thou art felle of werkes ¹	
265	And right worldly wise of wordes and deedes,	
	And ever kepis thee cloos for casting bihinde. ²	
	Thou wol not putte thee in prees but profit be the more ³	
	To thy propre persone; thou passes not the bondes	<i>yourself; bounds</i>
	Forto gete any grucche for glaunsyng of boltes.	<i>reproach; shooting of arrows</i>
270	Thus me semeth that thou serves thyself and no man elles,	<i>it seems to me</i>
	And has housholde and hire to holde up thy oyles,	<i>reward; flattery</i>
	And eke bouche of court for colte and for cnave.	<i>food allowance; servant</i>
	And yit thou suffris thy souvrayn to shame hymself	<i>allow</i>
	There thou mightes amende hym many tyme and ofte.	<i>While you could</i>
	<i>ffacientis culpam habet qui quod potest corrigere negligit emendare in secretis etc.⁴</i>	
275	Now suche another servant, the same and noon other,	
	Mote dwelle with the deveil, til Do Bette hym helpe."	<i>Do Better (see note)</i>
	Thus after talkyng we twynned asundre,	<i>parted company</i>
	Bothe Mum and I, and oure mote endid;	<i>conversation</i>
	But muche mervailed I, whenne Mum was passid,	<i>had left</i>
280	Of his opinion that he heulde ever,	
	And provyd hit by profitable poyntz ynowe	
	That better was a burne to abide stille	<i>person to remain quiet</i>
	Thanne the soeth to seye that sitteth in his herte,	
	Forto warne the wy that he with dwellith,	<i>man</i>
285	Or mynne hym of mischief that misserewle askith.	<i>warn; misrule arouses</i>
	And ever he concludid with colorable wordes	<i>deceptive</i>
	That whoso mellid muche more than hit nedeth	<i>speak; was required</i>
	Shuld rather wynne weping watre thenne robes.	<i>gain tears</i>

¹ *For I sense by your fable-making that you are malicious in your actions*

² *And ever you keep close so that you are not left behind*

³ *You will not engage with people unless there is profit in doing so*

⁴ *He who can reform but who secretly neglects to do so shares the fault of the evil-doer*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And clearly Caton construeth the same,	<i>Cato explains</i>
290	And seyth soethly, I saw hit in youthe, That of “bable” cometh blame and of “be stille” never —	“idle chatter”; “be quiet”
	<i>Nam nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum</i> — ¹	
	And a wise worldly worde, as me thenketh, Of the whiche I was hevy and highly abawyd,	<i>sad; addled</i>
	And for the double doute as dul as an asse,	<i>very great doubt</i>
295	And troublid for the travers, and amisse temprid, That I wente in a wyre a grete while after.	<i>legal denial; out of sorts</i>
	For woo I ne wiste who had the better Of Mum and of me, and musid faste,	<i>quandary</i>
	Rehershyng the reasons of bothe two sides,	<i>arguments</i>
300	The pro and the contra as clergie askith. But for witte that I wanne I wolde that he knewe	<i>learning requires</i>
	I was never the nyre, but as newe to begynne	<i>awareness; acquired</i>
	As clerck is to construe that can not reede.	<i>nearer</i>
	Thenne thoughte I on Sidrac and Salomonis termes,	<i>read</i>
305	And Seneca the sage I soughte for the nones, That whilom were the wisest wies upon erthe	<i>Sydrac (see note)</i>
	Forto wise any wighte, whatso hym grieved.	<i>at that time</i>
	I bablid on thoo bokes that thoo barnes made,	<i>formerly; men</i>
	And waitid on thaire wordes aswel as I couthe,	<i>edify; creature</i>
310	But of the matiere of Mum might I nought finde, Ne no maniere nycete of the newe jette,	<i>read aloud from</i>
	But al homely usage of the olde date,	<i>studied; as best</i>
	How that good gouvernance gracieusely endith.	<i>kind of subtlety; style</i>
	But glymsyng on the glose, a general reule	
315	Of al maniere mischief I merkid and radde: That whoso were in wire and wold be y-easid	<i>ends favorably</i>
	Moste shewe the sore there the salve were.	<i>glancing at</i>
	Thenne was I wel ware what he wolde meene,	<i>noted; read</i>
	That I shulde cunne of clergie to knowe the sothe,	<i>perplexity; comforted</i>
320	Forto deme the doute that me so dul made.	<i>where</i>
	I was wilful of wil and wandrid aboute,	<i>consult learned men</i>
	Til I came to Cambrigge couthe I not stynte,	<i>resolve; doubt</i>
	To Oxenford and Orleans and many other places	<i>stop</i>
		<i>Oxford; Orleans</i>

¹ *No harm comes from remaining silent, harm comes from speaking*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	There the congregacion of clercz in scole Were stablid to stonde in strengthe of bilieve. I moeved my matiere of Mum, as ye knowe, And of the Soethsigger in fewe shorte wordes. To alle the vij sciences I shewed as I couthe, And how we dwellid in dome, for doute of the better.	<i>gathering; school established stated seven arts (Liberal Arts) judgment; uncertainty</i>
325	Sire Grumbald the grammier tho glowed for anger That he couthe not congruly knytte thaym togedre. Music and Mum mighte not accorde, For thay been contrary of kynde, whoso canne spie. Phisic diffied al the bothe sides,	<i>grammarian then glowered harmoniously agree by nature; discern defied both sides</i>
330	Bothe Mum and me and the Soethsiggere; He was accumbrid of oure cumpaignye, by Crist that me bought, And as fayn of oure voiding as foul of his make.	<i>redeemed glad; leaving; bird; mate</i>
335	Astronomyis argumentz were alle of the skyes, He-is touche no twynte of terrene things.	<i>His conversation no jot; earthly</i>
340	Rethoricis reasons me luste not reherce, For he conceyved not the caas, I knewe by his wordes; But a subtile shophister with many sharpe wordes Sette the Soethsigger as shorte as he couthe. ¹	<i>Rhetoric's arguments I do not care to grasped; situation sophister (Logic)</i>
345	But he wolde melle with Mum ner more ner lasse, So chiding and chatering as choghe was ever. Jeometrie the joynour jablid faste,	<i>speak; neither; nor chough (see note)</i>
	And caste many cumpas, as the crafte askith, ² And laide level and lyne along by the squyre.	<i>Geometry; joiner; gabbled square walnut</i>
350	But I was not the wiser by a Walsh note Of the matiere of Mum that marrid me ofte, And stoode al astonyed and starid for angre That clergie couthe not my cares amende,	<i>troubled astonished; stared in the academic clerisy</i>
	And was in pourpoos to passe fourth right in pure wreth. But a semely sage that satte al abouve,	<i>leave seemly</i>
355	Ychose to the chaire forto chaste fooles, ³ Whom alle the seven sciences servyd at wille, Bothe in werke and in worde weren at his heste,	<i>seven Liberal Arts command</i>

¹ Called into question the Soothsayer as curtly as he could

² And set up many compasses, as the [geometric] art requires

³ Selected for the professorial chair to chastise fools

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And more bunne at his bede than boy til his maister, ¹ He satte as a souvrayn on a high siege.	seat
360	A doctour of doutz, by dere God he semyd, For he had loked al that lay to the .vij. artz; He was as ful of philosophie and vertues bothe As man uppon molde mighte perceyve.	expert in logical difficulties studied; pertained
	This comely clerke me called agaynes,	earth called me to him
365	And cunseillid me so clearly that I caughte ease, And seide, "Soon, seest thou this semblé of clercz, How thay bisien thaym on thaire bokes and beten thaire wittz, And how thay loken on the levis the letter to knowe?	took comfort Son; assembly strain scan; pages; meaning
	For whenne thay knownen the scripture thay construen no ferther Fortho soutille ne to siche no side-wayes. ²	interpret
370	But as long as I have lerned and lokid in bokes, And alle the seven sciences ysoughte to th'ende, Yit knewe I never suche a caas, ne no clerke here, As thou has ymooved among us alle.	looked into books investigated to the end situation brought forward
375	Hit is sum noyous nyceté of the newe jette, ³ For the texte truly telleth us nomore But how that goode gouvernance graciously endith. But and thou woldes be wise and wirche as I telle,	Than how; beneficially if advise; know
380	I wolde wisse thee to wite where that thou shuldest Have knowlaiche of thy caas cleere to thyn intent, And thy cumberouse question quyclly be assoiled. Now harke and holde and hye to th'ende.	troublesome; quickly be resolved listen; continue
	Sum of this semblé that thou sees here, Whenne thay have loked the lettre and the lyfez over	assembly pages
385	Of alle the seven sciences, or sum as thaym liketh, Thay walken fourth in the worlde and wonen with lordes, And with a covetous croke Saynt Nicholas thay throwen, And travailen nomore on the texte, but tournen to the glose,	dwell crook; leave (see note)
	And putten thaym to practike and plaisance of wordes.	labor; turn; gloss
390	But thay cunne deme thy doute, by dere God in hevene, I can not knowe of thy caas who couthe elles."	Unless; resolve else could

¹ And more responsive to his bidding than young apprentice to the master

² To argue subtly or to seek out any deeper meanings

³ It is some pernicious foolishness of the new fashion

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Thenne ferkid I to freres, alle the foure ordres, There the fundament of feith and felnesse of workes Hath ydwellid many day, no doute, as thay telle.	went; friars foundation; plenitude
395	I frayned thaym faire to fele of thaire wittes, And moevyd my matiere of Mum, as ye knowe, And of the Soethsigger in fewe shorte wordes. To every couple I construed my caas for the nones, Til the cloistre and the quyre were so accorded	questioned; politely; sound out pair (see note) choir; agreed
400	To geve Mum the maistrie withoute mo wordes, And shewid me exemplis, the sohest uppon erthe, N'ad Mum be a more frende to making of thaire houses Thenne the Sothesigger, so God shuld thaym helpe, Hit had be unhelid half a yere after.	mastery truest <i>If Mum had not been</i>
405	Now ne were thre skiles and scantly the ferthe, I wolde love as litel thaire life and thaire deedes As man upon molde, til Amendes me prayed. The furst is a faire poynt forto wynne hevene, Whenne thay stirid a statute in strengthe of bilieve	logical reasons; fourth fitting; gain heaven urged
410	That no preste shuld preche save seely poure freres. ¹ But this deede dide thay not, I do you to wite, For no maniere mede that mighte thaym befalle. Ne forto gete the more good, God wote the sothe, But for good herte that thay have to hele manis soules.	tell you reward [worldly] goods men's
415	The secund is a pryyv poynt, I pray hit be helid: Thay cunne not reede redelles aright, as me thenketh; For furst folowid freres Lollardz manieres, And sith hath be shewed the same on thaymself, That thaire lesingz have lad thaym to lolle by the necke;	subtle; kept hidden interpret riddles ways themselves
420	At Tibourne for traision ytwyght up thay were. <i>Patere legem quam ipse tuleris</i> — ² For as hit is yseide by eldryn dawes — “That the churle gafe a dome whiche came by hym aftre.” ³ The thrid is no lesing ne no long tale: Thees good grey freres that mouche love geten	lies; swing Tyburn hill; strung <i>from the old days</i> third; falsehood Franciscans; much

¹ *That no priest should preach except poor holy friars*

² *You yourself must be vulnerable to the law you imposed*

³ *“That the knave rendered a judgment which came back to haunt him later”*

Mum and the Sothsegger

425	For keping of thaire conscience clenner than other, Thay goon al bare abouve the foote and byneth the double With smale semyd socks and of softe wolle, For the love of oure Lord harde life induren. Thay mellen with no monaye more nother lasse,	purer double layers beneath seamed; wool endure deal; money
430	But stiren hit with a sticke and staren on hit ofte, And doon thaire bisynes therewith by obedience of th'ordre; But in the herte ne in the hande ne may hit not come, For thenne thay shuld bee shent of the subpriour. The fourthe poynt is fructuous and fundid al in love:	stir business punished by profitable; based
435	Whenne freres goon to chapitre for charite-is sake, They casten there the cuntrey and coostz aboute, And parten the provynce in parcelle-mele. And maken limitacions in lengthe and in breede, Til eche hous have his owen as hym aughte.	chapter-house; love's divide; district; regions divide up; piecemeal begging districts; breadth monastic house
440	Thenne hath the limitour leve to lerne where he cometh ¹ To lye and to licke or elles lose his office. But sum been so courtoys and kinde of thaire deedes That with thaire charité thay chaungen a knyfe for a peyre, But he wol pille ere he passe a parcell of whete	lie; flatter [for money]
445	And choise of the chese the chief and the beste. He is so cunnyng in the crafte that whereso he cometh He leveth the lasse for the more deele. ² Thus with thaire charité and with thaire fayre chere Thees good Godis men gadren al to thaym ³	exchange; trifles steal; portion choose; cheese skilled gracious demeanor
450	And kepen hit to thaire owen croppe clene fro other. For though a frere be fatt and have a ful coffre Of gold and of good, thou getys but a lite Forte bete thy bale, though thou begge ever. But that is no mervail, by Marie of hevene,	store separate from material goods; little ease; suffering wonder; Mary
455	For to begge of a begger what bote is hit But who wolde balle his heede to breke harde stones? Thus thaire conscience is yknowe and thaire crafte eeke, That hath be kepte cunseil and cloos many dayes,	profit strike; head; break profession secret; private

¹ Then has the licensed friar permission to learn where he may come (see note)

² He abandons the inferior portion for the better

³ These good men of God gather everything to themselves

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Til al the world wote what thay wolde meene;	
460	And that is this treuly, tende whoso wil,	<i>pay attention</i>
	Thorough crafte of confession to knowe men intentz:	<i>men's inner thoughts</i>
	Of lordz and ladies that lustes desiren,	<i>pleasures</i>
	And with thaire wyly wittz wirchen on ever	<i>work</i>
	And mulden up the matiere to make thaym fatte,	<i>shape things</i>
465	And gouvernem the grete and guilen the poure.	<i>control; powerful; hoodwink</i>
	Now take my tale as my intent demeth,	
	And ye shal wel wite I wil thaym no mischief	<i>wish; harm</i>
	By my worde ne by my wille as wissely forsothe ¹	
	As God that is oure gouvernour me gye at my nede.	<i>guide</i>
	<i>Honora dominum de tua substancia. Propheta.²</i>	
470	For whenne thay come to your cote to crave that thaym nedeth, ³	
	Gyfe thaym, for Godis sake and with a good wille,	<i>Give</i>
	Mete or monaye as ye mowe indure,	<i>Food; can afford</i>
	And gefe thaym sauce therewith of the Sothesigger	<i>"sauce" (see note)</i>
	Forto preche the peuple the peril of synne,	
475	How symonie shendith al hooly churche,	<i>simony ruins</i>
	And not forbere bisshop ne baron that lyveth	
	That thay teche treuly the texte as hit standeth,	<i>the [literal] text</i>
	And abide thereby with a bolde herte,	<i>hold to it</i>
	And spare for no spicerie ne no speche elles,	<i>bribery</i>
480	But telle oute the trouthe and tourne not aside	
	How Covetise hath caste the knyght on the grene,	<i>thrown down; greensward</i>
	And woneth at Westmynstre to wynne newe spores,	<i>spurs (conquests)</i>
	And cannot crepe thens while the crosse walketh.	<i>[venerated] cross (see note)</i>
	He multiplieth monaye in the mote-halle	<i>council chamber</i>
485	More for his mayntenance and manasshing of wordes	<i>menacing words</i>
	Thenne with draughte of his swerde or deedes of armes.	<i>drawing</i>
	And telle the frere a toquen, that trouthe wote the sothe	<i>token</i>
	Why men mervaillen more on thaym thanne on othir —	
	That suche a cumpaignye of confessours cunne not yelde	<i>gang; produce</i>
490	Oon martir among thaym in seven score wynter.	<i>One martyr</i>
	Thay prechen alle of penanche as though thay parfite were,	<i>penance; perfect</i>

¹ Neither by word nor will as surely indeed

² Honour the Lord with thy substance. The Prophet

³ For when they come to your cottage to beg what they need

Mum and the Sothsegger

	But thay prove hit in no poynt there thaire peril shuld arise.	
	Thaire clothing is of conscience, and of Caym thaire werkes,	<i>Cain (see note)</i>
	That fadre was and fundre of alle the foure ordres,	<i>founder</i>
495	Of deedes thay doon deceipuyng the peuple,	<i>deceiving</i>
	As Armacanes argumentz, that thaire actes knewe,	<i>FitzRalph's (see note)</i>
	Provyn hit apertly in a poysie-wise;	<i>Prove; patently; poetry</i>
	For of Caym alle came, as this clercl tolde.	
	For who writeth wel this worde and withoute titil,	<i>abbreviation mark (see note)</i>
500	Shal finde of the figures but evene foure lettres:	<i>acrostic shapes; only</i>
	C. for hit is crokide, thees Carmes thou mos take, ¹	
	A. for thees Augustines that amoreux been ever,	<i>are ever amorous</i>
	I. for thees Iacobynes that been of Iudas kynne,	<i>Jacobins (Dominicans); Judas' kin</i>
	M. for thees Menours that monsyd been thaire werkes. ²	
505	I seye of thaym that suche been and cesse agaynes other,	<i>cease to criticize</i>
	But wel I wote that wilful and worldly thay been sum,	<i>some (of them)</i>
	And eeke spracke and spitous, and spices wel thay loven,	<i>zealous; spiteful</i>
	For Symonis sermons thay setten al to taske,	<i>Simony's; take up earnestly</i>
	And feele other faultz fourtene hunthrid	<i>many other faults; hundred</i>
510	Thay lepen over lightly, and lyen woundre thicke. ³	
	I cannot deme deuely of what degré thay bee;	<i>truly; rank</i>
	Thay been not weddid, wel I wote, though thay wifes have;	
	But knightz yit of conscience I couthe of thaym make,	
	For thay have joygned in justes agayns Jhesus werkes; ⁴	
515	And forto prove thaym prestes thees poyntz been agayne thaym.	<i>priests</i>
	I cannot rede redily of what reule thay been,	<i>read; rule</i>
	For hooly churche ne hevene hath not thaym in mynde,	
	Save in oon place thaire office and ordre is declarid:	
	I sawe hit in a ympne and is a sentence trewe,	<i>hymn; true statement</i>
520	And elleswhere in hooly writte I herde thaym ynempnyd.	<i>heard; named</i>
	<i>Auferte gentem perfidam. Credentium de finibus;</i>	
	<i>Deleantur de libro vivencium, et cum iustis non scribantur.⁵</i>	

¹ C, because it is crooked, for Carmelites you must understand

² M, for these Minorites (Franciscans, Friars Minor), cursed are their works

³ They leap over lightly (i.e., overlook wrongs), and lie wondrously much

⁴ For they have engaged in jousts against Jesus' works

⁵ Lines 520a–b: Let him carry off the treacherous people, of the believers in the last things; / Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and with the just let them not be written

Mum and the Sothsegger

	But of the matiere of Mum ne of the Sothesigger, This is not to pourpoos the pare of oon pere,	<i>purpose the paring of a pear</i>
	And therfore my wil is to walke more at large Forto fynde sum freeke that of feith were	<i>man</i>
525	Not double, but indifferent to deme the sothe, Whether Mum is more better or Melle-sumtyme	<i>duplicitious; impartial</i>
	Forto amende that were amysse into more ease. And for the fikelle freres were fully withholde	<i>Speak-Sometime wrong; something better</i>
	And alied to Mum in many maniere wises, And eeke ful partie, as provyd by thaire wordes,	<i>fickle; supported</i>
530	I lyeyed wel the lasse thaire lore and thaire deedes, And forto eschewe chiding I chalanged thaym alle,	<i>allied</i>
	And lept lightly fro thaym, leste I laught were; For thaire curtesie is crokide there thay caste ille,	<i>wholly biased</i>
	And that witen thay wel that han wrastlid with thaym.	<i>believed; less; teachings</i>
535	T henne passid I to priories and personages many, To abbeys of Augustyn and many hooly places,	<i>avoid; challenged</i>
	There prestz and prelatz were parfitely yclosid To singe and to reede for alle Cristen soules.	<i>caught</i>
540	But for I was a meen man I might not entre; For though the place were ylpighe for poure men sake	<i>contrive wickedness</i>
	And eeke funded therefore, yit faillen thay ofte That thay doon not eche day do beste of alle.	<i>wrestled</i>
	For the fundacions of the fundours ment	<i>monasteries; parsonages</i>
545	Was groundid for Godis men, though hit grete serve.	<i>houses of Austin canons</i>
	<i>Mutauerunt caritatem in cupiditatem. Sapientia¹</i>	<i>enclosed</i>
	Thay koveiten no comers but yf thay cunne helpe	<i>meanly dressed</i>
	Forto amende thaire mynstre and to maynteyne thaire rente, ²	<i>established</i>
	Or in worke or in worde waite thaire profit,	<i>founded</i>
	Or elles entreth he not til thay have ysopid.	<i>intended</i>
550	Thus thaire portier for my povreté putt me thens, And grauntid me of his goodnesse to go where me luste	<i>porter; drove me away</i>
	And to wandry where I wolde withoute the gates.	<i>I pleased</i>
	T henne raughte I fro religion, redelees of wittes,	<i>wander; outside</i>
	And caried to closes and cathedralle churches	<i>went away; at my wits' end</i>
		<i>traveled; precincts</i>

¹ They have turned charity into cupidity. Wisdom

² To repair their church and to sustain their income

Mum and the Sothsegger

555	There that pluralité was prisely ystablid. ¹ I queyntid me with the quyre for my questions sake, And moevid of Mum more thenne thaym liked.	<i>acquainted myself; choir talked</i>
560	I was as wise whenne I wente as whenne I came to thaym, Thay wolde not intremitte of ner nother side, But ever kepte thaym cloos to cracche and to mangier, ² And fedde so the foule flesh that the velle ne might	<i>intervene on either skin</i>
565	Unethe kepe the caroigne but yf hit cleve shuld; ³ And n'ad the gutte groned there thay gurde were, ⁴ Thay had bee sike of swete mete, so me God helpe, For piking of provendre passing th'assise; ⁵	<i>sick; sweetmeats</i>
570	And n'adde thay partid with the poure as prestz doon thaire offryng, That putten alle thaire masse penyes in thaire purses, Thay had be blamyd of Belial for thaire bolde riding <i>Nolite possidere aurum neque argentum in zonis vestris.</i> ⁶	<i>shared mass pennies i.e., the devil belts; gilt</i>
575	Thenne woxe I wondre wery of wandring aboute Thorough the wilde weyes that I wente had, Ful woo for I ne wiste what was my beste Reed — forto reste or rome more at large,	<i>grew; wondrously weary had gone through Woeful; did not know Advice; roam</i>
580	Til I wiste wittrely who shulde have The maistrie, Mum or the Sothesigger. And every man that I mette mad for my wordes Wende that I were, wisten thay non other. ⁷	<i>knew certainly mastery (upper hand)</i>
	And as I stooode staring, stonyd of this matiere, Mum with his myter manachid me ever, And cunseilled me to cusky and care for myself,	<i>amazed by miter; menaced submit</i>

¹ To where the principle of pluralities (multiple benefices) was nobly established (see note)

² But they always remained near the food bin and the manger

³ Scarcely contain the flesh unless it should rupture

⁴ And had not their guts groaned where they were girt

⁵ For filching of foodstuffs beyond the legal amount

⁶ Do not possess gold or silver in your purses

⁷ Lines 576–77: And every man that I encountered believed I was mad because of my words / they knew no other [explanation]

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And leste I soughte sorowe, cesse by tyme. ¹	
	I doutid of his deedes, for his delectacion	<i>delight</i>
	Was more in his mynde thenne the masse-bokes,	
	And boode til a baron, blessid be he ever —	<i>waited</i>
585	His name is ynempnyd among the seven ordres —	<i>named</i>
	Sente a saufconduyt so that I wolde	<i>safe-conduct</i>
	Maynteyne no matiere to amende myself,	
	Ne caicche no colour that came of my wittes,	<i>seize on any figment</i>
	But showe for a souvrayn to shewe hit forth after. ²	
590	This boldid me to bisynes to bringe hit to ende	<i>emboldened</i>
	Thorough grace of this good lord that gouverneth al thing.	
	Thenne sought I forth sevnyght and slepte ful silde,	<i>week; seldom</i>
	And cessid on a Saterday til sunne roose amorowe,	
	And burnys and belles ballid togedre,	<i>men; bells beat</i>
595	Momeling on thaire matyns and to the masse after.	<i>Mumbling</i>
	I satte in a siege my service to hire,	<i>seat; hear</i>
	Til the prest in a pulpite began forto preche	
	The peuple to pees and the peril of synne,	<i>peace</i>
	And also t'offre as ofte as thaym likid.	<i>to give money</i>
600	He taughte thaym by tyme thaire tithing to bringe	
	Of al manier grene that groweth uppon erthe	<i>green produce</i>
	Of fructe and of floxe in felde and in homes,	<i>fruit; flax</i>
	Of polaille and of peris, of apples and of plummes,	<i>poultry; pears</i>
	Of grapes and of garlik, of gees and of pigges,	
605	Of chibollz and of chiries and of thaire chese eeke,	<i>chives; cherries</i>
	Herbaige and oygnons and alle suche thinges	<i>Herbs; onions</i>
	That growen in thaire gardynes, lete God his parte have,	<i>gardens</i>
	Of hony in your hyves and of your honycombes,	<i>honey; hives</i>
	Of malte and of monaye and of al that multiplieth,	
610	Of wolle and of wexe and what-so yow increceth	<i>wool; wax; increases</i>
	Or newith yow, the nine partienymeth to your self,	<i>is renewed; ninth part take for</i>
	And trewly the tithing taketh hooly churche.	
	And ever I waitid whenne he wolde sum worde moeve	<i>say</i>
	How hooly churche goodes shuld be yspendid.	
615	And declare the deedes what thay do shulde	

¹ And lest I was looking for trouble, cease [the search] immediately

² But explain it to a sovereign so it can be proved afterwards (see note)

Mum and the Sothsegger

	To have suche a harveste and helpe not to erie.	<i>plow</i>
	But sorowe on the sillable he shewed of that matiere, ¹	
	For Mum was a meen and made hym to leve.	<i>intermediary; break off</i>
	And as wery as I was, yit was I wrothe eeke	<i>angry</i>
620	With Mum, for he made the moppe so lewed	<i>fool</i>
	To leve men to lerne the lawe sith he knewe hit.	<i>allow</i>
	Thenne ferkid I forth as faste as I mighte	<i>went</i>
	Sevene yere Sunnedayes and solempne festes, ²	
	Yf prest or prelat or prechour wolde	
625	Sey sothe of hymself and serve thereafter	
	And teche how the tithinge shuld trewly be departid.	<i>divided</i>
	But as wide as I wente, was noon of thaym alle	
	Wolde moeve of that matiere more nother lasse.	<i>speak</i>
	And why that thay wolde not wol ye gladly wite,	
630	Thay have a memoire of Mum among alle other,	
	Ys more in thaire mynde thenne martires of hevene	<i>[Which] is; martyrs</i>
	That token the deeth for trouthe of tirantz handes.	<i>suffered death; tyrants'</i>
	But here a querele or a question quyk mighte thou make:	<i>objection; quickly</i>
	Martires had more might and more mynde eeke,	
635	And couthe more on clergie thenne cunne now a thousand.	<i>knew; about; know</i>
	But thereto I answeare as I am lerid:	<i>have been taught</i>
	Thou, lewed laudate, litel witte has.	<i>foolish dimwit</i>
	Hit was for no cunnynge ne clergie nother	<i>book-learning</i>
	That thay chosid the deeth, but for derve love	<i>bold</i>
640	And kindenes to oure Creatour that creed us alle,	<i>affinity; created</i>
	And for pure trouthe that thay taught ever.	
	<i>Propter veritatem dimittam omnes familiaritatem etc.³</i>	
	This made thaym martires more thanne ought elles,	
	For clercz were not knowe by thaire clothing that tyme,	<i>known; at that time</i>
	Ne by royal raye ne riding aboute,	<i>array</i>
645	Ne by service of souverayns, so me God helpe,	
	Ne by revel ne riot ne by rente nothir,	<i>income</i>
	Ne by thaire double dees, ne thaire deupe hoodes,	<i>dais; deep</i>
	Ne by drynkyng of dollid wyne ne by datz at eve,	<i>warmed; dates in the evening</i>

¹ But he did not utter a single syllable on that matter

² For seven years on Sundays and feast-days

³ For truth's sake do away with all human affections

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Ne by worldly workes of writtes ne seelyng,	writs; sealing wax
650	Ne by no maniere niceté that thay now usen,	engage in
	But by the deedes that thay dide, I do you to wite.	cause; know
	For I am but lewed and lettrid ful lite,	
	And yit me semeth the sentence that I shewe couthe	judgment
	And teche how the tithing shuld trewly be departid,	
655	For in thre lynes hit lith and not oon lettre more.	lies
	Now hendely hireth how I begynne:	kindly hear
	That ye clepe Godis parte, lete Godis men have hit, ¹	
	Reservyng for yourself sustenance for your foode,	
	And the overplus over that for ornementz of the churche.	surplus
660	Though this be shortly yseide, yit so me God helpe,	knowledge
	Whoso had cunnyng and a clerc were,	
	Might make a long sermon of thees fewe wordes;	sermon theme
	And though he toke to his theme “the tresour is among thaym	revelry
	And the revyllé of the royaulme and the richesse bothe,”	
665	He shuld not wende of the waye two whete cornes.	go; wheatgrains
	For thay have tollid so the tithing thay han the two dooles,	taxed; both portions
	And been so usid to ease erly and late	
	That thay cunne no crafte save kepe thaym warme.	
	Thay bisien more for benefices thenne Bibles to reede,	busy themselves
670	And been as worldly wise and wynners ekee	profiteers
	As man uppon molde, and as muche loven	earth
	Mum and the monaye, by Marie of hevene,	
	For mayntenance and mede been thaire two mates.	thuggery; reward
	“Yit wil thou melle more,” cothe Mum, “thenne hit nedeth.	speak; is required
675	Be stille lest thou stumble, for thou stondes ful slidre,	at great peril
	And thou moeve any more suche maniere wordes.	If; words of that kind
	Thay been not holsum for thy heed ne for thy herte nother,	beneficial
	For thou mos holde with thee mo yf thou thy helthe willes; ²	
	And so I have ytolde thee twyes and oones.	twice and again
680	Thou art mad of thy mynde, and amysse levis	insane; wrongly believe
	That Mum hath a maister there men been of goode;	men are wealthy
	For Mum maketh mo men at a moneth ende	in a month
	Thanne the Sothesigger in sevene score winter;	

¹ That which you call God's share, let God's men (the poor) have it

² You must agree with the majority (the most) if you desire to maintain your health

Mum and the Sothsegger

	For he is privy with the pruttist and there the price caicchet, ¹	
685	As is ydrawe to the deys with deyntées yservyd	drawn; dais; dainties
	Whenne the Sothsigger dar not be seye.	dare; seen
	For and a matier be moeved at mete or at eve	at supper or in the evening
	Or in pryvy places there peeris assemblen,	private; peers
	Mum musith thereon and maketh many cautelles	ponders; deceits
690	With a locke on his lippe and loketh aboute.	
	He spendith no speche but spices hit make,	
	Til he wite whitherward that wil doo drawe. ²	
	But thenne he knittith a knotte and cometh al at ones	pauses a moment; comes on
	And getith hym a greet thanke to go among the beste.	receives; reward
695	Fle folly therefore, and frendes thee make,	Flee folly; make friends
	And arete, I thee rede, and rome no ferther	stop; advise; roam
	For thou walkis of the weye forto wynne silver.	stray out of the way; gain
	And carpe no more of clergie but yf thou cunne leepe,	speak; leap
	For and thou come on thaire clouche, thou crepis not then ³	
700	Til thou wite right wel with whom that thou mellys."	mingle
	"Iwys I wil not," cothe I, "til I wite more.	Certainly
	For prestz been not perillous but pacient of thaire werkes,	dangerous
	And eeke the plantz of pees and ful of pitie ever,	fruit
	And chief of al charité ychoose afore other.	chosen before others
705	Forto fighte ne to flite hit falleth not to thaire ordre,	dispute; belongs
	Ne to prece to no place there peril shuld be ynne.	crowd into any
	That proveth wel by parlement, for prelatz shuld be voidid	dismissed
	Whenne any dome of deeth shal be do there,	sentence; enacted
	Al for cause thaire conscience to kepe unywemmyd.	unblemished
710	A man may saye thaym the sothe sonest of alle,	soonest
	Withoutte grucche other groyn, but gete many thankes.	grousing or complaint
	Thay moste bowe for the beste, God forbede hit elles,	yield
	To shewe us exemple of suffrance ever."	patient endurance
	<i>Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus vt videant opera vestra bona etc.⁴</i>	
	"Yee, yit be ware of wiles and waite wel aboute,	

¹ For he is intimate with the proudest and takes his price from that association

² Lines 691–92: He squanders no speech unless bribes cause it, / Until he knows which way desire will tend

³ For if you come into their clutches, you may not creep away from there

⁴ So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works

Mum and the Sothsegger

715	For me semeth that thy sight is sumdele a-dasid And al myndeelies," cothe Mum, "and al amysse demys; For though thou shuldes thysilf be a sothesigger, Thou has no cleere conceypt to knowe alle thaire werkes. And that I pryved by a poynt thou perceipues never, Al a-twartz thy intent and thy tale ekee, For Pilat in the Passion among al the people Wilned afstre watre to waisshe with his handes. ¹ To shewe hym, by that signe, of the bloode-shedding Of Crist that us creed and on the Crosse deyed, His conscience was clensid as clene as his handes. Yit was he ground of the grame and moste guilty ekee, For every man that mynde hath may wel wite That prelatz aughten have pité when princz bee moeved, And reede thaym so that rancune roote not in hert, And ere the grame growe ferre, the ground so to wede And amende that were mysse ere any moore caicche Of manslaughter or mourdre, as hath many dayes. For who hath knowlache of a cloude by cours of abouve, And wil stande stille til the storme falle, And wende not of the waye, the wite is his owen. Though hit heelde on his heede, who is to blame? For who hath sight of a showre that sharply ariseth, And wil not caste hym to kepe with covryng abouve Til hit droppe al adoune and dung-wete hym make, And ekee falle on his frende, in feith as me thenketh, He is auctor of al the harme and th'ache And so pryyv to the peynes that peeres induren. And also in cuntrey hit is a comune speche And is ywritte in Latyne, lerne hit whoso wil: The reason is " <i>qui tacet consentire videtur.</i> " And whoso hath insight of silde-couthe thingz, Of synne or of shame or of shonde outhier, And luste not to lette hit, but leteth hit forth passe As clercz doon construe that knownen alle bokes, He shal be demyd doer of the same deede.	somewhat dazed judges understanding proved; perceive contrary to Pilate created; died cleansed; clean source; damage ought to; angered advise; anger damage; far; weed take root murder its movements moves not to shelter; blame hailed to protect himself; shelter dripping wet author; discomfort party to; pains; comrades saying "he who is silent is seen to consent" strange disgrace either prevent; allows; happen
720		
725		
730		
735		
740		
745		
750		

¹ Wished for water afterwards with which to wash his hands

Mum and the Sothsegger

	And eeke in londis lawe I lernyd by another:	<i>land's law</i>
	Yf a freeke for felonye is frayned atte barre	<i>interrogated; bar</i>
	For traision or for trespass, and he a tunghe have	<i>tongue</i>
	And wil not answere to the deede he is of indited,	<i>indicted for</i>
755	But stont stille as a stoone and no worde stire,	<i>stands; offers</i>
	But he be deef or dum, to deeth shal he wende,	
	As atteynt for the trespass, and is a trewe lawe.	<i>convicted</i>
	This cursid custume hath cumbrid us alle;	<i>troubled</i>
	The grucching of grete that shuld us gouverne	<i>quarreling; nobility who</i>
760	Han yshourid sharplye thorough suffrance of clercz,	<i>showered; tolerance</i>
	That lightly with labour ylettid thay mighte,	<i>easily; prevented</i>
	The conseil of clergie yf thay had caste for hit.	<i>contrived</i>
	For there the heede aketh alle the lymes after	<i>head aches; limbs</i>
	Pynen, whenne the principal is put to unease —	<i>Suffer</i>
	<i>Dum caput infirmum cetera membra dolent</i> — ¹	
765	(Of sum and certayn, I saye not of alle,	
	But of the same seurely that suche maniere usen)."	<i>certainly; use</i>
	"Now treuly," cothe I, "thy talking me pleasith,	
	For thou has saide as sothe, so me God helpe,	
	As ever sage saide sith Crist was in erthe;	
770	For thou has rubbid on the rote of the rede galle	<i>root; red gall</i>
	And eeke yserchid the sore and sought alle the woundz.	<i>searched</i>
	And yf thou woldes do wel, wende to thaym alle	
	And telle the same tale that thou has tolde here;	
	Thou might be man made and menshid for ever."	<i>honored</i>
775	"Nay, there I leve thee, Lucas, go loke for an othir,	<i>leave you, Luke (see note)</i>
	For I wil wende no waie but wit go bifore, ²	
	Ne telle no tales for teryng of hodes,	<i>tearing of hoods (i.e., for quarreling)</i>
	So taughte me the trusty techer on erthe,	<i>most trustworthy</i>
	My maister and maker, Mum, that I serve.	
780	Go walke where thy wil is and waite wel aboute,	
	For thou has sought al aside sith thou begunne	<i>in the wrong places</i>
	With clercz of Cambrigge and cathedrall churches.	
	Fare forth therefore to finde that thou sechis,	<i>what you seek</i>
	And come not with clergie leste thou a-croke walke,	<i>crookedly</i>

¹ When the head ails the other members grieve

² For I will go down no path unless crafty precaution shows the way

Mum and the Sothsegger

785	But tourne now to tounes and temporal lordz, There prece is of peopple, and pray thaym to telle Yf any sothesigger serve thaym long."	<i>towns</i> <i>Where there are crowds</i>
790	Thenne ferkid I to fre men and frankeleys mony, To bondemen and bourgeois and many other barnes, To knightz and to comunes and craftzmen eeke, To citezeyns and souvrayns and to many grete sires, To bachilliers, to banerettz, to barons and erles, To princes and peris and alle maniere estatz; But in every court there I came or cumpaigny outhir	<i>free; landowners</i> <i>bondsmen; burgesses</i>
795	I fonde mo mummers atte moneth-ende Than of sothesiggerz by sevene score thousand. For alle the knyghtz of the court that with the king dwellen, For the more partie — yee, mo than an hunthrid — Heulden Mum for a maister, and more do mighty	<i>lords</i> <i>bachelor-knights (see note)</i> <i>peers; classes of persons</i>
800	With king and his cunseil and al the court aftre. And every toune that I trade twelfe moneth togedre, Mum was a maister and with the maire ever, And al of oon lyvraye and looke so togedre That a poure manis prayer departe thaym ne mighty.	<i>mum folk</i>
805	There was no maner man the maire had levir Bydde of the burns in benche there he satte As Mum to the mete among al the rewe; For he couthe lye and laugh and leepe over the balkes There any grucche or groyne or grame shuld arise. ¹	<i>Held</i>
810	He was ful couchant and coy and curtoys of speche, And parlid for the partie and the playnte lefte. ² The maire preisid hym apert for his plaisant wordes; He was a blessid barne and beste couthe suffre Whenne souvraynes were assemblid to saye what thaym liked.	<i>trod</i> <i>mayor</i> <i>livery</i> <i>poor man's; separate</i> <i>would rather</i>
815	He toke no manere travers tenne yere togedre, Among the comun conseil lest he caste were, But ever shewid his seal to sitte among other. But whoso mummeth a mayre to maynteyne his rente, Maniere were that the mayre shuld mumme hym agaynes	<i>Invite</i> <i>food; row</i> <i>lie; overleap hurdles</i>

¹ *Where any grousing or complaining or difficulty should arise*

² *And spoke up for the [influential] party and ignored the merits of the legal pleading*

Mum and the Sothsegger

820	And yelde hym with a yere-is gifte ere the yere passed. Mum with the mayre to the mete wente, And ever I after, al unaspied, For to knowe of my caas couthe I not stynte. There shuldrid sergeantz to serve atte mete	<i>reward; year's gift</i> <i>unnoticed</i> <i>case; stop</i> <i>shouldered</i>
825	For a male ful of misseededz that Mum had in keping. I stoode stille as a stoone and starid aboute And lokid lightly along by the bordes, Yf any sothesigger were sette in the halle. But sorowe on the shyne I sawe of hym there,	<i>bag</i> <i>casually; tables</i> <i>[To see] if</i> <i>not a glimpse</i>
830	But yf he were a soleyn and servyd aloon, For alle was huyst in the halle sauf "holde up the oyles." And forto saye sothe and shone long tale, The sunne and the sergeantz my sight so dasid That I might not eche messe merke as me luste.	<i>solitary person; alone</i> <i>hushed; flattery</i> <i>avoid (shun) a</i> <i>dazzled</i> <i>meal course mark</i>
835	I askid of a eldryn man as I beste couthe Yf any sothesigger sate in the halle, And he answerid sharply that "the Sothesigger Dyneth this day with Dreede in a chambre, And hath ydrunk dum-seede, and dar not be seye	<i>elderly</i> <i>"silence drink"; seen</i>
840	Sith Mum and the mayer were made suche frendes." Thenne waxe I woundre wrothe, as I wel might, And drowe me to the doreward and dwelled no lenger, ¹ But romed forth reedelees, remembryng ofte That Mum was suche a maister among men of good.	<i>became; angry</i> <i>roamed around confused</i> <i>wealth</i>
845	And as I lokid the loigges along by the streetz, I sawe a sothesigger, in sothe as me thought, Sitte in a shoppe and salwyn his woundes.	<i>places</i> <i>putting salve on</i>
		<i>Beati qui persecucionem paciuntur propter iusticiam. Euaungelium.²</i>
	Thenne was I ful-come and knewe wel the sothe That Mum upon molde myrier life had	<i>fully informed</i> <i>world merrier</i>
850	Thenne the Sothesigger, asay whoso wol; But the better barne to abide stille And to lyve with a lord to his life-is ende Ys the Sothesigger, asay whoso wol.	<i>investigate</i> <i>man to remain constant</i> <i>life's</i>

¹ And went toward the door and stayed there no longer

² Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake. Gospel

Mum and the Sothsegger

- Yit was I not the wiser for waye that I wente;
 855 This made me al madde as I most nede,
 And wel fleuble and faynt, and feulle to the grounde, weak; fell
 And lay doine on a lynche to lithe my boones, furrow; relieve
 Rolling in remembrance my rennyng aboute
 And alle the perillous patthes that I passid had,
 860 As priories and personagz and pluralités, parsonages
 Abbeyes of Augustyn and other hooly places,
 To knightes courtz and crafty men many, skilled
 To mayers and maisters, men of high wittes,
 And to the felle freris, alle the foure ordres, wicked
 865 And other hobbes a heepe, as ye herde have — chaps a heap (see note)
 And nought the neer by a note, this noyed me ofte nearer; at all; vexed
 That thorough construyng of clercz that knewe alle bokes
 That Mum shuld be maister moste upon erthe.
 And ere I were ware, a wynke me assailed,
 870 That I slepte sadly sevene houres large. aware; sleep
Thenne mette I mervailles mo thanne me luste soberly; long
 To telle or to talke of, til I se tyme; dreamed
 But sum of the silde-couthes I wol shewe hereafter, [appropriate] time
 For dreme is no dwele by Danyelis wordes, wonders
 875 Though Caton of the contrarye carpe in his bokes. illusion; Daniel's
 Me thought I was in wildernesse walking aloon, Cato; speaks
 There bestes were and briddes and no barne elles, alone
 Yn a cumbe cressing on a creste wise, beasts; birds
 Al gras grene that gladdid my herte, valley broadening; crest shape
 880 By a cliffe unyknowe of Cristis owen makynge. gladdened
 I lepte forth lightly along by the heigges hedges
 And movid forth myrily to maistrie the hilles, merrily; master
 For til I came to the coppe couthe I not stynte top
 Of the highest hille by halfe alle other.
 885 I tournyd me twyes and totid aboute, turned around twice; looked
 Beholding heigges and holtz so grene, woodlands
 The mansions and medues mowen al newe, houses; meadows newly mown
 For suche was the saison of the same yere. season that very year
 I lifte up my eyeledes and lokid ferther
 890 And sawe many swete sightz, so me God helpe, eyelids; looked
 The wodes and the waters and the welle-springes
 And trees ytraylid fro toppe to th'erthe, festooned

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Coriously ycovrid with curtelle of grene,	covered; kirtle
	The flours on feeldes flavryng swete,	smelling
895	The corne on the croftes ycroppid ful faire,	wheat; fields cut
	The rennyng rivyere russhing faste,	running river
	Ful of fyssh and of frie of felefold kinde,	spawn of diverse sorts
	The breris with thaire beries bent over the wayes,	briars; berries; paths
	As honyssoucles hongyng uppon eche half,	
900	Chestynes and chiries that children desiren	<i>Chestnuts; cherries</i>
	Were loigged undre leves ful lusty to seen.	situated; leaves
	The hauthorne so holsum I beheulde eeke,	
	And hough the benes blowid and the brome floures;	<i>beans blossomed; broom</i>
	Peris and plummes and pesecoddes grene,	Pears; plums; peascods
905	That ladies lusty loken muche after,	spirited greatly desire
	Were gadrid for gomes ere thay gunne ripe.	men; ripened
	The grapes grouid agrete in gardyns aboute,	grew abundantly
	And other fruytz felefold in feldes and closes;	manifold
	To nempne alle the names hit nedith not here.	name
910	The conyngz fro covert covrid the bankes	<i>rabbits from shelter covered</i>
	And raughte oute a raundon and retournyd agaynes,	dashed; quickly
	Pleyed forth on the playne, and to the pitte after,	
	But any hound hente thaym, or the hay-nettes.	seized; animal traps
	The hare hied hym faste and the houndes after;	
915	For kissung of his croupe acauntwise he wente,	<i>nipping; rump zigzag</i>
	For n'ad he tournyd twies his tail had be licked,	
	So ernestly Ector ychid hym after.	<i>Hector (hound) ran</i>
	The shepe fro the sunne shadued thaymself,	<i>sheep; sun shaded</i>
	While the lambes laikid along by the heigges.	played; hedges
920	The cow with hire calfe and coltes ful faire	
	And high hors in haras hurtelid togedre,	<i>stallions in corral</i>
	And preisid the pasture that prime-saute thaym made.	high-spirited
	The dere on the dale drowe to thaire dennes,	deer; went
	Ferkid forth to the ferne and feulle doune amyddes.	bracken; fell
925	Hertz and hyndes, a hunthrid togedre,	<i>Harts; hinds</i>
	With rayndeer and roobuc runne to the wodes,	roebuck ran
	For the kenettz on the cleere were unycouplid;	<i>hunting dogs; clearing; unleashed</i>
	And buckes ful burnysshid that baren good grece,	<i>burnished (see note); fat</i>
	Foure hunthrid on a herde yheedid ful faire,	<i>antlered</i>
930	Layen lowe in a launde along by the pale,	<i>clearing; edge of the forest</i>
	A swete sight for souvrayns, so me God helpe.	

Mum and the Sothsegger

	I moved doune fro the mote to the midwardz And so adoune to the dale, dwelled I no longer, But suche a noise of nestlingz ne so swete notz	hill; middle slopes on down young birds; notes
935	I herde not this halfe yere, ne so hevenely As I dide on that dale adoune among the heigges, For in every bussh was a brid that in his beste wise Bablid with his bile, that blisse was to hire.	<i>Chirped; bill sang</i>
940	So cheerly thay chirmed and chaunged thaire notes, That what for flavour of the fruyte and of the somer floures, The smellyng smote as spices, me thought, That of my travail treuly toke I no kepe,	<i>fragrance; summer infused notice vanished from me</i>
	For al was vanesshid me fro thorough the fresshe sightes. T henne lepte I forth lightly and lokid aboute,	
945	And I beheulde a faire hous with halles and chambres, A frankeleynis freholde al fresshe newe. I bente me aboute and bode atte dore Of the gladdest gardyn that gome ever had.	<i>freehold (see note) turned aside; stopped person</i>
	I have no tyme treuly to telle alle the names	
950	Of ympes and herbes and other feeele thinges That growed on that gardyn, the grounde was so noble.	<i>saplings; many other</i>
	I passid ynne pryvely and pulled of the fruytes And romed th'aleys rounde al aboute;	
	But so semely a sage as I sawe there	<i>off the lanes</i>
955	I sawe not sothely sith I was bore: An olde auncyen man of a hunthrid wintre, Ywedid in white clothe and wisely ymade, With hore heres on his heede more thanne half white,	<i>Clothed hoary hairs fresh</i>
	A faire visaige and a vresse and vertuous to sene.	
960	A faire visaige and a vresse and vertuous to sene. His eyen were al ernest, eggid to noon ille, With a broode besmet berde, ballid a lite, ¹	<i>inclined; wickedness</i>
	As comely a creature as ever kinde wrought.	
	He was sad of his semblant, softe of his speche,	
	Proporcioned at alle poyntes and pithy in his tyme, ²	
965	And by his stature right stronge, and stalworth on his dayes. He hoved over a hyve, the hony forto kepe	<i>nature made grave; appearance tended; hive; honey</i>

¹ With a broad broom-shaped beard, a little bald

² Well proportioned and vigorous for his age

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Fro dranes that destrued hit and dide not elles;	drones; nothing else
	He thraste thaym with his thumbe as thicke as thay come,	squashed
	He lafte noon alive for thaire lither taicches.	wicked vices
970	I wondrid on his workes, as I wel might, And ever I neyed hym nere as ney as me ought, ¹	greeted; politely greeted
	And halsid hym hendily as I had lernyd; And he me grete agayne right in a goode wise,	
	And askid what I wolde, and anone I tolde	
975	My wil was to wite what man he were. “I am gardyner of this garth,” cothe he, “the grounde is myn owen,	know who he was garden
	Forto digge and to delve and to do suche deedes	
	As longeth to this leyghttone, the lawe wol I doo,	pertains; garden
	And wrote up the wedes that wyrwen my plantes;	dig; destroy
980	And wormes that worchen not but wasten my herbes, I daisshe thaym to deeth and delve oute thaire dennes.	slugs; plants dash; dig
	But the dranes doon worste, deye mote thay alle;	may they all die
	Thay haunten the hyve for hony that is ynne,	frequent; within it
	And lurken and licken the liquor that is swete,	
985	And travelyn no twynte, but taken of the beste Of that the bees bryngen fro blossomes and floures.	toil not a bit
	<i>Qui non laborat non manducet. Bernardus.²</i>	
	For of alle the bestes that breden upon erthe	breed
	For qualité ne quantité, ne question, I trowe	believe
	The bee in his bisynes beste is allowed,	
990	And provyd in his proprieté passing alle other, And pretiest in his wirching to profite of the peopule.”	proved; disposition cleverest
	“Swete sire,” sayde I, in slepe as me thoughte, “The proprieté of bees I pray that ye wolde	qualities
	Declare with thaire deedes, and of the drane eeke.”	
995	“Blethely, burne, thy beede shal bee doo ³	
	Yf thou wil tende treuly my tale to th’ende	listen
	The bee of alle bestz beste is ygouverned	creatures
	Yn lowlynes and labour and in lawe eeke.	humility
	Thay have a king by kinde that the coroune bereth,	nature

¹ And I continued to draw nearer to him as near as I should

² He who labors not does not eat. Bernard

³ Gladly, good man, your bidding shall be done

Mum and the Sothsegger

1000	Whom thay doo sue and serve as souvrayn to thaym alle, And obeyen to his biddyng, or elles the boke lieth. The highest hoole in the hyve, he holdeth hit hymself, For there thay setten hym in his see by hymself oone, And maken mansions bynethe, that mervail hit is to knowe	<i>follow</i>
1005	The bilding of the boures that the bees maken. For the curiousiste carpintier undre cope of hevene Couthe not caste thaire coples ne cuntrefete thare workes. ¹ Thaire tymbre and thaire tile stones and al that to thaym longeth, Thay feycchen hit of floures in feldes and in croftes.	<i>alone</i> <i>chambers</i> <i>most skillful; vault</i> <i>gather; pastures</i>
1010	Thayr dwellingz been dyvyded, I do hit on thaire combes, ² And many a queynt cave been cumpassid wythynne. And eche a place hath a principal that peesith al his quarter, ³ That reuleth thaym to reste and rise whenne hit nedith, And alle the principallz to the prince ful prest thay been at nede. ⁴	<i>curious room; enclosed</i> <i>orders</i>
1015	To rere thaire retene to righte alle the fautes; For thay knownen as kindly as cleric doeth his bokes Wastours that wyrchen not but wombes forto fille. Thaire workes been right wondreful, wite thou for sothe, For sum, as thou sees, thay shape thaym to the feldes	<i>raise up; faults</i> <i>stomachs</i>
1020	To souke oute the swettenes of the somer floures, And sum abiden at home to bigge up the loigges, And helpen to make hony of that thay home bringen, And doon other deedes thorough dome that is among thaym; And sum waiten the wedre, the wynde and the skyes,	<i>suck</i> <i>build; chambers</i> <i>a law</i> <i>watch; weather</i>
1025	Yf hit be teinperate tyme to travaylle or to leve. Thay eten alle at oones, and never oon by hymself, Thorough warnyng of thaire waughour, leste waste were among thaym. The bomelyng of the bees, as Bartholomew us telleth, Thair noyse and thaire notz at eve and eeke at morowe,	<i>the right time; work; stop</i> <i>watchman</i> <i>bumbling</i>
1030	Lyve hit wel, thair lydene the leste of thaym hit knoweth. ⁵	

¹ Could not design their rafters nor imitate their works

² Their living-quarters are partitioned, I prove it by their honeycombs

³ And each chamber has a leader who keeps the peace in his quarter

⁴ And all the principals are ready for the prince when they are needed

⁵ Believe it well, the least among them know their language

Mum and the Sothsegger

	The moste merciful among thaym and meukest of his deedes Ys king of bees comunely, as clergie us telleth, And sperelees, and in wil to spare that been hym under, Or yf he have oon, he harmeth ne hurteth noon in sothe.	<i>meekest</i> <i>without a stinger</i>
1035	For venom doeth not folowe hym, but vertue in alle workes, To reule thaym by reason and by rightful domes, Thorough contente of the cumpaignie that closeth alle in oone. And yf the king coveite the colours to beholde	<i>poison</i> <i>judgments</i> <i>consent; agree</i> <i>wishes</i>
	Of the fressh floures that on the feldes growen	
1040	Evermore amyddes as maister of thaym alle His place is yproperid for peril that mighte falle; And yf he fleuble or feynte or funder douneward, The bees wollen bere hym til he be better amended.	<i>in the middle</i> <i>appointed; arise</i> <i>grows weak; sinks</i> <i>support; improved</i>
	But of the drane is al the doute, the deveil hym quelle,	<i>peril; kill</i>
1045	For in thaire wide wombes thay wol hide more Thenne twenty bees, and travaillen not no tyme of the day — But gaderyn al to the gutte and growen grete and fatte And fillen thaire bagges bredeful of that the bees wyrchen.	<i>stomachs</i> <i>brimful</i>
	<i>Quorum deus venter est et gloria in confusione. paulus</i> — ¹	
	But hire hough thay ende with al thaire hole cropping: ²	
1050	Whenne thay have soope the swete, the soure cometh aftre, For whenne the bee-is bisynes is bribed fro the hyve Thorough dranes that deceipuen thaym and doon no thing elles, Thenne seen the bees thair subtilité and serven thaym thereafter	<i>sipped; sour</i> <i>bees'; lured</i> <i>deceive</i> <i>plot</i>
	As Bartholomew the Bestiary bablith on his bokes,	
1055	And of other pryvy poyntz, but I wol passe over.” “By this skile,” cothe I, “there shuld scant hony Yf every hyve hurle thus and have suche a ende.”	<i>reason; be little</i> <i>quarrel</i>
	“Be certayne,” he seide, “that is a sothe tale	
	But yf the gardyner have grace and gouverne hym the bettre	
1060	And wisely awaite whenne dranes furste entren, And nape thaym on the nolle ere thay thaire neste caicche; For been they oones ynned, his eyen shal be dasid Fro al kinde knowlache, so covert thaym helpeth.”	<i>strike; head; reach</i> <i>inside; dazed</i> <i>concealment</i>
	“Yit wolde I wite,” cothe I, “yf your wil be,	

¹ *Whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame. Paul*

² *But hear how they end with their whole gathering*

Mum and the Sothsegger

1065	Hough to knowe kindly, thorough craft of your scole, The drane that devoureth that deue is to other, By colour or by cursidnesse or crie that he maketh. Kenneth me the cunnyng, that I may knowe after.” “Thay been long and lene,” cothe he, “and of a lither hue,	<i>instruction; school what is due fraud Teach lean; evil</i>
1070	And as bare as a bord, and bringen nougnt with thaym; But have thay hauntid the hyve half yere to th’ende, Thay growen under gurdel greeter than other, And noon so sharpe to stinge ne so sterne nother.” <i>Nichil asperius paupero cum surget in altum. Gregorius.</i> ¹	<i>board been present in abdomen; fatter eager; fierce</i>
1075	“Yit I mervaille,” cothe I, “and so mowen other, Why the bees wollen not wirwe thaym by tyme, And falle on thaym fersly furst whanne thay entre, For so shuld thay save thaymsilf and thaire goodes.” “The bees been so bisi,” cothe he, “aboute comune profit,	<i>destroy fiercely thereby</i>
1080	And tendeth al to travail while the tyme dureth Of the somer saison and of the swete floures; Thayr wittes been in wirching and in no wile elles Fortho waite any waste til winter approche, That licour thaym lacke thair lyfe to susteyne.	<i>lasts no other scheme look out for drink</i>
1085	But as sone as thay see thaire swynke is ystole Thenne flocken thay to fighte, thair fautes to amende, And quellen the dranes quickly and quiten alle thaire wrongz.” “Now wol mote ye worthe,” cothe I, “for your wise tale, For hit hath muche menyng, whoso muse couthe,	<i>their labor has been stolen losses to make up kill; revenge prosper can ponder it</i>
1090	But hit is to mistike for me, by Marie of hevene, So wol I leve lightly withoute long tale. But and ye dwelle, as I dar, derive I you preyne Oone question to construe that I come fore:	<i>too mystical (i.e., obscure) dare, boldly</i>
1095	For I have soughte sevene yere and sum dele more, And mette I never man yit that me wise couthe Cleere to my knowing, cleric nother lewed, Of the matiere of Mum that moste me angrith, That he shuld have maisters mor than oon hunthrid,	<i>explain to me So I could understand; untutored</i>
	Whenne the Sothesigger shuld siche his mete. I have travailed tenne yere to temporal estatz,	<i>Whereas; seek; food</i>

¹ *Nothing is so harsh as the poor man when he is raised to an exalted position. Gregory*

Mum and the Sothsegger

- 1100 And spied of spirituel and sparid for no wreth¹
 Forto wite witterly who shuld have *know with certainty*
 The maistry, Mum or the Sothesigger.
 For alle the foure ordres agayne thaire fundacion *against; founding principles*
 Provyd hit ofte by prechement, for peril that myght falle, *preaching*
- 1105 That Mum shuld be maister and maynteyne th'ordre;
 And alle other estatz every after other *each*
 Heulden muche more with Mum thenne with the Sothesigger.
 And yf ye deme as thay doon, by dere God in hevene,
 By no witte that I wote I wol go no ferther
- 1110 Forto seke shadue there no sunne apperith.” *shadow; appears*
 “Swete soon, thy seching,” seide the freke thenne, *son; searching; man*
 “And thy travail for thy trouthe shal tourne thee to profit,
 For I wol go as nygh the grounde as Gospel us techeth *near*
 Forto wise thee wisely to thy waie-is ende. *To instruct you wisely; way's end*
- 1115 For of al the mischief and myssereule that in the royaule growtheth
 Mum hath be maker alle thees many yeres, *has been the maker*
 And eek more and moulde, I may wel advowe; *(see note); avow*
 And principally by parlement to prove hit I thenke,
 When knightz for the comune been come for that deede, *community*
- 1120 And semblid forto shewe the sores of the royaule *assembled; ills*
 And spare no speche though thay spille shuld, *should die [for it]*
 But berste oute alle the boicches and blaynes of the hert *boils; blisters*
 And lete the rancune renne oute arusshe al at oones, *spite run*
 Leste the fals felon festre withynne;
- 1125 For as I herde have, thay helen wel the rather *heal; sooner*
 Whanne th'anger and th'attre is al oute yrenne, *venom; drained*
 For better were to breste oute there bote might falle *remedy*
 Thenne rise agayne regalie and the royaule trouble. *rise up [in rebellion]; royalty*
 The voiding of this vertue doeth venom forto growe *absence; causes*
- 1130 And sores to be salvelees in many sundry places, *without balm*
 Sith souvraysns and the shire-men the sothe have eschewed *knights of the shire*
 Yn place that is proprid to parle for the royaule *appointed; speak*
 And fable of thoo fautes and founde thaym to amende. *talk; strive*
 For alle the perillous poyntz of prelatz and of other, *dangerous arguments*

¹ *And investigated spiritual authorities without stint despite anger [directed against me]*

Mum and the Sothsegger

- 1135 As peres that have pouaire to pulle and to leve,¹
 Thay wollen not parle of thoo poyntz for peril that might falle, speak; happen
 But hidene alle the hevynes and halten echone seriousness; hesitate each one
 And maken Mum thaire messaigier thaire mote to determyne, envoy; suit to judge
 And bringen home a bagge ful of boicches un-ycurid, uncured boils
 1140 That nedis most by nature ennoye thaym thereafter. must needs; vex
Qui potest contradicere peccato & non contradicit actor est peccati. Sidrac²
 And in al the kingis court there coiphes been and other coifs (lawyers)
 Mum is maister there more thenne men wenen, know
 For sum of tho segges wolle siche sidewayes, men; seek crooked ways
 Whenne thay witen wel ynow where the hare walketh. i.e., what is what
 1145 Thay lednen men the long waye and love-days breken³
 And maken moppes wel myry with thaire madde tales, fools; merry
 Forto sowe silver seede, and solve ere thay singe,⁴ heat lasts
 To have ynne thaire harveste while the hete dureth.
ffauor & premium timor & odium peruerunt verum iudicium. Canon.⁵
 Now feithfully, my ful frende, I wol not feyne to thee:
 1150 There is no wronge on this world wrought, as I wene — suppose
 Treason nother trespass ne trouble that falleth,
 Felonye ne falshede ne no faute elles, other crime
 Rancune ne riotte ne revyng of people, Wrath; plundering
 Courshidnes ne cumbrance ne no caste of guile —⁶
 1155 That Mum n'ys the maker and moste cause eeke.
 And that shal I shewe thee by exemples ynowe;
 For Lucifer the lyer that lurketh aboute liar
 Forto gete hym a grounde that he may graffe on foundation; graft on to
 And to sowe of his seede suche as he usith,
 1160 That groweth al to grevance and gurdyng of heedes, grievance; beheadings
 He leyeth his lynes along that luste may be clepid⁷

¹ Such as peers of the realm who have the power to refuse and to allow

² He who is able to denounce sin and does not is the doer of sin. Sidrac

³ They lead men the long way round and break love-days [appointed for reconciliation]

⁴ To accept bribes, and to sol-fa before they sing (see note)

⁵ Influence and reward, fear and hatred pervert true justice. Canon [Law]

⁶ Cursedness or oppression or contrivance of fraud

⁷ He spreads his lines in such a way that may be called desire

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Of oure foule flessh that foundrith ful ofte,	founders
	And of gloire of this grounde his griefz been ymade,	glory; earth; ills
	That who be hent in his hoke he shal be holde faste	caught; hook
1165	Til he be caste with covetise or sum croke elles.	cast down; crook
	<i>Seminator zizannie & agricola diaboli.</i>	<i>Sower of weeds and the devil's farmer</i>
	Thenne fareth he forth felaship to gete,	supporters
	To holde his opinion over alle thingz.	
	Whenne he is laught on the lyne he can not lepe thens,	caught; leap
	So the cursid covetise cleaveth on his herte,	cleaves to
1170	Or elles dreede forto do wel dulleth his wittz.	dread
	But seche what he seche wol and asaye eeke,	seek; appraise
	There is no sothesigger that wol assent to hym,	
	But conseilleth hym the contrary and construeth the doutes	
	And poynteth hym the perillz and pleynely telleth	points out
1175	As a sicour servant, and sheweth hym the happes.	faithful; adversities
	He shoneth for no salaire ne soulde that he fangeth, ¹	
	Ne for no likerous lyvelode ne loising of his office,	pleasant food; losing
	That he ne telleth the tirant how hit tourne wol	tyrant
	Hamward by his hows, and harme most hymself.	Homeward; house
1180	Thenne fleeth he fro his frend and to his foo tourneth,	foe
	For til he mete with Mum may he never reste.	meet
	He wol abide with no burne that botene hym wolde	amend
	Ne arayne hym arere with reasonis bridel,	rein; backwards; reason's
	So loveth he go large to lepe where hym liketh,	freely to roam (i.e., do)
1185	And kiketh faste as a colte that casteth downe hymself,	kicks
	And fondeth forto finde this freeke I have nempnyd,	person; named
	That fayne is to folowe hym for fees and robes.	
	Thenne meteth he with Mum and his matiere sheweth,	wicked servant
	That shortly assentith as a shrewed hyne,	i.e., obstacle
1190	And spareth for no spurnyng, but spedith the matiere,	
	And wircheth up with wiles a walle of deceiptes,	foundation
	Til the fals fundement falle atte laste,	strutting; step
	That thay stumblen after stroutyng and stappen no ferther,	buried
	But lyen doune on the diche, as wel nygh ydolven,	
1195	Bothe the maister and his man ymurid at oones.	imprisoned
	Suche maniere medes Mum can deserve	rewards

¹ *He does not shirk [his duty] for income or payment that he might receive*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Forto mende his maister for meete and for hure But by the feith that I finge atte vantstone Shal no Mum be my man and I may aspie,	payment received at font-stone <i>if I may be on guard</i>
1200	And namely nygh me, but next shal he never. And therefore I fende thee, by feith that thou awes, That thou lieve in no lore of suche lewed gomes That fikelly fahlen and fals been withynne, But sue the Sothesigger and seche thou no ferther.	near; next [to me]; never be forbid; owe believe deceitfully follow troubles; turns out
1205	And though hit tene for a tyme, hit tideth wel after, And He that made the molde and man with His handes Shal quite thee with a quittance whenne querellz been up Of this newe novellerie that noyeth men ofte.	reward; quittance (see note) novelty; annoys
	Hit is the holsemyst hyne for halle and for chambre To bringe boldly abedde the best of the royaulme And arise with the renke, rehershing agaynes Salomon and Seneca and Sidrac the noble.	servant <i>man</i>
1210	Hit is a sicour servant forto serve lordes, And to knighthz of the cuntré his conseil availleth;	<i>is helpful</i>
1215	And thow he dwelle with a duc and dide not elles But forto seye hym the sothe in seasonable tymes, He might serve sum day sevene yeres wages.” “Grand mercy, gardiner,” cothe I, “and God thee foryelde, ¹	though; duke
1220	For thou has demed deuely the doute I was ynne; But yit wote I not in sothe, ne am not infourmed, How to come to the court there the kempe dwellith.” “His dwellyng to discryve,” cothe he, “I do hit on alle clercz	<i>rightly</i> <i>informed</i> <i>man</i>
	That I shal teche thee treuly the tournyng to his place. Yn manis herte his housing is, as hooly writte techet,	<i>the way to</i> <i>dwelling; teaches</i>
1225	And mynde is his mansion that made alle th'estres. <i>In corde fidelis est habitacio veritatis.</i> <i>Truth's dwelling is in the faithful heart</i>	<i>rooms</i>
	There feoffed hym his Fadre freely forto dwelle, And put him in possession in paradise terrestre Yn Adam oure auncetre and al his issue after.	<i>granted</i> <i>earthly paradise</i> <i>ancestor</i>
	He spirith hym with His spirite that sprange of Hymself	<i>inspires</i>
1230	To holde that habitacion and hevene afterwardes, To serve Hym in sothenes and no souvrayn eschewe	

¹ “Many thanks, gardener,” I said, “and God reward you

Mum and the Sothsegger

	For dreede of deyeng ne no disease elles.	<i>dying</i>
	As wold God that eche gome that gre hath take in scoles ¹	
	Wolde holde that opinion and overlepe hit never,	<i>never transgress it</i>
1235	For hit was never so nedeful as now sith Noah's dayes.	<i>Noah's</i>
	But Mum wol be no martir while mytres been in sale	<i>for sale</i>
	And but the Sothesigger sey the same wordes	
	Whenne thou comys to his court, kutte of myn eres.	<i>ears</i>
	<i>Qui non intrat per ostium in ouile sed aliunde / fur est et latro. / Euangelium.²</i>	
	Now I have ywised thee the weye to his place,	<i>instructed</i>
1240	Hye thee hens to his hows and hippe evene amyddes; ³	
	For though his loigge be lite, hit is unloke ever,	<i>house; always unlocked</i>
	That thou mays intre eche day bothe erly and late,	<i>may enter</i>
	Forto walke where thou wolt wythynne and withoute	
	And to moeve of his mote in mesurable tyme	<i>advance; case in due</i>
1245	And have concours to Criste and come yn agaynes.	<i>recourse</i>
	For thay been brethern by baptesme, as the boke telleth,	
	And he is ysibbe to the Sire abouve the sevene sterres,	<i>kin; i.e., God; stars</i>
	For trouthe and the Trinité been two nygh frendes.	<i>close</i>
	Yf thou wol folowe this fode, thou mos be faire of speche	<i>person</i>
1250	And soft of thy sawys, but souvrayneté hit helpe;	<i>speech; authority</i>
	For poverté hath a pressonere whenne he doeth passe bondes. ⁴	
	And be wel ware of wiles, the world is ful of mases;	<i>deceits</i>
	And loke wel a-leehalf lest thou be beguilid,	<i>to leeward</i>
	For Mum hath a man there, and is a muche shrewe,	<i>great scoundrel</i>
1255	Antecristis angel that eche day us ennoyeth.	
	He dwellith faste by the dore and droppeth many wiles	
	Yf he might wynne over the walle with a wronge entré.	<i>get; wrongful</i>
	He debateth eche day with Do-welle withynne,	
	And the maistrie among and the mote wynneth,	<i>debate</i>
1260	And shoveth the Sothesigger into a syde-herne,	<i>side-corner</i>
	And taketh Covetise the keye to come ynne when hym liketh.	

¹ *Would to God that each man who has taken a degree in school*

² *He who enters not by the door into the sheepfold but from another place / is a thief and a robber. / Gospel*

³ *Speed you hence to his house and hop straight in*

⁴ *For poverty has a jailer when he steps over his bounds*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Thenne Dreede with a dore-barre dryveth oute the beste, ¹	
	And maketh the Sothesigger seche a newe place,	
	And to walke where he wol withoute on the grene	
1265	Til sorowe for his synnes seese hym agaynes	<i>seizes; again</i>
	And the tenaunt atourne to treuthe al his life.	<i>turn</i>
	Though thou slepe now, my soon, yit whenne thou seis tyme,	<i>son</i>
	Loke thou write wisely my wordes echone;	<i>Be sure to</i>
	Hit wol be exemple to sum men sevene yere hereafter.	
1270	And loke thou seye ever sothe, but shame not thy brother,	
	For yf thou telle hym trouthe in tirantis wise,	
	He wol rather wexe wrother thenne forto wirche after. ²	
	But in a muke maniere thou mos hym asaye,	<i>meek; examine</i>
	And not eche day to egge hym, but in a deue tyme.	<i>urge; due</i>
1275	Do thus, my dere soon, for I may dwelle no longer,	
	But fare to my good frend that I fro come.	
	I have infourmed thee faire, loke thou folowe after	<i>you properly</i>
	And make up thy matiere, thou mays do no better.	<i>may</i>
	Hit may amende many men of thaire misdeedes.	
1280	Sith thou felys the fressh, lete no feynt herte	<i>feel vigorous</i>
	Abate thy blessid bisynes of thy boke-making	<i>Slacken; activity; book-making</i>
	Til hit be complete to clapsyng, caste aweye doutes	<i>clasping</i>
	And lete the sentence be sothe, and sue to th'ende;	<i>follow through</i>
	And furst feoffe thou therewith the freyst of the royaulme,	<i>noblest</i>
1285	For yf thy lord liege allone hit begynne,	
	Care thou not though knyghtz copie hit echone,	
	And do write eche word, and wirche thereafter."	<i>act accordingly</i>
	T henne soudaynly of swevene and slepe I abrayed	<i>suddenly; dream; awoke</i>
	And woke of my wynke and waitid aboute,	<i>sleep; looked</i>
1290	Wondring on my wittz, as I wel aughte,	<i>ought</i>
	Where the gome and the gardyn and the gaye sportz	<i>pastimes</i>
	And alle the sightz that I sawe were so sone voidid.	<i>vanished</i>
	Hit ferde as a fairye, but feithfully the wordes	<i>enchantment</i>
	Were ful wise of the wye in the white clothes,	<i>man</i>
1295	And eeke nedeful and notable for this newe world,	
	And eeke plaisant to my pay, for thay putten me to reste	<i>liking</i>

¹ Then Dread with a door-bar drives out the most virtuous people

² He will sooner grow angrier than follow your advice

Mum and the Sothsegger

- Of my long labour and loitryng aboute.
 For he provid by profitable poyntz and fele
 That the Sothesigger shuld have the better
 1300 Of Mum, and the maistrie, malgré his chekes.
 He made Mum a man-sleer and amys thewed
 And likenyd hym to a lorel atte long goyng.
 And shortly hit sheweth right so by thayr werkes
 To clercz of conceipte that construen thaire workes.
- 1305 He chargid me cleerly to change not myn intent
 Til the matire of Mum were made to th'ende,
 And that I shuld seye sothe and sette no dreede
 Of no creature of clay, for Criste so hym taughte.
 And though sum men of swevenes savery but lite,
- 1310 Yit the lore of the lude shal like me ever,
 For Daniel in his dayes declarid ful ofte
 Dreemes, and undide thaym, as deede provid after;
 And Joseph the gentil, Genesis thou saye
 (The Bible bereth witnesse, a boke of bilieve),
- 1315 He mette that the mone and elleven sterres
 With the shynant sunne soudaynely at oones
 Abowid to his bidding bonairely, hym thought,
 And dide hym worship therewith, that wroth made after
 His brethern that bisied thaym to bringe hym of dawe.
- 1320 Hit semyd by his swevene thay sayden tho among thaym
 Shuld falle that thayr fadre and thay been fayne eke
 To mete hym with thayre modre in a muke wise,
 And pray hym in his pouaire pité forto have
 Of thaym, and thaym helpe fro hungre and elles.
- 1325 And so it feulle sothely, thay sought hym therafter
 Ernestly in Egipte, or elles the boke lieth,
 For hunger that thay hadde, and helpe couthe thay none
 But lowely to loute, his lordship to sike,
 Forto graunt of his grayn what hym good likid
- 1330 That for faute of thayr fode famyne long durid.
 And so hit semeth in certayne, that sum bee right trewe
 And sothe of thees swevenes of sobre men wittes,
 And proven ofte to the poynt of pourpoos in deede.
 And therefore my doute and dreede is the lasse
- 1335 To do that the burne bade that the bees kepte
- many*
i.e., in spite of him
man-slayer; ill-natured
rascal finally
understanding
have no fear
i.e., no human
little appreciate dreams
man; please
explained
interpreted
faith
dreamed; moon; stars
Bowed down; graciously
to slay him
then
meek
power
befall truly
humbly to bow; seek
what he pleased [to spare]
lack; food
some [dreams]
men's
purpose

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Forto saye sumwhat of suth er I passe How the greete of this ground been ygouverned. Thenne softe I the soores to serche thaym withynne, And seurely to salve thaym, and with a newe salve	truth; conclude powerful; earth soften; wounds
1340	That the Sothesigger hath sought many yeres And mighte not mete therewith for Mum and his ferys That bare aweye the bagges and many a boxe eekē. N ow forto conseille the king unknytte I a bagge	companions carried opened
	Where many a prývē poyse is preyntid withynne	<i>secret verse is printed</i>
1345	Yn bokes unbredid in balade-wise made, Of vice and of vertue fulle to the margyn, That was not y-openyd this other half wintre. There is a quayer of quitances of quethyn goodes,	unsealed <i>opened</i>
	That bisshoppz han begged to binde al newe,	<i>quire; receipts; bequeathed</i>
1350	And a penyworth of papir of penys that thay fongen For lemmans and lotebies in thees late dayes, And lien on the lettrure, for lawe was hit never.	<i>paper; receive</i> <i>sweethearts; whores</i> <i>lie; learning</i>
	<i>Ve illis qui vendunt peccatum propter pecuniam. Lincolnensis.</i> ¹	
	T here is a volume of visitacion of viftene leve ²	
	How persones and prestes been ypassid over	<i>parsons; overlooked</i>
1355	Thorough favour of fangyng and no faute amendid, But liggen at London in lorden courtz And pleyen lille for lalle with many leude kitte. Thay lusten for to lerne of lettrure no ferther	<i>bribery</i> <i>lie around</i> <i>tit for tat; i.e., mixes</i> <i>learning</i>
	Thenne to the lesson of laudate al thaire life-dayes,	<i>Lauds (first lesson)</i>
1360	Forto preche thaire parroisshe how Pernelle is arayed And with the tolle of the tithing fetisly atired. Thay been losers of the lawe, and lewde men maken	<i>parish; dressed</i> <i>tax; elegantly clothed</i> <i>breakers</i>
	The bolder for thaire badnes and breke the Tenne Hestes.	<i>Commandments</i>
	T here is a rolle of religion, how thay thaire rentz hadde	<i>rollbook; incomes</i>
1365	Forto parte with the poure a parcelle otherwhile, But thay been rotid in a rewe to refresshe greete, ³	<i>share; poor; portion sometimes</i>
	To maynteyne thayre manhode, and matieres thay have to doo For pleding and for pourchas, to pasture thaym the swetter,	<i>dignity; lawsuits</i> <i>feed; sweeter</i>

¹ *Woe to those who sell sin for money. Grosseteste*

² *There is a volume of fifteen pages on the archdeacon's visitation [to check on priests]*

³ *But they are rooted in a row (in the roll-book) to enrich the nobility*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	So poure thay been and penylees sith the pestilence tyme.	"poor"; <i>Great Plague</i>
1370	Y it is there a paire of pamphiletz of prelatz of the royaulme Yn the bottume of the bagge, how boldely thay ride, Thees persones and thees prebendiers pluralité that haven, ¹ Poperyng on thaire palefrays fro oone place to another,	<i>pamphlets</i>
	And lernen to lede ladies, and lewed men envien	<i>Gallivanting; palfreys escort</i>
1375	To do al thing as thay do, as by thaire deedes proveth. Thay autorisen with argumentz, and allegen for thaym That of oon kinde alle came, there can no man seye other. Thus leden thay thaire lyves in lustes and in sportes,	<i>authorize; claim a single nature play</i>
	And spenden on thaire speciales that thay spare shuld	<i>mistresses; retain</i>
1380	For pouraile of thaire parroishens, and present to be among thaym Fortho salve thaire shepe whenne thay sike were. ² But how shuld a surgeon serve wel his hyre	<i>surgeon; profession</i>
	That cometh not in sevene yere to se the sore oones — <i>Ve pastoribus</i> —	<i>Woe to the pastors glimpse; subtly</i>
	That thay shal not se oon shyne how soutelly thay wirchen.	
1385	I say not but of sum that suche manieres usen, For every wyman that is wise, she wircheth to the beste, And conseilleth al to conscience, leste there come happenes.	<i>woman misfortunes</i>
	Y it is there a copie for comunes of culmes foure and twenty How sum tellen tidingz at home uppon thaire benches,	<i>contracts news (rumors)</i>
1390	Or elles at eve after souper, or erely atte nale, And lyen on the lordz — lorelles and noon other.	<i>early; ale tell lies about; scoundrels</i>
	Thaire tales been so troublé that tournen men thoughtz	<i>confused; [they] turn men's</i>
	The more that mén musen on thaym, the madder thay been after.	
	I mervail but thay mette so, how hit might be	<i>dreamt</i>
1395	That thay finde fables and been so ferre fro thens That though thou ride rennyng, and reste but a lite —	<i>far; thence running</i>
	Fro London forth the long waye to the landis ende,	
	And comes right fro the kingis courte and his cunseil bothe,	<i>council</i>
	Fro prelatz unto peris in pryveté or elles —	<i>peers; private</i>
1400	Yit shal tidingz bee ytolde tenne dayes ere thou come, That never was of worde spoke ne wroughte, as thou shal hire.	<i>hear</i>

¹ *These parsons and these canons (prebendiaries) who have plural benefices*

² Lines 1380–81: *For the poor of their parish, and they should be present among them / To heal the wounds of their sheep (congregation) when they were sick*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Lesingz been so light of fote, thay lepen by the skyes, And as swifte as a swalwe sheutynge oute at oones As falsy forgid as though a frere had made thaym. <i>Rumores fuge ne incipias nouis auctor haberi.</i> ¹	<i>Lies; i.e., insubstantial swallow shouting</i>
1405	That harde happes mote thay have that Henry so appeiren, ² Or any lord of this lande that loveth pees and reste, Though the burne my brother were, I bid hit with my herte. Yit wol thay carpe of the coroune as thay of cunseil were, And ordeyne more in oon houre than other half wintre	<i>pray talk about</i>
1410	Al the kingis cunseil couthe wel bringe aboute. Thus mellen thay with matieres to moustre thaire wittes, And grucchen whenne the gadryng is that goeth for us alle. ³ I seye yf hit be sette so and in suche thinges, ⁴ Ful ille couthe thay corde with Changwys-is deedes,	<i>interfere; show off accord; Genghis's</i>
1415	That conquerid many a cuntré as king withynne hymself; And how he came to his coroune I shal you kenne sone. The greete God of goodnes that gouverneth alle thingz, He nempned furst his name to the sevene nacions	<i>teach</i>
1420	That were wel nygh destrued and disware of thaire lives And in disease and desperat thorough thaire double intentz. <i>Omne regnum in se diuisum desolabitur.</i> ⁵ Thaire division dide thaym harme (and so hit doeth elleswhere), That thay were sette in servitute by souvrays of the marches ⁶ That had ywonne and ywastid wel nygh alle the landz. The principalz of this peuple pryyly by nightz	<i>destroyed in despair false</i>
1425	A voice thaym folowed in vision in fourthering of thaymself, And bade thaym coroune Changwys king of al thaire peopple, A eildren man of aunsetrie that aged was a lite. And so the deede was ydo when day and tyme came after, And when this Changwys was ycorouned, as cronicle of hym telleth,	<i>elderly; noble lineage</i>

¹ *Flee from gossip lest you begin to be taken for their author*

² *May those who have damaged Henry experience misfortunes*

³ *And complain when the tax collection happens that applies to all of us*

⁴ *I say if their destiny were so appointed and in similar circumstances*

⁵ *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation*

⁶ *Such that they were placed in slavery by kings of surrounding countries*

Mum and the Sothsegger

1430	And sette in his se with sceptre on his handes, He stablid two statutz, as storie of hym writeth, I herde never harder, and yit thay holde were: ¹ The furst that he funded to fele trewe hertz And his principal peuple to prove and asaye	throne ordained <i>established to investigate loyal leaders; test</i>
1435	Was that the souvrayns of the sevene nacion Shuld sle thayre soones, th'eldest and thaire hoires; The secund that thay shuld eeke sese hym in hire lande, And yelde hit up in erniste, and geve hit hym for ever, To have and to holde in his high grace.	lords heirs <i>cede their lands to him</i>
1440	And as the king commandid accordid thay were, Consentyng to his covetise with crie alle at oones. Thay sparid not to spille blode that spronge of thaymself, ² Ne to lose thayre lordship and lande at his wille. Now forto telle trouthe, I trowe hit be no lesing,	(the lords) were agreed <i>a shout</i>
1445	Who wolde have grieved for a grote, he wold have grucched there. ³ Thus proved this prince his peuple and thaire hertz, And to feil of thaire fiance ful felly he wroughte. And whenne he wiste that his wil was not encountrid, But that he had thaire hertz al hoole at his wil,	allegiance, direly knew; thwarted
1450	He forgafe thaym thaire graunt and goodely thaym thanked. Thenne clepid he to cunseil knightz and other, And wroughte alle with oon wil as wise men shuld, And wanne wisely agen withynne a while after The lande and the lordship that thay loste had,	won back
1455	And conquerid cuntréees, as Cathayis lande, That is the richeste royaulme that reyne over hoveth.	Cathay's rain hovers over
	<i>Ecce quam bonum & quam iocundum habitare fratres in vnum.⁴</i>	
	Now by Crist that me creed, I cannot bethenke A kindly cause why the comun shuld Contre the kingis wil ne construe his werkes.	created commonalty Oppose
1460	I carpe not of knightz that cometh for the shires, That the king clepith to cunseil with other;	

¹ *I never heard of harder [laws], and yet they were followed*

² *They did not spare the blood of their own offspring*

³ *He who would have grieved for a groat would have moaned at that*

⁴ *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*

Mum and the Sothsegger

	But hit longeth to no laborier the lawe is agayne thaym.	<i>laborer</i>
	And yit hit is y-usid with unwise peopple	<i>inflames</i>
	And availleth not a ferthing, but vireth the hertz;	<i>attention</i>
1465	And tournen with thaire tales the tente of the lordes,	<i>cease</i>
	That thay leven the labour the londe to defende,	<i>borders; beat back</i>
	To bisye thaym on the bordures to bete oute oure foes,	<i>borderlands</i>
	And maynteyne the marches fro myschief and elles.	<i>chatters; harms</i>
	Thus clappeth the comun and knocketh thaymself,	<i>conclusion; oppresses</i>
1470	For the tayl of thaire talking teneth thaym ofte.	
	Thou mays lerne that lesson in the nexte lyne,	<i>hand will be harmed</i>
	For and thy heede be hurte, thy hond wol apeire;	<i>cut; overhead</i>
	And whoso hewe over heede, though his hoode be on,	<i>splinters</i>
	The spones wol springe oute and spare not the eye.	
1475	Thay finde many fautes and faillen moste thaymself	<i>duty</i>
	Of deedes of deueté that thay do shuld.	
	Thay shulde love loyally the lordz aboute,	
	That thay mighte lerne a lesson of thaire lowe hertz	
	To reule thaym by reason and by right lawe.	
1480	Thay shuld be ready to ride and renne at thayre heste	<i>bidding</i>
	For soulde and for silver as thay might aserve,	<i>payment; deserve</i>
	And obeye to thayre bidding and bable no ferther —	
	<i>Potencioribus pares esse non possumus. Sapiencia</i> — ¹	
	For suche lewed labbing the lande doeth apeire.	<i>chattering; injure</i>
	But God of His goodnes graunt thaym to amende,	
1485	To knowe what thaire kinde is and commenche bityme	<i>begin soon</i>
	The cunseille of Changwys and construe no ferther,	
	But love so oure liege al oure life-dayes	<i>liege lord</i>
	That he may leede us with love as hymself liketh.	<i>rule</i>
	T here is a scrowe for squyers that asquare walken	<i>scroll; aloof</i>
1490	Whenne a tale is ytolde, yf hit touche greeete ²	<i>have robbed</i>
	That piled han poure men of penys and of goodes.	
	Thay wol neghen no neer but yf thay noye thenke ³	<i>give evidence; bear down</i>
	And alleigge for the lord and lawe doune bere,	
	Leste soulde and thaire service cesse al at ones,	<i>pay</i>

¹ *We cannot be equals with the more powerful. Wisdom*

² *When a court pleading is told, if it concerns powerful men*

³ *They will approach no nearer unless they think to cause trouble*

Mum and the Sothsegger

1495	Thus poure men pleynzt been pledid ful ofte, For reasonis reteneue mostereste nedis There robes rehercyn the rightz of the parties. T here is a writte of high wil ywritte al newe, Yknytte in a cornier of the bagge-ende,	lawsuits must needs rest When justices; sum up cranny cursed irritant; costly similar power equality errs; contends humble; superior property
1500	And is a courssid couraige and costeful bothe That serveth al for souvraysns of semblable pouaire; For ever egalité errith and stryveth More thanne the mene man with his more heigher. For whenne a matiere is ymooved among men of goode,	cursed irritant; costly similar power equality errs; contends humble; superior property
1505	Though there happe no harme save hertz aggrieggid, ¹ Thay stele into strivynge and strien thaymself And stiren so that stuffure and store doon apeire, ² And eeke losen thaire good loos with thaire lewed pride, And annoyen thaire neighborowes nyne myle aboute.	steal; contention; destroy reputation
1510	For every feithful frend wol funde to helpe And leve there he loveth, for lothe or elles; Suche wilfulnes and wisedame wonen asunder. <i>wisdom dwell apart from one another</i> Thou maybs baathe on a brooke to the breggurdelle, But passe not the polle forther for peril that foloweth.	try believe; harm bathe; waist head
1515	<i>Ira odium generat concordia nutrit amorem.</i> ³ “Thus” — seyeth that oon side — “shule I obeye Or make amendes or mukyn myself? Nay, are I worke suche a worke, but my witte faille, Hit shuld stande right straite with stoone of my houses, For lever thenne to lowe me while my life dureth	humble before rather; abase myself
1520	I wol do a deede that I dide never: Sille for silver my sherte and my clothes, Or borowe til I begge thenne bowe oones. And I were caste in my cuntré and hit knowe were I shuld be eschewid and oversette ofte.	Sell submit defeated; region shunned; disgraced
1525	Ney, I wol maynteyne my manhoode, maulgré that gruccheth, ⁴ And spare swete splices and spende on my foes.”	

¹ Though no damage occurs except aggravated hearts

² And behave such that household goods and provisions are damaged

³ Wrath inspires hatred; peacefulness nourishes love

⁴ Nay, I will maintain my dignity, despite those who complain

Mum and the Sothsegger

	That other side seyeth right so and the same wordes, As wilde and as wode and as wrothe eeke, And braggeth and bosteth and wol brenne watiers 1530 And rather renne in rede blode thenne arere oones.	<i>the same</i> <i>burn waters</i> <i>retreat</i>
	<i>Ira requiescit / non in sanitas mentis / ac corporis / Salomon.¹</i> Thus thay blowe as a bore til bothe repente. Hit is no witte, as I wene, to waste so silver For a woode wil and wretthe in thy herte, And no harme on thy heede in hande ne in goodes,	<i>bluster; boar</i> <i>mad; anger</i>
1535	But yhurte on the hert with a high pride. For suche maniere medling al to many tymes, Though hit gaine in the bigynnynge, hit groweth so afstre That lymes been yloste and lyfes ful ofte.	<i>grows to such an extent</i> <i>limbs; lives</i>
	<i>Superbia generat omnem maliciam vsque ad mortem. Salomon.²</i> And eeke hit is no worldly witte, as me thenketh,	
1540	To toille there no trespass is do to accountz. ³ But hit semeth to a souvrayn that ynnesight lacketh, Whenne his mynde is ymoovid to medle in his ire, That though his grounde be not goode and he gaste were	<i>insight</i> <i>moved</i> <i>[legal] cause; if; fearful</i>
	Or feynte forto folowe but fersse to th'ende, ⁴ Hit shuld be aretted for reprouf whenne hit were rehercyd, And he ysette the shorter at shire and aboute. ⁵	
1545	Suche cursid construyng accombreth the people. For cuntry that conceipt I can make a reason, And a trewe, as I trowe, whoso taketh hede:	<i>set down; reproach</i> <i>against; notion; argument</i>
	Whenne rancune thee redeth to reere debatz, Or angre at attre arteth thy herte Fortho commenche a cause not cleere in the winde, ⁶	<i>mount debates</i> <i>bitterness constrains</i>
1550	Bowe ere thou breste whenne thou arte bette yfourmyd, And reule thee by reason and renne not to faste,	<i>Yield; burst; informed</i> <i>run</i>

¹ *Wrath may not rest in a sound mind or body. Solomon*

² *Pride brings forth all wickedness even unto death. Solomon*

³ *To contend at law where there is no offence due to property [recorded in an account]*

⁴ “*If he were slow to prosecute, though eager for his object*” (D&S)

⁵ *And he thought less of in the shire and round about*

⁶ *To inaugurate legal proceedings whose basis is not clear*

Mum and the Sothsegger

1555	But gife hit up with good wille whenne thy grounde failleth, And falle of with fayrenes leste fors thee assaille. ¹ For yf thou leve are thou ligge thenne wol thy loos springe, ² But yf thy tale be trewe, to toylle thou hatis.	case; just; contend; hate
1560	So wol the worde walke with oon and with other And cumforte thy cuntré in cumpas aboute To be nere at thy nede another tyme after, And bilieve loyally, in lawe yf thou were,	case
	Or medlist with a matiere, thy mote were trewe,	
	Elles woldes thou not worche on hit longe.	
1565	T here is a raggeman rolle that Ragenelle hymself Hath made of mayntenance and motyng of the peopple, Hough thay sheve at sises and sessions aboute,	legal document; i.e., the Devil litigation
	And halen so the hockerope, oon halfe agayne other,	shove; courts of assizes pull; hock-rope (see note)
	Til the strong steriers and styvest on the heedes	inciters; i.e., most bull-headed
1570	Strifen so and streicchen streight adoune the poure. Gold and good thaym glewith so, thay wol not go asundre, ³ Til thay have haled the houslord oute atte halle-dore	Contend; pull down dragged; house-lord
	And drawen hym clene fro his dees; he dysneth there nomore.	dais; dines
	This same cursid custume the coroune doeth apeyre	damage
1575	And bringeth a bitter byworde abrode among the peopple, And is in every cuntré but a comune tale That yf the pouer playne, though he plede ever	proverb; abroad poor man
	And hurleth with his higher, hit happeth ofte-tyme That he wircheth al in waste and wynneth but a lite.	litigate; superior in vain
1580	Thus laboreth the loos among the comune peopple That the wacker in the writte wol have the wors ende; Hit wol not gayne a goky a grete man forto plede,	spreads the report weaker
	For lawe lieth muche in lordship sith loyauté was exiled,	benefit a poor man since
	And poure men pleyntes penylees abateth.	complaints conclude penniless
1585	But David demed not so, I do hit on his bokes.	prove it by
	<i>Munera super innocentem non accipies.</i> <i>Do not take bribes against the innocent</i>	
	Y it is there a forelle that I forgate that frayed is a lite,	book cover
	How the fleuble fareth that folowed bee in shires	weak; prosecuted

¹ And withdraw gracefully lest force assaults you

² For if you quit before you are defeated then will your reputation rise

³ Gold (money) and property so unite them that they cannot be separated

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Whenne thay grienfen greefe, though the guilte be lite.	vex the powerful
	And he have any hors or elles hedid bestes,	horses; beasts with horns
1590	He shal be hourled so in high courte and holde so agogge That hym were bettre lose his lande thenne long so be toylid; ¹	assaulted; in expectation
	Suche crokes been ycovrid and coloured under lawe, To strue a man with strength the statutz been so made.	tricks; covered; cloaked destroy; statutes
	For though men pleede and poursuye and in thaire playntz falle	prosecute; withdraw
1595	And newe thaym aftra nonsuytes nynetene hunthred, Withouthe grounde or guilte, but forto gete a bribe,	re-open; failures (see note)
	Yit shal thay have no harme though thay hurle ever.	contend
	But shuld thay picche and paye at eche pleynte-is ende	pay ready money
	And compte alle the costz of men of court and elles,	reckon
1600	And taske al the trespass, as trouthe wolde and reason, Thay wolde cesse sum tyme for shedding of thaire silver.	tax; violations
	I seye as wel of simple men that suen agenst grete,	spending
	And of the poure proute that peyren ofte thaire better,	the same; sue
	That causelees accusen thaym to king and to the lordz,	proud folk; injure
1605	As I doo of ducz that suche deedes usen;	without cause
	For lordz and laborers been not like in costes.	dukes; employ
	Hit wold pese the peuple and many pleyntes bate	i.e., what they can spend
	And chaunge al the chauncellerie and chevallerie amende	pacify; ease
	And ease be to every man that been of evene states,	knights
1610	And solas be to souvrays and to thaire servantz alle,	equal estates
	And a miracle to meen men that mote lite cunne. ²	
	Were this oon yere y-usid as I have declarid —	
	That of every writte withoute wronge there were amendes made,	
	And paye for alle the costes at every pleynte-is ende,	
1615	And tolle for the trespass as trouthe wolde and reason — The lawe wold like us wel, and ever the lenger the bettre.	pay
	But pouaire of prerogative that poynth hath reservyd	serve; longer
	That every fode have fredome to folowe unypunysshid.	power; prerogative
	But Civile seith us not so, that serveth for al peopple	man; prosecute
1620	That habiteth undre hevene, hethen men and other.	Civil Law
	And Cristis lawe is ycanonized Canon, yf thou loke,	live; heathen
	And eeke the glorious Gospelle, grounde of alle lawes,	Canon Law

¹ That it would be better for him to lose his land than to be so long in litigation

² And a miracle to poor men who know little of legal debate

Mum and the Sothsegger

	Techeth us a trewe texte that toucheth this ilke matiere.	concerns; same
	For in my conscience ne in my credo yit couthe I never vele	feel
1625	But that oure lawe leneth there a lite, as me thenketh. T here is a librarie of lordes that losen ofte thaymself Thorough lickyng of the lordship that to the coroune longeth, And weneth hit be wel ydo; but wors dide thay never Thenne sith thay gunne that game, I grounde me on reason.	<i>is biased a whole history infringing upon</i>
1630	For every wighte wote wel, but yf his witte faille, That hit is holsum forto have a heede of us alle, That is a king ycorouned to kepe us under lawe, To put us into prisone whenne we passe boundes.	<i>one head</i>
	For but we had a souvrayn to sette us into reste,	peace
1635	Thees rechelees renkes wolde renne on eche other. Thenne of fyne fors hit foloweth, as me thenketh, That a certayne substance shuld be ordeynid To susteyne this souvrayn that shuld us governe. And so I wote wel hit was atte furst tyme,	<i>irresponsible men</i>
1640	But now hit is bynome hym th' olde and the newe, Notwithstanding statutz ful strattely ymade	<i>taken away from him (see note)</i>
	To stable many statutz and strong lawes make.	<i>strictly</i>
	But execucion falle, what may hit availle ¹	<i>firm up</i>
	Ne more thenne the mose may or the Maij floures	<i>moss</i>
1645	To breke doune bastiles that beste is ymade? Hit is as dede as a dore nayle, though the dome come after, Withoutte execucion thees wise men hit knoweth.	<i>towers</i>
	Thees knightz of the conseil that nygh the king dwellen,	<i>dead; doornail</i>
	And eeke lordz ylettred of oone lawe and other,	<i>i.e., civil and canon law</i>
1650	Forto kepe his coroune fro covetous people, Han pulled thaymself the peres right to the pere stalke,	<i>pears</i>
	And lickid so the leves he hath the leste dele,	<i>sampled; (the king) has; least part</i>
	For thay holden of his honour halfendele and more.	<i>i.e., more than half</i>
	This was grounde and bigynnyng of gurdyng of heedes,	<i>beheadings</i>
1655	And eeke more, and mourdre, and manyfolde wronges That han yfalle for foly withynne thees fourty wintre.	<i>murder; crimes</i>
	For th'egre envy that eche had to other	<i>bitter envy</i>
	Dide thaym preece to be pryvy and put awaye the beste,	<i>urge; secret</i>

¹ Unless the laws are executed, what may they avail

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- But muche more for the mede to make thaymself riche
 1660 Thenne to cunseille the king of the comune wele,
 Or for any deue dome or defence of the royaulme *appropriate judgment*
 This same cursid custume oure coroune hath apeyred, *weakened*
 And cause is most that comunes collectours haten, *commons hate tax collectors*
 For nedis moste oure liege lord like his estat
 1665 Have for his houshold and for his haynous werres *heinous wars*
 To maynteyne his manhoode, there may no man seye other, *dignity; otherwise*
 But of his owen were the beste, whoso couthe hit bringge; *bring about*
 To lyve uppon his laboriers, hit may not long indure. *laborers*
 Whenne hit is haled al away, thenne is wo the nexte *carried*
 1670 To you that shullen silver to solve thenne were tyme. *owe; time [to pay up] (see note)*
 For trusteth right treuly, talke what men liketh,
 And wendith and trendith twys in oon wike, *And twist and turn twice in one week*
 And clepith to your cunseil copes and other, *i.e., clerics and others*
 And pleyne atte parlement, but yf the deede prouve
 1675 That the coroune in his kinde come ynne agaynes,
 Clene in his cumpas with croppes and braunches, *circle*
 Lite and a lite, right as the lawe asketh, *Little by little*
 Wel mowe we wilne and wisshe what us liketh
 And eeke waite after welthe but as my witte demeth,
 1680 Oure wynnyng and worship wol be the lasse *gains; praise; less*
 With knight and with comune til the king have
 Alle hoole in his hande that he have oughte.
 There is a copie of covetise, how conscience is reuled *writing on greed; ruled*
 Whenne he hath gadrid a greete bagge and good at his wil,
 1685 And wrongfully ywonne hit thorough wiles of his hert,
 And is yrunne in riches thorough ryfling of the people, *robbing*
 He maketh maisons deu therewith whenne he may live no lenger; *hospitals*
 But while he had power of the penyes, the poure had but lite.
 Hit is a high holynes and grete helth to the soule
 1690 A man to lyve in lustes alle his life-dayes
 And have no pitie on the poure, ne parte with thaym nother, *share*
 But holde hit ever in his hande til the herte breke. *it breaks one's heart*
 But thenne he shapeth for the soule whenne the sunne is doun¹,
 But while the day durid he delte but a lite; *gave [to charity]*

¹ *But then he makes provision for the poor when the sun goes down (i.e., at the end of his life)*

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1695	Now muche moste his merite be that mendeth so the poure, That gifeth his goode for Godis sake whenne his goste is passed. ¹	benefits
	T here is a lite of a testament that I tolde never, How pryvyly thay been provid and yput aside, For so the silver be ysolvid for the seal of th'office	section; will surreptitiously; probated paid; seal [on the will]
1700	And the feis alle yfunge, thay folden thaym togedre And casten thaym in a coffre leste thay copied were, And sith thay seure thaym by thaymself and seyen thees wordes:	fees; received assure
	"Hit is no wisedame forto wake Warrok while he slepeth." ² <i>i.e., a ferocious dog</i>	
	For though a quynzieme were yquethe, oon quittance shal be geven ²	
1705	Though executours afterwarde execute hit never, Ne do noght for the dede, as I do whenne I slepe.	nothing
	And yit thay seyen for thaymsilf right a subtile reason: "Why shuld we dele for the dede? He dide not while he mighte.	
	He made us in his mynde among alle his frendes	
1710	To be his trewe attourneys and treete for his debtes, For so that thay have halfendele, thay mowe thaym holde content. ³	
	Yit wol not the good go so ferre, so mote we grounde oure tale, For I wol seye for myself, seye thou whenne thee liketh,	
	Yf we do as he dude, may no man deme us yvel,	(the testator) did; badly
1715	Ne rightfully by reason reprove us hereafter.	censure according to law
	He was bothe ware and wise while he was on live,	guarded; alive
	And me lust not be lewed leste I fare the wors.	incautious
	His custume was to kepe his good, so lete us kepe hit eke, And thenne after oure deeth day lete dele for us alle,	
1720	For oure executours aftre us shal have the same charge."	directive
	Thus thay chiden with charité and chacheth eche other,	harass
	That til the Day of Dome the dele is not parfourmid.	Judgment; dole; distributed
	Y it is there a poynt of prophecie how the peuple construeh And museth on the mervailles that Merlyn dide devyse,	
1725	And redith as right as the Ram is hornyd, ⁴ And helpe me the high God, I holde thaym halfe amasid.	mad
	For there nys wight in this world that wote bifore eve	

¹ Who bestows his property for God's sake when his spirit has departed

² For although a fifteenth were bequeathed, a receipt shall be given

³ For so long as they have half of it, they must hold themselves contented

⁴ And interpret as straightforwardly as the Ram is horned (*i.e., convolutedly*)

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	How the winde and the wedre wol wirche on the morowe,	<i>weather; behave</i>
	Ne noon so cunnyng a cleric that construe wel couthe	
1730	Ere Sunneday a sevenyght what shal falle. ¹	
	Thus thay muse on the mase on mone and on sterres	<i>in confusion on moon</i>
	Til heedes been hewe of and hoppe on the grene,	<i>chopped off</i>
	And al the wide world wondre on thaire workes.	
	Y it sawe I there a cedula soutelly indited	<i>schedule; subtly written</i>
1735	With tuly silke intachid right atte rolle-is ende,	<i>red; attached</i>
	Ywritte ful of wordes of woundres that han falle,	<i>Written; wonders</i>
	And fele-folde ferlees wythynne thees fewe yeris,	<i>many different marvels</i>
	By cause that the clergie and knighthoode togedre	
	Been not knytte in conscience as Crist dide thaym stable.	<i>establish</i>
1740	For who so loketh on the lawe may lerne, yf hym like,	
	Thayre ordre and office and how thay ought wyrche.	
	For thay folowe no foote of thaire forne-fadres,	<i>footstep; forefathers</i>
	I do hit on thaire deeth-day, and deme no ferther,	
	For seurly sumtyme I sawe hit not late	<i>recently</i>
1745	Yn cronicle of clercz and kingz lygnées	<i>lineages</i>
	How prelatz of provinces pride moste hatid	
	For the theme that thay taughte was tachid on thaire hertz.	<i>fastened</i>
	Thay preached the peuple and provyd hit thaymself	
	And were lanternes to lewed men to lyve thaym after.	<i>i.e., examples for</i>
1750	Thay pourchachid no prelacies with prince nother elles ²	
	Thorough preyer ne poundes but thorough proufe of thayre workes.	

¹ What should happen a week before Sunday

² They purchased no church appointments from a prince or someone else

Notes

Abbreviations: **B**: Barr's edition of *Mum*; **D&S**: Day and Steele's edition of *Mum*; **IMEV**: Carlton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *Index of Middle English Verse*; **MED**: *Middle English Dictionary*; **MEPW**: Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings*; **MS**: MS British Library Additional 41666; **OED²**: *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.; **PP**: *Piers Plowman*, ed. Schmidt; **PPCr**: *Piers the Plowman's Crede*, in *6ES*; **RiR**: *Richard the Redeless*; **6ES**: Dean, ed., *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*; **Sk**: Skeat's 1886 edition of *RiR*; **Sz**: Szarmach's transcription of the MS; **Usk**: *The Chronicle of Adam Usk*, ed. Given-Wilson; **WGO**: Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*; **Wr**: Wright's 1838 edition of *RiR*

- 1 *Hough*. A corrector D&S designate “M” has written *how* in the left-hand margin. D&S differentiate among four main correctors or editors (A, B, C, and D), who place a dot over the word to be corrected, and other correctors, including M (whom they suspect is the scribe of the MS); N (who underlines words to be corrected); P (who inserts with a caret); S, in two hands (who uses interlineation or marginal corrections); O (who designates words for omission); and L (who inserts single letters). Both Barr and Doyle believe that fewer editors and correctors were involved in marking the MS. That material has been lost from the beginning is clear from the lack of a large initial letter (such as the one that appears at line 29).

The sentiment and wording of line 1 is repeated in line 1650. *covetous peuple* may refer to Henry's first supporters — notably the Percies of Northumberland, including the Duke of Northumberland and his son, Henry Percy (called Hotspur) — who helped put him on the throne but who felt neglected once he became king.

- 4 *profit of grete*. MS: *profit of oper*. Emended by D&S and B, adopting the marginal suggestion of one of the correctors (called, by D&S, “A”). The MS's *oper* seems to be dittography (inadvertent repetition) from the *oper* at the end of line 3. The “A” corrector has placed a dot over the *oper* of line 4 and has written the word *grete* in the right-hand margin. In this line “A” has placed a dot over *departid* and, in the left margin, written *parte*, with a dot over it.
- 5 *Leste uncunnyng come yn and caste*. So MS; D&S and B use the corrector's marginal gloss “comyn,” interpreting *come yn* as the commons. I read *uncunnyng*

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substantively rather than adjectivally. D&S comment: “*caste vp þe halter*: cast off restraint. Perhaps ‘þe’ should be inserted before ‘vncunnyng’” (p. 106).

- 6 According to K. B. McFarlane, Henry IV’s councils were not fixed, predictable sessions but instead were “nebulous” and “indistinct.” See “Council and Parliament” in *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 82–89.
- 7 *smaicche of the smoke*. The word *smaicche* — “taste” — signifies a sampling of something (Old English *smæc*), usually something pleasant (as nectar), but here the connotation is ironic.
- 9 *tymbre not to high*. This wording seems to have been suggested by : “þei tymbred nouȝt so heiȝe” (*PP*, B III.85; compare A III.74, C III.84).
- 11–12 *For two yere . . . leued men tellen*. The idea here is that even a loyal Treasurer may make a small fortune in a brief time of service. D&S summarize: “Even if the Treasurer be honest, he can do well for himself, for in two years (men say) he will make enough to live as a lord for twenty years.” The “A” corrector wants to substitute “leude,” presumably ignorant, for *leued*, men who may be believed or men in the know.
- 17 *Sergeantz . . . atte barre*. The A text of *PP* contains similar language: “Seriauntis, it semide, þat seruide at þe Barre; / Pleted for penis and poundes þe lawe, / And nouȝt for loue of Oure Lord vnlose here lippes ones” (Prol.85–87). “Sergeants were the most prestigious and powerful lawyers of Chaucer’s time; they ranked above esquires, and were the equal of knights. Their group, called the Order of the Coif, was small (only twenty-one sergeants were created during Richard II’s reign), chosen from among the most accomplished apprentices who had spent at least sixteen years studying and practicing law. They had exclusive rights to plead cases in the Court of Common Pleas, and all judges were chosen from this group” (Patricia J. Eberle in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 811).
- 18 *prentys of court*. The apprentices “were practising lawyers who had received legal training in the central law courts, or . . . students who were currently receiving such training. These lawyers might practise as advocates, attorneys, advisers, clerks or officials.” See Maureen Jurkowski, “Lawyers and Lollardy in the Early Fifteenth Century,” in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston

Notes

and Colin Richmond (New York:St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 155, 156 respectively.

19 *reeche not of the riche*. The MS does not include *not*. D&S and B properly insert it.

24 *graunteth thaym*. So D&S, B; MS: *graunteth hym*.

with a good chiere. The meaning of *chiere* is usually “demeanor,” “countenance,” but a corrector or reader — identified by D&S as the “E” corrector, has written “wille” in the right-hand margin.

25 *writtz . . . waxe*. The narrator asks that the “penylees” be granted legal redress in the form of *writtz* and then sealed in *waxe*. In some Middle English complaint poems the green wax sealing legal writs was reason for consternation. See, for example, *Song of the Husbandman*, note to line 55, in *MEPW*, p. 261.

27 *mayntenance*. Maintenance was the practice of wrongfully supporting one side in litigation, often accompanied by threats of violence or other forms of intimidation. A “meyntenour,” explains Sk in his note to *RiR* II.78, is “a technical term for one who abets another in wrong-doing, and supports him in defeating justice” (II, p. 292).

29 *Now*. There “is space left for cap N; only small letter for prompt to rubricator” (Sz).

38 *Sothesigger*. My convention throughout the text and notes of the poem is to capitalize the one “Sothesegger” who is the object of the narrator’s quest (parallel to Langland’s Piers Plowman) but to use lower-case “sothesegger” for the generic type: “the Sothesegger” versus “a sothesegger.”

41 *And yf . . . undre*. The idea here is that if a soothsayer oversteps what people want to hear, he will be summarily ousted.

42–43 *There is . . . yere after*. My translation of these lines is speculative and based on the readings of D&S and B. The sense of the lines seems to be that the Soothsayer provides his own clothes because no one wants to sponsor him. Hence he is called, in line 44, “Alexander without livery.”

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- 42–46 *There is . . . But the.* The left-hand margin has been cut away so as to omit the first letters of lines 42–44 and the first words of lines 45–46. D&S reconstructed them, and I follow their suggestions.
- 52 *pure poynt . . . sothe.* The truth in effect lances the wound and drives out the disease of falseness and corruption.
- 61 *peynture.* MS: *preynte.* Stricken, with *peynture* written faintly in the margin. The scribe reduplicated the subsequent *preynte*, though the reduplication makes sense too. The impression in this case is of a coin which has greased someone's palm. The "crosse" in line 66 also refers to the impression from a coin.
- 66 *crosse.* See note to line 61.
- 76 *For.* MS: *Fort.* D&S and B emend to *For.* The "D" corrector suggests *now.*
- 81a *Si peccauerit . . . corrigē etc.* The wording is based on Matthew 18.15: "But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone." The Latin is in the right-hand margin and marked by an editor to be placed after line 81.
- 87–89 *And he . . . to have.* D&S translate the important part of these lines: "'He that is most of might shall . . . have regard of a reasonable man,' i.e. thyself" (p. 107). The "he" who is "most of might," however, might be Christ rather than a temporal lord.
- 88 *soeth.* "So P (dot and caret)" (D&S, p. 29).
- 106 *mede.* So D&S, B. MS: *soulde* but "A" corrector suggests *mede.*
- 113 *though . . . after.* I.e., although what the Soothsayer said proved to be true after he left the service for which he was held to be foolish.
- 114–24 *But muche . . . woo falle.* The narrator wonders that *oure coronued king* (line 115) does not have a soothsayer to help govern the realm. The poor, he claims, have many such to help them manage their wealth and guide them when misfortune should arise. King Henry did in fact have at least one advisor who risked his wrath with stern advice.

Notes

115a *Et nunc . . . David.* This is based on Psalm 2.10 and is inserted in the right-hand margin next to line 120, but with a mark indicating that the Latin should be inserted after line 115, which is where it appears in D&S.

116 *saye.* So D&S, B, based on a correction (“B”). MS: *telle.* The scribe may have anticipated the beginning of line 120. At the top of fol. 2a and “keyed to end of 116” (Sz) four verse lines in English are appended:

Thorough mayntenance and mysrewle of maisters above
And al is consail to þe king / he knoweth not þe fawtes
For lacke of a loresman / þat lesinges hateth
That wold telle hym þe trouthe / and trippe not aside (Sz’s transcription)

120 Next to this line appears the following verses (transcribed by Sz):

And souuerayns soethly / þay serue but a whiles / yit shuld hit lengthe þayre lyves / and
þe lawe mende.

At the bottom of fol. 2a similar verses appear, with the “margin cut away” for the opening words (transcribed by Sz):

[And] souuerayns soethly / þay serve but a whiles
[Yit] shuld hit lengthe þayre lives / and þe lawe mende.

124 *ware, ere.* There is a caesural mark, a virgule, between these two words, which I have marked with a comma in the text.

134–39 *Hough . . . But.* The margin for these lines is lost. I follow D&S’s reconstruction of the initial letters of the first words of these lines.

141–42 *Forto telle . . . with other.* A soothsayer — “fabuler” — could enlighten the king as to the true situation (the *texte*) without obfuscating it with misleading rhetoric (the *glose* or *glozing*). This truth teller could explain how words work with respect to both truth and falsehood (the *oon* and the *other*).

143 *king . . . londe.* A reference to Henry Bolingbroke’s landing at Ravenspur on his return from exile in France in July, 1399, at which time Henry was seeking allies for his cause against Richard, who had confiscated his father’s estates. This action is mentioned at the beginning of *RiR*. See note to Prol.11.

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- 148 *the crosse*. Perhaps the Bristol cross featured in *RiR* Prol.56 (“the rode of Chester”). “The market-cross was everywhere the place where proclamations were made” (D&S, p. 108).
- 149 *and*. I adopt B’s excellent emendation, since customs and taxation of the people — the latter much discussed in this poem — are different things but both cause for abuses. A corrector has inserted the word *and* above the line between *custume* and *of*.
- 152–55 *But piez . . . owen peeris*. D&S in their marginal paraphrase of these lines say, “The magpies who once disputed with the parrot were punished, and dare not now complain openly” (p. 32). In their explanatory notes they offer: “Once some of the commons discussed their grievances with some one of higher rank, and consequently suffered fines and imprisonments. Now they dare not speak, except privately among themselves” (p. 108). The semantics of the lines do not permit such confidence about the relationship between and among the magpies and the parrot, as B observes in her discussion of *parle* (line 155). The magpies may be holding a conclave with or disputing with the parrot — they may be allies or foes. B speculates that if the magpies and parrot are allies, then these lines may refer to the Cirencester rebellion of 1399–1400. The magpie would be Sir Ralph Lumley, “whose heraldic charge was three parrots.” The rebels “were not executed for their part in the rebellion but were imprisoned for a short time in the Tower of London. This would fit the *caige* of line 153” (p. 299).
- 166 *mynde*. This is the reading that a corrector suggests in the left-hand margin. The MS reads *warne* but that word does not alliterate according to the poet’s usual pattern. D&S and B, on the strength of line 285, emend *mynde* to *mynne*, “remind.”
- 169 *yblent*. So MS (*y blent*); D&S and B emend to *y-brent* (“burned”) on the strength of a corrector.
- 176 *haylstones*. These hailstones are part of the extended metaphor of the silencing of truth, which is hounded, shouted down, shunned, and injured by princes. The extended metaphor begins at line 171.
- 179 *fro greve*. So D&S, B, based on a corrector’s *oute of greue*; MS: *fro grayen* (perhaps anticipating *his grayne* later in the same line).

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- 180 A corrector or editor has added, at the bottom of the page, “that draweth al to goodnesse and gouernaunce after” for insertion into the text between lines 180 and 181 (Sz).
- 181 *goyng uppon erthe* means simply “alive,” as also at line 212.
- 196 *tabart*. A tabard was a short gown, often emblazoned and worn over armor. The phrase “tuck at your tabard” means to pay someone back.
- 205a *Here . . . the Sothsigger*. This statement occurs in the right-hand margin. Previous editions have not included it in the textual portion.
- 228–31 *Leste . . . Of . . . That . . . There*. The left-hand margin is torn for the initial letters of these words. I follow D&S’s reconstruction of them.
- 234 *not* is suggested by a corrector and is required for the sense.
- 238 *Forto . . . passe*. D&S gloss “Seeing that thy desire (to talk) will set aside thy understanding” (p. 109). Mum upholds the virtues of reticence and silence, which can be admirable qualities. But the debate between Mum and the Soothsayer concerns when it is better to speak out and properly advise the king and his council than to hold one’s tongue.
- 240 *knytte . . . knotte*. D&S explain this phrase as “broke off what I intended to do” (p. 110); B glosses as “to conclude” with the sense of “coming to a decision.” But the meaning here must be something like paused for the length of time it takes to compose a knot: the narrator as Soothsayer appropriately stops talking for a time after Mum’s harangue.
- 244 *sittith*. So D&S and B; MS: *fittith*.
- 247 *for oyle*. Oil, as in line 271, is associated with flattery. See *RiR* III.186 and note.
- 254 *Oon . . . waye*. This phrase means “only twenty minutes” (time measured by distance). Lines 252–54 may be paraphrased “You would be better served to follow me (Mum) for eighty long years than be a soothsayer, God help me, for twenty short minutes.”

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- 256 *contra* here and in line 262 has the sense of a contrarious speaker, someone who causes strife with his words. D&S translate this line “have nothing to do with contradiction” (p. 110).
- 262 *coveite . . . cumpaignie*. The syntax of this phrase and of lines 261–62 is difficult. B emends *his cumpaignie* to *thy cumpaignie*. The meaning is clearly that nobody will want to be in the same room with Soothsayer while he is so quarrelsome as to have Contra for a companion.
- 266 *casting*. So D&S and B; MS: *caſting*. My translation of this line is based on B’s glosses.
- 269 *glaunsyng of boltes*. These shafts are metaphorical. The Soothsayer says Mum keeps himself well out of harm’s way through his flattering, non-controversial speech.
- 272 *bouche . . . cnaue*. Mum knows when to keep quiet so as not to interfere with his sinecure from the court (his *bouche*) for both his beast and his serving-man. The MS reads *caue* rather than *cnaue*, the emendation formulated by D&S and adopted by B.
- 273 *yit*. So a corrector, D&S, and B; MS: *yf*.
- 274a *ffacientis . . . in secretis etc.* Attributed to Gregory the Great in the *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. G. Holmstedt, EETS o. s. 182 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 63 and *passim*. The English translation reads: “Wyth-outen doute he has the gylte of the doyngne that reckeȝ not to amende that thyng that [he] myghte correcte, et cetera.”
- 276 *Do Bette* is one of three stages of action and sometimes an allegorical figure in *PP*, the other two being Dowel (Do Well) and Dobest (Do Best). The narrator of *PP* goes on a long search for Dowel over the course of the poem.
- 281 *ynowe*. So MS (*y nowe*), B (*y-nowe*). D&S: add [*and fele*] to the end of the line based on a corrector’s “feble” and line 1298.
- 289 *Caton*. A reference to *The Distichs of Cato* (third century?), an immensely popular and influential series of sayings, authorship unknown, studied by every schoolchild as part of his early training in Latin, as the narrator acknowledges when he says, of

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Cato's book, "I saw hit in youthe" (line 290). The name "Cato" became attached to the *Monostichs* (one-line adages) and *Distichs* (couplets) because the author was thought to be "Dionysius Cato" or Marcus Porcius Cato of Utica (Cato the Censor's great-grandson). The *Monostichs* were known as *Petit Cato* or *Little Cato* and the *Distichs* as *Magnus Cato* or *Great Cato*. Perhaps the best-known aphorism is from Book 1, distich 3, which appears in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as "firste vertu is to kepe tonge" (III.294); see also The Manciple's Tale, IX (H)332–33. Another of Cato's oft-quoted sayings is alluded to below in line 875 (and see note to that line).

- 291a *Nam . . . locutum.* From Cato's *Distichs (Magnus Cato)* 1.12. The Latin is marked for insertion between lines 291 and 292 (Sz). A Middle English translation of this Latin couplet reads:

For to be still may noȝte dysplese,
& mekyll speche dose oft dysese,
Bot it be rewled be ryght.*much; often causes harm*

From the edition of Sarah M. Horrall, "Christian Cato: A Middle English Translation of the *Disticha Catonis*," *Florilegium* 3 (1980), 158–97, at p. 164 (lines 73–75).

- 304 *Sidrac and Salomonis termes.* The narrator is on a quest for wisdom and help trying to make sense of Mum and his own situation. He turns to authors and works regarded in the late Middle Ages as containing important sayings and truth. Sidrac was said to be a descendant of Japhet born 847 years after the Flood. In Middle English poems (*IMEV* 772, longer version; *IMEV* 2147, shorter version), king Boctus asked Sidras 847 questions. "The result is a comprehensive medieval encyclopedia, one of the largest, in dialogue form" (F. L. Utley, in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, Vol. 3, ed. A. E. Hartung [New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1972], p. 745). "Sydrac and Boctus" is item 75 in Utley's section on "Dialogues, Debates, and Catechisms." "By Solomon the middle ages understood all the Wisdom literature, as in *Melibeus* 2249–50, where two passages from Ecclesiasticus are assigned to Jhesus Syrak and Salomon respectively" (D&S, p. xxv). For these three wisdom literature figures cited together, see *The Tale of Beryn*, line 2666 and note, in the *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*, ed. John M. Bowers (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), pp. 129, 188.

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- 305 *Seneca the sage* refers to a collection of aphorisms attributed to the Roman philosopher Seneca. Solomon, Seneca, and Sidrac are cited again in line 1212.
- 311 *the newe jette*. MS: *yette*. So D&S, B: *iette*. The phrase “new jet” appears often in medieval satires on clothing fashion and refers both to new fashions and to an arrogant manner of carrying oneself, one’s demeanor. See MED s.v. *get* n.1 (a) and (b); Chaucer’s General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* I(A)682 (said of the Pardoner); and *MEPW The Simonie*, line 118 and note. The author of *Mum* uses the word for new fashions in academic inquiry as well, as when the Doctor of Philosophy renders his opinion of Mum’s argument: “Hit is sum noyous nyceté of the newe jette” (line 375).
- 313 *good*. D&S (on the strength of a corrector) and B insert this word, which is required for the alliteration and metrics of the line. MS: *bat gouernance*.
- 321–91 The narrator in these lines visits universities at Cambridge, Oxford, and Orleans in search of sure knowledge about Mum and the Sothsegger. “The episode,” explains B, “satirises the uselessness of academic learning in a fashion reminiscent of Wycliffite polemics” (p. 24).
- 322–23 *Cambrigge . . . Orleance*. The English universities were highly regarded for theology and law; Orleans was famous for its school of law.
- 328 *seven sciences*. The narrator has wandered to the universities to seek academic wisdom about when to speak and when to keep silent. He queries the Liberal Arts of Grammar, Music, Physics, Astronomy, Rhetoric, Logic, and Geometry but, like the narrator of *PP* or of *PPCr*, he is little the wiser for this visit to the great universities.
- 329 *for doute . . . better*. For uncertainty of the better world (i.e., heaven). The MS reads *dome / and doute of be better* but a corrector suggests *for* for *and*, and B adopts that correction. D&S read *And how we dwellid in [dwere] / and doute of be better*. *Dwere* means doubt.
- 330 *Sire Grumbald* is an allegorical figure for the stern Grammarian who wants words to fit together neatly and to make sense. The Grammarian’s expertise fails when it comes to parsing the issues that separate Mum from the Sothsegger.
- 334 *the*. So D&S, B (based on a corrector). MS: *y*; Sz: “MS = *y*, almost *p* [sans *e*].”

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- 337 *of his make*. MS: *on the skyes*, which anticipates line 338. So D&S and B on the strength of a corrector (*with his make*).
- 342 *shophister*. Logic, who can manipulate words.
- 343 *the*. So D&S, B, based on a corrector. MS: *a*.
- 345 *as choghe was ever*. So a corrector. D&S, B: *as choghe was he euer*; MS: *and couche was he neuer*. The chough is a crowlike bird regarded as noisy and chattering, as in “Jack Upland’s” rejoinder to *Friar Daw’s Reply*. Upland claims that Friar Daw — whose name means a chattering bird — “grounded his logic” on “cursynges and false glose, / Chidynge with blasfemie, on chyteryng as chowghes” (6ES, p. 204, lines 4–5).
- 354 *semely sage*. Described as a “doctour of doutz” (line 360), the sage is a Doctor of Theology.
- 368 *letter*. So D&S, B (based on a corrector’s *lettture*). MS: *better*.
- 373–77 *Yit knewe . . . endith*. D&S paraphrase: “Neither I nor they have ever heard of such a question as you have brought forward. It is some foolish newfangled idea, for orthodox doctrine only tells us how good governorship has good results” (p. 38).
- 387–88 *Saynt Nicholas . . . the glose*. Saint Nicholas was the patron saint of scholars, so these scholars abandon study and give themselves over to flattery and easy reading (the gloss, which explains the text).
- 392 *foure ordres*. The four orders, as in *PPCr*, are the Franciscans (Greyfriars, or Friars Minor), the Dominicans (Blackfriars, or Preaching Friars), the Augustinians, and the Carmelites (White Friars).
- 397 *shorte*. So D&S, B. MS: *shotte*.
- 398 *every couple*. The friars traveled in pairs, so the narrator interrogates pairs of friars about his *caas* — Mum versus the Soothsayer. The antifraternal lyric *Preste, Ne Monke, Ne Yit Chanoun* laments “that ever it shuld be so, / Suche clerkes as thai about shuld go, / Fro toun to toun by two and two, / To seke thair sustynaunce” (MEPW, p. 48).

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- 399 *Til the cloistre and the quyre.* “The sense of the line . . . appears to be that in all departments of the friars’ houses, from the religious to the more secular, Mum was lord” (D&S, p. 112).
- 409 *stirid a statute.* This may imply that friars were behind parliamentary legislation authorizing friars to preach, to the detriment of parish priests and, later on, Lollards. Wyclif and Wycliffite writers such as the author of *Jack Upland* denounced the expanded role of the friars in matters traditionally the preserve of the parish priest. The most important anti-Lollard legislation was the statute *De haeretico comburendo*, passed shortly after William Sawtrey was burned as a heretic, in 1401.
- 411 *deede.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector). MS omits.
- 417 *manieres.* So MS, B; D&S: *names* (based on a corrector). D&S argue vigorously on behalf of the corrector’s reading saying “the sense clearly is that friars first gave Lollards their names, and now they must have the same name given them” (p. 112). That is, because the friars have visited destruction on the Lollards through branding them, they must suffer a similar fate. The author of *Mum* alludes to the hanging of Franciscans (and others) on Tyburn Hill in 1402 for spreading rumors — judged as treason — that Richard II was still alive. See also a possible allusion to this event in *Upland’s Rejoinder*, lines 271–72, in 6ES. For critical and historical commentary, see McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV*, pp. 95–97, and the *Eulogium historiarum* (monastic prose chronicle), ed. F. Haydon, 3.393 (under the year 1402), and *Chronica et annales*, ed. H. T. Riley, pp. 340 (one Franciscan executed for proclaiming that Richard II lives) and 341 (eight Franciscans executed for treason, exact reason unstated). The story is also told by E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, pp. 27–29 (drawing heavily on the *Eulogium*).
- 420a *Patere . . . tuleris.* The MS is torn at this point and D&S have reconstructed from . . . *egem quā . . . eris.* This line in the Vernon *Little Cato* is translated as follows:

Suche lawe as þou hast brouȝt
And haunted hast bi-fore
þou most hit mekely suffre,
ffor winnyng or for lore.

Lines 93–96, in *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, Part II, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 117 (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), p. 560. B places the

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quotation after line 422, although the mark for insertion follows line 420. The quotation is not from Seneca but from *Monostichs* of Cato.

- 426–27 *Thay goon . . . softe wolle.* An issue that arose with respect to mendicant poverty was whether friars should wear shoes. *PPCr* (lines 298–300) portrays friars as favoring shoes despite the rule against them:

Fraunces bad his bretheren barfote to wenden. go
Nou han thei buckled shon for blenyng of her heles, buckled shoes; sores on
And hosen in harde weder, yhamled by the ancle. cut short at

- 430 *stiren hit . . . sticke.* Because the Franciscan rule forbids friars to accept money, they handled money with a stick.

- 431 *by obedience of th'ordre.* This phrase, like so much else in this passage, is highly ironic. The mendicants are indeed supposed to submit to the discipline of their order — they take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience — but in this case their obedience is more like indulgence: they are ordered to accept money (with a stick) and to beg for cash in specific limited districts. See note to line 440.

- 436–37 *They casten . . . parcelle-mele.* The Provincial Chapter meetings included the parceling out of begging districts called “limitacions” (see line 438). Those so licensed to beg in a district were termed, like Chaucer’s Friar Huberd, “limitour[s]” (line 440). Friar Huberd was “the beste beggere in his hous” (General Prologue I [A]252), which means that he contrived the greatest income.

- 440 *limitour.* A limiter was assigned to a particular area and was licensed to beg within it. See also the note to lines 436–37 above.

- 451 *frere be fatt.* One of the persistent charges against friars in antifraternal literature was that they pampered themselves and were overfed. The narrator of *PPCr*, for example, comes upon a huge, grotesque Dominican in the convent’s refectory, “A greet cherl and a grym, growen as a tonne [barrel], / With a face as fat as a full bledder / Blowne bretfull of breth . . . ” (lines 221–23). Chaucer’s limiter, “a wantowne and a merye,” fills his “double worstede . . . semycope” as “rounded as a belle out of a presse,” he is so fat (General Prologue I [A]208, 262–63).

- 454 *But that . . . hevene.* A corrector adds in the right-hand margin: “ne to noo creature þat can ony reason” (Sz).

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- 456 *balle his heede.* So MS; D&S, B: *balle [with] his [browe]*, with the notation “MS omits.” A corrector suggests “liste ball with his browe” (Sz). The question posed in lines 455–56 is, “What use is it to beg from a beggar unless you would break hard stones by smashing your head against them?”
- 461–65 *Thorough crafte . . . guilen the poure.* D&S paraphrase these lines: “They aim at controlling the great by means of the sacrament of penance” (p. 40).
- 468 *forsythe.* So D&S, B: *[for] sothe*; MS: *sothe*.
- 469a *Honora dominum.* From Proverbs 3.9.
- 473 *sauce.* Friars should receive, that is, a “piquant accompaniment” (D&S, p. 157) with their food — namely, a lecture on truth telling. The condiment metaphor continues in line 479 with the word “spicerie.”
- 475 *symonie.* Simony was the practice of selling church pardons, offices, and benefits, widely regarded as corrupt among Wycliffites, Lollards, and reformists generally. It takes its name from Simon Magus, who attempted to purchase with money the power of God dispensed through the Apostles’ hands (Acts 8.18–19).
- 481 *Covetise . . . the grene.* Covetousness here is depicted as a knight — “Sire Covetise” — who has the better of another knight in a jousting tournament. The other knight is overcome with greed. Lines 481–86 chronicle the spread of Covetousness into Westminster, council chambers, and the courts.
- 482 *woneth at Westmynstre.* A corrector or editor adds in the margin: “At shire and at sessions thaire shoon þay appeire” (Sz).
- 483 *while the crosse walketh.* The “cross” refers to the back of a coin, hence a figure for covetousness, with wordplay on the Veneration of the Cross at the Good Friday ceremony mentioned in PP B 18.428, “And crepeþ to þe cros on knees, and kisseþ it for a iuwel.” Compare C 20.474. Here the “cross” walks in procession, as money goes from hand to hand.
- 485 *mayntenance.* See above, note to line 27.

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- 487 *toquen*. The “token” in case is a piece of truth from the non-fraternal or anti-mendicant perspective: the wonder is that “holy” people such as the friars have not yielded even one martyr in more than a century (according to the narrator).

490 *seven*. So D&S, B based on “the conventional number for such formulae”; MS: *vij*. “Note the play on the words ‘Confessors’ and ‘Martyrs’ — two of the classes of saints in the Liturgy” (D&S, p. 115).

491 *thay*. So D&S, B based on a corrector; MS omits.

492 *in no*. So D&S, B. “[in no]: MS: *not* with a space after it; crossed out by original scribe and *in no* added above line by M” (D&S, p. 41).

493–98 *of Caym thaire werkes . . . cleric tolde*. In antifraternal literature the friars were compared both with Antichrist and with Cain (who was one of the first two “brothers” and the first fratricide). Piers in *PPCr* testifies that friars are “Of the kynrede of Caym” (line 486); and in *Jack Upland* they are said to be “Caymes castel-makers” (and see *Friar Daw’s Reply*, line 105). In *6ES*, pp. 122 and 153. Cain was said to be the founder of mendicant orders:

It semes sothe that men sayne of hame
In many dyvers londe,
That that caytyfe cursed Cayme
First this ordre fonde.

See *MEPW*, p. 50. Cain appears thematically as an evil principle in *PP*. For critical discussions of Cain in this literature, see Penn Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 163–64, 229–30 and *WGO*, pp. 120–25; 205–12.

- 494 *fundre of alle the foure ordres.* The issue of the origins of the fraternal orders vis-à-vis the historical church was important to the mendicants and their critics alike. Christ never authorized the mendicant orders; and they were not part of the apostolic church either. Wyyclif and writers in the *PP* tradition returned to this question often. Each of the friars questioned by the narrator of *PPCr* tries to claim primacy for his order. The Franciscan says that “we Menures most scheweth / The pure Apostells life,” while the Dominican claims “oure foundement was first of the othere” (lines 103–04; 250). The Austin friar traces his order’s founding back to “Paul, primus heremite” (line 308), while the Carmelite boasts “we Karmes first

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comen / Even in Elyes tyme, first of hem all” (lines 382–83). Antifraternal writers trace the origins back even further — to the first brother-slayer and constructor of the city of man.

- 496 *Armacanes*. Richard FitzRalph, Archbishop of Armagh, and scourge of friars in well-known sermons preached at St. Paul’s Cross in 1357. For FitzRalph’s influence on the anti-mendicant literature of the later fourteenth century, see Penn R. Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), chapter 3: “The Antifraternal Ecclesiology of Archbishop Richard FitzRalph,” pp. 123–54.
- 499 *this worde . . . titil*. The *worde* mentioned signifies *Caym*. *titil* refers to the abbreviation mark (a macron) over the *y* in the name *Caym*; that is, the name “Caym” must be written out in full to include the four letters that signify the four orders. See note to line 500.
- 500 *four letters*. These four letters — C, A, I, and M — in the form of an acrostic was a favorite with late medieval English antifraternal writers. D&S trace the derivation to Wyclif’s *Trialogus* 4.33. In *Preste, Ne Monke, Ne Yit Chanoun* appears the following lines:

Nou se the sothe whedre it be swa,
That frere Carmes come of a k
The frer Austynes come of a,
Frer Iacobynes of i,
Of M comen the frer Menours.
Thus grounded Caym thes four ordours,
That fillen the world ful of errours
And of ypocrisy. (lines 109–16)

Now observe; truth whether

In *MEPW*, p. 50; see note to line 110 on p. 100.

- 505 A corrector or editor adds at the bottom of fol. 6a: “Hit shal not greue a good frere though guilty be amendid” (Sz).
- 514 *in justes*. So D&S, B based on a corrector (who reads *ioustes*); MS: *iustice*.
- 520a–b The first quotation is from the hymn “Placare Christi servulis” for the Vesper of All Saints. The quotation beginning *Deleantur de libro vivencium* is Psalm 68.29.

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- 535 A corrector or editor adds next to this line:

Yit gesse I þat good men of grey and of blake
And of þe white witerly I wote wel been many
But dan conuent þe compaignie as my credo techeth
Cunen mo crokes / þan crist euer taught.

- 536 *Thenne passid I.* The narrator turns away from the friars and looks for help among the monastic houses; but he receives as little help from the monks as he did from the friars. He cannot even enter the monastery (line 552).

- 544 *fundacions of.* So MS. D&S; *fundacion of*; B: *fundacion as.*

- 544–45 *For . . . serve.* Although the syntax is difficult, the meaning seems to be: “For the founders intended the founding [of the monastic houses] to be established for God’s men, though it serves the powerful.”

- 545a *Mutauerunt . . . in cupiditatem.* Although the attribution to Sapientia would suggest that the quotation is from the Book of Wisdom, it is from some other source.

- 549 *ysopid.* So D&S, B; MS: *y sepид.*

- 555 *pluralité.* Pluralism was the holding of more than one benefice with the cure of souls. Pluralism, a widespread practice that led to absentee benefice-holders, was forbidden by Lateran IV and other decrees.

- 560 *cracche.* So D&S and B (based on a corrector); MS: *racke*, which does not alliterate. *Cracche* can mean horse’s manger. Both *cracche* and *mangier* in this line seem to refer to the choir’s food provisions.

- 566 The offering at Mass and tithes were to be distributed to the support of the parish priest, to the upkeep of the church, and to the poor.

- 566–69 *And n’adde . . . atte leste.* D&S, glossing Belial, suggest a possible paraphrase for these lines: “Having given nothing to the poor, they travel with money in their purses. Hence (though they may be blamed by Christ), they will never be blamed by the devil [Belial]” (p. 116).

- 567 *purses.* So MS; D&S, B: *purses [bottume]* based on a corrector.

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- 569a A corrector has added *Matthei 10 capitulo*. Matthew 10.9 reads “Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses.”
- 588 *that*. So B; MS, D&S: *hit*, which may be anticipation of the *hit* in line 589. The syntax of the lines in this section is difficult, but the meaning is clearly that God approves the narrator’s course of action and sends him safe-conduct through the dangerous political climate in which he finds himself. God does not want the narrator to alter his current course of action (lines 587–88).
- 589 *But showe . . . after*. My translation is very provisional. A corrector adds at the bottom of fol. 7a, for insertion after this line, “the high maker of molde and man with his handes” (Sz). The corrector apparently wants to gloss *souvrain*; according to this explanation, God would seem to want the narrator to maintain his course of action and not seek shelter in some figment of his “wittes.”
- 594 *ballid*. So MS, B; D&S: *bablid*. B suggests that “the sounds of men and bells clashing together . . . belittle[s] the institutionalised services of the established church” (p. 319).
- 603 *plummes*. So D&S and B based on a corrector; MS: *notes*.
- 604 An expander writes, at the bottom of fol. 7b, for inclusion after this line (Sz):
of lyke and of lynne seede of lambes and egges
of coltes and of calves / þat þe cow lycketh
of benes and of boutre / þat bele doo make
- 610 *what-so*. So D&S, B; MS: *so*. A corrector suggests “or what so ye wynne.”
- 621 *leve*. So D&S; B: *lene*. Sz: *leue* but with the notation “almost looks like *lene*.”
- 623 An expander adds “To hire of þair holy nesse for harvest is sake” (Sz).
- 637 According to the MED, a *laudate* as a term of abuse means “?an unlearned priest who knows only these two, most frequently recited, Psalms.” See also below lines 1358–59.
- 639 *derve*. So D&S; B: *derne*. Sz: *derue* but with the notation *derne?*

Notes

- 641 *ever*. So D&S, B based on a corrector. MS: *were*. Since the narrator has been emphasizing the martyrs' love of God as opposed to instruction, *ever* makes best sense.
- 644–50 *Ne by . . . usen*. The rhetorical device of repeating the first word(s) of verse lines was known as anaphora. The *Mum*-poet uses this technique to good effect in these lines, contrasting the clerks of former days with their modern-day counterparts.
- 647 *double dees*. “Daises above the ordinary height” (D&S, p. 118), hence another indication of modern-day clerical arrogance.
- 655 *lith*. So D&S, B. MS: *light*.
- 666 *two dooles*. Both portions: that for the poor and that for the church.
- 685 *As*. MS: *as*. D&S, B emend to *And*.
- 692 *Til he . . . drawe*, “i.e., which is going to be the popular side” (D&S, p. 118).
- 694 *And getith . . . beste*. D&S translate: “And gets for himself a great reward, which may be accounted among the best” (p. 119).
- 707–08 *prelatz . . . do there*. Bishops in their clerical role were not permitted to take part in death sentences; hence they would have to leave Parliament during such discussions.
- 713a *Sic luceat . . . opera vestra bona etc.* From Matthew 5.16.
- 719 *never*. Sz, noting that this word is in darker ink, asks “later?”
- 720 *a-twartz*. MS: *tw* and a space afterwards. So D&S, B based on a corrector.
- 745 *qui . . . videtur*. Underlined in red (Sz).
- 752–57 *Yfa freeke . . . trewe lawe*. In felony trials the accused was compelled to state how he would be tried after a plea of not guilty. He was supposed to respond, “By God and my country” in order for the trial to proceed. If he said nothing — if he “stood mute” — a jury had to decide whether he was deliberately trying to forestall the trial process or whether he was deaf or dumb. Mum’s citing this precedent is ironic and

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self-condemnatory, since the prisoner's silence is taken for guilt unless he is physically unable to hear or speak; in this legal situation it is better to be a truth teller than mum.

- 761–62 *That lightly . . . caste for hit.* “Which (quarrels) the Church might easily have prevented by its action, if it had devised wise counsel against the occasion” (D&S, p. 120).
- 775 *Lucas.* B explains MS *lucas* as “a common name which fits the alliteration,” while D&S gloss it, tentatively, as “? ‘luck-ace,’ luckless person,” since ace is “the lowest throw of the dice.” MS reads *yf an othir* rather than *for an othir*, D&S’s emendation accepted by B.
- 792 *To bachillers, to banerettz, to barons and erles.* Bachelor knights and knights banneret define the two grades of knighthood, the second — the banner-bearing knights — being of a higher rank. Barons and earls, then princes and peers (line 793), complete the progression toward lofty, worldly establishment.
- 796 *sothesiggerz.* So D&S, B. MS: *sothe sigger.*
- 798 *yee.* So D&S, B. MS: *ee.*
- 803 *al . . . lyvraye.* A reference to identifying uniforms and often badges worn by private armies in the service of magnates. Parliament tried to check the abuses associated with such activities with the Statute of Livery and Maintenance in 1390. See *RiR* II.2 and note; see also Paul Strohm, Appendix 2: “The Literature of Livery,” in *Hochon’s Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 179–85.
- 820 *yere-is gifte.* Refers to gifts bestowed either at New Year’s (see *PP* B X.47; A XI.34) or at the beginning of a term of office (*PP* B III.100; A III.92).
- 824 *sergeantz.* So D&S, B based on a correction; MS: *a sergeant* (but *a* crossed out and *z* added to *sergeant*). The same pluralization of MS *sergeant* occurs in line 833.
- 837–40 “*the Sothesigger . . . suche frendes.*” Following D&S and B, I place these words in quotation marks as direct speech rather than reported speech; but it might be reported speech.

Notes

- 847a *Beati . . . propter iusticiam.* Matthew 5.10.
- 865 *a heepe.* D&S and B spell this *a-heepe* and gloss it “in a crowd” (D&S, p. 133), and “a-plenty” (B, p. 168). I suggest “a heap of other common fellows.”
- 875 *Caton . . . bokes.* Cato’s *Distichs* 2.31 — *Somnia ne cures* — paraphrased by Pertelote in Chaucer’s The Nun’s Priest’s Tale as “Ne do no fors of dremes” (VII [B²]2941): pay no heed to dreams. A Middle English translation of 2.31 reads: “On dremes, son thynke þou not lang, / Bot also þai com, so lat þaim gange, / & pas out of þi mynd” (lines 448–50 in Sarah M. Horrall’s edition, “Christian Cato: A Middle English Translation of the disticha Catonis,” *Florilegium* 3 [1981], 176).
- 928 *burnysshid.* Refers to the antlers, which have been scraped clean of velvet.
- 935 *ne so hevenely.* So MS; D&S, B: *ne so hevenely [sounes].*
- 939 *cheerly.* So D&S, B; MS: *cleerly*, which spoils the alliteration on *ch*.
- 946 *freholde.* An estate held in fee simple or owned outright for the term of one’s life.
- 954 *a sage.* Here begins a long sequence within the narrator’s dream on a beekeeper who is also a gardener. This wise man, himself a truth teller, explains that the Sothsegger may be located “Yn manis herte” (line 1224); “And mynde,” he adds, “is his mansion that made alle th’estres” or rooms (line 1225). The beekeeper sequence concludes at line 1287, when the narrator awakens.
- 959 *sene.* So D&S, B; MS: *seme.*
- 976 *garth.* So D&S; MS, B: *gate*, which B glosses as “plot of land” or “furrow” or “track to the ploughed” (p. 336). She points out that the beekeeper also “digs” and “delves” in the land (as in line 977). As gardener the beekeeper anticipates the Gardener of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, who roots out “The noisome weeds which without profit suck / The soil’s fertility from wholesome flowers” (3.4.38–39) — as Richard II should have done from his commonwealth.
- 978 *leyghttöne.* See MED s.v. *leigh-toun*, “A garden; esp. a kitchen garden, herb garden.” The word derives from the Old English word for “leek-enclosure,” *leac-* or *leah-tun*.

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- 982 *doon worse*. To “do worst” is the polar opposite of the social and spiritual idea in *PP* — to “do best.” The drones not only undermine the common profit, they also subvert the spiritual enterprise — “the unveil hym quelle,” says the gardener. Later on the gardener speaks of Lucifer, sower of poisonous weeds (heretics and schismatics), who fears “forto do wel” (line 1170), a reversal of the dreamer’s quest in *PP*. Mum’s servant, Antichrist’s angel and a “muche shrewe,” lurks at truth’s door to debate “eche day with Do-welle withynne” (lines 1254, 1258). The gardener finally identified composing a work on truth-telling as the best he can do: “thou mayes do no better” (line 1278).
- 987a *Qui . . . manducet*. The quotation from St. Bernard derives from 2 Thessalonians 3.10: “if any man will not work, neither let him eat.” In *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Gustaf Holmstedt (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 64, 65 this is attributed to *Apostolus* and is translated into Middle English as “He that trauels [works] not, lete hym not ete” (p. 64). The idea is picked up in *PP* B.7, where Hunger helps Piers keep people employed.
- 1001 *the boke*. Refers to *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, thirteenth-century Franciscan writer, whom the beekeeper cites at lines 1028 and 1054 (“Bartholomew the Bestiary”). The *De proprietatibus rerum* is an encyclopedic work on such subjects as theology, philosophy, botany, and zoology, including the bee lore that found its way into *Mum*. See *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus de proprietatibus rerum, a critical text*, ed. M. C. Seymour, et al. 2 vols (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975).
- 1006 *cope*. So D&S, B (suggested by a corrector); MS: *erthe*.
- 1011 *wythynne*. So D&S, B: [*wy*] -thynne; MS: *by pynne*.
- 1026 *Thay*. So D&S, B; MS: *That*.
- 1030 *lydene*. So D&S, B; MS: *lydenys*.
- 1044 *drane . . . hym*. So MS, B; D&S: *drane[s] . . . paym*.
- 1045 *in thaire wide . . . hide*. The point is that the drones have eaten them.

Notes

- 1048a *Quorum . . . confusione.* Philippians 3.19. “Could presumably go *after* 1046 (so D&S) though positioned at 1048 in marg.” (Sz). I have followed Sz’s suggestion for positioning after line 1048.
- 1054 *Bartholomew the Bestiary* sounds like a title or designation for *De proprietatibus rerum*, but that work contains much more than a bestiary. The designation or title does appear in other writings. See Klaus Bitterling, “*Mum and the Sothsegger* und *Bartholomaeus Anglicus*,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literatur* 216 (1979), 345–56.
- 1062 *shal.* So D&S (based on a corrector), B; MS: *shald*.
- 1089 *hit is to mistike.* The authors of both *RiR* and *Mum* include these built-in disclaimers about their allegorical sections. See *RiR* “derkliche endited,” I.20, and note, and III.63.
- 1115 *of.* So D&S, B; MS: *ffor al.*
- 1117 *more and moulde.* The expression seems to mean that Lucifer is the origin and exemplar of evil deeds. B emends the phrase to *more, [a] moulde*.
- 1117–21 There is a large oval hole in the manuscript at these lines, but the scribe has worked the lines around on both sides of it, as he did on the verso side of fol. 13 at lines 1163–65.
- 1118–28 *And principally . . . trouble.* D&S paraphrase these lines: “This I can prove by what happens in Parliament, where the knights of the shire should speak out boldly their complaints, lest they fester as an abcess within their hearts and break out in rebellion” (p. 59).
- 1140a *Qui potest . . . peccati.* The side-note identifies the quotation as from “Sidrac” but it does not appear in the common extant Sidrac collections (D&S, p. 123).
- 1147 *solve ere thay singe.* That is, they would perform complicated musical exercises before they know how to sing at all. The word *solve* here is the same as modern *solfège* or *solfeggio*: “vocal exercises sung to a vowel (*a, o, u*) or the syllables of solmization (*ut [do], re, mi*, etc.), which are used instead of a text” (Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972], p. 785).

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- 1159 *sowe . . . seede.* This line (with a glance back to “grounde” and “graffe” in the previous line) inaugurates an extended yet very familiar metaphor about the devil and his “crop,” namely weeds (tares). The language is drawn from Christ’s parables, especially the parable of the sower (Matthew 13). See also line 1165a and note.
- 1164 *hent . . . hoke.* The devil and Christ were both cast as fishers of men in Christian art and iconography. Christ said to Peter and other disciples, who were fishermen, that he would make “fishers of men” (Matthew 4.19, Mark 1.17). The devil would try to hook humans and snare them into hell, but Christ would trap the trapper and rescue souls from the great serpent or whale.
- 1165a *Seminator . . . diaboli.* Heretics were said to be *zizannia*, darnels or cockels — noxious weeds growing up among the orthodox wheat (Matthew 13.25). See, for example, the language of Pope Gregory XI’s condemnation of John Wyclif in his Bull directed to Oxford University: “you through a certain sloth and neglect allow tares to spring up amidst the pure wheat in the fields of your glorious University” (as quoted in Jeanne Krochalis and Edward Peters, eds., *The World of Piers Plowman* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975], p. 128). The Bull is recorded in the great collection of anti-Lollard texts known as *Fasciculi zizaniorum* in the Rolls Series. The Host of the *Canterbury Tales* takes exception to the Parson’s condemnation of his oaths by saying “I smelle a Lollere in the wynd” and “He wolde sownen som difficulte / Or springen cokkel in our clene corn” (Epilogue of The Man of Law’s Tale, II[B¹]1173, 1182–83). Gower uses the same metaphor in his discussion of Christianity in Book 5.1874–87 (“To sowe cokkel with the corn,” line 1881) and in his Latin verse treatise on the evils of Richard’s time (“Carmen super multiplici viciorum pestilencia”) he exploits the coincidence of the word Lollard and the Latin for “darnel,” *lollia* (line 29). He also speaks of the Lollards as spreading their bad seed among the sacred fields: “Semina perfidie sacros dispersa per agros” (line 22). See *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), 4: 347, 346. For a brief discussion of the linguistic history of *lollia* in a context of English heresy, see Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne*, p. 37.
- 1173 *the contrary.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *be contrary*.
- 1179 An expander has prepared for insertion after this line this declaration: “Iuris consultus / Cicivs debet homo omnia mala pati quam malo consentire” (Sz), or “A man versed in law ought rather to suffer every ill than consent to evil.”

Notes

- 1207 *quittance . . . been up.* A *quittance* is a release from debt or receipt. When there are no more quarrels — no more struggle between evil and good, Lucifer and Christ, and no more “novellerie that noyeth men ofte” (line 1208) — then the ones who have done well will have their reward in heaven. The language in this section is reminiscent of the famous pardon scene from *PP* passus VII. For a good introduction to the theological implications of this theme, see James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: An Introduction to the B-Text* (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 75–87.
- 1215 *thow.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *do.*
- 1216 *seasonable.* So D&S; MS, B: *reasonable.*
- 1223 *thee.* D&S, B: *the;* MS: *hym.*
- 1225a *In corde . . . veritatis.* The thought is a medieval commonplace. D&S, p. 123, direct to Proverbs 14.33 (“In the heart of the prudent resteth wisdom”) and to *PP*: “Thow shalt see in þiselue Treuþe sitte in þyn herte” (B V.606).
- 1226 *feoffed hym.* The metaphoric language is legal, with God depicted as a feudal lord bestowing on Adam and his issue (his successors) possession of the earthly Paradise “and hevene afterwardes” (line 1230) as their inheritance as a reward for following truth, which the gardener/beekeeper here equates with truth telling or soothsaying.
- 1235 *Noe-is dayes.* According to Matthew 24.37, earthly conditions were similar to the last days before Christ’s Second Coming.
- 1236 *while mytres . . . sale.* That is, while bishoprics are up for the highest bidder, a reference to the scandal of simony in the Church. See above, note to line 475.
- 1238a *Qui non intrat . . . latro.* Based on John 10.1.
- 1247 *And he is.* MS: *And is.*
- 1303 *hit.* So D&S (based on a corrector); MS, B: *he.*
- 1309–33 *swevenes.* The author grounds the truth of his dream-vision in spiritual revelations such as Daniel’s regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon and Joseph’s of his rise to prominence over his older brothers and the years of feast and famine. Medieval literary writings often include discussions of the meaning and truth-claims of

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dreams. Chaucer features such discussions in the *House of Fame* and in Chauntecleer and Pertelote's quarrel in The Nun's Priest's Tale. Pertelote, who cites Cato's "Ne do no fors of dremes" (VII [B²]2941), scorns dreams as insignificant. Chauntecleer, who champions dreams as revelations of truth, turns out to be correct in this fiction. In *Mum* the dream and the gardener's advice in it license the author to compose his narrative.

- 1336 *Forto . . . Ipasse.* So D&S, B (based on a scribal expander); MS omits. A line like this is needed to lead into line 1337.
- 1343–75 *Now forto . . . deedes proveth.* For a discussion of the implications of the various documents the author of *Mum* brings forward in these lines — “the disruptive potential of literacy itself” — see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 280–81. He concludes: “The material solidity of his actual documents, reminiscent of the reassuringly solid weds [symbolic tokens] of the old trothplight, supplies an ironic counterpoint to this depiction of universal faithlessness” (p. 281).
- 1343–47 *Now forto conseille . . . half wintre.* The author in these lines stresses the perils of trying to relate true aspects of good government to a sovereign and his court. As he characterizes the situation, the relevant writings have existed in unopened boxes and bags which he now intends to bring to light.
- 1353 *There is . . . leves.* The bishop or archdeacon would visit dioceses or parishes and record what he found in a book. But sometimes, according to the narrator, the bishop would accept bribes in return for not setting down abuses (“prestes been ypassid over,” line 1354), such as a priest’s abandoning his parish to go to London and live a life of ease and luxury in the court of a nobleman (line 1356). Chaucer’s narrator praises the Parson for staying at home, with his parish, and not running off to London and St. Paul’s.
- 1354 *prestes.* D&S, B: *prestis.*
- 1357 *lille for lalle.* This phrase was used to translate Exodus 21.25, *livorem pro labore*, “stripe for stripe” (Rheims). The charge here is that priests are engaging in sexual hanky-panky with uneducated, uncaring sluts rather than tending to their home congregations — and, worse, the archdeacon is turning a deaf ear to it.
- kitte.* So D&S and B, based on a reading suggested by a corrector. MS: *light.*

Notes

- 1360 *Pernelle*. See *RiR* III.156 and note.
- 1373 *Poperyng*. So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *Properyng*. “Palefrays” were fine riding horses. Chaucer’s pilgrim Monk rides a palfrey (General Prologue I[A]207).
- 1374–77 *And lernen . . . seye other*. “The higher clergy vie with the common people in immorality, as we see by their deeds. They justify themselves by arguments, declaring, in their own support, that all are the children of Adam, as is certain” (D&S, p. 126).
- 1377 *man*. So D&S, B; MS: *may*.
- 1383a *Ve pastoribus*. From Jeremiah 23.1, which reads, “Woe to the pastors, that destroy and tear the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord.”
- 1404a *Rumores . . . haberi*. This is the first line of Cato’s *Distichs* 1.12, whose second verse was quoted at line 291a. A commentator in the margin says of this: “but caton is al contra, and his consail bothe.”
- 1414 *Changwys*. Or Genghis (Jenghiz) Khan (died 1227), Mongol conqueror. Mention of Genghis Khan in this line begins an exemplum on this great ruler drawn largely or entirely from chapter 24 of John Mandeville’s *Travels* (the “chronicle” mentioned in line 1429), an immensely popular “travel book” composed in the mid-fourteenth century and quickly translated into many languages. Of the so-called *Ysyā Chan* — the “many statutes and ordinances” that Changwys or the “Grete Chane” ordained partly in order to test his subjects from the seven nations — Mandeville writes:
- After he [Changwys] commanded to the princypales of the vii. lynages that thei scholde leuen and forsaken alle that thei hadden in godes and heritage and fro thensforth to holden hem payd of that that he wolde yeue hem of his grace. And thei diden so anon. After he commaunded to the princypales of the vii. lynages that euery of hem scholde brynge his eldest sone before him and with here owne handes smyten of here hedes withouten taryenge. And anon his commandement was performed. (p. 162)

The point of the Genghis Khan exemplum is similar to that of the drone-squashing beekeeper of lines 954–1287: it is sometimes necessary to take harsh measures against those who would subvert the common profit. For a description and account of the manuscripts and bibliographical references to Mandeville’s *Travels*, see Christian K. Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in*

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Fourteenth-Century England (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), chapter 6; and Zacher, “Travel Literature,” in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, Vol. 7, pp. 2239–41, 2452–57.

- 1420a *Omne . . . desolabitur.* Luke 11.17; Matthew 12.25. This quotation is a favorite with political and theological writers. See, e.g., *RiR* II.52 and Dante’s *De monarchia* 1.5. Gower in the Prologue to *Confessio Amantis* establishes division — in the human psyche and in the political world — as the cause of the world’s decline from earlier times. He especially focuses on the Schism and Lollardy. See *WGO*, chapter 6, esp. pp. 250–55.
- 1424 *principalz.* So B; MS, D&S: *principal*. *Principal* should agree in number with “souvrayns” of line 1422.
- 1425 *in vision.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *by nightes*.
- 1437 *sese hym in hire lande.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *paym in his handes*.
- 1446 *peuple.* So D&S, B; MS: *pleuple*.
- 1448 *whenne he.* So D&S, B; MS omits.
- 1470 *tayl.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *tale*.
- 1472 *hond.* MS: *hoode*, stricken, with *hond* in right margin. D&S amend to [*honde*]. Perhaps no emendation is necessary in that *hoode* makes sense.
- 1482a *Potencioribus . . . non possumus.* B, p. 356, directs to Ecclesiasticus 8.1, “Non litiges cum homine potente, ne forte incidas in manus illius” (“Strive not with a powerful man, lest thou fall into his hands”). The MS is torn away here; I follow Sz’s reconstruction, which is based on D&S. B reads *Potencioribus pares non esse non possumus. Sapiencia*.
- 1483 *labbing.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *babling*.
- 1503 *mene.* So D&S, B; MS: *more*.

Notes

- 1504–11 *For whenne . . . or elles.* D&S paraphrase these lines: “Even in a trifling matter, they will waste their estates in legal proceedings. Their neighbors will be involved, because a friend will believe in and help his friend’s cause” (p. 70).
- 1505 *hertz.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *herg.*
- 1513 *breggurdelle.* An Old English word for waist, loins, or things connected with these (loin-cloth, for example), from *brec-gyrdle*. See MED s.v. *brech-girdel* (n.)2. The idea in these lines 1513–14 seems to be that one may safely venture into water (that is, enter into arguments with powerful men) to a certain point — the *breggurdelle* — but venturing further may result in being over one’s head.
- 1514a *Ira . . . amorem,* from Cato’s *Distichs* 1.36. The Vernon MS English version of this line reads, “Wraþþe gedereþ gret hate, / Loue norisscheþ sauȝtynge [reconciliation].”
- 1515 *I.* So D&S, B; MS omits.
- 1523 *And.* So D&S, B; MS: *A.*
- 1524 *eschewid.* So D&S, B; MS: *so thewid.*
- 1528 *wilde and.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS omits *and.*
- 1530a *Ira . . . ac corporis.* Paraphrasing Ecclesiastes 7.10, “ne velox sis ad irascendum quia ira in sinu stulti requiescit” (“Be not quickly angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool”). The book of Ecclesiastes was attributed to Solomon in the Middle Ages. Parts of this left-hand marginal quotation are “torn away.” “Less appears legible now” (Sz).
- 1534 *hande.* So MS, B; D&S emend to *lande* but mar the alliteration in so doing. The general idea, as D&S suggest in a side margin, is that “It is foolish to waste money thus where nothing material is at stake” (p. 71).
- 1538a *Superbia . . . ad mortem.* B, p. 358, cites Ecclesiasticus 10.5: “for pride is the beginning of all sin: he that holdeth it, shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end.” The notion that *radix malorum est cupiditas* (money is the root of all evil, I Timothy 6.10) was a medieval commonplace, providing the theme for Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale.

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- 1545 *aretted*. So D&S, B; MS: *sette*, perhaps in anticipation of “ysette” in line 1546.
- 1547 *peuple*. So D&S, B; MS: *pleuple*.
- 1557–58 *For yf . . . thou hatis*. D&S paraphrase these lines: “If you stop before you are defeated, then the report will be spread concerning you that, unless your story is a good one, you will refuse to go to law” (p. 128).
- 1563 *mote*. So B; MS, D&S: *more*. *Mote* meaning discussion, debate, issue, or case in law (OE *mot*, *moot*) has been used in lines 278 and 1138. See also “moting” (litigation), in line 1566.
- 1565 *raggeman rolle*. A legal document, with ragged edges, containing accusations. The term “rigmarole” or “rigamarole” derives from the alleged petty legalisms of these rolled-up parchment documents.
- Ragenelle* is the name of a devil or demon.
- 1568 *hockerope*. D&S explain: “Hock-tide is the Monday and Tuesday following the second Sunday after Easter. ‘On Hock-Monday, the women “hocked” the men; that is to say, they went abroad with ropes, caught and bound any man they came across, and exacted a forfeit. On Hock-Tuesday, the men retaliated in similar fashion upon the women. Bishop Carpenter of Worcester forbade this practice in his diocese in 1450.’ (Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, i.155, q.v. for further descriptions of Hock-tide customs.) The description here, however, more resembles a tug-of-war” (p. 129).
- 1569–73 *Til the strong . . . there nomore*. The syntax of these lines is difficult, and scribes and modern editors have been busy trying to sort out their complexities. The sense of the lines is that legal wranglings and tugs-or-war — rigmaroles — develop in district courts of assize such that householders, because of the intimate connections between money and property (line 1571), lose their dwellings: “they dine no longer in their houses” (line 1573). D&S rearrange lines and phrases but without improvement of the sense. I have kept the words and lines as they appear in the MS.
- 1582 *goky*. This rare word means a fool or here specifically a hapless poor man at a great disadvantage when pitted against influential, powerful men in courts of law. In *PP* a *goky* is someone who commits errors in mass offices (see MED s.v. *goki* and the reference to *PP* B XI.299–300: “*Be gome þat gloseth so chartres for a goky [vr.*

Notes

- gooky; C: goky; vr. gouky] is holden; So is it a goky, by god, þat in his gospel failleth, Or in masse or in matynes maketh any defaute.)
- 1585a *Munera . . . non accipies.* Adapted from Psalm 14.5: “he that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent.”
- 1587 *fleuble.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *peuple*.
- 1593 *strength.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector’s *strength*); MS: *lawe*, which is followed by a blank space. A corrector has emended MS *status* to *statutz*.
- 1594–97 *For though . . . hurle ever.* D&S paraphrase these lines as referring to the powerful: “For the great, if defeated once, will go on again without feeling any loss” (p. 73).
- 1595 *nonsuytes.* So D&S, B; MS: *nonsuyte*. Non-suits were suits that were never brought to conclusion, either because the plaintiff failed to proceed with his case or because he was unable to bring sufficient evidence.
- 1619 *Civile.* Civil Law is comprised of statutes created for the secular government and courts, based on the Roman Law.
- 1621 *Cristis . . . Canon.* Canon Law is the officially established rules governing the faith and practices of Christians, formulated by and ratified in church councils. The narrator observes in line 1622 that the Bible is the basis for all law, civil and canon. D&S and B place a hyphen between *lawe* and *is*, but *is* is a verb not a possessive.
- 1623 A corrector has added next to this line a phrase from Pope Innocent III’s *De miseria humane conditionis*: “nullum malum impunitum. euangelium.” That is, “No evil shall go unpunished (Gospel).”
- 1624 *my credo.* “My personal belief.” The narrator brings inward resources to bear on issues of law that he knows intimately.
- 1626 *librarie of lordes.* “There is a collection of books concerning lords who infringe on the king’s revenue” (D&S, p. 74).
- 1640 *th’olde . . . newe.* Because of encroachments on the king’s revenues, the crown is deprived of both its regular sources of revenue (“th’olde”) and the monies levied by Parliament (“the newe”).

Mum and the Sothsegger

- 1641 *Notwithstanding.* So D&S, B; MS: *Not wistanding.*
- 1648–53 *Thees knightz . . . halfendele and more.* These lines represent criticism of Henry's "temporal and spiritual lords who had got into their hands by brants or leases or other methods the endowed revenues of the crown" (E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century 1399–1485*), p. 79, citing B. P. Wolffe, "Acts of Resumption in the Lancastrian Parliaments," *English Historical Review* 73 [1958], 587).
- 1650 *kepe . . . peuple.* This phrase echoes the opening of the poem (as we have it). See note to line 1.
- 1660–62 The right-hand margin is torn away at these lines. I follow D&S's reconstruction of the words.
- 1664–68 *For nedis . . . long indure.* D&S paraphrase these lines in the margin: "The king must have money to support his household. It should come from his own estate, not from taxes, or the people will suffer" (p. 75).
- 1665 *haynous werres.* The MS is blank after *for his.* A corrector supplies "haynous werres."
- 1666 *other.* The right-hand margin is torn away at this word and "bringge" in line 1667. I follow D&S's reconstruction of the words.
- 1670 *To you . . . tyme.* "To you who owe money it would then be time to pay up" (D&S, p. 130).
- 1671–82 *For trusteth . . . he have oughte.* The sense is: "For trust well, despite what men may say, twisting and turning twice in a week, calling clerics and others to the council and complaining at Parliament, unless it happens that the crown is brought back into the picture (?) — clear as it should (?), little by little as is required by law — then may we want and wish what we please, our profit and praise will be the less with knights and with the commons until the king has in his hands all [the revenues] that he should have."
- 1684 *hath.* So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS omits.
- 1687 *maisons deu.* "Houses of God," were hospitals. The complaint in lines 1683–88 is that some people make a great deal of money dishonestly and live lavishly but

Notes

without giving any of their ill-gotten gains to the poor until the very end of their lives, when they donate money for the building of hospitals. The end of line 1687 is torn away in the MS; I follow D&S's reconstruction of them.

- 1697 *lite*. D&S and B needlessly emend to *[title]*. “Little” designates a portion.
- 1702 *wordes*. This word and the last words of lines 1703–05 have been torn away in the MS. I follow D&S's reconstructions.
- 1704–05 *For though . . . never*. “Even if a whole fifteenth is bequeathed and a receipt given, the executors keep the donations for themselves” (B, p. 366).
- 1706–12 *Ne do noght for . . . oure tale*. The left-hand margin is torn at these lines. I follow D&S's reconstructions.
- 1724 *mervailles that Merlyn dide devyse*. These refer to the many prophecies — retrospective predictions in verse — attributed to Merlin, the magician of King Arthur legends. See, for example, the three “Merlin” prophecies included in the section “Poems of Political Prophecy,” in *MEPW*, pp. 9–10. For a discussion of Merlin prophecies and contemporary English politics, see Paul Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne*, chapter 1 (“Prophecy and Kingship”), esp. pp. 6–9. For general information on the Merlin prophecies, see R. H. Robbins, “Poems on Contemporary Conditions: The Merlin Prophecies,” in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, Vol. 5, pp. 1519–22; 1714–16.
- 1731–33 *on mone . . . thaire workes*. Eckhardt interprets this as an allusion to the Percies, who wore a crescent moon on their badge. She adduces Adam Usk, who speaks of the “horns of the moon” meaning Hotspur and his uncle. See “Another Historical Allusion,” p. 496.
- 1741 *ought*. So D&S, B (based on a corrector); MS: *shuld*.
- 1746 *How . . .*. The left-hand margin is torn away at this line and through line 1751. I follow D&S's reconstruction.

Glossary

aboughte <i>about; round about</i>	construen <i>explain, explicate; interpret</i>
afofre <i>before</i>	coroune, croune <i>crown; the king</i>
agayne, ageine <i>again; against</i>	co(u)the <i>said (variant of quod)</i>
als <i>as; also</i>	covetise <i>greed, avarice</i>
and <i>and; if</i>	cowde, coughthe, couthe <i>could; might; knew [how to]</i>
apeire <i>damage, harm; grow weaker</i>	Cristen <i>Christian</i>
asketh <i>requires</i>	cunne <i>learn; know</i>
atte <i>at the</i>	cunnyng <i>knowledge</i>
axen <i>ask; require</i>	cunseil <i>council; advice</i>
ayen <i>again</i>	
bable, bablyng <i>babble; rant</i>	dawe <i>day; dawis</i> pl.
be by	dede (sb.) <i>deed</i>
berne <i>man, person; also burne</i>	dede (vb.) <i>did</i> (pl.)
bestes <i>beasts, creatures</i>	deme <i>judge, think; weigh, estimate; resolve</i>
beth <i>are</i>	demyd <i>judged, deemed</i>
betyme, bityme <i>soon; early</i>	double <i>false, fraudulent, deceitful</i>
bisyng <i>business; activity</i>	drede, dreede <i>fear, dread; awe</i>
borough <i>city; town</i>	durste <i>dare, dare to</i>
bot <i>but</i>	
bryddis, breddys, <i>birds</i>	
burne <i>man, person; also berne, barne</i>	echone, echoone <i>each one; every one</i>
but if <i>unless</i>	efte <i>again</i>
 	eke, eeke <i>also</i>
caas <i>case, situation; plight</i>	ellis <i>else; other</i>
carpe <i>speak</i>	ese <i>pleasure; luxury, ease</i>
caste <i>devise, contrive; devised; defeated, overthrown, abandoned</i>	eten <i>eat</i>
clepen <i>call</i>	everich <i>every</i>
clepid <i>called; named</i>	everich a <i>each</i>
clergie <i>learning, training, education</i>	
comoune <i>commonalty, estate commons</i>	fahlen <i>say, narrate, speak, talk</i>
conceill <i>counsel, advice; wisdom</i>	fallen <i>happen, occur; befall</i>
	fayne <i>glad; eager</i>

Glossary

fedris feathers	ho-so whosoever; he who
fele many	hough how
fele, feil investigate, test; sound out	hunthrid hundred
telefold diverse, manifold	
fer, ferre far	ich each
ferkid went	ichonne each one
fondeth endeavors	iwis, ywis indeed, certainly
fondyd tried	
foolie foolishness, folly	kenne teach
for because	kinde, kynde nature
forto in order to	kindely naturally
fourth forth; fourth	kunne know; understand
freke, freeke man, person	
frere friar	lele loyal
frist first	leodis people, men
fro from	lesing lie, falsehood
 	lette prevent, hinder; forbid
gaderen gather, collect; pt. gadrid,	leve permission, leave
ygadered	leved lived
gode, goode possessions, property;	leved, lyeved, ylyved believed
goods; also goodes	leven live
gome man, person	lewde ignorant; unlettered
gost, goost soul; spirit; mind	lewte loyalty
grette nobility; the great, powerful	-liche -ly
grucchen complain	liegis subjects, citizens
gunne did (helping verb)	list please (impersonal construction: him list it pleases him; he wishes)
 	lite, litel, litill little; small portion
han have	lither evil, bad; inferior
hele health	loigges lodges, chambers, loges, places
hem them	longid belonged
hende noble	lust pleasure; own will
her, here their	
herte hart; heart	maniere manner; manner of, kind of
hervest autumn	matiere matter
hie, hy high	mede reward, payment; bribery; also medes
hire hear	meke meek; humble
hit it	mekely humbly
ho who; whoever; he who	
hoole whole	

Glossary

melle speak; thou mellys you are speaking	of of, off
mellen concern themselves; interfere	off of
mete food, meal; dinner, banquet	ofte often; ful ofte very often
mette dreamed	ony any
meve, meuve bring forward, advance; say, articulate, state	onys, ones, oones once; at ones at once
meyny, meyné household, retinue	oo, oon one; alone, solely
mo more	or before
moche much	other, outhier other; or
molde earth; world; uppon molde alive	out anything; ought
monaye money	owen own
mony many	
mos must	parle speak, hold a conversation
mote may	pees peace
mowe may	peple, peucle people; subjects
myssdeedes misdeeds	peté, pyté pity
myssecheff misfortune	pleyne complain
myssedoer evil-doer; miscreant	pleynte complaint; legal pleading
mysserewle misrule; bad governance	pouaire power
n'ad, n'adde had not (<i>ne + hadde</i>)	poure, pover poor; poor man
nas was not (<i>ne + was</i>)	poyntz arguments; legal reasonings
ne not; nor; ne . . . ne neither . . . nor	preie pray, beg
nede nede	preiere prayer
nempnen to name; identify	prevy manifest, proved; vigorous, lusty
ne . . . nother neither . . . nor	prevyly secretly; privately
nere never	
nolde would not (<i>ne + wolde</i>)	quod said; also cothe
nolle head; nollis (pl.)	
not do not know (<i>ne + wot</i>)	rancune anger
nother nor; neither	rascaile, raskall young lean deer; rabble, riff-raff
nought nothing	ray, raye clothing, array
nyce foolish	reche, reeche care, care for; favor
nyceté, nyseté foolishness, absurdity	rede advice; counsel; advise, give counsel
nygh near; nigh	regne reign; rule; regnid ruled
nys is not (<i>ne + ys</i>)	rennen to run
nyst did not know (<i>ne + wist</i>)	reson reason; common sense
	rewē pity, ruth
	rewme, royaume realm, kingdom

Glossary

rewthe pity; shame	tales stories, sayings
righthh, rith right, justice; very	tente intention, purpose
rith as . . . ryth so just as . . . just so	thaym them
rith then just then; at that moment	thaymself themselves
royaume, royaulme realm, kingdom	th'ende the end
 	thenne than; then
saff, sauf except	ther where, there where
saie, seie say	therafter afterward; in the future
sauf except; save	thilke that; that same
sawe speech, statement, saying	tho then
schappe style, fashion	tho, thoo those
schewe show; manifest, demonstrate	thoru, thorough through; because of, owing to
seche, sike seek	thoru-oute throughout
seie see	to to; too
semblé gathering, assembly	togedyr together; also
semblid gathered, assembled	tourne turn
seurly assuredly	trouthe truth; troth, fidelity, loyalty
seye seen	trowe believe, think, deem
sicour faithful; sure, certain	tweyne two; both
sidis sides	tyl to; until
sith, syth since	unethe scarcely, barely
skynnes skins	waite consider, ponder; attend; watch out for
sodeynly suddenly	waxen to grow, to become
soeth truth, sooth	wede, wedis clothing
sonde dispensation; message; plan	wedir weather
sone soon	well prosperity, weal
soon son	wenen believe, think
sothe, soeth truth; in sothe in truth; indeed	werchen, wirchen work, act, do
soulde money; pay; fee	werk work; deed
souvrain lord, king, sovereign	werkis accomplishments, works
styff strong; stout; styffnesse	wete know
stynten, stinten to stop, cease, halt	wexe grew
suen follow, pursue; imitate	whane when
suffre endure; suffer	whedir whether
sum some	where where; were
swevene dream	
swiche, swyche such	

Glossary

- wilne** *wish, desire*
wilnest *wish*
wirchen *work, do*
wisse *advice, council*
wissen *to instruct, teach; advise*
wite *blame*
witen *to know*
witte *understanding, intelligence,
judgment*
wolde *would; wished, would wish;
required*
wonen *dwell, live*
wones *dwellings, homes*
woo *woe, misfortune; destruction*
wyghte, wight, wy *man, person;
creature; pl. wies*
- y-** *sign of past participle*
yeris *years*
yif *if*
yit *yet; as yet*
ylyved *believed*
ynne *in*
ynowe *enough, sufficient; considerable*
yonge *young*
youghthe *youth*
ys *is*
ywis *indeed, certainly*