

# SENTIMENTAL AND HUMOROUS ROMANCES

Floris and Blancheflour, Sir Degrevant, The  
Squire of Low Degree, The Tournament of  
Tottenham, and The Feast of Tottenham

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## INTRODUCTION TO *FLORIS AND BLANCHEFLOUR*

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*Floris and Blancheflour* is undoubtedly one of the most popular stories of the Middle Ages. Although not part of one of the well-known medieval conglomerations of narratives, like those of Arthur or Charlemagne, there are versions of it in all Western European languages, from Italy to Iceland and from Spain to Sweden. The one in Middle English survives in four manuscripts, and goes back to an Old French original composed c. 1160–70, i.e., the period in which Chrétien de Troyes started to write the first medieval romances. When exactly the Middle English adaptation was made is difficult to say, as none of the manuscripts are direct copies of the original, but critics agree that it must have been around 1250. This early date makes *Floris* the second oldest romance in English, after *King Horn* (c. 1225–50), but where the latter is a typical example of the “matter of England,” set in the Germanic world of northwestern Europe, *Floris* is an oriental tale with all the indispensable wonders of the East: a garden with a magical spring and tree, a harem, eunuchs, an emir who marries a different maiden every year, and the like. And, as Dorothee Metlitzki has pointed out, what is “remarkable is not only the Saracen setting . . . but the sympathetic treatment of the emir,”<sup>1</sup> which again is in stark contrast with the role of the Saracens in *King Horn*.<sup>2</sup>

### MANUSCRIPTS, DATE, AND PROVENANCE

Of the four manuscripts of the text, two are clearly older than the others. The Cambridge (C) and London Vitellius (V) manuscripts can both be dated to c. 1300 or even the last decades of the thirteenth century. Of the other two, the manuscript in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, the so-called Auchinleck Manuscript (A), dates from 1330–40, while the London Egerton manuscript (E) is the youngest, c. 1400.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of a careful analysis of the linguistic features of the texts, F. C. De Vries concluded that V had a southwestern origin, that C was possibly written in Winchester, and that E was of an East Anglian provenance.<sup>4</sup> The Auchinleck MS, containing no fewer than seventeen romances in its present state (from a total of forty-three pieces), was presumably the work

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<sup>1</sup> Metlitzki, *Matter of Araby*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note that the Cambridge manuscript has *King Horn* follow upon *Floris*.

<sup>3</sup> In the Breton lay *Emaré*, also dated to approximately 1400, the love of Floris and Blancheflour is mentioned in one breath with that of Tristram and Isowde (lines 133–50).

<sup>4</sup> *Floris and Blancheflour*, ed. De Vries, pp. 44–50.

of a London professional (i.e., commercial) scriptorium.<sup>5</sup> Among scholars there is general agreement that the original text was composed in a dialect of the southeast Midlands.<sup>6</sup>

By an unfortunate whim of fate the beginning of the text is missing in all four manuscripts. V is one of the manuscripts that was partly destroyed and for the rest heavily scorched by the fire that caused so much damage to Sir Robert Bruce Cotton's library in 1731. As a result, many of the lines of the leaves that remain are hardly legible, or are incomplete. In C *Floris* is the opening text of a single, incomplete quire, of which the first two leaves, or about 350 lines, have been lost. A has lost an equal number of lines, but here that is due to the loss of a complete gathering, the last two leaves of which must have held the opening of *Floris*, which is continued in the next quire. E preserves more than any of the others, as here the loss is limited to as much as was contained on one folio, roughly some eighty lines. However, it is not only the different number of lines missing at the beginning that cause the four versions to vary considerably in length; this is also due to the texts themselves, which in many places have been abbreviated or added to, resulting in the following total numbers: 824 lines in C, 861 lines in A, 1083 lines in E, and 445 lines in V.<sup>7</sup> From what we have and from what has been lost it can be deduced that the original must have numbered some 1,200 lines, which makes it about a third of the length of the Old French text. In this edition, I have provided a brief summary of the missing beginning, based on the French.

In spite of these differences, the four versions all offer what is clearly the same story, while at the same time they are sufficiently dissimilar to preclude the possibility that any of them is the direct source of any of the others. Still, it is also clear that some versions are "more similar" than others, and on the basis of common readings it can be shown that V, A, and E together form a group over and against C, which stands apart.<sup>8</sup> This is an interesting conclusion as it means that within fifty years of its alleged first composition in English at least two rather divergent versions were already circulating. Such a rapid development of the text can only be explained if one accepts a vivid oral tradition, as was argued by Murray McGillivray, who further underpins this by pointing out a number of features characteristic of memorization in the texts, such as repetition, anticipation, or long-range transposition of lines.<sup>9</sup>

If oral tradition may account for the presence of such features as described by McGillivray, others certainly cannot be explained in this way. All four versions show abrupt transitions, hiatuses, and loose ends. The most conspicuous example is that of the pillar in the garden of the Emir's palace, where Claris, Blancheflour's friend, fills her basin with water (line 960). The pillar occurs in all four versions, in a passage that is remarkably uniform and therefore must go back to the first adaptor. It is curious, nevertheless, since the existence

<sup>5</sup> Loomis, "Auchinleck Manuscript."

<sup>6</sup> *Floris and Blancheflur*, ed. De Vries, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> For V the total number given may vary depending upon whether one includes the visible but illegible lines or not.

<sup>8</sup> Compare the editions edited by Hausknecht (*Floris and Blancheflur*, pp. 98–108) and De Vries (*Floris and Blancheflur*, pp. 7–11).

<sup>9</sup> McGillivray subsumes these features under the general term "memorial transfer," by which he means "the movement of material from one part of a text to another part which is physically remote, but which is liable to confusion with it because of similarities of situation, content, or language" (*Memorization*, p. 5).

of this *piler* comes as a complete surprise — except to the audience of the C-text, for there it had been introduced three hundred lines earlier, when Darys, the keeper of the bridge, described the city and the Emir's palace to Floris (C lines 223–30):

In the tur ther is a welle	<i>spring</i>
Suthe cler hit is withalle.	<i>Very; indeed</i>
He urneth in o pipe of bras,	<i>It runs into a</i>
Whiderso hit ned was.	<i>Whichever way; needed</i>
Fram flore into flore	<i>floor</i>
The strimes urneth store,	<i>streams flow abundantly</i>
Fram bure into halle,	<i>chamber</i>
The stremes of this welle.	

The line in A is a literal translation of the corresponding line in the Old French version, but there, as in C, a much more detailed description of the palace of the Emir had been given. Its central part is a tower, which functions as a four-story apartment building for the Emir and his harem; Blancheflour has her room on the top floor, together with seven times twenty other maidens. In the middle is a pillar which is the main support of all the floors and through which water, as from a spring, rises to all floors and all rooms. Whenever one of the maidens needs some water, she can tap it from this pillar-conduit.<sup>10</sup>

Other modern editions (e.g., those of French and Hale or Sands) followed E as their base text. I have chosen A as my primary text, with E to supply 366 of the missing lines at the beginning not found in A, thereby recovering more of the original ME text (i.e., 1,227 lines). A is more rich in detail than E and, although it is at times more difficult to read, it is, nonetheless, the more interesting.

#### STRUCTURE

The deficient opening is in itself no obstruction to our understanding of the narrative, as the French version can be used to supply the relevant details. At the court of the king and queen of Spain lives a slave; both she and the queen are pregnant. When the two women have given birth on the same day, the pagan parents of Floris request the Christian mother of Blancheflour to look after the two babies. The E-text begins when the children have reached the age of seven years and are ready to go to school. Five years later, at the age of twelve, they have completed their school education and are approaching marriageable age; the first part may be said to end here (lines 1–30). At this point the king realizes that Floris is unlikely to accept any wife but Blancheflour unless drastic measures are taken to prevent this. Consequently, the second part deals with these inadequate measures and the king's eventual assent to the marriage (lines 31–324). The third part encompasses Floris' quest for Blancheflour (lines 325–809), and the fourth the happy reunion, the trial, and the wedding (lines 810–1197). In part five the story ends with the return to Spain of the newlyweds,

<sup>10</sup> An example of a loose end is provided by lines 447–52: here Floris is told that the Emir wants to give a “heghe feste” (line 451) to which all those who hold land from him will be invited. This is all we hear of it. Hiatuses in the flow of the narrative are mainly found in E, due to rigorous cutting of the text. As De Vries observes in his edition of the text, for the part they have in common A has 855 lines, against E's 711 (*Floris and Blancheflur*, p. 8).

where they are crowned and Floris is christened (lines 1198–1219). Finally, there is an epilogue by the narrator, in which he provides a historical perspective by informing his audience that Floris and his beloved are now both dead, ending it with the devout wish that, like them, we may all find happiness after misery (lines 1220–27).

The Auchinleck Manuscript has a number of three-line capitals indicating new sections of the poem; they occur at lines 676, 810, 858, 948, and 1198. Of these, the capitals at lines 810 and 1198 occur at points where the above scheme proposes section breaks, too; the other three are not so easily explained. At line 676 we are in the middle of the description of the garden of the Emir's palace, and the narrator here moves from the spring to the tree of love that stands at the head of it: “At the welle heved ther stant a tre, / The fairest that mai in erthe be” (lines 676–77). In line 858, after a lament by Blancheflour, we hear how Claris commiserates with her, but also rejoices at the secret arrival of Floris, which she can now reveal to Blancheflour. Finally, in line 948, the Emir shows himself so impressed by Claris' defense of Blancheflour that he is now certain that he wants to marry her. Admittedly these are important moments in the development of the story, but not of equal weight to the other two, at lines 810 and 1198. An additional problem is posed by the absence of any large capitals in the first 309 lines of the A-text — it would be too facile a solution to think that the scribe must have overlooked these at the initial stages of his copying job, or changed his mind about capitals while going along.<sup>11</sup>

A look at the other manuscripts is not very helpful here. V is too mutilated to be of any service, while in neither C nor E do capitals ever occur in the same place as in A.<sup>12</sup> Apparently there was no basic section structure that the scribes recognized and copied into their own texts.

#### STYLE

To those who see the sword as the quintessential feature of the romance genre, the contents of *Floris* must come as a surprise: the only sword that occurs in it is that of the Emir, who, in his anger at discovering Floris and Blancheflour in bed together, is tempted to kill them and draws his sword, only to drop it when pity moves him to embrace the young couple. The hero himself, Floris, performs no act of martial skill at all, and is in fact not even a knight; it is only at the very end of the story that the Emir, impressed by Floris' account of his adventures, has him dubbed a knight and invites him to join his retinue (lines 1181–83).

<sup>11</sup> Smaller subsections of the poem are marked by paragraph signs, often with no more than ten lines in between. They have not been used for the present edition. For a full description of the manuscript, see the facsimile, *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, edited by Pearsall and Cunningham (pp. vii–xvii), or the online edition edited by Burnley and Wiggins: <http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/>.

<sup>12</sup> Capitals in C are found at lines 9, 433, 479, 721, 749, and 777, in E at lines 203, 443, and 835. In the case of E, it is not quite correct to speak of capitals; they were intended by the scribe but never filled in. All the manuscript has is a guideletter in an open space two lines high, followed by two small capitals for the next two letters of the word, e.g. [n]OW in line 203. In both C and E the first of the capitals does in fact indicate a break in the narrative: in line 9 of C Floris takes his leave of his parents and departs on his quest for Blancheflour; in line 203 of E the narrator tells the audience that he will shift his attention from how Blancheflour had been sold to the Emir of Babilon back to Floris: “Now let we of Blancheflour be / And speke of Florys in his contree” (lines 203–04). The other instances, however, have no notable features of a new beginning.

More remarkable still, during his quest for Blancheflour, which makes up a large part of the story, Floris takes on the disguise of a merchant, a member of a class that in other romances is hardly visible at all. But in the end, of course, all falls out as it should: Floris and Blancheflour are married, return home, and are crowned king and queen of Spain.

If it is not by prowess, then how does Floris win his beloved in this story? The answer to this is in a key term that occurs no fewer than twelve times in the text: *ginne* (or *engynne*), meaning “ruse, trick, stratagem.” It is the person who can devise the right stratagem who will eventually be successful; only he can obtain access to the Emir’s tower. In this respect it is worth noticing that the Emir’s harem is guarded by eunuchs, who are selected for this job exactly because they lack a “ginne,” or as the text has it, none of them “in his brech bereth the ginne” (line 630). The line is found in all versions (V is illegible here), and must go back to the original. Since the French text reads: “Les guetes qui en la tor sont / Les genitaires pas nen ont” (“The guards who are in the tower do not have genitals” — lines 1707–08),<sup>13</sup> the English adaptor probably saw the humorous potential opened up by the use of the word *ginne* here in relation to its application elsewhere. The emphasis on *ginne*, as the means to reach the desired goal, goes hand in hand with a need for good advice (*red*, *ginne*, or *counseil*): the queen advises the king; the innkeepers, including Darys, advise Floris (as does the porter); Claris advises Blancheflour; and the barons advise the Emir. That this feature plays a more conspicuous role in the Middle English text than in the French has been shown by Geraldine Barnes: “Where comparison is possible, these three MSS [C, A, and E] all show additional occurrences of *counseil*, *gin*, and *rede*. ”<sup>14</sup>

The way in which the story is told evokes folktale rather than romance: it abounds with repetitions of words, of lines, of entire passages; and it abounds with sentiment. John Stevens goes so far as to define the poem as “a game of sentiment” rather than *amour*.<sup>15</sup> But the story is well told, and such features enable the audience to recognize the successive events as part of an ongoing development within a coherent plot. An illustrative example is found at the beginning of the text. The king, seeing the great and continuing affection between the children and realizing that, when the time comes, Floris will want to marry no one but Blancheflour, intends to put her to death. When he tells his wife, the queen advises him to send Floris away, to her sister, a measure which has, she says, “muche more honour / Than slee that mayde Blancheflour” (lines 61–62). When it appears that Floris is pining away at the court of his uncle without his Blancheflour, again the king can think of no other solution but to behead the girl, and again the queen comes up with a plan that will save Blancheflour’s life and, hopefully, force Floris to accept the inevitable fact of having to choose a different partner. Blancheflour is sold off to a merchant, the tomb is built, and everyone is instructed to pretend that Blancheflour is dead. But the scheme fails to accomplish its desired effect: Floris tries to commit suicide, from which he is saved by his mother. All in tears the queen runs to the king and beseeches him to consent to the marriage as otherwise the last of their twelve children will die, and he will be left without offspring. In this passage the queen steps in three times to save the life of one of the children. The two involving Blancheflour are identical; the third, when she saves Floris, is subtly different: first she saves his life

<sup>13</sup> All references to the Old French text are from *Floire et Blancheflor*, ed. Pelan. There is a Modern English translation based on this edition by Hubert.

<sup>14</sup> Barnes, “Cunning and Ingenuity,” p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 94.

and only then does she go to the king and suggest a solution. Similar repetitions are found in the scenes in the three inns where Floris and his companions take their lodging. The first two of these are identical; the third deviates slightly: in the inns at the harbor from which they set sail, and in the lodgings in the city at which they land, Floris is given information because his absentmindedness and his sad demeanor remind the host and hostess of Blancheflour, while in the third inn, just outside Babylon, he is helped thanks to the mediation of the host of the second inn.

A powerful structural image is that of the cup. When Blancheflour is sold, the king receives for her a golden cup of unsurpassed craftsmanship and beauty. On it was depicted how Paris “ledde away” Helen, while their great love was portrayed on the lid. The cup was taken by Aeneas to Italy, there became the possession of Caesar, from whom it was stolen by the same man who has now sold it to the king. The parallels with the events in the story are obvious: like Helen, Blancheflour is loved by the son of the king but is a prisoner at a foreign court. Like the cup, she was taken overseas where she became the possession of the “emperor” from whom, in the end, she will be stolen. Because Blancheflour had been sold for the cup, this can serve as a quid pro quo for Floris, who takes the cup with him on his quest. The way in which the English adaptor deals with the possibilities of this symbol shows him to be a careful reviser. In the French original it is said that the merchants bought Blancheflour for thirty marks of gold, twenty of silver, precious textiles and the gold cup, and they thought it cheap because they were certain to get double the price from the Emir in Babylon.<sup>16</sup> The Middle English text says that the thief who paid for Blancheflour with the cup (and an additional twenty marks of red gold) “wyst to wynne suche three” (line 185). That he was right in his assessment of Blancheflour’s value we see when we follow Floris on his way to Babylon: it costs him three cups before he eventually gains access to and is reunited with Blancheflour; two of lesser value are paid to the hosts of the first two inns; with the third, the gold cup, he buys the loyalty and help of the porter.<sup>17</sup> But the adaptor goes a step further than this. After he has handed him the cup, the porter devises a plan to smuggle Floris into the Emir’s tower by means of a basket filled with flowers. The word for “basket” used here is *coupe*, and it is the same in both C and A, whereas the later E-version employs *lepe* (there is no text for V here). The earliest quotation in the MED for *coupe* is from *Floris*, and for *lepe* from *The Owl and the Nightingale*, a text that is from the same period (c. 1250) and same region (probably Guildford). Considering that the earliest text, C, and the second earliest but of the other group, A, both have *coupe*, we may assume that the original had this as well, and that this was a conscious choice of the adaptor.<sup>18</sup> This also means that there is an intended play on words when the narrator tells us that Floris had to hide under the flowers in the *coupe*. The cup as a vessel, or container, is a feminine symbol, so, when Floris has given up the gold cup, i.e., the symbol of Blancheflour, to the porter, he receives in return a new but equivalent symbol of her. His subsequent hiding in it is a prefiguration of his sexual union with Blancheflour that will take place soon after. And there is more to

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<sup>16</sup> *Floire et Blancheflor*, ed. Pelan, lines 496–501.

<sup>17</sup> The number three, which we saw before in the three saving acts of the queen, occurs again in the three games of chess Floris has to play with the porter. The recurrence of the number three is a feature of folktale narratives.

<sup>18</sup> Also the Modern English word *basket* was probably already available in this period, but before 1300 had no wide circulation.

it. While he is on his way to Babylon and acting as a merchant, Floris will refer to Blanche-flour as his "merchandise," as if she were an object that could be obtained by a commercial undertaking.<sup>19</sup> When Floris has given him the cup, the porter becomes his man, his vassal in a feudal sense. In other words, this act enabled Floris to resume his status as a member of the aristocracy, and to receive, as a return service, the help of the porter.

The imagery of the cup has even further implications. When the cup is first introduced it is given an ample description of its splendor and luster. Apart from the story of Paris and Helen already mentioned, the cup has a "pomel" on its lid, an ornamental ball, holding a carbuncle which would light up any cellar where a cupbearer might have to pour out beer or wine (lines 171–75). Later on in the story, Darys describes the tower of maidens in the Emir's garden, and it appears to have some familiar features (lines 615–20):

And the pomel above the led  
Is iwrout with so moche red,  
That men ne dorfen anight berne  
Neither torche ne lanterne;  
Swich a pomel was never bigonne,  
Hit schineth anight so adai doth the sonne.

*ornamental globe on the top of the lead [roof]  
made; ingenuity  
need by night burn  
made  
by night as by day*

The parallels between the cup and the tower confirm that here the ultimate goal of Floris' search must be sought. He has given the replica, the cup, to the porter and will now receive its exemplar, the tower, in compensation.

Both at the beginning and at the end Floris has to overcome the resistance of a male opponent, the king and the Emir respectively, but on both occasions he is supported by a female assistant, his mother, the queen, and Claris, Blancheflour's friend in the Emir's harem. The two men act as cold, rational beings, the women as their compassionate, feeling opposites. In their function as rulers of a state the men have to behave like that; they cannot afford to lose sight of the state's welfare. Consequently, the queen only manages to persuade the king to desist in his obstruction of Floris' wishes when she reminds him that if Floris should die, there will be no heir to the throne — to which she adds the emotional argument that the other eleven children they had have all died. In the same manner the Emir is eventually won over to allow Floris to have his Blancheflour. During the court trial, the duke, who had found the lifesaving ring that Floris and Blancheflour were each trying to give to the other, and who like all bystanders was impressed and moved by the couple's display of self-effacing love, suggests to the Emir that he not kill the two, but instead ask Floris to reveal how he had managed to enter the tower, for in this way he could all the better protect himself against future attempts to do so. The Emir follows this advice, and the ensuing dialogue between him and Floris leads to the happy ending.

## SOURCES

The immediate source of *Floris* is the Old French *Floire et Blancheflor*, which is about a hundred years older than the Middle English text. This French version is usually designated the aristocratic one, or a *roman idyllique*, to distinguish it from the later “popular” version

<sup>19</sup> On the position of Blancheflour as a slave at the court of the king of Spain, and therefore as property that could be sold as he thought fit, see Kelly, "Bartering of Blancheflour."

(in which Floris needs the strength of his hands more than cunning, or *engin*, to win Blancheflour). There may be little doubt regarding the source of the English text, but this is not the case for the French tale. As Lillian Hornstein writes: “The origins of the story are uncertain: parallels and resemblances have been noted in Byzantine, Greek, and Arabic romances; their exact relationship to the western versions is not clear.”<sup>20</sup> Kelly has neatly summarized the discussion of the sources as follows: “Scholars disagree as to whether *Floris and Blancheflur* is an oriental tale that was adapted for Western audiences, or a tale whose European author simply supplied it with an oriental setting.”<sup>21</sup>

The appearance of a book by Patricia Grieve in 1997 marked a watershed in the discussions of the sources and dissemination of the story through Europe. She was able to show that the origin lies in Spain and goes back to the wars between the Moors and the Christian kings there. This hypothesis would explain not only the strong emphasis placed on the conversion of Floris and all his subjects in many of the continental versions, but also the “perplexing” geography of these versions.<sup>22</sup>

When the English reviser set out to compose his version of the text, he not only reduced it in length, he also cut out all the references to French history (in the French text and others, the daughter of Floris and Blancheflour, Berthe, is the mother of Charlemagne), and most of the names, both of persons and of places; and he toned down the lengthy descriptions of Blancheflour’s tomb and the Emir’s palace and garden, while reducing the religious, missionary aspect of the text to a single line.<sup>23</sup> But on the whole he did his job skillfully, and critics have often commented favorably on the way in which he has reshaped the romance.<sup>24</sup> The dialogues are swift and convincing, the “simple, formulaic style allows rapid movement,” and the story ends with “one of the most impressive climaxes in the whole of Middle English romance.”<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, some losses must be noted as well, occasionally resulting in obscure lines or passages that cannot be clarified without recourse to the underlying French text. The example of the “piler” has already been dealt with; another is that of the peculiar names of the main characters. In the French text we learn that the two babies were born on the same day, “Le jour de la Pasque florie” (“The day of flowery Easter,” line 161), which even in Modern French still means Palm Sunday; this is why they are given their flower names. Throughout, the story emphasizes that the red rose is the

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<sup>20</sup> Hornstein, “Miscellaneous Romances,” p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Kelly, “Bartering of Blancheflur,” p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the geographical complexities of the Old French and other continental texts, see Grieve, “*Floire and Blancheflor*” and the European Romance, pp. 46–50.

<sup>23</sup> This line occurs in A only. E ends with the coronation of Floris; C skips the baptism of Floris but does have the epilogue (which is almost verbally the same as that in A). In view of this, the original version may not have had the line either.

<sup>24</sup> That this is by no means true for all critics is shown by the “anthology” of negative comments provided by Barnes; her conclusion is that these are especially found with scholars who compare the Middle English text with its French original (“Cunning and Ingenuity,” p. 10). On the other hand, Kelly opens with a list of positive reactions (“Bartering of Blancheflur,” p. 101).

<sup>25</sup> Gray, “Early English *Entföhrung*,” p. 210. It is telling of the tale’s mixed reception that Gray could see it as “an early English example of the ‘literature of tears,’ a ‘piteous tale’ [which] heightens and intensifies the moments of pathos and sentiment” (p. 208), whereas Field concludes that “sentimentality is avoided with a deft touch” (“Romance in England,” p. 166).

flower of Floris and the white lily that of Blancheflour. These colors/flowers are found, for example, on the tomb made for Blancheflour and later in the Emir's garden; both are decorated with trees, one of which has white flowers, the other red. The color symbolism explains as well the curious colors of Floris' horse, which was half red, half white (lines 365–66). A final point is that in the French text Blancheflour's tomb becomes a prefiguration of the Emir's garden, which it resembles so unmistakably. The English text has to do without this balancing image.

#### NOTE ON THE TEXT

Editors have generally opted to use the E-text, probably because it has more of the missing opening part than any of the others. Here the A-text has been chosen, complemented with as much of the E-version as was necessary, for the simple reason that it is the longest and in many ways the most complete text.

#### MANUSCRIPTS

Indexed as \*45 in Brown and Robbins, eds., *Index of Middle English Verse*, and as item \*2288.8 in Cutler and Robbins, eds., *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*:

- Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1. Fols. 100r–104v. [A]
- Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.iv.27.2. Fols. 1r–5v. [C]
- London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862. Fols. 98r–111r. [E]
- London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii. Fols. 6r–8v. [V]





## FLORIS AND BLANCHEFLOUR

[Listen lords, and especially lovers, and I will tell you the tale of Floris and Blancheflour, the ancestors of Charlemagne, which I heard from two maidens who wished to speak of love. Born on the same day, Blancheflour was a Christian maiden, and Floris a pagan; however, after he was baptized, Floris inherited kingdoms and riches.

Fenix, the pagan king of Spain, set sail to raid the Christian country of Galicia. He burned and pillaged the countryside within reach of the shore until no trace of the civilization remained. Before he left, he commanded his noblemen to terrorize those pilgrims seeking the shrine of St. James. They slaughtered a great number of pilgrims, including a noble French knight traveling with his devout daughter, a pregnant widow whose husband had been killed. After killing the knight, Fenix seized the daughter and gave her as a slave to his queen, who cherished her well and kindly allowed her to practice her faith. The women, who became fast friends despite their differences in faith, realized that they were both pregnant when the queen recognized the Christian woman's morning sickness. They gave birth on the same day, the slave woman to a girl-child and the queen to a boy; they named their children Floris and Blancheflour. King Fenix allowed the Christian woman to rear both children, although Floris was suckled by a pagan nurse.<sup>1]</sup>]

	Ne thurst men never in londe After feirer children fonde. The Cristen woman fedde hem thoo; Ful wel she loyed hem both twoo.	Nor need one ever more beautiful; try to find nourished them then Very much; the two of them raised them together Until; age
5	So longe she fedde hem in feere That they were of elde of seven yere. The king behelde his sone dere, And seyde to him on this manere	That it would be a great pity
	That harme it were muche more 10      But his son were sette to lore On the book, letters to know, As men don both hye and lowe.	Unless; study  high
	"Feire sone," he seide, "thow shalt lerne, Lo, that thow do ful yerne."	you will learn very seriously
15	Florys answerd with wepyng, As he stood byfore the kyng; Al wepyng seide he:	

<sup>1</sup> This summary is based on Hubert's translation of Fonds Français MS 1447, edited by Pelan in 1956 as *Floire et Blancheflor*.

	"Ne shal not Blancheflour lerne with me?	<i>But</i>
20	Ne can y noght to scole goon Without Blanchefloure," he seide than.	<i>I cannot</i>
	"Ne can y in no scole syng ne rede Without Blancheflour," he seide.	<i>Nor; read</i>
	The king seide to his soon:	<i>son</i>
	"She shal lerne for thy love."	<i>thanks to</i>
25	To scole they were put. Both they were good of wytte;	<i>very intelligent</i>
	Wonder it was of hur lore, And of her love wel the more. <sup>1</sup>	
	The children loyed togeder soo,	<i>each other</i>
30	They myght never parte atwoo. When they had five yere to scoole goon,	<i>be separated</i>
	So wel they had lerned thoo, Inowgh they couth of Latyne,	<i>then</i>
	And wel wryte on parchemyn.	<i>knew</i>
35	The kyng understood the grete amoure Bytwene his son and Blanchefloure, And thought, when they were of age, That her love wolde noght swage;	<i>could write; parchment</i>
	Nor he myght noght her love withdrawe,	<i>perceived; love</i>
40	When Florys shuld wyfe after the lawe. The king to the queene seide thoo,	<i>diminish</i>
	And tolde hur of his woo, Of his thought and of his care,	<i>remove</i>
	How it wolde of Floreys fare.	<i>marry in accordance with</i>
45	"Dame," he seide, "y tel thee my reed: I wyl that Blanchefloure be do to deed.	<i>spoke then</i>
	When that maide is yslawe And brought of her lyf dawe,	<i>her; distress</i>
	As sone as Florys may it underyete,	<i>concern</i>
50	Rathe he wylle hur forgete. Than may he wyfe after reed."	<i>About how it would go with Floris</i>
	The queene answerd then and seid (And thought with hur reed	<i>advice</i>
	Save the mayde fro the deed):	<i>desire; put to death</i>
55	"Sir," she seide, "we aught to fond That Florens lyf with menske in lond, And that he lese not his honour For the mayden Blancheflour.	<i>slain</i>
	Whoso myght take that mayde clene	<i>And an end is made to her life</i>
60	That she nere brought to deth bydene, Hit were muche more honour	<i>discover</i>
		<i>Quickly</i>
		<i>marry advisedly</i>
		<i>intended through her counsel</i>
		<i>[To] save; death</i>
		<i>ought; try</i>
		<i>live; honor</i>
		<i>lose</i>
		<i>Because of</i>
		<i>take away; pure</i>
		<i>would not be; at once</i>

<sup>1</sup> Lines 27–28: *Their aptitude to learning was a great marvel, / But their love [was] an even greater one*

	Than slee that mayde Blancheflour."		
	Unnethes the king graunt that it be soo:	<i>kill</i>	
	"Dame, rede us what is to doo."	<i>Reluctantly</i>	
65	"Sir, we shul oure soon Florys	<i>advise; to be done</i>	
	Sende into the londe of Mountargis.	<i>should; son</i>	
	Blythe wyl my suster be,	<i>Glad</i>	
	That is lady of that contree.		
	And when she woot for whom		
70	That we have sent him us froom,	<i>knows</i>	
	She wyl doo al hur myght,	<i>away from us</i>	
	Both by day and by nyght,		
	To make hur love so undoo	<i>To resolve their love in such a way</i>	
	As it had never ben soo."	<i>As if</i>	
75	"And, sir," she seide, "y rede eke	<i>advise also</i>	
	That the maydens moder make hur seek.	<i>feigns to be ill</i>	
	That may be that other resoun	<i>another</i>	
	For that ylk encheson,	<i>same cause</i>	
	That she may not fro hur moder goo."	<i>Why; from</i>	
80	Now ben these children swyth woo,	<i>very unhappy</i>	
	Now they may not goo in fere,	<i>together</i>	
	Drewryer thinges never noon were.	<i>Sadder; there never were</i>	
	Florys wept byfore the kyng,	<i>lying</i>	
	And seide: "Sir, without lesyng,		
85	For my harme out ye me sende,	<i>To my harm you send me away</i>	
	Now she ne myght with me wende.	<i>is not able; go</i>	
	Now we ne mot togeder goo,	<i>are not allowed</i>	
	Al my wele is turned to woo."	<i>happiness; woe</i>	
	The king seide to his soon aplyght:	<i>son in good faith (assuredly)</i>	
90	"Sone, withynne this fourtenyght,		
	Be her moder quykke or deed,	<i>alive</i>	
	Sekerly," he him seide,	<i>Surely</i>	
	"That mayde shal com thee too."	<i>to you</i>	
	"Ye, sir," he seid, "y pray yow it be soo.		
95	Yif that ye me hur sende,	<i>Unless</i>	
	I rekke never wheder y wende."	<i>do not care in the least where</i>	
	That the child graunted, the kyng was fayn	<i>consented pleased the king</i>	
	And him betaught his chamburlayn.	<i>entrusted him to</i>	
	With muche honoure they theder coom,	<i>there (thither) come</i>	
100	As fel to a ryche kynges soon.	<i>was fitting for; noble</i>	
	Wel feire him receyvyd the Duke, Orgas,	<i>fairly</i>	
	That king of that castel was,		
	And his aunt, with muche honour,		
	But ever he thought on Blanchefloure.		
105	Glad and blythe they ben him withe;	<i>happy; together with him</i>	
	But for no joy that he seith	<i>sees</i>	
	Ne myght him glade, game ne gle,	<i>cheer up, [by] sport; entertainment</i>	
	For he myght not his lyf see.	<i>sweetheart (lit., life)</i>	

	His aunt set him to lore	study
110	There as other children wore, Both maydons and grom; To lerne mony theder coom. Inowgh he sykes, but noght he lernes; For Blauncheflour ever he mornes.	Where; were boys <i>many to that place came</i> sighs; nothing mourns
115	Yf eny man to him speke, Love is on his hert steke. Love is at his hert roote, That nothing is so soote; Galyngale ne lycorys	speaks in; fastened <i>is [so much]; heart's</i> <i>is as sweet [as that]</i> Spice; licorice
120	Is not so soote as hur love is, Ne nothing ne non other flour. So much he thenketh on Blancheflour, Of oo day him thynketh thre, For he ne may his love see.	<i>their</i>  <i>One day seems as long as three to him</i>
125	Thus he abydeth with muche woo Tyl the fourtenyght were goo. When he saw she was nought ycoom, So muche sorow he hath noom, That he loveth mete ne drynke,	waits had passed had; come was afflicted by food; nor
130	Ne may noon in his body synke. The chamberleyн sent the king to wete His sones state, al ywrete. The king ful sone the waxe tobrike For to wete what it spake.	<i>any; go down</i>  <i>[to] the king to inform [him of]</i> <i>condition, in writing</i> <i>immediately; wax [of the seal] broke</i> <i>know; said</i>
135	He begynneth to chaunge his mood, And wel sone he understode, And with wreth he cleped the queene, And tolde hur alle his teene, And with wrath spake and sayde:	anger; called vexation
140	"Let do bryng forth that mayde! Fro the body the heved shal goo." Thenne was the quene ful woo. Than spake the quene, that good lady: "For Goddes love, sir, mercy!"	Have that maiden sent for From; head very unhappy
145	At the next haven that here is Ther ben chapmen ryche ywys, Marchaundes of Babyloyn ful ryche, That wol hur bye blethelyche. Than may ye for that lovely foode	<i>[have] mercy</i> nearest harbor merchants; certainly from buy gladly
150	Have muche catell and goode. And soo she may fro us be brought, Soo that we slee hur nought." Unnethes the king graunted this, But forsoth, so it is.	<i>young woman</i> property; goods away from; taken <i>In such a way that; kill</i> Reluctantly truly; happened
155	The king let sende after the burgeise,	burgess (merchant)

	That was hende and curtayse, And welle selle and bygge couth, And moony langages had in his mouth. Wel sone that mayde was him betaught,	gentle; courteous sell; buy; could
160	An to the haven was she brought. Ther have they for that maide yolde Twenté mark of reed golde, And a coupe good and ryche,	given over And; harbor given red
165	In al the world was non it lyche; Ther was never noon so wel grave, He that it made was no knave. Ther was purtrayd on, y weene,	cup; precious like it engraved apprentice
	How Paryse ledde awey the queene, And on the covercle above	depicted; think led; (i.e., Helen) lid
170	Purtrayde was ther both her love; And in the pomel theron Stood a charbuncle stoon. In the world was not so depe soler	both their round knob on top carbuncle deep a cellar
175	That it nold lyght the botelere, To fylle both ale and wyne; Of sylver and gold both good and fyne. Enneas the king, that nobel man,	would not give light to the cupbearer fill [containers with] both [The lid was] of; pure Aeneas
	At Troye in batayle he it wan, And brought it into Lumbardy, And gaf it his leman, his amy.	
180	The coupe was stoole fro King Cesar; A theef out of his tresour hous it bar. And sethe that ilke same theef For Blaunchefloure he it geef.	sweetheart; beloved stolen carried afterwards; very In exchange for; gave
185	For he wyst to wynne suche three, Myght he hur bryng to his contree. Now these marchaundes saylen over the see	expected (knew he could); gain their journeyed
	With this mayde to her contree. So longe they han undernome	
190	That to Babyloun they ben coom. To the Amyral of Babyloun They solde that mayde swythe soon; Rath and soone they were at oon.	Emir at once Quickly; agreed immediately
195	The Amyral hur bought anoon, And gafe for hur, as she stood upryght, Sevyn sythes of gold her wyght, For he thought, without weene,	
	That faire mayde have to queene. Among his maydons in his bour	times her weight in gold doubt harem
200	He hur dide with muche honour. Now these marchaundes that may belete,	placed maiden left behind are; [their] profit from her
	And ben glad of hur byyete.	

	Now let we of Blancheflour be And speke of Florys in his contree.	<i>let us leave Blancheflour</i>
205	Now is the burgays to the king coom With the golde and his garyson, And hath take the king to wolde The seler and the coupe of golde. They lete make in a chirche	<i>burgess</i> <i>payment</i> <i>to the king to keep</i> <i>had made; temple</i>
210	A swithe feire grave wyrche, And lete ley ther uppon A new feire peynted ston, With letters al aboute wryte With ful muche worshipp.	<i>very beautiful tomb created</i> <i>had placed</i> <i>written</i> <i>dedication</i> <i>Whoever could; read</i>
215	Whoso couth the letters rede, Thus they spoken and thus thei seide: “Here lyth swete Blauncchefloure That Florys lovyd par amoure.”	<i>lies</i>
220	Now Florys hath undername, And to his fader he is coome. In his fader halle he is lyght. His fader he grette anoonryght, And his moder, the queene, also.	<i>traveled</i> <i>descended (from his horse)</i> <i>greeted instantly</i>
225	But unnethes myght he that doo That he ne asked where his leman bee. Nonskyns answeare chargeth hee. So longe he is forth noom, Into chamber he is coom.	<i>scarcely</i> <i>But that; beloved might be</i> <i>No sort of; demanded</i> <i>So along he is taken</i> <i>a chamber</i>
230	The maydenys moder he asked ryght: “Where is Blaunccheflour, my swete wyght?” “Sir,” she seide, “forsythe, ywys, I ne woot where she is.”	<i>straight-away</i> <i>creature</i> <i>in truth, certainly</i>
235	She bethought hur on that lesyng That was ordeyned byfore the king. “Thow gabbest me,” he seyde thoo, “Thy gabbyng doth me muche woo. Tel me where my leman be.”	<i>recalled; deception</i> <i>ordered by the king</i> <i>mock; then</i> <i>lying trickery causes</i> <i>beloved</i>
240	Al wepyng seide thenne shee: “Sir,” shee seide, “deed.” “Deed?” seide he. “Sir,” she seide, “forsythe, yee!”	<i>yes</i>
245	“Allas, when died that swete wyght?” “Sir, withynne this fourtenyght The erth was leide hur above, And deed she was for thy love.” Flores, that was so feire and gent,	<i>gentle</i> <i>Swooned; truly</i> <i>call</i> <i>On</i>
	Sownyd there verament. The Cristen woman began to crye To Jhesu Crist and Seynt Marye. The king and the queene herde that crye;	

250	Into the chamber they ronne on hye, And the queene sawe her byforn On sowne the childe that she had born. The kinges hert was al in care, That sawe his son for love so fare. <sup>1</sup>	<i>ran in haste</i> <i>Unconscious; given birth to distress</i>
255	When he awooke and speke myght, Sore he wept and sore he syght, And seide to his moder ywys: “Lede me there that mayde is.” Theder they him brought on hyghe;	<i>Grieved; sighed</i> <i>Take; where</i> <i>There; in haste</i>
260	For care and sorow he wold dyye. As sone as he to the grave com, Sone there behelde he then, And the letters began to rede That thus spake and thus seide:	<i>grief; die</i> <i>looked</i> <i>read</i>
265	“Here lyth swete Blancheflour, That Florys lovyd par amoure.” Thre sithes Florys sownydde nouth, Ne speke he myght not with mouth. As sone as he awoke and speke myght,	<i>times; swooned now</i>
270	Sore he wept and sore he syght. “Blaunceflour,” he seide, “Blaunceflour! So swete a thing was never in boure; Of Blancheflour is that y meene, For she was com of good kyn.	<i>groaned</i> <i>chamber</i> <i>moan</i> <i>worthy parents</i> <i>High and low</i>
275	Lytel and muche loveden thee For thy goodnesse and thy beauté. Yif deth were dalt aryght, We shuld be deed both on oo nyght. On oo day born we were,	<i>portioned out fairly</i> <i>the same night</i>
280	We shul be ded both in feere. Deeth,” he seide, “ful of envy, And of alle trechorye, Refte thou hast me my leman. Forsooth,” he seide, “thow art to blame.	<i>together</i> <i>treachery</i> <i>Robbed; beloved</i> <i>Truly</i>
285	She wolde have levyd, and thow noldest, And fayn wolde y dye, and thow woldest. After deeth clepe no more y nylle, But slee myself now y wille.” His knyf he braide out of his sheth,	<i>lived, if you'd not interfered</i> <i>gladly; if you would [demand]</i> <i>cry out; will not</i> <i>kill</i>
290	Himself he wolde have doo to deth, And to hert he had it smeten, Ne had his moder it underyeten. Then the queene fel him uppon,	<i>drew; its sheath</i> <i>struck</i> <i>perceived</i>

<sup>1</sup> Who saw what had happened to his son because of love

	And the knyf fro him noom.	<i>took</i>
295	She reft him of his lytel knyf, And savyd there the childeſ lyf. Forth the queene ranne, al wepyng, Tyl she com to the kyng. Than seide the good lady:	<i>deprived</i>
300	"For Goddes love, sir, mercy! Of twelve children have we noon On lyve now but this oon. And better it were she were his make Than he were deed for hur sake."	<i>Away</i>
305	"Dame, thow seist soth," seide he. "Sen it may noon other be, Lever me were she were his wyf Than y lost my sonnes lyf."	<i>Alive</i>
	Of this word the quene was fayn,	<i>wife</i>
310	And to her soon she ran agayn. "Floryes, soon, glad make thee, Thy lef thow shalt on lyve see. Florys, son, through engynne Of thy faders reed and myne,	<i>Than [that]</i>
	This grave let we make,	<i>speak true</i>
315	Leve son, for thy sake; Yif thow that maide forgete woldest, After oure reed wyf thow sholdest." Now every word she hath him tolde	<i>Since; otherwise</i>
	How that they that mayden soldē. "Is this soth, my moder dere?"	<i>I had rather</i>
	"Forsoth," she seide, "she is not here." The rowgh stoon adoun they leyde, And sawe that there was not the mayde.	<i>happy</i>
320	"Now, moder, y think that y leve may. Ne shal y rest nyght ne day, Nyght ne day ne no stound, Tyl y have my lemmōn found.	<i>son</i>
	Hur to seken y woll wend,	<i>be glad</i>
325	"Now, moder, y think that y leve may. Ne shal y rest nyght ne day, Nyght ne day ne no stound, Tyl y have my lemmōn found.	<i>sweetheart</i>
	Hur to seken y woll wend,	<i>deceitful trickery</i>
330	Thaugh it were to the worldes ende." To the king he goth to take his leve, And his fader bade him byleve. "Sir, y wyl let for no wynne,	<i>advice</i>
	Me to bydden it were grete synne."	<i>Dear</i>
335	Than seid the king: "Seth it is soo, Seth thow wylt noon other doo, Al that thee nedeth we shul thee fynde. Jhesu thee of care unbynde."	<i>If (Unless)</i>
	"Leve fader," he seide, "y telle thee	<i>In accordance with our advice marry</i>
340	Al that thow shalt fynde me.	

	Thow mast me fynde, at my devyse,	<i>may; request</i>
	Seven horses al of prys:	<i>excellent</i>
	And twoo ycharged, uppon the molde,	<i>loaded, on the earth</i>
	Both with selver and wyt golde;	
345	And twoo ycharged with moonay	<i>money</i>
	For to spenden by the way;	
	And three with clothes ryche,	
	The best of al the kyngryche.	<i>kingdom</i>
	Seven horses and sevyn men,	
350	And thre knaves without hem,	<i>servants in addition to them</i>
	And thyn own chamburlayn,	
	That is a wel nobel swayn.	<i>fellow</i>
	He can us both wyssh and reede,	<i>guide; advise</i>
	As marchaundes we shull us lede."	<i>conduct</i>
355	His fader was an hynde king,	<i>gracious</i>
	The coupe of golde he dide him bryng,	<i>had brought</i>
	That ilke self coupe of golde	<i>very same</i>
	That was Blauncheflour foryolde.	<i>had been given in payment for Blauncheflour</i>
	"Have this, soon," seide the king,	<i>son</i>
360	"Herewith thow may that swete thing	<i>creature</i>
	Wynne, so may betyde,	<i>Obtain if it may so happen</i>
	Blauncheflour with the white syde,	<i>side</i>
	Blauncheflour, that faire may."	<i>maiden</i>
	The king let sadel a palfray,	<i>had saddled a riding horse</i>
365	The oon half white so mylke,	<i>side as white as milk</i>
	And that other reed so sylk.	<i>as red as</i>
	I ne kan telle you nowt	<i>[see textual note]</i>
	Hou richeliche the sadel was wrout.	<i>splendidly; made</i>
	The arsouns were gold pur and fin,	<i>saddlebows; exquisite</i>
370	Stones of vertu set therin,	<i>great potency</i>
	Bigon abouten with orfreis.	<i>Surrounded; gold embroidery</i>
	The Quen was hende and curteis.	<i>gentle</i>
	She cast her hond to hire fingre,	<i>put</i>
	And drough therof a riche ringe.	<i>drew</i>
375	"Have nou, sone, here this ring.	
	While thou hit hast, doute thee nothing,	<i>have no fear of anything</i>
	Ne fir thee brenne, ne drenchen in se,	<i>burn; drown; sea</i>
	Ne iren ne stel schal derie thee;	<i>steel; injure</i>
	And be hit erli and be hit late,	<i>Whether it be early</i>
380	To thi wille thou schalt have whate."	<i>To your liking; whatsoever [will be]</i>
	Weping thai departed nouthe	<i>now</i>
	And kiste hem with softe mouthe.	<i>each other</i>
	Thai made for him non other chere	
	Than thai seye him ligge on bere.	<i>They behaved; no differently</i>
385	Nou forht thai nime with alle main,	<i>Than if; saw; lying; bier</i>
	Himself and his chaumberlain.	<i>off; go; might</i>
	So longe thai han undernome	<i>have traveled</i>

- To the havene thai beth icome  
 Ther Blauncheflour lai anight.  
 Richeliche thai were idight.  
 The loverd of the hous was wel hende;  
 The child he sette next his hende,  
 In the altherfairest sete.  
 Gladliche thai dronke and ete,  
 Al that therinne were.  
 Al thai made glade chere,  
 And ete and dronke echon with other.  
 Ac Florice thoughte al an other.  
 Ete ne drinke mighte he nougħt;  
 On Blauncheflour was al his thought.  
 The levedi of the hous underyat  
 Hou this child mourning sat,  
 And seide here loverd with stille dreme:  
 "Sire," she saide, "nimstou no yeme  
 Hou this child mourning sit?  
 Mete and drynk he forgit,  
 Litel he eteth and lasse he drinketh.  
 He nis no marchaunt, as me thinketh."  
 To Florice than spak she:  
 "Child, ful of mourning I thee se.  
 Thous sat herinne this ender dai  
 Blauncheflour, that faire mai.  
 Herinne was that maiden bowght,  
 And over the se she was ibrowght.  
 Herinne thai boughte that maden swete.  
 And wille here eft selle to biyete.  
 To Babiloyne thai wille hire bring,  
 And selle hire to kaiser other to king.  
 Thou art ilich here of alle thinge,  
 Of semblant and of mourning,  
 But thou art a man and she is a maide."  
 Thous the wif to Florice saide.  
 Tho Florice herde his leman nevene,  
 So blithe he was of that stevene  
 That his herte bigan al light.  
 A coupe of gold he let fulle right.  
 "Dame," he saide, "this hail is thin,  
 Bothe the gold and the win,  
 Bothe the gold and the win eke,  
 For thou of mi leman speke.  
 On hir I thought, for here I sight,  
 And wist ich wher hire finde might,  
 Ne scholde no weder me assoine  
 That I ne schal here seche at Babiloine."
- stayed at night  
 provided for  
 lord; gentle  
 youth; seated nearest to him  
 fairest of all chairs  
 drank; ate  
 All those who  
 with each other  
 But; on someone else  
 lady; perceived  
 low voice  
 don't you notice  
 Food  
 less  
 it seems to me  
 see  
*Just like that sat in here the other day*  
 maiden  
 bought  
 sea; taken  
 maiden  
 her again sell for a profit  
 intend to  
 emperor  
 like her in all respects  
 outward appearance  
 Except that  
 Thus  
 When; sweetheart named  
 glad; because of; sound  
 to be cheered  
 had fulfilled; immediately  
 toast; yours  
 wine  
 also  
 Because; spoke  
 sighed  
 knew; I might  
 [bad] weather; delay  
 look for

435	Florice rest him there al night. Amorewe, whan hit was dailight, He dide him in the salte flos, Wind and weder he hadde ful god.	rested <i>In the morning</i> <i>set out; salty sea</i> <i>quite favorable</i>
440	To the mariners he gaf largeliche That broughten him over bletheliche To the londe thar he wold lende, For thai founden him so hende.	<i>sailors; gave generously</i> <i>across happily</i> <i>where he wanted to go</i> <i>gentle</i>
445	Sone so Florice com to londe, Wel yerne he thankede Godes sonde To the lond ther his leman is; Him thoughte he was in paradis.	<i>As soon as</i> <i>eagerly; sending [him]</i> <i>where his sweetheart</i> <i>It seemed to him</i>
450	Wel sone men Florice tidingges told The Amerail wolde feste hold, And kinges an dukes to him come scholde, Al that of him holde wolde,	<i>At once; news</i> <i>Emir intended to give a feast</i>  <i>from him hold land</i> <i>high</i>
455	For to honure his heghe feste, And also for to heren his heste. Tho Florice herde this tiding, Than gan him glade in alle thing,	<i>hear his command</i> <i>When; news</i> <i>he was glad of every</i>
460	And in his herte thoughte he That he wolde at that feste be, For wel he hopede in the halle His leman sen among hem alle.	<i>to see; them</i> <i>traveled</i>
465	So longe Florice hath undernome To a fair cite he is icome. Wel faire men hath his in inome, Ase men scholde to a kinges sone,	<i>Comfortably; lodging</i>  <i>palatial house; none like it</i>
470	At a palais — was non hit iliche. The louerd of the hous was wel riche, And gold inow him com to honde, Bothe bi water and be londe.	<i>master</i> <i>plenty of; into his hands</i>
475	Florice ne sparede for no fe, Inow that there ne scholde be Of fisc, of flessch, of tendre bred, Bothe of whit win and of red.	<i>Money was no object to Floris</i> <i>Lest there should not be enough</i> <i>meat; fresh bread</i>
480	The louerd hadde ben wel wide; The child he sette bi his side, In the altherferste sete. Gladliche thai dronke and ete.	<i>had been around</i> <i>seated</i> <i>fairest of all</i>
	Ac Florice et an drank right nowt, On Blauncheflour was al his thought. Than bispak the bourgeis, That hende was, fre and curteys:	<i>But; absolutely nothing</i>
	"Child, me thinkketh swithe wel Thi thought is mochel on thi catel."	<i>spoke; burgess (i.e., the host)</i> <i>Who gentle; noble</i> <i>it seems to me quite clearly</i> <i>much; goods</i>
	"Nai, on mi catel is hit nowt,	

	On other thing is al mi thought. Mi thought is on alle wise Mochel on mi marchaudise;	<i>something else in every respect (intended) purchase greatest concern must lose [it]</i>
485	And yit that is mi mestre wo, Yif ich hit finde and schal forgo." Thanne spak the louerd of that inne: "Thous sat this other dai herinne That faire maide Blancheflour.	<i>Similarly</i>
490	Bothe in halle and ek in bour, Evere she made mourning chere, And biment Florice, here leve fere. Joie ne blisse ne hadde she none, Ac on Florice was al here mone."	<i>chamber face lamented; her dear companion</i>
495	Florice het nime a coppe of silver whight, And a mantel of scarlet, Ipaned al with meniver, And gaf his hoste ther.	<i>lament ordered [to be] fetched; white Lined; fur gave [it]</i>
500	"Have this," he saide, "to thine honour, And thou hit mighte thonke Blancheflour. Stolen she was out mine countreie; Here ich here seche bi the waie. He mighte make min herte glad	<i>you may thank Blancheflour for it from Here look for her</i>
505	That couthe me telle whider she was lad." "Child, to Babiloyne she is ibrought, And Ameral hire hath ibought. He gaf for hire, ase she stod upright, Seven sithes of gold here wight.	<i>Who could; where; taken An</i>
510	For hire faired and for hire schere The Ameral hire boughte so dere, For he thenketh withouten wene That faire mai to haven to quene. Amang other maidenes in his tour	<i>times; her weight beauty; bearing at such a high price doubt maiden</i>
515	He hath hire ido with mochel honour." Nou Florice rest him there al night. On morewe, whan hit was dailight, He aros up in the moreweninge, And gaf his hoste an hondred schillinge,	<i>placed rested himself At daybreak morning</i>
520	To his hoste and to his hostesse, And nam his leve and gan hem kesse. And yerne he hath his oste bisought, That he him helpe, yif he mought, Hou he mighte with sum ginne,	<i>took; kissed them earnestly might ruse</i>
525	The faire maiden to him awinne. "Child, to one brigge thou schalt come; A burgeis thou findest ate frome. His paleis is ate brigges ende, Curteis man he his and hende.	<i>for himself win bridge instantly he is</i>

	We beth wed brethren and trewthe iplight.	<i>are sworn brothers; pledged by oath</i>
530	He thee can wissen and reden aright. Thou schalt beren him a ring Fram miselvē to tokning, That he thee helpe in eche helve So hit were bifalle miselvē."	<i>counsel; advise properly</i> <i>take</i> <i>as a token</i> <i>in every way</i> <i>As if; had happened</i>
535	Florice tok the ring and nam his leve, For there no leng wolde he brieve. Bi that hit was undren hegh The brigge he was swithe negh. When he was to the brigge inome,	<i>took his leave</i> <i>longer; stay</i> <i>By the time that; high noon</i> <i>very close to</i> <i>come</i>
540	The burges he fond ate frome, Sittende on a marbelston. Fair man and hende he was on. The burgeis was ihote Dayre. Florice him grette swithe faire,	<i>came upon first thing</i> <i>Sitting</i>
545	And hath him the ring irawt And wel faire him bitawt. Thourgh tokning of that ilke ring Florice hadde ther god gestning Of fichss, of flessch, of tendre bred,	<i>called</i> <i>greeted graciously</i> <i>handed</i> <i>entrusted [fit]</i>
550	Bothe of whit win and of red. Ac evere Florice sighte ful cold, And Darys gan him bihold: "Leve child, what mai the be, Thous carfoul ase I thee se?	<i>welcome</i> <i>meat; fresh bread</i>
555	I wene thou nart nowt al fer, That thou makest thouſ doelful cher. Other thee liketh nowt thin in?" <sup>1</sup> Nou Florice answered him: "Yis, sire, bi Godes ore,	<i>disconcertedly</i> <i>observed</i> <i>Dear; what is the matter with you</i> <i>sorrowful</i>
560	So god I ne hadde yore. God late me bide thilke dai That ich thee yelde mai. Ac I thenke in alle wise	<i>mercy</i> <i>Such a good [one]; before</i> <i>live to see (abide) the very day</i> <i>repay</i>
565	Upon min owen marchaundise, Wherfore ich am hidre come, Lest I ne finde hit nowt ate frome. And yit is that mi mestē wo,	<i>But; in every way</i> <i>[intended] purchase</i>
570	Yif ich hit finde and sschal forgo." "Child, woldest thou tel me thi gref? To helpe thee me were ful lef." Nou everich word he hath him told,	<i>In case; to begin with</i> <i>this is my greatest fear</i> <i>must lose [fit]</i> <i>I'd be very happy</i> <i>every</i>

<sup>1</sup> Lines 555–57: *I think that you are not feeling well, / That you put up such a sorrowful face. / Or don't you like your accommodation?*

	Hou the maide was fram him sold, And hou he was of Speyne a kinges sone, And for hire love thider icome,	
575	For to fonde with som ginne That faire maide to biwinne. Daris now that child bihalt, And for a fol he him halt: “Child,” he seith, “I se hou goth:	<i>In order to devise; stratagem (ruse)</i> <i>win</i> <i>observed</i> <i>fool; held</i> <i>[it] goes</i> <i>desire</i>
580	Iwis, thou yernest thin owen deth. Th’Ameral hath to his justening Other half hondred of riche king. That altherrichchest kyng	<i>has [invited]; tournament</i> <i>A second half hundred (i.e., 150)</i> <i>The most powerful king of them all</i>
585	Ne dorste beginne swich a thing; For mighte th’Ameral hit underyete, Sone thou were of live quite. Abouten Babiloine, withouten wene,	<i>Would not dare</i> <i>discover</i> <i>At once; from life departed</i> <i>[To go] around</i>
590	Sexti longe milen and tene And ate walle thar beth ate Seven sithe twente gate. Twente toures ther beth inne,	<i>[It is] sixty; ten</i> <i>at the wall there are</i> <i>times; gates</i>
595	That everich dai cheping is inne; Nis no dai thourg the yer That scheping nis therinne plener. An hondred toures also therto	<i>trading</i> <i>There is no day in the entire year</i> <i>in full progress</i>
600	Beth in the borewe, and somdel mo. That alderest feblest tour Wolde kepe an emperour To comen al ther withinne,	<i>borough; a few more</i> <i>weakest tower of them all</i> <i>prevent</i>
605	Noither with strengthe ne with ginne. And thei alle the men that beth ibore Adden hit up here deth iswore, Thai scholde winne the mai so sone	<i>From coming; inside</i> <i>force; cunning</i>
610	As fram the hevene hegh the sonne and mone. And in the bourh, amide the right, Ther stant a riche tour, I thee aplight. A thousand taisen he his heighe,	<i>Even if; have been born</i> <i>Had; upon; sworn</i>
615	Woso it bihalt, wid, fer, and neghe. And an hondred taises he is wid, And imaked with mochel prid Of lim and of marbelston;	<i>as soon</i> <i>high; moon</i> <i>right in the middle</i> <i>assure</i>
	In Cristienté nis swich non. And the morter is maked so wel, Ne mai no man hit breke with no stel.	<i>fathoms it is tall</i>
	And the pomel above the led Is iwrout with so moche red, That men ne dorfen anight berne Neither torche ne lanterne;	<i>Whoever; beholds; far; near</i> <i>wide</i>
		<i>lime</i>
		<i>In the Christian world [there] is not</i>
		<i>steel</i>
		<i>ornamental globe on the top of the lead [roof]</i>
		<i>made; ingenuity</i>
		<i>need by night burn</i>

	Swich a pomel was never bigonne,	<i>made</i>
620	Hit schineth anight so adai doth the sonne.	<i>by night as by day</i>
	Nou beth ther inne that riche toure	
	Four and twenty maidenes boure.	<i>chambers</i>
	So wel were that ilke man	
	That mighte wonen in that an.	
625	Now thourt him nevere, ful iwis,	<i>live; one</i>
	Willen after more blisse.	<i>needs</i>
	Nou beth ther seriaunts in the stage	<i>Desire for</i>
	To serven the maidenes of parage.	<i>servants; upper floor</i>
	Ne mai no seriaunt be therinne	<i>noble descent</i>
630	That in his brech bereth the ginne,	<i>breeches; instrument</i>
	Neither bi dai ne bi night,	
	But he be ase capoun dight.	<i>Unless; castrated cock fixed</i>
	And at the gate is a gateward,	<i>gatekeeper</i>
	He nis no fol ne no coward;	
635	Yif ther cometh ani man	
	Withinne that ilche barbican,	<i>same fortress</i>
	But hit be bi his leve	<i>Unless; by; permission</i>
	He wille him bothe bete and reve.	<i>beat; castrate</i>
	The porter is proud withalle,	<i>moreover</i>
640	Everich dai he goth in palle.	<i>rich clothes</i>
	And the Amerail is so wonder a gome	
	That everich yer hit is his wone	<i>astonishing a fellow</i>
	To chesen him a newe wif.	<i>habit</i>
	And whan he a newe wif underfo,	<i>choose</i>
645	He knaweth hou hit schal be do.	<i>takes</i>
	Thanne scholle men fechche doun of the stage	<i>done</i>
	Alle the maidenes of parage,	<i>from the upper floor</i>
	An brenge hem into on orchard,	<i>noble descent</i>
	The fairest of al middelhard;	<i>an</i>
650	Ther is foulen song,	<i>earth</i>
	Men mighte libben ther among.	<i>of birds</i>
	Aboute the orchard goth a wal,	<i>live</i>
	The werste ston is cristal.	
	Ther man mai sen on the ston	<i>cheapest</i>
655	Mochel of this werldes wisdom.	<i>see</i>
	And a welle ther springeth inne	<i>much</i>
	That is wroot with mochel ginne.	
	The welle is of mochel pris,	<i>wrought; ingenuity</i>
	The strem com fram Paradis.	<i>splendor</i>
660	The gravel in the grounde of preciouze stone,	<i>came</i>
	And of vertu iwis echone,	<i>[is] of</i>
	Of saphires and of sardoines,	<i>special power; every one</i>
	Of oneches and of calcidoines.	<i>sardonyx stones</i>
	Nou is the welle of so mochel eye,	<i>onyxes; chalcedonies</i>
665	Yif ther cometh ani maiden that is forleie,	<i>awe-inspiring quality</i>
		<i>has been slept with</i>

	And hi bowe to the grounde For to waschen here honde, The water wille yelle als hit ware wod, And bicome on hire so red so blod.	<i>she</i> <i>cry out as if it were furious</i> <i>turn; as red as blood</i>
670	Wich maiden the water fareth on so, Hi schal sone be fordo. And thilke that beth maidenes clene, Thai mai hem wassche of the rene.	<i>Whichever; acts</i> <i>She; put to death</i> <i>those; chaste</i> <i>themselves; stream</i> <i>run</i>
675	The water wille erne stille and cler, Nelle hit hem make no daunger. At the welle heved ther stant a tre, The fairest that mai in erthe be.	<i>It will not cause them harm</i> <i>head</i>
	Hit is icleped the Tre of Love, For floures and blosmes beth ever above.	<i>called</i> <i>about</i> <i>those</i>
680	And thilke that clene maidenes be, Men schal hem bringe under that tre. And wiche so falleth on that flour, Hi schal ben chosen quen with honour.	<i>whosoever the flower falls upon</i> <i>She</i>
685	And yif ther ani maiden is That th'Amerail halt of mest pris, The flour schal on here be went Thourh art and thourgh enchantement.	<i>considers [to be] of most excellence</i> <i>directed</i> <i>cunning</i>
	Thous he cheseth thourgh the flour, And evere we herkneth when hit be Blaunccheflour."	<i>expect to hear that</i>
690	Thre sithes Florice swooned nouthe, Er he mighte speke with mouthe. Sone he awok and speke might, Sore he wep, and sore he sight.	<i>times; swooned then (in an instant)</i> <i>As soon as</i>
695	"Darie," he saide, "ich worht ded, But ich have of thee help and red." "Leve child, ful wel I se That thou wilt to deth te;	<i>I'll die</i> <i>Unless; advice</i>
	The beste red that I can (Other red I ne can):	<i>advice; know</i>
700	Wende tomorewe to the tour, Ase thou were a god ginour, And nim in thin hond squir and scantiloun; Als thai thou were a masoun Bihold the tour up and doun.	<i>Go</i> <i>As if; stonemason</i> <i>take; square; measuring rule</i> <i>As if; bricklayer</i>
705	The porter is colvard and feloun; Wel sone he wil come to thee, And aske what mister man thou be, And ber upon thee felonie, And saie thou art comen the tour aspie.	<i>villainous; cruel</i>
		<i>kind of</i> <i>accuse; evil intention</i> <i>spy on</i>
710	Thou schalt answeren him swetelich And speke to him wel mildelich, And sai thou art a ginour,	<i>pleasantly</i> <i>kindly</i> <i>craftsman</i>

	To biheld that ilche tour, And for to lerne and for to fonde To make another in thi londe. Wel sone he wil come thee ner, And bidde thee plaien at the scheker. To plaien he wil be wel fous, And to winnen of thin wel coveitous.	<i>[And have come] to try near ask; chess eager desirous chessboard money with you Thirty; pocket anything of your [money]</i>
715	When thou art to the scheker brought, Withouten pans ne plai thou nowt. Thou schalt have redi mitte Thrittii mark under thi slitte. And yif he winne ought of thin Al leve thou hit with him. And yif thou winne ought of his,	<i>should not attach too much value to it eagerly the next day say take; twice as much possession retain selfsame given in payment</i>
720	Thou lete therof ful litel pris. Wel yerne he wille thee bidde and pracie That thou come amorewe and plaie.	<i>in tip-top condition Give; marks; pennies many keep no account</i>
725	Thou schalt sigge thou wilt so, And nim with thee amorewe swich two. And ever thou schalt in thin owen wolde Thi gode cop with thee atholde, That ilke self coppe of golde That was for Blancheflour iyolde.	<i>stake</i>
730	The thridde dai bere with thee an hondred pond And thi coppe al hol and sond. Gif him markes and pans fale; Of thi moné tel thou no tale.	<i>you don't feel like offer have more luck gladly Although</i>
735	Wel yerne he thee wille bidde and pracie That thou legge thi coupe to plaie. Thou schalt answeren him ate first No lenger plaie thou ne list. Wel moche he wil for thi coupe bede,	<i>are short of nothing resources</i>
740	Yif he mighte the better spede. Thou schalt bletheliche given hit him, Thai hit be gold pur and fin, And sai: 'Me thinketh hit wel bisemeth te, Thai hit were worth swiche thre.' <sup>1</sup>	<i>may homage; receive</i>
745	Sai also thee ne faille non, Gold ne selver ne riche won. And he wil thanne so mochel love thee, That thou hit schalt bothe ihere and see That he wil falle to thi fot	
750	And bicome thi man, yif he mot. His manred thou schalt afonge,	
755		

<sup>1</sup> Lines 748–49: "It seems to me that it is fitting for you, / Even if it were worth three times as much"

	And the trewthe of his honde. Yif thou might thou his love winne, He mai thee help with som ginne."	<i>oath of loyalty</i>
760	Nou also Florice hath iwrowt Also Darie him hath itawt, That thourgh his gold and his garsome The porter is his man bicome. "Nou," quath Florice, "Thou art mi man,	<i>strategem</i> <i>Thus; done</i> <i>Just as; taught</i> <i>So that; reward</i>
765	And al mi trest is thee upan. Nou thou might wel ethe Arede me fram the dethe." And everich word he hath him told Hou Blancheflour was fram him sold,	<i>trust</i> <i>easily</i> <i>Save</i>
770	And hou he was of Spaine a kynges sone, And for hire love thider icome, To fonde with som ginne The maiden agen to him winne.	<i>try; device</i>
775	The porter that herde and sore sighte: "Ich am bitraied thourgh righte; Thourgh thi catel ich am bitraid, And of mi lif ich am desmaid. Nou ich wot, child, hou hit geth:	<i>betrayed indeed</i> <i>property</i> <i>I despair of</i>
780	For thee ich drede to tholie deth. And natheles ich ne schal thee nevere faile mo, The whiles I mai ride or go. Thi foreward ich wil helden alle, Whatso wille bitide or falle.	<i>suffer</i>  <i>As long as</i> <i>condition; observe entirely</i> <i>happen</i> <i>Go</i>
785	Wende thou hom into thin in Whiles I think of som ginne. Bitwene this and the thridde dai Don ich wille that I mai." Florice spak and wep among,	<i>what</i> <i>wept in between</i> <i>period</i> <i>counsel</i>
790	That ilche terme him thoughte wel long. The porter thoughte what to rede. He let floures gaderen in the mede, He wiste hit was the maidenes wille. Two coupen he let of floures fille;	<i>be gathered; meadow</i> <i>wish</i> <i>baskets</i> <i>then</i>
795	That was the rede that he thought tho: Florice in that o coupe do. Tweie gegges the coupe bere, So hevi charged that wroth thai were. Thai bad God yif him evel fin	<i>one basket was put</i> <i>young women; carried</i> <i>loaded; angry</i> <i>end</i> <i>put</i>
800	That so mani floures dede therin. Thider that thai weren ibede Ne were thai nowt aright birede, Acc thai turned in hire left hond, Blauncefloures bour around.	<i>When they were asked to go to that place</i> <i>They had not been directed correctly</i> <i>But; to the left</i>

	To Clarice bour the coupe thai bere	
805	With the floures that therinne were. There the couppe thai sette adoun, And gaf him here malisoun,	curse <i>brought together</i>
	That so fele floures embroughte on honde.	<i>forth</i>
	Thai wenten forht and leten the coppe stonde.	
810	Clarice to the coppe com and wolde The floures handlen and biholde.	touch <i>thought; creature</i>
	Florissee wende hit hadde ben his swet wight; In the coupe he stod upright,	
	And the maide, al for drede,	
815	Bigan to schrichen an to grede. Tho he segh hit nas nowth she,	shriek; cry aloud <i>When; saw</i>
	Into the coupe he stirte aye, And held him bitraied al clene;	<i>jumped again</i> <i>considered himself</i>
	Of his deth he ne gaf nowt a bene.	<i>didn't give a bean (i.e., he didn't care at all)</i>
820	Ther come to Clarice maidenes lepe Bi ten, be twenti, in one hepe,	<i>rush[ing]</i> <i>group</i>
	And askede what here were That hi makede so loude bere.	<i>what was the matter with her</i> <i>she; commotion</i>
	Clarice hire understod anonright	<i>at once</i>
825	That hit was Blauncheflour, that swete wight, For here boures negh were,	<i>was [meant for]; creature</i>
	And selden that thai nerent ifere And aither of other conseil thai wiste,	<i>close to each other</i>
	And michel aither to other triste.	<i>[it was] seldom; were not together</i>
830	Hii gaf hire maidenes answer anon That into boure thai sscholden gon:	<i>secrets; knew</i>
	"To this coupe ich cam, and wolde The floures handli and biholde.	<i>much; entrusted</i>
	Ac er ich hit ever wiste	<i>She gave</i>
835	A boterfleye togain me fluste. Ich was so sor adrad of than,	<i>knew</i>
	That sschrichen and greden I bigan."	<i>towards; darted</i>
	The maidenes hadde therof gle	<i>terribly frightened by it</i>
	And turnede agen, and let Clarisse be.	<i>[to] shriek; cry</i>
840	So sone so the madenes weren agon, To Blauncheflours bour Clarice wente anon	<i>fun about it</i>
	And saide leyende to Blauncheflour:	<i>went back</i>
	"Wiltou sen a ful fair flour?	<i>As soon as</i>
	Swiche a flour that thee schal like,	
845	Have thou sen hit a lite."	<i>laughing</i>
	"Avoy, dameisele," quath Blauncheflour,	<i>very</i>
	"To scorne me is litel honour.	<i>please</i>
	Ich ihere, Clarice, withoute gabbe,	<i>Once you have seen it a little</i>
	The Ameral wil me to wive habbe.	<i>Come</i>
850	Ac thilke dai schal never be	<i>hear; no kidding</i>
		<i>have</i>
		<i>But that</i>

	That men schal atwite me That I schal ben of love untrewe, Ne chaung I love for non newe, For no love, ne for non eie;	<i>reproach</i>
855	So doth Floris in his contreie. Nou I schal swete Florice misse, Schal non other of me have blisse."	<i>nor for none (i.e., no one else) ever</i> <i>Just so</i> <i>Now that; lose</i>
860	Clarice stant and behalt that reuthe, And the treunesse of this treuthe. Leighande sche saide to Blancheflour: "Com nou se that ilche flour."	<i>beheld that sorrow</i> <i>faithfulness; troth</i> <i>Laughing</i> <i>see; very</i> <i>went then</i> <i>happy</i>
865	To the coupe thai yeden tho. Wel blisful was Florisse tho, For he had iherd al this.	
870	Out of the coupe he stirte iwis. Blaunceflour chaungede hewe; Wel sone aither other knewe. Withouten speche togidere thai lepe, Thai clepte and keste and eke wepe.	<i>jumped certainly</i> <i>color</i> <i>At once; recognized</i> <i>rushed</i> <i>embraced; kissed; also wept</i> <i>kissing lasted a long time</i>
875	Hire cussing laste a mile, And that hem thoughte litel while. Clarice bihalt al this, Here contenaunce and here bliss, And leighende saide to Blancheflour:	<i>their</i>
880	"Felawe, knouestou ought this flour? Litel er noldest thou hit se, And nou thou ne might hit lete fro thee. He moste conne wel mochel of art That thou woldest gif therof ani part."	<i>at all</i> <i>A little while ago you would not</i> <i>you can't give it up</i> <i>know; cunning</i> <i>Before; give [away]</i> <i>creatures; happiness</i> <i>her feet</i>
885	Bothe thise swete thinges for blis Falleth doun, here fet to kis, And crieth hire merci, al weping, That she hem biwraie nowt to the king, To the king that she hem nowt biwreie,	<i>betray them not</i>
890	Wher thourgh thai were siker to deye. Tho spak Clarice to Blancheflour Wordes ful of fin amour: "Ne doute thou nammore withalle Than to misself hit hadde bifalle.	<i>Through which; sure</i> <i>true love</i> <i>fear; no more indeed</i> <i>Than if; happened</i> <i>Know you; surely</i>
895	White ye wel, witerli, That hele ich wille youre bother druri." To on bedde she hath hem ibrowt, That was of silk and sendal wrought. Thai sette hem there wel softe adoun,	<i>cure; you both of your lovesickness</i> <i>a; taken</i> <i>rich silk; made</i>
	And Clarice drowgh the courtyn roum. Tho bigan thai to clippe and kisse, And made joie and mochele blisse.	<i>closed; curtain completely</i>

	Florice ferst speke bigan,	
	And saide: "Louerd that madest man,	<i>Lord</i>
900	Thee I thanke, Godes sone,	
	Nou al mi care ich have overcome.	<i>sorrow</i>
	And nou ich have mi lef ifounde,	<i>beloved</i>
	Of al mi kare ich am unbounde."	<i>From; redeemed</i>
	Nou hath aither other itold	
905	Of mani a care foul cold,	<i>very</i>
	And of mani pine stronge,	<i>suffering</i>
	That thai han ben atwo so longe.	<i>Because; apart</i>
	Clarice hem servede al to wille,	<i>to their liking</i>
	Bothe dernelich and stille,	<i>secretly; quietly</i>
910	But so ne mighte she hem longe iwite	<i>protect</i>
	That hit ne sscholde ben underyete.	<i>discovered</i>
	Nou hadde the Amerail swich a wone	<i>habit</i>
	That everi dai ther sscholde come	
	Two maidenes ut of hire boure,	
915	To serven him up in the toure,	<i>towel; basin</i>
	With water and cloth and bacyn,	
	For to wasschen his hondes in;	
	That other scholde bringge comb and mirour,	
	To serven him with gret honour.	
920	And thai thai servede him never so faire,	<i>although they; courteously</i>
	Amorewen scholde another paire;	<i>The next morning should [come]</i>
	And mest was woned into the tour	<i>most; accustomed [to go]</i>
	Therto Clarice and Blauncheflour.	
	So longe him servede the maidenes route	<i>rest of the maidens</i>
925	That hire service was comen aboute:	<i>their turn to serve</i>
	On the morewen that thider com Florice	<i>morning</i>
	Hit fel to Blauncheflour and to Clarice.	
	Clarice — so wel hire mote bitide —	<i>all the best to her</i>
	Aros up in the morewentide,	<i>morning</i>
930	And clepede after Blauncheflour,	<i>called for</i>
	To wende with here into the tour.	<i>go</i>
	Blauncheflour saide: "Ich am comende,"	<i>coming</i>
	Ac here answere was al slepende.	<i>But</i>
	Clarice in the wai is nome,	<i>went on her way</i>
935	And wende that Blauncheflour had come.	
	Sone so Clarice com in the tour	<i>As soon as</i>
	The Ameral asked after Blauncheflour.	
	"Sire," she saide anonright,	
	"She hath iwaked al this night,	<i>been awake</i>
940	And ikneled and iloke,	<i>knelt; looked</i>
	And irad upon hire boke,	<i>read</i>
	And bad to God here oreisoun,	<i>made; prayer</i>
	That He thee give His benisoun	<i>blessing</i>
	And thee helde longe alive.	<i>keep</i>

- 945 Nou sche slepeth al so swithe,  
Blauncheflour, that maiden swete,  
That hii ne mai nowt comen yhete.”  
“Certe,” said the kyng,  
“Nou is hi a swete thing.
- 950 Wel aughte ich here yerne to wive,  
Whenne she bit so for mi live.”  
Another dai Clarice arist  
And hath Blauncheflour atwist  
Whi hi made so longe demoere.
- 955 “Aris up, and go we ifere.”  
Blauncheflour saide: “I come anan.”  
And Florice here klippe bigan  
And felle aslepe on this wise;  
And after hem gan sore agrise.
- 960 Clarice to the piler cam;  
The bacyn of gold she nam,  
And hath icleped after Blauncheflour,  
To wende with here into the tour.  
She ne answerede nai ne yo,
- 965 Tho wende Clarice she ware ago.  
Sone so Clarice com into the tour,  
The Ameral asked after Blauncheflour,  
Whi and wharfore she ne come,  
As hi was woned to done.
- 970 “She was arisen ar ich were,  
Ich wende here haven ifonden here.  
What, ne is she nowt comen yit?”  
“Nou she me douteth al to lit.”  
Forht he clepeth his chaumberleyn,
- 975 And bit him wende with alle main,  
And wite wi that she ne come,  
As hi was wone bifore to done.  
The chaumberleyn hath undername,  
Into hir bour he his icome,
- 980 And stant bifore hire bed,  
And find thar twai, neb to neb,  
Neb to neb, an mouth to mouth:  
Wel sone was that sorewe couth.  
Into the tour up he steigh,
- 985 And saide his louerd al that he seigh.  
The Ameral het his swerd him bring,  
Iwiten he wolde of that thinge.  
Forht he nimth with alle mayn,  
Himself and his chaumberlayn,
- 990 Til thaie come thar thai two laie;  
Yit was the slep fast in hire eye.
- soundly  
*she; yet*  
*Surely*  
*she*  
*her desire to marry*  
*prays*  
*arose*  
*reproached*  
*delay*  
*together*  
*at once*  
*embrace*  
*afterwards they became frightened*  
*yes*  
*thought; had already gone*  
*supposed to do*  
*she; before*  
*thought to have found her here*  
*fears; too little*  
*calls*  
*orders; go; retinue*  
*find out why*  
*accustomed before*  
*went away*  
*has come*  
*stands*  
*finds these two, face to face*  
*calamity known*  
*climbed*  
*ordered*  
*Know; event*  
*goes*  
*their eyes*

	The Ameral het hire clothes keste A litel binethen here breste. Than segh he wel sone anon	<i>bed covers pulled down</i>
995	That on was a man, that other a womman. He quok for anguisse ther he stod; Hem to quelle was his mod.	<i>one shook</i>
	He him bithoughte, ar he wolde hem quelle, What thai were thai sscholde him telle,	<i>Them to kill; intention A thought came to his mind, before; kill</i>
1000	And sithen he thoughte hem of dawe don. The children awoken under thon. Thai segh the swerd over hem idrawe;	<i>afterwards; to put them to death in the meantime saw; drawn</i>
	Adrad thai ben to ben islawe. Tho bispak the Ameral bold	<i>Afraid; slain spoke</i>
1005	Wordes that scholde sone bi told: “Sai me now, thou bel ami, Who made thee so hardi	<i>at once good friend brave</i>
	For to come into mi tour, To ligge ther bi Blaunccheflour?	<i>lie</i>
1010	To wrotherhale ware ye bore; Ye schollen tholie deth therfore.”	<i>evil fortune; born suffer</i>
	Thanne saide Florice to Blaunccheflour: “Of oure lif nis non socour.”	<i>Nothing can save our lives</i>
	And mercy thai cride on him so swithe,	<i>pressingly</i>
1015	That he gaf hem respit of here live Til he hadde after his baronage sent, To awreken him thourgh jugement.	<i>barons avenge himself; trial</i>
	Up he bad hem sitte bothe And don on other clothe,	
1020	And siththe he let hem binde fast, And into prisoun hem he cast, Til he had after his barenage sent	
	To wreken him thourgh jugement.	
	What helpeth hit longe tale to sschewe?	<i>tell</i>
1025	Ich wille you telle at wordes fewe. Nou al his baronage hath undernome,	<i>in</i>
	And to the Amerail they beth icome.	<i>traveled</i>
	His halle, that was heighe ibult, Of kynges and dukes was ifult.	<i>built filled</i>
1030	He stod up among hem alle, Bi semblaunt swithe wroth withalle.	<i>outward appearance very angry</i>
	He saide: “Lordinges, of mochel honour	<i>with all due respect</i>
	Ye han herd spoken of Blaunccheflour,	<i>have</i>
	Hou ich hire boughte dere aplight	<i>dearly indeed</i>
1035	For seven sithes of gold hire wight.	<i>times; weight</i>
	For hire faired and hire chere	<i>beauty; bearing</i>
	Ich hire boughte allinge so dere,	<i>after all</i>
	For ich thoughte, withouten wene,	<i>doubt</i>

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
|      | Hire have ihad to mi quene.<br>Bifore hire bed miself I com,<br>And fond bi hire an naked grom.<br>Tho thai were me so lothe<br>I thoughte to han iqueld hem bothe,<br>Ich was so wroth and so wod; | <i>came<br/>man</i>   |
| 1045 | And yit ich withdrawe mi mod.<br>Fort ich have after you isent,<br>To awreke me thoughur jugement.<br>Nou ye witen hou hit is agon,<br>Awreke me swithe of mi fon."                                 | <i>Then; hateful<br/>have killed<br/>angry; mad<br/>held back my anger</i>  |
| 1050 | Tho spak a kyng of on lond:<br>"We han iherd this schame and schonde,<br>Ac, er we hem to dethe wreke,<br>We scholle heren tho children speke,<br>What thai wil speke and sigge,                    | <i>know<br/>quickly; foes<br/>a<br/>disgrace<br/>But; condemn</i>   |
| 1055 | Yif thai ought agein wil allegge.<br>Hit ner nowt right jugement<br>Withouten answeare to acoupement."<br>After the children nou men sendeth<br>Hem to brenne fur men tendeth.                      | <i>say<br/>adduce anything as defense<br/>would not be proper judicial procedure<br/>accusation</i>                           |
| 1060 | Twaie Sarazins forth hem bringe<br>Toward here deth, sore wepinge.<br>Dreri were this schilfren two;<br>Nou aither biwepeth otheres wo.<br>Florice saide to Blauncheflour:                          | <i>burn in the fire; intended<br/>Saracens</i>  |
| 1065 | "Of oure lif nis non socour.<br>Yif manken hit tholi might<br>Twies I scholde die with right:<br>One for miself, another for thee,<br>For this deth thou hast for me."                              | <i>Sorrowful<br/>weeps for<br/>cannot be saved<br/>If it were possible for a human being<br/>suffer death justly<br/>Once</i> |
| 1070 | Blauncheflour saide agen tho:<br>"The gelt is min of oure bother wo."<br>Florice drew forth the ring<br>That his moder him gaf at his parting.<br>"Have nou this ring, leman min,                   | <i>Because of<br/>answered then<br/>guilt; of the two of us</i>   |
| 1075 | Thou ne schalt nowt die whiles hit is thin."<br>Blauncheflour saide tho:<br>"So ne schal hit never go,<br>That this ring schal arred me;<br>Ne mai ihc no deth on thee se."                         | <i>departure<br/>sweetheart<br/>save</i>  |
| 1080 | Florice the ring here Araught,<br>And hi him agein hit bitaught.<br>On hire he hath the ring ithrast,<br>And hi hit haveth awai ikast.  | <i>I can't see you condemned to death<br/>handed<br/>she; passed<br/>thrust</i>   |
| 1085 | A duk hit segh and begh to grounde,<br>An was glad that ring he founde.   | <i>cast<br/>bent</i>  |

	On this maner the children come Weping to the fur and to hire dome. Bifor al that folk thai ware ibrowt, Dreri was hire bother thought.	sentence brought Sad severe
1090	Ther nas non so sterne man That thise children loked upan, That thai ne wolde alle ful fawe Here jugement have withdrawe, And with grete garisoun hem begge —	quite gladly conviction; repealed ransom; buy
1095	Yif thai dorste speke other sigge — For Florice was so fair a yongling, And Blancheflour so swete a thing. Of men and wimmen that beth nouthe, That gon and riden and speketh with mouthe,	If only they dared; or say young man creature live now walk
1100	Beth non so fair in hire gladnesse, Als thai ware in hire sorewenesse. No man ne knewe hem that hem was wo Bi semblaunt that thai made tho, <sup>1</sup> But bi the teres that thai schadde,	Except; shed And [which]; face
1105	And fillen adoun bi here nebbe. The Ameral was so wroth and wod That he ne might withdraw his mod. He bad binde the children faste, Into the fir he hem caste.	control; anger ordered to
1110	Thilke duk that the gold ryng hadde Nou to speke rewthe he hadde. Fain he wolde hem helpe to live And tolde hou thai for the ring strive. The Ameral het hem agen clepe,	[enough] compassion Gladly about; argued call; back
1115	For he wolde tho schildren speke. He askede Florice what he hete, And he him told swithe skete. “Sire,” he saide, “Yif hit were thi wille, Thou ne aughtest nowt this maiden spille.	was called very quickly kill
1120	Ac, sire, lat aquelle me, And lat that maiden alive be.” Blaunceflour saide tho: “The gilt is min of oure bother wo.” And the Ameral saide tho:	be killed
1125	“Iwis ye sculle die bo. With wreche ich wille me awreke, Ye ne scholle nevere go ne speke.” His swerd he braid out of his sschethe,	both vengeance; avenge drew; its

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1100–03: *No one is so fair while being happy, / As they (i.e., Floris and Blancheflour) were in their distress. / No one could make out that they were sad / By the appearance that they assumed then*

- The children for to do to dethe.  
 1130 And Blauncheflour pult forth hire swire,  
       And Florice gan hire agein tire.  
       “Ich am a man, ich schal go bifore.  
       Thou ne aughtest nought mi deth acore.”  
       Florice forht his swire pulte  
 1135 And Blauncheflour agein hit brutte.  
       Al that iseyen this  
       Therfore sori weren iwis,  
       And saide: “Dreri mai we be  
       Bi swiche children swich rewthe se.”
- 1140 Th’Ameral, wroth thai he were,  
       Bothe him chaungede mod and chere  
       For aither for other wolde die,  
       And he segh so mani a weping eye.  
       And for he hadde so mochel loved the mai,  
 1145 Weping he turned his heved awai,  
       And his swerd hit fil to grounde;  
       He ne mighte hit holde in that stounde.  
       Thilke duk that the ring found  
       With th’Ameral spak and round,  
 1150 And ful wel therwith he spedde;  
       The children therwith fram dethe he redde.  
       “Sire,” he saide, “hit is litel pris  
       Thise children to slen, iwis.  
       Hit is the wel more worsschipe
- 1155 Florice conseile that thou wite,  
       Who him taughte thilke gin  
       For to come thi tour within,  
       And who that him broughthe thar,  
       The bet of other thou might be war.”
- 1160 Than saide th’Ameraile to Florice tho:  
       “Tel me who thee taughte herto.”  
       “That,” quath Florice, “ne schal I nevere do,  
       But yif hit ben forgiven also  
       That the gin me taughte thereto;
- 1165 Arst ne schal hit never bi do.”  
       Alle thai praid therfore iwis;  
       The Ameral graunted this.  
       Nou everi word Florice hath him told,  
       Hou the made was fram him sold,
- 1170 And hou he was of Speyne a kyngges sone,  
       For hire love thider icome,  
       To fondon with som gin  
       That faire maiden for to win.
- 1175 And hou though his gold and his garisoun  
       The porter was his man bicom,
- thrust; neck  
pulled her back
- suffer  
thrust his neck  
pulled  
saw
- With; grief to see  
angry thought  
mind; countenance
- maiden  
head  
fell  
moment  
The same duke who  
whispered  
was quite successful
- saved  
honor  
kill  
honor  
secret; know  
ruse
- better; others; aware
- Unless; forgiven  
Who  
Sooner; be done  
begged
- maiden
- try; device
- reward

	And hou he was in the coupe ibore; And alle this other lowen therfore. Nou the Amerail — wel him mote bitide — Florice he sette next his side,	<i>carried in the basket the others laughed all the best to him beside</i>
1180	And made him stonde ther upright, And had idubbed him to knight, And bad he scholde with him be With the formast of his mené. Florice fallet to his fet,	<i>requested foremost; retinue falls</i>
1185	And bit him gif him his lef so swet. The Ameral gaf him his lemman; Alle the othere him thanked than. To one chirche he let hem bringge And wedde here with here owene ringge.	<i>give; love so sweet sweetheart</i>
1190	Nou bothe this children alle for bliss Fil the Amerales fot to kis; And thourgh counseil of Blaunccheflour Clarice was fet doun of the tour, And the Amerale here wedded to quene.	<i>temple there; their happiness Fell</i>
1195	There was feste swithe breme I ne can nowt tellen alle the sonde, Ac the richest feste in londe. Nas hit nowt longe after than That Florice tidingge to cam	<i>feast very splendid courses But [it was] It was not news</i>
1200	That his fader the king was ded. And al the barnage gaf him red That he scholde wenden hom And underfongen his kyndom. At Ameral he nom his leve,	<i>barons; advice go accept From; took</i>
1205	And he him bad with him bileve. Thanne bispak the Ameral: “Yif thou wilt do, Florice, bi mi conseil, Dwelle here, and wend nowt hom.	<i>requested; stay spoke</i>
1210	Ich wille thee given a kyngdom Also longe and also brod, Als evere yit thi fader bod.” “I nel bileve for no winne; To bidde me hit were sinne.”	<i>As As; offered will not remain; gain</i>
1215	Thai bitauht the Amerail oure Dright, And thai com hom whan thai might, And let croune him to king, And hire to quene, that swete thing, And underfeng Cristendom of prestes honde,	<i>commended; Lord be crowned</i>
1220	And thonkede God of alle His sonde. Nou ben thai bothe ded; Crist of Hevene houre soules led. Nou is this tale browt to th'ende,	<i>received for; gifts</i>
		<i>our; guide the end</i>

- 1225      Of Florice and of his lemane hende,  
                Hou after bale hem com bote;  
                So wil oure Louerd that ous mote.  
                Amen siggeth also,  
                And ich schal helpe you therto.
- gracious  
misery for them; relief  
it may [happen] to us  
say*

EXPLICIT



## EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *FLORIS AND BLANCHEFLOUR*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** **A** = Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 (Auchinleck); **C** = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.iv.27.2; **DV** = De Vries edition (1966); **E** = London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862; **FH** = French and Hale edition, in *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930); **S** = Sands edition, in *Middle English Verse Romances* (1966); **V** = London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii.

- 31      *When they had five yere to scoole goon.* Since they went to school at the age of seven, the children are now twelve years old.
- 66      *londe of Mountargis.* The name “Montargis” is unique to the English text. The original Old French, and all other continental versions, have “Montoire,” or “Montoiro,” in Andalusia, Spain. Montargis, a medieval town near the Montargis Forest near Orleans in the Loire Valley, takes its name, ultimately, from Odysseus’ loyal dog Argos; hence a place of loyalty, apt for Floris as he is removed from home and Blancheflour by his parents, whose act only strengthens his dog-like obedience to his love. Legends of obedient dogs in this “londe of Mountargis” thrive into the fourteenth century, one of the latest being a story of a French courtier, Aubry de Montdidier, who was killed by one Macaire. The king ordered a trial by combat between Aubrey’s dog Argos and Macaire, who was armed with a cudgel. The dog won the victory, Macaire confessed, and was hanged. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, sixth edition, indicates that the story is founded in earlier loyal dog stories. The trope remained popular into the nineteenth century. See Pixérécourt, *Le chien de Montargis*.
- 105–06    Floris sees that such pastimes give joy to others, but they do not cheer him up.
- 115      *speke.* Third singular present subjunctive, best translated as “Should any man speak to him.”
- 119      *Galyngale.* Aromatic root, a spice (and a word) brought home by the crusaders.
- 147      *Babyloyn.* Probably not the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar, but “the town of Bab-al-yun in ancient Egypt, which later became part of old Cairo” (Reiss, “Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative,” p. 346). It is perhaps noteworthy that the author of *Mandeville’s Travels* expresses concern that his readers distinguish between the two Babylons: “And vnderstondeth þat that Babyloyne [‘Babylon the Less’] þat I haue spoken offe where þat the Soudan duelleth is not þat gret Babylone where the dyuersitee of langages was first made” (ed. Hamelius, pp. 24–25).

- 149–50    *may ye for that lovely foode / Have muche catell and goode.* On the alterity of Blancheflour and the mercantile trafficking of women, see Kelly, “Bartering of Blancheflour,” especially pp. 103–05.
- 155    *the burgeise.* The burgess or citizen has not been mentioned before, so that “a citizen” would have been more logical. A burgess is a freeborn man, but a commoner. He will act as a kind of intermediary, a business agent, for the king, and sell Blancheflour for him.
- 163    *a coupe good and ryche.* That Blancheflour is initially valued primarily as a commodity by Floris’ father, the tradesmen, and the Emir is evident from the beginning. That Floris would yield the cup in a chess game (lines 357–58) demonstrates that to Floris the whole person of Blancheflour is more important. He seems aware of the way the system works, whereby she is a high-priced trade object, and he is able to move in his affections and loyalty beyond that system to a sacred commitment that affects even the Emir, who comes to pity and love them.
- 168    *Paryse.* Paris was one of the sons of Priam, the king of Troy. At the wedding of Peleus and the demigoddess Thetis, the goddess Eris (“discord”), who had not been invited, delivered a golden apple inscribed “To the most beautiful.” When Hera (Juno), Athena (Minerva), and Aphrodite (Venus) claimed it, Paris was asked to judge who should win the apple. He awarded it to Aphrodite, because she had promised him the most beautiful woman in return. This was Helen, wife to Menelaos, king of Sparta. Paris carried her off to Troy, which precipitated the Trojan war.
- 176    Although it fits the rhyme scheme, this line, as it stands, makes sense only if we take it to refer back to the golden cup that was “good and ryche” (line 163).
- 180    *amy.* This is Lavinia, daughter of Latinus and Aeneas’ bride-to-be.
- 198    *have to queene.* Kelly (“Bartering of Blancheflour,” p. 105) notes the tradition in oriental tales of the emir taking a new queen each year and killing the old one, “thus giving a new meaning to the term ‘planned obsolescence,’” but there is no evidence in *Floris and Blancheflour* of such a practice. Here the marriage simply suggests a pleasing addition to the harem.
- 199    *bour.* Bower, (lady’s) bedroom, hence, in this particular context, harem (S).
- 209    *chirche.* Since Floris and his parents are pagans, this word had best be translated as “temple.”
- 218    *That.* It is not clear whether this is the subject or the object of the sentence, but either solution makes good sense. The same ambiguity is found in the remark of Floris’ mother (lines 242–44) that Blancheflour died “for thy love,” i.e., her love for him or his love for her? It is clear that their mutual love is the cause of all their problems.
- 221    *lyght.* As the French version makes clear, the original meaning of the word is intended here, i.e., “to descend (from one’s horse)”: “Il descent jus du palefroy / En la sale devant le roi” (“He dismounts from his horse in the hall before the king”). To ride into a hall on horseback was not uncommon, at least in narra-

tives; witness the famous entry of the Green Knight into King Arthur's hall (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 136–96).

- 226 The sense of this line is difficult. The *MED*, citing this line, glosses *chargeth* as "demands." In her edition of the poem, Fellows follows suit, as I have done, to read: "He does not demand any sort of answer." French and Hale suggest that "Chargeth is a result of confusion for the French: *Il* (his parents) *se tardent de respons rendre*. The Cotton MS has *targeth*, and the rest of the context is more like the French. The idiom 'charge to answer,' demand an answer, may have been intended" (FH, p. 830). Sands says that the "ME is confused, perhaps from maladroit translation from the French, but the sense is 'He [does not wait] to demand an answer, [but] went forth until he got to the chamber.'" But all of these readings are problematic; why would not Floris demand an answer to his question about Blancheflour? Perhaps a better way to read the line would be to take it as referring to his greeting of his father and mother. "Chargeth" might be glossed "care about" (*MED chargen* 11.a). The sense would be that he could scarcely greet his parents without asking about his lover — and he did not care about their response to his greeting (because he was so concerned about his beloved).
- 274–75 In four extra verses, between lines 274 and 275 of the present text, V indicates why Blancheflour was loved by all:

Vor in worlde nes nere non Pine imake of no wimmon; Inouȝ þu cubest of clergie And of alle curteysie.	<i>wasn't ever anyone your equal among women knew; learning courtly conduct</i>
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- 331 *To the king he goth to take his leve.* From this point on, as Floris asserts his own authority, he becomes somewhat more adult as he would attempt to control his destiny, though it is his childlike integrity, even as much as his stubborn will, that continues to define his behavior to the end. See Barnes ("Cunning and Ingenuity," p. 13) on Floris' more potent sense of *gin* in the English when compared to the French source.
- 338 *Jhesu thee of care unbynde.* A small slip of the E scribe: Floris and his family are pagans, though Blancheflour's mother is Christian (see line 3). In the French tale, the beginning of which is missing in all English versions, she was captured by the heathen king and given to his queen as a personal servant.
- 343 *uppon the molde.* A stopgap, providing a convenient rhyme word.
- 362 *syde.* Another stopgap, part of the standard description of a lady's beauty.
- 366 *reed so sylke.* The combination of "red" and "silk" is curious. The Old French reads *rouge comme sans*, "red as blood," a folklore phrase that explains the color, but not the reference to silk (OF *sei*). Unfortunately some folios are lost at this point in V.
- 375 *Have nou, sone, here this ring.* Veldhoen suggests that as Floris takes the protective ring from his mother, along with the gold cup, he adds a "feminine aspect to his male personality, thus making him whole" ("Floris and Blancheflour," p. 60).

- With the ring, neither fire nor water can kill him. See note to line 1175, below, for further thoughts on this engendered alchemy that moves beyond gender.
- 380     *thou schalt have whate.* *MED* cites *whate* in this line to mean “the force of destiny” or “fortune as a causal force.” The point is the mother recognizes the power of Floris’ will and accepts his potent determination. What will be, will be.
- 392     *child.* In what follows the word is used in the sense “boy, young man” (also as a term of address), a common meaning in Middle English.
- 416–17     *here eft selle to biyete. / To Babiloyne.* Given the merchandising of Blancheflour, Floris wisely goes disguised as a merchant to gain access to his loved one. See Kelly on his wending of “his very bourgeois way toward Babylon” (“Bartering of Blancheflur,” p. 107). In the older French “version populaire,” Floris is a typical warrior knight. This later mercantile adaptation reflects an appeal to a bourgeois audience. See Giacone, “*Floris and Blancheflur*: Critical Issues,” pp. 398–99.
- 419     *of alle thinge.* An intensifier and handy rhyming phrase (again in line 454).
- 427–28     *hail . . . win.* Floris first proposes a toast (a kind of hailing) to his hostess and then offers her both the goblet and the wine in it.
- 444     *Wel yerne he thankede Godes sonde.* C omits this line; maybe the scribe realized that Floris is a pagan.
- 447–52     This feast is something we never hear of again. When much later in the text the Emir has caught Floris and Blancheflour in bed and wants to set up a court-trial to adjudge them, the barons have to be specially invited for that.
- 465–66     *gold . . . bi water and be londe.* As the French original makes clear, this innkeeper (like most of them in the story) collects tolls from those who come by water or by land.
- 483–84     *Mi thought is on alle wise / Mochel on mi marchaundise.* Compare lines 563–64. Veldhoen (“*Floris and Blancheflour*,” p. 52) notes the near repetition of the lines as a component of the folkloristic ceremonial formalities of the poem: “The formality is immediately apparent in the ritualistic repetitions: there are several innkeepers, several guides, several obstacles to be overcome, several disguises, even the game of chess is to be played three times. Also words and lines are repeated in the same ritualistic way.”
- 520     *gan . . . kesse.* “Kissed”; in ME *gan* (lit., “began”) is often used as an auxilliary of the past tense.
- 579     *goth.* The common form for the A scribe is *goth*, the one he uses in the middle of a line (e.g., in line 331). *Geth*, the grammatically more correct form, is found in rhyming position only (compare lines 778–79). Considering that *goth* is the default form in A, and that A has many other imperfect rhyme pairs (such as *wiste/ fluste*, lines 834–35), the MS reading may be retained.
- 582     *Other halfhondred.* The literal meaning of this phrase is “the second [other] hundred half,” i.e., only half of the second hundred, so 150.

- 587      *Babiloine*. See the explanatory note to line 147.
- 616      *iwrout with so moche red*. See *MED red* n.1 (meaning “wisdom” or “advice”), the implication being that the top of the tower is made with such special ingenuity that it actually glows at night. E records that the tower top is “made with muche pride” (line 578), an alteration that perhaps favors this meaning; so, too, lines 695–99 of the present poem, where “red” is thrice used to mean “counsel.” Alternatively, the sense could be that of *MED red* n.2(j) and *red* adj.1(f), with the meaning “gold,” the sense here being that the top is made of so much pure gold (red being the color associated with the metal in its molten form, cleansed of impurities) that it shines like the sun at night. Since red gold is associated with the highest form of wealth in the Middle Ages it would be fitting here.
- 638      *reve*. To castrate. See *MED reven*, v.4(b) and v.5(d): to cut off a bodily member. The sense is that if a man wants to get into the barbican he can get his wish but at an expense that might outweigh the desire.
- 643      The rhyme scheme makes clear that the A scribe must have skipped a line here. With the help of the other manuscripts the original may be reconstructed as: *Peiz he lovede his quene as his lif.*
- 648–49    *on orchard, / The fairest of al middelhard*. Reiss discusses the garden as a kind of Edenic world beyond death, which Floris enters through his “coffin.” This pre-lapsarian world “establishes the proper environment for the innocent love of Floris and Blauncheflour” (“Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative,” p. 345). See also Veldhoen (“*Floris and Blauncheflour*,” p. 62) on the orchard as a protective *mandala*.
- 651      *libben ther*. I.e., one might live there a long and/or comfortable life; consider E, “Men myȝt leue þeryn ful long,” and V, “Me mihte wel libbe hem a[mong].”
- 655      V adds the word *iwrite*: apparently texts containing “this werldes wisdom” were engraved on the precious stones.
- 658 ff.    *The welle is of mochel pris, / The strem com fram Paradis. / The gravel in the grunde of preciouuse stone. . . .* The Edenic garden with its many towers, well, and paradisal stream bears marks of Apocalypse 21, and is akin to the description of the stream of paradise in *Pearl*. See also accounts of the exotic bird decor of oriental gardens in the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, with streams of water and bird melodies (n.b., the “foulensong,” line 650).
- 661      *vertu*. Jewels were thought to have special powers. Such stones and their qualities were listed in lapidaries, books of stone lore, of which several in Middle English survive and even one in Old English; see *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*.
- 676      *At the welle heved ther stant a tre*. This “Tre of Love” (line 678) is a tree of life (rather than of fatal knowledge), where pure maidens bask. The Amerail, by art and enchantment, “cheseth thourgh the flour” (line 688) as it falls from the tree upon the chosen one.
- 690      *Thre sithes Florice swouned*. Gray (“Early English *Entführung*,” p. 208) compares the tender sensibilities of Floris to those of Troilus, who seems as affected by the

- emotional turmoil as a woman; see lines 419–21, where the woman at the inn sees Floris and Blancheflour in each other.
- 717     *at the scheker*. Reiss (“Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative,” pp. 346–48) notes that chess originated in ancient Babylon, where the board was modeled on the layout of the city. The game becomes associated with love pursuits as well as games of fortune. The three-day match has a ritual/magical component whereby, though he loses the match “rather than lose his own soul, [he] is able . . . to rescue another’s” (p. 348).
- 726–27     E is not only more logical but also the version closest to the French original:
- 3if þow wynne ouȝt of his,  
þow tell þerof lytel pris.  
And yf he wynne ouȝt of þyn,  
Loke þow leue it with hym. (lines 675–78)
- 738     *markes and pans fale*. A mark is two-thirds of a pound sterling. There are 12 pennies to a shilling, 20 shillings to a pound, and, thus, 240 pennies to a pound, *pans fale*, indeed.
- 744–45     By his high bidding for the cup, the porter hopes to persuade Floris to go on playing.
- 795     *Floris in that o coupe do*. What happens to the other basket (line 793) we never learn. The basket (*coupe*) evokes two common folk motifs, the one a casket from which life overpasses death, the other a boat or basket from which a future hero emerges. See Thompson, *Motif-Index*, L111, S141 (exposure in boat, basket, or chest) and L111.2.1 (future hero found in boat, basket, or bushes). See Reiss on the *coupe* as a coffin (“Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative,” p. 344), and Spargo on eastern analogues of the hero being carried by a basket to a tower where he meets a woman (“Basket Incident,” pp. 69–75). See also Gower’s Tale of the False Steward, and Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where men are carried into or out of the woman’s private domain while hidden in a basket or chest.
- 819     *deth*. One might expect “life” rather than “death,” as in E, though *deth* works as well in defining his fearlessness of death, as he will repeatedly demonstrate. Quite simply, he is not frightened by the spider in the cup, as Leontes in Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale* might say.
- 835     *boterfleye*. Clarise’s response is evocative, given the common association of butterflies and flowers. Reiss cites traditions of the butterfly as symbol of male sexuality (“Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative,” p. 344), but other more metaphysical connotations may apply as well. The butterfly “was widely regarded as a symbol of resurrection and rebirth, an association stemming apparently from the Greek word *psyche*, which meant both butterfly and soul. Its changing of form from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly was seen traditionally as a parallel to man’s pattern of life, death, and rebirth; the butterfly was analogous to the soul that had risen from the dead body (i.e., the chrysalis) and attained a new life in paradise. This significance, then, explains the butterfly’s frequent appearance in

- paintings of the Christ Child. Perhaps in terms of the patterns in the romance, this detail suggests that Floris has gone not only beyond life to seek his love but also beyond death; and it may be additionally significant that, as the story states, he rises out of the basket on the third day after the porter has agreed to help him" (p. 345). See also Wentersdorf ("Iconographic Elements," pp. 91–93) who, citing Augustine, notes another tradition associating the butterfly with lechery, as it flutters about the candle until it burns its wings, a fate Floris is *almost* subject to, but is not, given the sacrificial commitment of the couple, each to each.
- 853     *Ne chaung I love for non newe.* The line echoes a line from a French song type known as the *chanson à personages* that was picked up by William Cornish, Master of the Revels in the court of Henry VIII, in *A Robyn, Gentle Robyn*, where, in praise of the true woman we learn "she will chaunge for no newe." Thomas Wyatt used the song in one of his poems, and it is sung by Feste in *Twelfth Night* 4.2, in mockery of Malvolio. The song was included in Percy's *Reliques*.
- 870     *mile.* Their kissing lasted as long as it takes to walk a mile.
- 891     *hele ich wille youre bother druri.* I have glossed the line to mean "I will cure you both of your lovesickness." But a better sense may be "I will hide both your lovemaking," especially given the fact that she provides a curtain to hide behind. N.b., *MED helen* v.1, to heal, cure; and *helen* v.2, to cover, conceal, hide.
- 952     *arist.* Contracted form of *ariseth*, third singular present. The A scribe often mixes up present and past tense forms, especially with *hath* and *had* (compare line 962).
- 960     *piler.* The word occurs in all four versions, in a passage that is remarkably similar and therefore must go back to the first adaptor. It is curious, nevertheless, since the existence of this *piler* comes as a complete surprise. The line is a literal translation of the corresponding line in the Old French version (quoted by DV), but there the reader had been given a much more detailed description of the palace of the Emir. Its central part is a tower, which functions as a four-story apartment building for the Emir and his harem; Blancheflour has her room on the top floor, together with seven times twenty other maidens. In the middle is a pillar which is the main support of all the floors and through which water, as from a spring, rises to all floors and all rooms. Whenever one of the maidens needs some water, she can tap it from this pillar-conduit.
- 992–93     *The Ameral het hire clothes keste / A litel binethen here breste.* See Gilbert's careful reading of the French text, here noting that if the two youths embracing had both been women "this involvement in the emir's eyes does not constitute a sexual relationship" ("Boys Will Be . . . What?" p. 45n15). In the French, Floris' childlike expression of sexual passion and his physical resemblance to a girl "disturbs categories of gender" (p. 46).
- 1035     *seven sithes of gold hire wight.* Further evidence of the Emir's commercial evaluation of the value of virginity. In marrying the virgin Clarice, instead, his code of fiscal ethics remains intact.
- 1056     The king is referring to the well-known adage, going back to Roman civil law, *audite et alteram partem* ("hear the opposing party too").

- 1096–97 *For Florice was so fair a yongling, / And Blauncheflour so swete a thing.* See Barnes on the “Youth versus Age situation of Greek New Comedy” (“Cunning and In-genuity,” pp. 11–12), as the potency of the young lovers defies the opposition of the old father and the Emir himself as the couple moves beyond the murderous threats of the elderly to their happy nuptials.
- 1109 Judging by what follows the Emir did not really throw them into the fire yet; the reading of E and C confirms this: “He bade þe children fast be bound, / And into þe fire slong” (He ordered the children to be bound fast and thrown into the fire; E 996–97), but the order is never carried out.
- 1134–35 *pulte/brutte.* The form *brutte* is not recorded in the *MED*. The text is obviously corrupt here, since the sense of the most likely OE original, *brytan*, “crush, break,” does not fit the context, as DV concluded. The corresponding rhyme words in E do not offer much help: *putte/tytte*, in which *tytte*, “pulled,” is of obscure origin, too.
- 1145–46 *Weping he turned his heved awai, / And his swerd hit fil to grounde.* Gray (“Early English *Entföhrung*,” pp. 211–12) notes the kind presentation of the Emir to suggest a more subtle reading of the East, which, rather than being simply stereotypically evil, shows a leader who is more compassionate and capable of tolerance.
- 1175 *The porter was his man bicom.* See Veldhoen (“*Floris and Blauncheflour*,” p. 54) on the “ennobling and civilizing force” of love that enables Floris to protect his “man,” the gatekeeper, from the Emir’s wrath, and for Blancheflour to intercede for Clarice (lines 1192–97), thereby “achieving final harmony in the form of marriage between Clarice and the Emir.” This “civilizing force” is evident throughout the poem as male prowess is modified to embody kindness and sympathy. “Floris’ antagonists are all male, because the checks to the ideal he portrays are aspects of the male psyche . . . the idea of Woman in a man’s mind” (p. 57).
- 1189 *wedde.* The subject cannot be the Emir but must be Floris, a reading supported by DV, who in his glossary translates *wedde* here as “took in marriage.” E reads “let wed hem,” where the Emir, who “To a cherche he let hem bring” (line 1064), is the subject. Perhaps in A *he let hem* in line 1188 is subject and auxiliary of *wedde*, in which case one might read “he (the Emir) caused them to be brought to a temple / and had them married there with their own ring.”
- 1194 *the Amerale here wedded to quene.* Kelly (“Bartering of Blauncheflur,” p. 109) compares the double marriage of the Emir and Clarice along with Floris to Blancheflour to the double wedding at the end of a Shakespearean comedy, where the civic as well as the personal values are embraced, along with Christendom (line 1214).
- 1216–17 The subject of *let croune* is Floris: “And [he] had himself crowned king, and her (Blancheflour) queen”; in line 1218 the subject of the singular verb could be Blancheflour: “And she received Christianity . . .” which would accord with her mother’s faith, though it might also be Floris, the implication being that they both became Christians.



## TEXTUAL NOTES TO *FLORIS AND BLANCHEFLOUR*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** See Explanatory Notes.

### MS E

Whenever a word ends in an *m* or *n* (and often in the case of a *d*), the scribe of the Egerton MS gives a nice flourish to the final minim, curling back over the letter. Originally this represented an *-e*, but at the time the scribe was active (around 1400) it had become a standard decorative addition, a development relieving the scribe from the task of remembering whether etymologically speaking the word should end in an *-e* or not. In the present text the flourish has consistently been interpreted as a mere decoration.

### MS A

In the Auchinleck MS the yogh in general stands for the Middle English descendant of the Old English *ȝ*, but the A scribe often uses alternative spellings. Due to his inconsistent spelling habits identical words or endings may take on many shapes: *brouȝte*, *browt*, even in one and the same line: *seȝ* and *beȝgh* (line 1084). Besides that it may also be found in places where one would normally expect a thorn, e.g., in *wiȝ*, “with.” Wherever the yogh occurs it has been silently replaced by its nearest modern equivalent.

The A scribe has committed many little mistakes and inconsistencies. Thus, in words like *thought/bout*, forms with a yogh alternate with, but are more frequent than, those without a yogh. In words with a series of minims he has often forgotten one. Vertical strokes are not his strong point anyway, as he also occasionally leaves out an *l* or tall *s* (e.g., *god* for *gold*, line 465, *hi* for *his*, line 476). At times he omits an *m* or an *n* by overlooking an abbreviatory sign (a horizontal stroke written over a vowel denotes a nasal, e.g., *mournig* for *mourning*, line 402). Finally, initial *h-* is problematic as well: it is frequently written where it does not belong, and vice versa (e.g., *ere* for *here*, line 502, or *hore* for *ore*, line 559). In a number of such instances the text has been emended without comment.

Quotations from the other MSS have been taken from De Vries' four-text edition.

#### 1-366

**These lines are based on the Egerton Manuscript.**

13

*he.* E: *she.*

*thow.* When the word is written in full, this spelling is used, when abbreviated the spelling is *þu*, with superscript *u*. Here the spelling *thow* has been used throughout.

19

*y.* The common spelling for “I” in E; A usually has *I*.

59

*take.* Not in E, supplied by Taylor.

60

*nere.* DV, improving on Taylor's *ne were*; E: *were*.

- 63      *graunt*. E: *gunt*. It often happens that a superscript abbreviation sign (here *ra*) is forgotten by a scribe.
- 121     *flour*. Not in E; the emendation was first suggested by Kölbing (Review of *Floris and Blancheflur*, ed. Hausknecht, p. 96). Even then, however, the line makes little sense. In the Old French text another spice is mentioned, *girofles*, “gilliflower, clove,” for which a Middle English equivalent may have been used by the original English adaptor of the text. The E scribe, not knowing the word, subsequently tried to make something of a text he did not understand.
- 196     At this point the text of V begins. Since it was burnt round the edges, the parts of the texts closest to these, i.e., the b-column on the recto and the a-column on the verso sides, are only partly legible. But the inner columns have been well preserved, so that at least some comparison is possible.
- 203     Now. There is a small guideletter *n* (the initial itself was never filled in), followed by a capital *O* and a lower-case *w*. The space surrounding the *n* is two lines high, and the large initial was clearly meant to mark a new section of the story.
- 205     *burgays*. E: *Bugays*.
- 210     *A*. E: *As*.
- 222     *wyrche* is really superfluous here because of *make* in line 209.  
he. V; E: *him*. In the immediate context E’s reading is not impossible (“the king, and his mother too, greeted him”), but then the sense goes off the rails in line 224, for here *he* must refer to Floris, and not to his father.
- 243     *above*. V; E: *about*.
- 251     *sawe*. DV; E: *herde*.
- 255     *myght*. V; E: *moȝt*.
- 262     *then*. This word does not rhyme, nor does it add much to the meaning of the line. The text in V suggests that E’s original may have read *theron* (possibly with a superscript abbreviation for *er*): “Wel ȝerne he bihul þeron” (Very eagerly he looked at it), but even here the rhyme is off.
- 270     *syght*. E: *myght* cancelled, replaced with *syght*.
- 324     *there*. Not in E.
- 325     *leve*. DV translates “live,” S “leave”; E’s spelling allows for both meanings, and so does the context. V is of no help here, having only the first half of the line.
- 333     *wynne*. In the two early MSS, C and V, this should probably be taken as deriving from OE *wynn*, “joy, pleasure,” otherwise it would not rhyme with *synne*, “sin” (from OE *synn*) in the next line. However, in the period and the area in which the E scribe was active, the East Midlands of c. 1400, *synne* would have its modern pronunciation (compare DV, p. 48), and therefore *wynne* could be interpreted as deriving from OE *gewinn*, and hence mean “profit, gain.”
- 367–1227**     **These lines are based on the Auchinleck manuscript.**
- 393     *altherfairest*. DV; A: *alþrest fairest* (compare line 472: *alþherferste*).
- 402     *mourning*. A: *mournig*.
- 431     *thought*. A: *thout*.

- 431–32      *hir, here, hire*. Within two lines the scribe uses three different spellings for “her.”
- 461–63      The scribe has obviously botched up the text here, but with the help of E and C the sense can be derived: “They have taken lodgings most attractively, as one was obliged to a king’s son, at a palace — there was none like it [MS *him*].” Compare E: “Feire he hath his ynne ynoome / At a palaise, was none it lyche” (lines 444–45).
- 465      *gold*. A: *god*.
- 475      *nowt*. A: *towt*.
- 476      *his*. A: *hi*.
- 482      *other thing*. A: *ope pink*.
- 498      *hoste*. A: *hostesse*. The scribe has confused this scene with that in the first inn, where Floris gave a gold cup to the lady of the house when she had mentioned Blancheflour. Very consistently, the scribe retains the feminine form (see the emendations listed below) to the end of this passage, where, just before the words of the innkeeper, he changes back to *he* (line 523).
- 499      *he*. A: *zhe*.
- 502      *here*. A: *ere*.
- 506      *hath*. E, C; A: *had*.
- 508      *of gold here wight*. DV; A: *here gol of wizt*.
- 509      *hire faired*. Twice in A.
- 519      *his*. A: *hes*.
- 520      *his*. A: *hs*.
- 521      *oste*. A: *ostesse*.
- 522      *he*. A: *zhe* (twice).
- 525      *schalt*. A: *schat*.
- 526      *burgeis*. A. All four texts have a different word for the bridgeman (another toll collector): E: *senpere*, A: *burgeis*, C: *porter*, and V: *bruggere*, which comes closest to the OF *pontonnier* (DV, line 1375). But a few lines later he is referred to as *vileins* (line 1459), which translates as *burgeis*.
- 530      *reden*. A: *renden*.
- 537      *hit*. A: *his*.
- 541      *hegh*. A: *heghȝ*
- 543      *Sittende*. A: *Stonded*.
- 548      *Dayre*. A: *daye*.
- 559      *ore*. A: *hore*.
- 571      *hath*. E, C, V; A: *had*.
- 585      *th’Ameral*. A: *thamerlal*.
- 587      The reading of V shows that the A scribe must have forgotten a verb of motion: “About Babiloyne beþ to ȝonge [go], wiþoute wene, / Sixti longe mile and tene” (lines 205–06).
- 602      *iswore*. A: *ishwore*.
- 606      *riche tour*. A: *riche a tour*.
- 607      *I*. A: omits.
- 607      *thousand*. A: *ȝousang*.

- 608      *bihalt.* DV: *bi-alt*, A: *bi alt*.  
*wid.* A: *wit*.  
*neghe.* DV; A: *negzene*.
- 617      *dorfen.* DV, A: *tforren*. The scribe first wrote *thorren*, a contamination of *dorren*, “dared (pl.)”, and *thorven*, “needed (pl.)”, and then, aware that he had to correct it, put the *f* in at the wrong place.
- 627      *ther.* E, C; A: *the*.  
630      *the.* C, DV; A: *thet*, E: *that*.  
635      *ther.* A: *the*.  
649      *middelhard.* Probably a mistake for *middellard*; compare E: *mydderd*, V: *mid-dellerd*.  
661      *And.* A: *And and*.  
664      *welle.* E, V; A: *waie*.  
665      *ther.* A: *the*.  
676      The MS has a three-line capital *A* here, marking a new section of the story.  
679      C adds here: “So sone so þe olde beoþ idon [left off] / Per springeþ niwe riȝt anon.”
- 689      *herkneth.* Lit. “listen,” but the meaning is clear from C: “Alle weneþ [expect] hit schulle beo Blancheflour.”
- 711      *mildelich.* A: *midelich*.  
724      *of.* E, C; A: *al*.  
733      *thee.* A: *he*.  
781      *The.* A: *Ther*.  
794      *he thought.* A: *he bout*.  
803      *around.* A: *an hond*. A is clearly amiss here, but this time the other two versions do not offer a solution, as they have two completely different lines (though with the same rhyme).  
810      The manuscript has a three-line capital *C* here.  
811      *handlen.* DV; A: *handleden*.  
816      *he.* A: *she*.  
*she.* A: *he*.  
828      *And.* A: *And and*.  
836      *so sor.* E, C, DV; A: *sor*.  
846      *Avoy.* DV; A: *Auob*; E: *Avey*, C: *Away*. Although A follows the French here more closely than E or C, it is C in which the next two lines of the French original are found as well: “Ho that luveth par amur/ And hath therof ioye, mai lufe flures” (OFr: “Damoisele, qui a amours / Et joie en soi doit avoir flours”).
- 848      *Ich.* DV; A: *I ich*.  
853      *chaung I.* A: *chaungi*.  
856      *I.* E; not in A.  
858      The manuscript has a three-line capital *C* here.  
869      *Thai.* DV; A: *That*.  
883      *biwraie.* DV; A: *briwaie*.  
885      *deye.* V; A: *depe*; this kind of mistake is typically due to the similarity of *y* and *p* in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts.  
890      *ye.* A: *ȝhe*.

- 905       *care*. A: *car*.
- 912       *wone*. A: *wane*, with *o* written above the *a*.
- 914       *Two*. E, C; A: *thre*. C's text reads as follows: "That on his heved for to kembe,  
/ That other bringe towaille and bacin, / For to wasse his honden in."
- 918       *That other*. C; A: *the thridde*.
- 940       *And*. A: *And and*.
- 948       Again the manuscript has a three-line capital *C* here.
- 957       *here*. A: *he*.
- 962       *hath*. DV; V: *haveþ*, A: *had*.
- 982       *iclepēd*. A: *icheped*.
- 999       *thai<sub>2</sub>*. A: *þat*.
- 1010       *ye*. A: *ȝe*.
- 1019       *don on other clothe*. A: *clothes*. Probably a mistake, compare E: *do on bob her cloþ*, and V: *do on here beyre cloþe*.
- 1022       *had*. A: *dhad*.
- 1026       *hath*. A: *had*.
- 1027       *they*. A, DV: *ȝhe*.
- 1031       *wroþh*. E, C; V: *wreb*; A: *wroþt*.
- 1035       *of gold hire wight*. E, C; A: *hire wiȝt of gold*.
- 1037       *Ich*. A: *I ich*.
- 1042       *loþe*. E, V; A: *wroþe*.
- 1046       *Fort*. Probably on the basis of E's *Tyl*. DV glossed this as "until."
- 1051       *iherd*. E, V, DV; A: *irerd*.
- 1052       *dethe*. E, C, V; A: *deye*; for a similar mistake, see line 885.
- 1054       *sigge*. DV amends to *segge*, but both in A and E *sygge* occurs twice in rhyming position, be it that this form is ambiguous, as it rhymes with *alegge* here (*legge* in E), and with *bygge* (E) / *begge* (A), "to buy," in line 1095.
- 1060       *bringe*. A: *bringez*.
- 1079       *ihc*. In A only here (elsewhere it is always *ich*), but the normal spelling in C.
- 1082       *hath*. A: *had*.
- 1084       *begh*. A: *beȝgh*.
- 1088       *folk*. E; A: *fok*.
- 1096       *For*. E, C; A: *Fo*.
- 1099       *and<sub>1</sub>*. A: *anr*.
- 1111       *speke*. A: *spleke*.
- 1127       *ne*. C; A: *no*.
- 1132       *bifore*. E, DV; A: *fifore*.
- 1141       *chaungede*. C; A: *chaungegde*.
- 1147       *holde*. C, DV; A: *hlde*.
- 1159       *of other*. A: *of other of other*.
- 1165       *schal*. DV; A: *scha*.
- 1168       *Nou*. DV; E: *Now*, C: *Nu*, A: *No*.
- 1174       *And*. A: *And and*.
- 1181       *had*. A: *hath*.
- 1188       *he*. A: *h*.

- 1191      *fot.* A; E, C: *fet*. There is no reason to emend, with DV, to *fet*, as in A both forms occur in this expression in rhyming position: *fot* in line 754, *fet* in line 1184.
- 1198      The MS has a three-line capital *N* here.
- 1199      *That Florice tidingge to cam.* C: *That to Florys tydyng cam*; A, DV *That Florice tidingge ne cam*.
- 1220      At this place one would have expected a large capital as a paragraph marker, but there is not even a small paragraph sign in the MS.
- 1223      *lemman.* C; A: *lemma*.



## INTRODUCTION TO *SIR DEGREVANT*

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The story of *Sir Degrevant* does not belong to the canon of Middle English romances: the number of editions of the text is small, it rarely figures in anthologies,<sup>1</sup> and even a complete list of critical work would be relatively short. Yet the text survives in two manuscripts, both of them personal, private collections rather than professional, public ones.<sup>2</sup>

### MANUSCRIPTS, DATE, AND PROVENANCE

The older of the two manuscripts, Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91, constitutes a well-known collection of texts, assembled and written by Robert Thornton, about halfway through the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> During his lifetime this North Yorkshire gentleman wrote down texts that were to his liking in two manuscripts, known today as the Lincoln and London Thornton manuscripts. The interest of these two miscellanies lies not only in the survival through them of the individual works, or in the collection as such, but also in the light they shed on the tastes of an active fifteenth-century reader/compiler. Their contents, though clearly thematically related, do not share a single item, which testifies to the care with which Thornton selected his material. Of the two, the Lincoln is the more voluminous collection with eighty items on 314 folios, against thirty-one on 181 folios for the London manuscript. The nine romances in the Lincoln MS all occur in the first part (the last is item 15), which is followed by a series of predominantly religious, and especially mystical, texts (e.g., by Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton). At several places in both manuscripts Thornton has added his name, and there is no doubt that he wrote the entire collection himself, in spite of the variations in the writing style of the script. The Lincoln manuscript has lost a few leaves at beginning and end, as well as from some of the quires. From *Sir Degrevant* one page, about two hundred lines, is missing.

Like the Thornton miscellanies, the only slightly later manuscript, Cambridge University Library Ff.i.6, is an anthology, and likewise it was compiled and written by the owners, the Findern family of Derbyshire, and their friends, while part of it was probably copied by itinerant scribes.<sup>4</sup> It contains an interesting selection of “courtly poetry,” including Chaucer’s

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<sup>1</sup> An exception is the edition of the poem in Gibbs’ *Middle English Romances*.

<sup>2</sup> For a comparison of the circumstances in which the two manuscripts were produced (including, in fact, a third, the Auchinleck Manuscript, containing *Floris and Blancheflour*), see Thompson, “Collecting Middle English Romances.”

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the Thornton Manuscript, see the facsimile edition by Brewer and Owen.

<sup>4</sup> See Robbins, “Findern Anthology,” and the introduction to the facsimile edition by Beadle and Owen.

*Parliament of Fowls* and poems by Lydgate and Hoccleve, but also love lyrics, an abbreviated history of England, and even household notes scribbled in open spaces. The text of *Sir Degrevant* was written by two different scribes. The first broke off at line 564, in the middle of a stanza, at the bottom of what is now the last leaf of the quire (the leaf that was originally the last one was cancelled before the scribe started writing his text). The second scribe began on the first page of the new quire, and resumed the text where scribe 1 had left off.<sup>5</sup> There is a marked difference between the two hands, but this does not mean that there is also a considerable lapse of time between the writing of the two parts. *Sir Degrevant* is followed by a short chronicle, written by yet another scribe, ending with a reference to King Henry VI. Since the end of his reign is not given, the text must have been written before 1461, when Edward IV succeeded to the throne.

There is general agreement that the two manuscripts were produced not very far from the original place of composition of the poem, which was probably in the northeastern Midlands.<sup>6</sup> Less certainty, but no substantial disagreement, exists regarding the date of the original: Casson puts it “in the first ten years of the fifteenth century, or even earlier” (p. lxxiii), whereas Lilian Hornstein thinks of “the late fourteenth century.”<sup>7</sup> Hence a period of composition between 1385 and 1410 would satisfy most scholars.

#### FORM

For his poem the author has employed the so-called tail-rhyme stanza. In such a stanza two or three rhyming lines of usually four stressed syllables are followed by a shorter line of three stresses, which is followed by another rhyming couplet or triplet plus a shorter line, which rhymes with the previous short line: *aa(a)bcc(c)b*.<sup>8</sup> The stanza may be extended to comprise three or four of such 2+1 or 3+1 “substanzas.” This is the case in *Sir Degrevant*, which has a stanza of sixteen lines, rhyming *aaabcccbdddbbeeb*. The lines themselves, however, are shorter than usual, the triplets having three (or even sometimes two), the *b*-lines two stressed syllables.

#### STRUCTURE

The story of *Sir Degrevant* is of a well-known type: a young knight falls in love with the daughter of a socially much higher ranking nobleman, and he has to win her by achieving for himself a reputation and status that will make him worthy of her — which of course he does, against all odds. What makes *Sir Degrevant* different is the emphasis on battle action and the realistic historical setting. The component episodes that make up the narrative occur frequently in many other romances; in the case of *Sir Degrevant* they have been com-

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<sup>5</sup> For an extensive review of the activities of the two scribes, see Thompson (“Collecting Middle English Romances,” pp. 32–37). In contrast to what is generally assumed, it may well have been the case that the quire containing the second part, constituting the bulk of the text of *Sir Degrevant*, came into the possession of the Findern family first, and that the missing opening section was added later.

<sup>6</sup> *Sir Degrevant*, ed. Casson, p. lviii.

<sup>7</sup> Hornstein, “Miscellaneous Romances,” p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> Chaucer ridicules this meter in his parodic romance of Sir Thopas.

petently cemented together, resulting in a fairly coherent account of the hero's vicissitudes before it reaches the happy ending.

The plot structure with its artful alternation of battle and love episodes (designated below as B and L) may be schematically represented as follows:

Prologue — Introduction of the two protagonists

B1 Degrevant vs. the Earl: confrontation between the household armies of Degrevant and the Earl; the Earl is defeated, and many of his men killed.

L1 Degrevant meets Melidor in the orchard and is rejected; Melidor's maid takes Degrevant into the Earl's castle.

B2 Degrevant vs. the Earl's preferred suitor, the Duke of Gerle; Degrevant unhorses the Duke both in the tournament and in the duel, the next day.

L2 Degrevant is accepted by Melidor; she takes him into the castle.

B3 Degrevant vs. the Earl's steward: Degrevant and his squire are ambushed by the steward, but overcome him and his men.

L3 Degrevant is accepted by the Earl, and a wedding follows.

The weakest part of the plot is the account of events with which *Sir Degrevant* opens. His neighbor is a certain Sir Sere of Cyprus, always referred to as "the Earl."<sup>9</sup> For some unexplained reason he holds a grudge against Sir Degrevant, and when the latter is away fighting the infidels he invades his estates, hunting deer, killing foresters and farmers, and destroying his property. Degrevant's steward sends a messenger to call back his lord, who in twelve days covers the distance between Granada and home.<sup>10</sup> The story then develops along the lines sketched above, and yet with enough deviations from the set pattern to keep the audience curious about the next intrigues of the plot. The two threads of love and battle are craftily mingled without sacrificing their individual contributions to the plot, as a closer look at the first battle and love scenes reveals.

The morning after their first confrontation ends dramatically for the Earl; Degrevant rides to his castle to challenge the Earl to a duel (battle). When he is waiting for an answer before the gates, the Earl's wife and his daughter Melidor appear on the embattlement to try to end the hostilities (battle). Degrevant replies that his estates have been destroyed, and that he wants to retaliate against the man who did that to him (battle). However, while he is speaking he cannot help observing the beauty of the daughter, and he falls in love with her (love). That same day he ravages the lands of the Earl (battle), but love for Melidor makes it impossible for him to feel the same satisfaction as on the previous day (love). Degrevant tells his squire about his love, and the squire promises to help him but warns him in the same breath: "Think that ye er enemys!" (line 578) (love and battle). In the evening they ride to the Earl's castle, fully armed, this time to visit not the father but the daughter (love). After spending the night under a rosebush in the castle's garden, "Yarmede as thei ware" (line 632), at last Degrevant has an opportunity to speak to Melidor, who has gone out for a walk. He kneels in front of her, mentions his name and offers his love (love), an act which elicits an indignant reaction from Melidor, who calls him a traitor and an enemy of her

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<sup>9</sup> The line in which his name is mentioned is in the one stanza missing from C (between lines 160 and 161).

<sup>10</sup> Since we had first been informed that Degrevant was in the Holy Land (line 117), the return from Granada (line 131) comes as a surprise.

family, and tells him that before long he will receive his due reward from her father (battle). After this conversation Melidor returns to her chamber.

Throughout the narrative the poet manages to keep up this interplay between the two themes. With the exception of the first actions of the Earl, the fighting that takes place is connected to the love theme, and the love scenes are inextricably bound up with the hostilities between the Earl and Degrevant. This interrelationship and the resulting shifting of scenes provides variation and is undoubtedly a major factor in the appeal of the poem.

The two themes of love and battle are found not only in the actions of the poem but also in its main male characters. By all appearances, initially every one of them is linked up with battle only: when the vengeful Degrevant and his squire knock at the castle gate and demand a duel, the Earl and his family put up a united front to their enemy. But although Degrevant is not aware of this, the front has already sustained a few cracks, for after the Earl's defeat in the first encounter with Degrevant his wife had asked him why he wanted more land and why he had behaved so badly. We hear no answers, but the Earl expresses his regret that he ever went there and his intention never to return. Standing on the battlement the lady makes a similar move towards Degrevant and advises him to be reconciled "Or ther dey any moo" (line 452). It is through her that the theme of love enters the story. The first to come under the spell of love is, of course, Degrevant. He is soon followed by Melidor's maid and his squire, for whose betrothal he is responsible. Melidor herself had been impressed by the figure of Degrevant from the moment she saw him at the gate, and later she says that she fell in love then; but she only explicitly shows love when, in the duel for her hand, Degrevant has unhorsed the Duke of Gerle. Finally, towards the end of the story, the Earl is persuaded by his wife to be reconciled with Degrevant and to accept him as Melidor's husband. The only personage who can merely superficially be associated with the theme of love is the Duke, who returns home immediately after his defeat and subsequent loss of Melidor.

A special role in the poem is played by the three women, who, if not all to the same degree, have a considerable impact on the course of the plot. Most important in the first part of the story is Melidor's maid. When Melidor, after having rejected Degrevant, has returned to her room, the maid (who remains nameless) has an outrageous request: she asks for the boon promised her at Christmas, and what she wants is "yonde knyghth / To slep by my syde" (lines 783–84). Do as you like, Melidor says, and this enables the maid to smuggle Degrevant into the castle and give him supper (which he does not touch). She also informs him of his chances with Melidor and the plans of the Earl for a tournament, and when he leaves she shows him a secret entrance. Degrevant is so grateful that he promises to marry her to his squire, giving her a hundred pounds in addition, to seal the contract. This turns the maid into an even stronger advocate of Degrevant with Melidor, with whom she warmly pleads Degrevant's case — to no avail as yet. Melidor's own about-face comes at a moment when she no longer needs to fear the enforcement of paternal authority; her father's choice of husband, the Duke, the Earl's social superior, has been made to feel Degrevant's superiority on the battlefield; and with his retreat also her father's superiority over Degrevant, whatever was left of it, has come to an end. Her gesture of taking the Duke's horse and leading it to Degrevant as a reward is symbolic of her surrender to him. The combination of time and circumstances under which she does this might create the impression of a calculating streak had we not been told long before how much she had been impressed by Degrevant's outward appearance; moreover, the words she adds to the deed spring from a determined mind: "On this stede wol I ryde / By my lemanus syde" (lines 1318–19). The

role of the third woman, Melidor's mother, is that of a "peace-weaver." Her first action as such is when she asks her husband why he, with all his wealth and property, invaded Degrevant's estates and caused so much damage. We meet her next when she climbs the walls of her castle to plead with Degrevant to give up his reprisals and be reconciled with her husband. Finally it is she who reminds the Earl that Melidor is their only child, that Degrevant is not to blame for the deaths of their servants who ambushed him, and that the Earl had better accept Degrevant as his son-in-law. As A. S. G. Edwards has said of this aspect of the poem, "throughout the romance it is [in the world of the feminine] that the reconciling role of the woman achieves what cannot be achieved through battle or by men alone."<sup>11</sup>

#### STYLE

In her account of *Sir Degrevant*, Hornstein has characterized the poem as "the story of a feud,"<sup>12</sup> and indeed through the hostilities between Degrevant and the Earl we are given a realistic picture of the social-historical conditions that the country nobility, living far away from the centers of government, had to cope with. But, as Edwards has observed, "the poem is not centrally concerned, after its early stages, with the delineation of social injustice nor of reparation of that justice."<sup>13</sup> It soon develops into a "normal" romance, with its inescapably invincible hero, beautiful lady, dramatic fights, mediating servants, secret meetings, resisting father, and all the other ingredients that we associate with the genre. Yet the author was competent enough not to fall victim to the easy, straightforward narrative technique. We have seen above that he regularly shifts both scene and theme, by means of which he keeps up the pace of the story as well as the interest of the audience. In addition to that, he introduces the suspense element of a lady who at first spurns the hero's declarations of love. For a long time Melidor remains loyal to her father and does not want anything to do with his enemy. This attitude opens up interesting possibilities for the role of the maid, whose loyalty is to Melidor and not to the Earl, and who can therefore openly show her support of Degrevant.

Through another stylistic device the author creates a sense of balance by contrast. When the Earl breaks into the estates of Degrevant, slaying both game and foresters, he does so from a feeling of superiority, as a territorial lord who had nothing to fear from anyone. Upon his return from Spain, Degrevant first mends the damage done to both his parks and his people, then sends his squire to the Earl to demand an explanation. The disdainful reply of the arrogant Earl renders a fight between him and Degrevant unavoidable. Due to the outcome of the battle, the tables are turned, and the victory is celebrated by Degrevant and his men with a great party, while the Earl has to flee, wounded and humiliated. But—and here we see the skill of the poet—the next day things are different again. To carry out his retaliation as announced to the Earl's wife and daughter, Degrevant goes hunting and fishing in the forests of the Earl. At the end of the day, however, we learn that he cannot rejoice over his revenge: "For Mayd Melidor the may / His care wax all cold" (lines 523–24). We have now had a scene describing the ravishing of Degrevant's estates by the Earl, a battle between these two, and a second ravishing scene, this time by Degrevant. The second duel, between Degrevant and the Earl's "stand-in," the Duke of Gerle, brings Degrevant another victory over the Earl, and this

<sup>11</sup> Edwards, "Gender, Order and Reconciliation," p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Hornstein, "Miscellaneous Romances," p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> Edwards, "Gender, Order and Reconciliation," p. 55.

time there are celebrations again. Yet it is only a partial success: Degrevant has won the love of Melidor, but not the lady herself. For this a third battle is needed, the ambush set by the Earl's steward. Although it is directed against Degrevant, as were the earlier ones, what has provoked it is the behavior of Degrevant and Melidor as a couple. By his final triumph Degrevant has overcome this last obstacle, and he is awarded Melidor as his bride.

This basic pattern of balance is also found on a smaller scale. A single example may illustrate this. When Degrevant first meets Melidor in the castle's orchard, he kneels before her and gives his name. Later he is taken into the castle by Melidor's maid, who supplies him with a rich supper. After the duel with the Duke and Melidor's admission of her love for him, Degrevant again visits the castle. He is now met by Melidor herself, who kneels on the floor, and, having been raised up by him and kissed, orders her maid to make a fire, lay the table, and prepare a costly meal.

Especially in the beginning of the narrative the poet displays an interest in the legal formalities in the case of a conflict. His command of the correct legal terminology is evident in such lines as: "Ther was sesyd in hys hand / A thousand poundus worth of land / Of rentes, wel settand, / And . . . / An houndered plows in demaynus" (lines 65–69). When Degrevant discovers the destruction done to his property by the Earl he sets about to claim damages, but, as the text says explicitly, he "thought werke be lawe / And wyth non other schore" (lines 151–52). He therefore writes a letter to the Earl, demanding justice. He sends his squire to deliver it, and when the Earl refuses to stop breaking into Degrevant's hunting grounds, the squire, as representative of Degrevant, throws down his glove, at the same time summoning the Earl to "amend to schkyll" (line 203). The duel fought for the hand of Melidor shows equal care to abide by the rules. We may deduce the importance of this aspect from the fact that it is the Duke who sends a squire to Degrevant to enquire how he wants to fight: "To juste o pesse or of were" (line 1267), the latter phrase meaning "to the bitter end."<sup>14</sup>

In this context the prominent word *trouthe* should also be considered.<sup>15</sup> Its usage varies considerably, from a mere asseveration, as when the Earl's wife says to Degrevant "Thou art a man marvelus, / My troth y thee plyght" (lines 423–24), to a legally valid betrothal, of Melidor's maid and the squire, orchestrated by Degrevant (lines 887–89). Precisely because it is such a meaningful word, the inability of the Duke of Gerle to make true his two solemn vows contrasts sharply with the supremacy of Degrevant.

That he has an eye for the luxury with which the nobility surrounds itself is evident from yet another feature of the poet's style. In the words of Hornstein: "Elaborated are details of social life, the glowing beauties of costume and architecture, of embroidery, jewel-work, table-fittings, wall-paintings."<sup>16</sup> In all fairness it should be said that this elaboration of details is practically limited to the lengthy description of Melidor's bower, but the splendor of medieval architecture and the luxurious design of her chamber and the objects in it are described so evocatively that the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones was inspired by them to paint a series of murals.

Finally, a word must be said about two ornamental devices found in the poem: alliteration and concatenation. If the second is taken in the strict sense of a repetition of the

<sup>14</sup> See the explanatory note to this line.

<sup>15</sup> On the significance of this word, see also Edwards ("Gender, Order and Reconciliation," pp. 61–62).

<sup>16</sup> Hornstein, "Miscellaneous Romances," p. 148.

same word in the last line of one stanza and the first line of the next, there are only four occurrences in *Sir Degrevant*, two of which concern the expression *plyghte trouthe*. If extended to words occurring in the last two lines of one stanza and first two of the next, there are seven more cases. Considering that the poem numbers 120 stanzas, it can hardly be called a prominent feature of the poet's style.

Anyone familiar with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* knows that in The Knight's Tale he used alliteration in his description of the tournament (especially in I[A]2601–16), possibly under the influence of the alliterative romances with their emphasis on knightly prowess and heroic battles. It is questionable, of course, if the poet of *Sir Degrevant* was acquainted with Chaucer's work, but the fact is that he too employs alliteration to heighten the tone in certain passages, fighting scenes in particular.<sup>17</sup> The first of these is the battle between the Earl and Degrevant and their assembled retinues (lines 289–304):

And whan the batell enjoined	<i>[they] engaged finj</i>
With speres ferisly they foynede.	<i>thrust</i>
Ther myght no sege be ensoynd	<i>warrior be excused (permitted to delay)</i>
That faught in the feld.	
Wyth bryght swerdus on the bent	<i>field</i>
Rych hawberkes they rent;	
Gleves gleteryng glent	<i>swords; glanced</i>
Onpon geldene scheldus.	<i>golden</i>
They styken stedus in stour,	<i>pierce steeds; battle</i>
Knygthtus thorow her armere;	<i>armor</i>
Lordus of honor	
Onpon the hethe heldus.	<i>sink</i>
They foughten so ferisly	
Ther weste non so myghty	<i>none knew, regardless of his might</i>
Who schold have the victory,	
Bot He that all weldus.	<i>Except; governs</i>

In this stanza, ten of the sixteen lines show alliteration, while the vocabulary includes a few words that are found only in the context of battle and are typically reminiscent of the alliterative romances: *foynede*, *gleves*, *glent*, *stour*.

#### SOURCE

Apart from the two hundred lines missing from L and the one stanza from C, the text is complete in both manuscripts. Casson has printed them side by side, thus enabling us to see the numerous similarities and differences between them. According to Hornstein “[e]ach manuscript is independently derived from a lost common source.”<sup>18</sup> What this source is, however, we do not know. Because of the names of the protagonists, one might be inclined to think of a lost French original, but this is not necessarily so. French names should be no obstruction to the suggestion that the poem may reflect a realistic situation, perhaps even a historical event that took place in the North Midlands. According to Maureen Jurkowski

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed statistical analysis of the number of lines showing alliteration, and of the various types, see the introduction to Casson's edition of the poem (pp. xlvi–xlv).

<sup>18</sup> Hornstein, “Miscellaneous Romances,” p. 147.

such a connection with the contemporary social situation in the north country is not too far-fetched. In her comprehensive study of the vicissitudes of the Fynderne family of Findern, Derbyshire, in the fifteenth century she suggests that the “life and career of John Fynderne may reflect . . . the tail-rhyming romance of *Sir Degrevant*.<sup>19</sup> She goes on to argue that the family possibly obtained possession of the romance around the time that said John had bought the manor of Stretton-en-le-Field, in April 1412, an acquisition that led the family into protracted litigation which ended only with John’s death in 1420.<sup>20</sup> A similar link with reality was argued by John Scattergood for the comparable romance of *Gamelyn*, in which the eponymous hero has to overcome, as a younger and less powerful son, the resistance of his two elder brothers to obtain his share in their father’s inheritance.<sup>21</sup>

#### NOTE TO THE TEXT

The two modern editors (i.e., post-1900) of the poem have both published the text in a parallel edition, in order to show the interesting differences between them. For a single text edition the C-text must clearly be preferred to the Thornton version simply because the latter lacks some two hundred lines. This does not mean that C is in any way superior to L. From both versions instances could be drawn to show how the one is better (not to say less corrupt) than the other. Thus in the following example C has a more felicitous reading than L (lines 1129–32):

(C)	(L)
He was stalworth in stoure,	He was staleworthe in stowres,
For he loved par amoure	Be Sayne Martyn of Towres;
The lady lay in the toure,	The Lady laye in hir bowres
That shuld be hys mak.	That solde be his make.

A love “par amoure” makes a stronger incentive to battle than the Christian neighborly love for which St. Martin of Tours is known.<sup>22</sup>

#### MANUSCRIPTS

Indexed as item 1953 in Brown and Robbins, eds., *Index of Middle English Verse*, and Cutler and Robbins, eds., *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*:

- Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern MS). Fols. 96r–109v. [C]
- Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS Cathedral 91 (the Thornton MS). Fols. 130r–138v. [L]

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<sup>19</sup> Jurkowski, “‘Findern Manuscript’ and the History of the Fynderne Family,” p. 206.

<sup>20</sup> Jurkowski, “‘Findern Manuscript’ and the History of the Fynderne Family,” pp. 208–09.

<sup>21</sup> Scattergood, “*The Tale of Gamelyn*: The Noble Robber as Provincial Hero.” A basis in history has also been argued for, for instance, *Floris and Blancheflour* and *The Erle of Toulous* (a poem with which *Sir Degrevant* is often associated in terms of plot and narrative detail). For further details on *Floris and Blancheflour*, see my introduction to the poem, above, and especially Grieve, “*Floire and Blancheflor*” and the European Romance. For *The Erle of Tolous*, see Cabaniss, “Judith Augusta and Her Time.”

<sup>22</sup> For a reverse case, see note to lines 1493–94.



## SIR DEGREVANT

	Lord Gode in Trynit�,	
	Geff home Hevene for to se	
	That lovetho gamen and gle	
	And gestys to fede. <sup>1</sup>	
5	Ther folke sitis in fere	Where; sit together
	Shuldde men herken and here	listen
	Off gode that before hem were	good [people]; them
	That levede on arthede.	lived in days of old
	And y schall karppe of a knyght	tell
10	That was both hardy and wyght;	brave; courageous
	Sir Degrevault that hend hyght,	gentle [one] was called
	That dowghty was of dede.	doughty; in deeds
	Was never knyght that he fond,	
	In Fraunce ne in Englond,	
15	Myght sette a schafft of hys hond	
	On a stythe stede. <sup>2</sup>	
	With Kyng Arrtor, y wene,	Arthur; think
	And wyth Gwennor the quene,	Guinevere
	He was known for kene,	as a fierce one
20	That comelych knyght,	handsome
	In hethenesse and in Spayne,	heathen lands
	In Fraunce and in Bryttayne,	Bretagne
	Wyth Persevall and Gawayne,	
	For herdy and wyght.	hardy; courageous
25	He was dowghty and der,	valiant
	And ther nevew full ner,	their; quite close
	Ther he of dedys myght yher	Where; deeds; hear
	By days or by nyght.	day
	Forthy they name hem that stounde	Therefore; appointed him at that time
30	A knyght of Tabull Round,	

<sup>1</sup> Lines 2–4: *Grant that they may see Heaven / Who love pleasure and merriment / And to entertain guests*

<sup>2</sup> Lines 13–16: *No knight that he might ever encounter, / In France nor in England, / Was able to knock a lance from his hand / While he was sitting on a strong stallion*

	As maked is in the mappemonde In storye full ryght.	written; world fittingly
35	He was fayre man and free And gretlech gaff hym to gle, To harp and to sautré And geterne full gay; Well to play on a rote, Of lewtyng, well y wote, And syngynge many seyt not He bare the pryses aey. Yet gamenes hade he mare: Grehondes for hert and hare, Both for bokes and the bare, Be nyght and be day.	handsome; noble greatly devoted himself; music psaltery cittern; joyful a [kind of] fiddle With playing the lute; know many a sweet note won; prize always pastimes hart roebucks; boar By
40	Fell faulkons and fayr, Haukes of nobull eyre, Tyll his parke ganne repey়, By sexxyt, y dar say.	Many falcons hawks; breed estate assembled sixty [all in all]
45	He wold be upp or the day To honte and to revay. Gretly gaff hem to pley, Eche day to newe. To here hys Mas or he went Trewly in gode entaunt,	before daybreak hunt; hawk [he] devoted himself; sport anew hear; Mass
50	And seththe to bowe into the bente There games ine grewe. Now to forest he founde, Both wyt horne and with hound; To breyng the deere to the grond Was hys most glew.	Truly with good will afterwards to head for the hunting field Where game (the hunted animals) lived hastened
55	Certus, wyff wold he non, Wench ne lemon, Bot as an anker in a ston He lyved ever trew.	bring greatest joy Certainly Concubine; mistress hermit; cell honorable
60	Ther was sesyd in hys hand A thousand poundus worth of land Of rentes, well settand, And muchell dell more: An houndered plows in demaynus, Fayer parkes inwyth haynus,	(i.e., he was given in property)
65	Grett herdus in the playnus, Wyth muchell tame store, Casteles wyth heygh wallus, Chambors wyth noble hallus,	[With its] incomes, well situated a great deal plowlands; possession inside enclosures herds; plains In addition to; livestock high
70		

75	Fayer stedes in the stallus, Lyard and soore. Wher he herd of anny cry Ever he was redy, He passede never forthby In lond wher they were.	stables <i>Spotted (white and silvery gray); reddish-brown</i> <i>Whenever someone made an appeal to him</i> <i>Always</i> <i>never went past</i> <i>wherever they were</i>
80	He lovede well almosdede, Powr men to cloth and fede Wyth menske and manhede; Of met he was fre, And also gestes to call, And mensteralus her in halle. He gaff hem robes of palle, Of gold and of fee. In ych place whaer he come, When he wente fram hem They hadde halowed hys name Wyth gret nobullé. In ych lond wher he wentt, So many men he hadd schennt, In justus and on tornament, He whan ever the gre.	almsgiving <i>Poor people</i> <i>dignity; compassion</i> <i>food; generous</i> <i>[he loved] guests; invite</i> <i>minstrels hear</i> <i>gave them (i.e., the minstrels); fine cloth</i> <i>[Rewards] of gold; money</i> <i>every; where; came</i> <i>left them</i> <i>honored</i> <i>splendor</i> <i>each</i> <i>put to shame</i> <i>jousts</i> <i>won always the prize</i>
85	Ther wonede an Eorl him besyd, Ye, a lord of mechell pryd, That hadd eight forestes ful wyd And bowres full brode.	lived; beside him <i>great pride</i> <i>extensive</i> <i>arbor; spacious</i>
90	He hade a grete spyt of the knyght, <sup>1</sup> That was so hardy and wyght, And thought howe he best myght That dowghty to grade.	worthy one; ruin <i>strong; bold</i>
95	He was sterne and stoute, And rode in a gay route, And brak hys parkes about, The best that he hade.	glittering company <i>broke into; everywhere</i>
100	Therinne he made a sory pley: The fattest he feld, in fey, By sexty on a day, Such maystries he made.	grievous display <i>downed, truly</i> <i>As many as</i> <i>shows of strength</i>
105	He drowhe reveres with fysh And slogh hys forsteres ywys.	<i>drew [nets in] rivers</i> <i>slew; foresters for certain</i>
110	The knyght wiste not of thys,	<i>knew</i>
115		

<sup>1</sup> *He harbored a strong grudge against the knight (Sir Degrevant)*

	For soth, y you say,	<i>truly; tell</i>
	For he was in the Holy Lond	<i>Feats of arms; undertake</i>
	Dede of armes for to fond;	<i>heathen; hands</i>
	The hethene men with hys hond	<i>killed</i>
120	He feld hem offten, in fey.	
	Hys steward hadd a lettre ysent;	
	A mesynger hath hyt hent	<i>taken</i>
	And forth hys wey ys ywent	<i>on his way; gone</i>
	As fast as ever he may.	<i>may</i>
125	When he tyll hys lord com	<i>before; came</i>
	The lettre in hys hand he nom.	<i>took</i>
	He sey all yoode to schom,	<i>saw all was ruined</i>
	And went on hys wey.	<i>departed</i>
130	Wyth the knyght was non abad;	<i>delay</i>
	He buskyd hym forth and rade	<i>made haste; rode</i>
	Fram the frount of the Garnad	<i>front line; Granada</i>
	As faste as he myght.	<i>was able to</i>
	Son he pased the see,	<i>Soon; sea</i>
	He and hys meney,	<i>following</i>
135	And com into hys contré	
	By the twelthe nyght.	<i>Epiphany</i>
	Tyll his maner he went:	<i>manor</i>
	A feyr place he fond schent,	<i>ruined</i>
	Hys husbandus that gaf rent	<i>tenants; paid</i>
140	Was yheryyed dounryght.	<i>Had been robbed exceedingly</i>
	His tenantrie was all doun,	<i>tenants' houses; torn down</i>
	The best in every toun;	
	His fayr parkes wer comen	<i>[were made] open to all</i>
	And lothlych bydyght.	<i>appallingly looked after</i>
145	He closed hys parkes agen.	<i>fenced off</i>
	His husbandus they were fyen:	<i>pleased</i>
	He lent hem oxon and wayn	<i>oxen; carts</i>
	Of his own store,	<i>From</i>
	And also sede for to sowe	<i>seeds</i>
150	Wyght horse for to drow,	<i>Strong; pull</i>
	And thought werke be lawe	<i>intended</i>
	And wyth non other schore.	<i>threat</i>
	Forthi a lettre has he dyght	<i>Therefore; prepared</i>
	To this Eorl of gret myght.	
155	He preyd hem to do him ryght	<i>justice</i>
	Ar tell hym wherfore.	<i>Or; why [not]</i>
	And wyth a sqwer he hit sent,	<i>squire</i>
	Of an honderd pond of rent,	<i>For; reward</i>
	And forth hys way ys he went	<i>on; gone</i>
160	To wytt hys answer.	<i>find out</i>

	The sqwyere wold noghte habyd, Bot forthe faste gun he ryde Unto the palesse of prydē Thare the Erle wonnde.	<i>not tarry off; he rode palace; ostentation Where; lived caught sight</i>
165	Sone so he of hym had sygthe: Sir Sere of Cypirs he highte, Was buskede with many knyghte In the foreste to hunte.	<i>Cyprus; was called Had made ready; many a</i>
170	He was steryn and stowte, With many knyghtes hym abowte. The sqwyere thought gret dowte To byde his firste brount.	<i>strong; bold surrounding him danger await; stroke</i>
	Therefore wold he noghte lett; Sone with hym als he mett	<i>he did not want to delay As soon as</i>
175	Even to hym was he sett With his horse front.	<i>Straightaway; pulled up horse's</i>
	The squier nolde nat down lyght, Bot haylis this Eorl opon hyght, And sethens barown and kynyght With wordes full wise.	<i>would not dismount greets; aloud after that</i>
180	He held the lettre by the nooke And to the Eorle he hit toke. And he theron gan loke And seyde his avys,	<i>corner</i>
185	And spake to the squiere: “Ne were thou a messengere Thou shuld abey ryght here Under this woderys.	<i>gave his opinion</i>
	I wull, for thy lordes tene, Honte hys foresstus and grene And breke his parkes bydene, Proudeste of prys.”	<i>pay for it branch will, despite your lord's anger grasslands break into; immediately The most excellent ones by reputation</i>
190	Thanne the squier seyde sone: “Syre, that is nat well done. Ye have lefft hym bot whone, In herde is nat to hyde.	<i>at once that would not be a good idea a few (i.e., that's the truth of it)</i>
195	He that seyth that hit is ryght — Be he squier other knyght — Here my glove on to fyght, What chaunce so betyde.	<i>right (just) [is]; to fight it out Whatever the outcome might be (i.e., that's the truth of it)</i>
200	Syr, yeff hit be your well, Thenkes that ye han don ylle. Y rede ye amend to schkyll, For wothes is ever wyde.”	<i>if you please Realize advise; according to reason danger; on the lookout</i>
205	The Eorl answeryd: “Ywyse,	<i>Certainly</i>

	Y woll nat amend that mese; Y counte hym nat at a cres, <sup>1</sup> For all hys mechell pryd."	wrong <i>In spite of</i>
210	Than the Eorl wax wroth And swor many a gret owt: He schold be messagere lothe But he hys wey wente. He toke his leve withouten nay, And wendus forth on his way,	grew angry oath <i>regret to have been a messenger</i> Unless indeed
215	As fast as ever he may, Over the brode bent. He com hom at the none And told how he hade done. The knyght asked him as sone	field noon <i>straightaway</i>
220	What answer he sent. "Sir, and he may as he ment, His game woll he never stent. Thyself, and he may thee hent, I tell thee for yschent."	if; intends <i>[little] game; cease</i> if; capture hold; destroyed
225	Than Syr Degrevvaunt syght And byheld the heven upan hyght: "Jhesu, save me in my ryght, And Maré me spedel! And y schall geff Gode a vow:	sighed on high confirm; rights assist make
230	Som of us schall hyt row. Hyt schall not be for his prow And y may right rede." Anon to armus they hom dyght, As fast as ever they myght,	regret to his advantage If; guess <i>At once they armed themselves</i>
235	Both squier and kynyght, Wys under wede. Ther was yarmed on hye Ten score knythis redy, And thre hondred archerus by,	armor quickly Two hundred in addition
240	Full goode at her nede.	<i>Just what they needed</i>
245	Anon to the forest they found. Ther they stotede a stound; They pyght pavelouns round, And loggede that nyght. The Eorle purveyede him an ost,	went halted for a while put up pavilions lodged levied; army from; side

<sup>1</sup> *In my opinion he is a worthless person (not worth a piece of watercress)*

	Wyth his brag and his bost, Wyth many a ferres knyght.	arrogance; boast fierce
	He uncouplede his houndus	unleashed
250	Withinne the knyghtus boundus, Bothe the grene and the groundus; They halowede an hyght.	boundaries grassland; lands shouted loudly
	Thus the forest they fray, Hertus bade at abey;	raided stayed at bay
255	On a launde by a ley These lordus doune lyght.	open space; lake dismounted
	Sexten hertus wase yslayn And wer brought to a pleyn, Byfore the cheff cheventen	Sixteen deer had been killed chieftain Laid down together
260	Yleyd wer yfere. Thane seys the Eorl on the land: “Wher ys now Sir Degrevvaund? Why wol not com this gyant To rescow his dere?	
265	Hys proud hertes of grese Bereth no chartur of pes. We schall have som ar we sese; Y wold he wer here.	fat harts agreement (letter); peace before we leave off
	Trewely, ar he went He shuld the game repent, The proud lettre that he sent, By hys sqwer.”	
270	Syr Degrevvaunt was so nere That he the wordes can her. He seyd: “Avaunt baner,	heard Forward blow the trumpet loudly
275	And trompes apon hygght!” Hys archarus that wer thare, Both lase and the mar, As swythe wer they yare	All of them Quickly, ready prepared pleased
280	To shote wer they dyght. Thane the Eorle was payd; Sone his batell was reyde, He was nothyng afreyd Of that feris knyght.	battalion; arrayed not at all fierce
285	Now ar they met on a feld, Both with spere and sheld; Wyghtly wepenes they weld, And ferysly they fught.	have met together Nimbly
290	And whan the batell enjoined With speres ferisly they foynede.	[they] engaged [in] thrust

	Ther myght no sege be ensoynd That faught in the feld.	<i>warrior be excused (permitted to delay)</i>
	Wyth bryght swerdus on the bent Rych hawberkes they rent;	<i>sword; field</i>
295	Gleves gleteryng glent Opon geldene scheldus. They styken stedus in stour, Knygghtus thorow her armere; Lordus of honor	<i>glanced golden pierce steeds; battle armor</i>
300	Opon the hethe heldus. They foughten so ferisly Ther weste non so myghty Who schold have the victory, Bot He that all weldus.	<i>sink</i>
		<i>none knew, regardless of his might</i>
		<i>Except; governs</i>
305	The doughty knyght Sur Degrevaunt Leys the lordes on the laund Thorw jepun and jesseraund, And lames the ledes.	<i>Lays low tunic; chain mail</i>
	Schyr scheldus they schrede,	<i>maims; men</i>
310	Many dowghty was dede, Ryche maylus wexen rede, So manye bolde dedus.	<i>Bright; cut [a] brave [man]</i>
	Thus they fowghten on frythe, Kene kynghus inwith kyth,	<i>coats of mail became</i>
315	Wo wrekes thare wryth, These doughty on dede.	<i>deaths (deeds) woodland</i>
	Burnes he hadde yborn doun;	<i>Fierce in their own country</i>
	Gomes wyth gambisoun	<i>Woe there avenges anger</i>
	Lyes opon bent broun,	
320	And sterff under stede.	<i>Warriors; borne down Men; [leather] tunic</i>
		<i>died; horse</i>
	Sir Degrevaunt the gode knyght Bryttenes the basnettus bryght. Hys feris ferysly they fyght And felles hom to grond.	<i>Cuts through; helmets companions strike down</i>
325	The knyghtus of the Eorlus hous, That wer yhalden so chyvalerus, And in batell so bountyveus. They deyden all that stond.	<i>Who; considered; doughty valorous all that time waited</i>
	The Eorl hovede and beheld,	
330	Both with sper and with scheld, How they fayr in the feld, And syght unsound. The best men that he ledde, He hadd ylefft hom to wedde;	<i>got on (fared) sighed grievously was the leader of left; for safety's sake</i>

335	With fyfft spers is he fledd And wodelech was ywounded.	<i>soldiers armed with spears severely</i>
340	Syr Degrevant and his men Feld hom faste in the fen, As the deer in the den, To dethe he tham denges. Wyth scharpe axus of stell He playtede her basnetus well. Many a knyght gart he knell In the mornynge.	<i>Struck them down Like; hiding place smites axes; steel bent (pleated) their helmets forced on his knees</i>
345	Sir Degrevant was full thro, Departed her batell atwo. The Eorl fley and was wo, On a stede can he spryng. He laf slawe in a slak,	<i>fierce Split their battle formation in two fled jumped left behind slain; hollow</i>
350	Forty scor on a pak, Wyd open on her bake, Dede in the lyng.	<i>800 (40 x 20); group Stretched out on their heather</i>
355	Syr Degrevant gat a sted, That was gode in ilk a ned. Many a side grat he bled, Thorow dent of his spere. And schased the Eorl within a whyll Mor then en leve myle.	<i>won a steed such an emergency caused to thrust chased eleven</i>
360	Many bold gert he style That byfore dud hym dere. He com schygynge agen, And of hys folk was fyen, And fond never on slayn, Ne worse be a pere. <sup>1</sup>	<i>bold men caused he to fall Who before had harmed him trotting back about; happy one</i>
365	He knelyde doun in that place And thankyd God of His grace. And all wend that there was Tyll his feyr manere.	<i>all returned who manor</i>
370	Bleve to soper they dyght, Both squier and knyght; They daunsed and revelide that nyght, In hert wer they blythe. And whan the Eorl com ham,	<i>Quickly; went reveled glad home</i>
375	He was wonded to scham. The lady ses he was lam,	<i>to his shame sees; crippled</i>

<sup>1</sup> *Nor worse by a pear (i.e., not in the least any worse [because of the fight])*

	And swouned full swyth. Offte she cryed: "Alas! Have ye nat parkus and chas? What schuld ye do at is place, 380     Swych costus to kythe?" "Dame," he seys, "y was thare, And me rews now full sar. Y take my leve for everemare Swych wornges to wrythe."	<i>instantly</i> <i>hunting grounds</i> <i>at his</i> <i>manners; show</i> <i>regret; bitterly</i> <i>wrongs; inflict</i>
385	On the morow Sir Degrevvant Dyght him at is avennaunt On a sted ferraunt, Yarmed at ryghtes. To the castell he rad	<i>The next morning</i> <i>Prepared himself as he thought fit</i> <i>gray</i> <i>Armed properly</i>
390	With folkys that he had. At the barnekynch he abad And lordelych doun lyght. And axed yef ther eny were That wold hym delyver him ther	<i>barbican he halted</i> <i>dismounted</i> <i>asked</i> <i>engage with</i> <i>In; jousts</i>
395	Of thre cors of wer, Hym and twelf knythus. He prayd the porter For to ben his mesenger, And to wit an answer,	<i>find out</i> <i>at once; ordered</i>
400	And anon he him hytus.	
	The porter went to the hall, And to the Eorl he can call: "Her is comen to thus wall, Yarmed apon a sted,	<i>said in a loud voice</i> <i>at the wall</i>
405	Sir Degrevvant the gode knygt, With hey helmes bryght, Many bold men and wyght, Wyse under wede.	<i>high</i> <i>valiant</i>
	He axit justes of were,	<i>asks</i>
410	And prays thee of answer. He mad me his mesager To walk on his ned."	
	The Eorl answerd an hy: "Here is non redy."	<i>do; errand</i> <i>loudly</i>
415	Hit semes as that dowghty Sir Degrevaunt drede.	<i>as if; doughty one (i.e., the Earl)</i> <i>feared</i>
	The Contase wendes to the wall, And hur daughter withall; Sche was jentell and small,	<i>Countess</i> <i>as well</i> <i>slender</i>

420	And lovesom to seyght. She lokyd on that auiterous, And seyth: "Sire knyghte chevalerus, Thou art a man marvelus, My troth y thee plyght.	<i>lovely in appearance</i> <i>daring one</i> <i>courteous</i> <i>astonishing</i> <i>On my word</i>
425	Yeff Gode hath lent thee grace That thou hast vencoust thy foos, Ne sekes nat at our plece, Be day ne be nyght." The knyght spekes to that free:	<i>vanquished</i> <i>seek out</i>
430	"Maydam, wyties nat me! Muchell mawgré have he That chalangeth unryght."	<i>noble person</i> <i>do not blame</i> <i>ill will</i> <i>unjustly</i>
435	He sais: "My parkes ar stroyed And reveres endreyde; Y gretly am anoyde, For south as y you say. Whyle y wared in Spayn He made my londes barreyn, My wodes and my warreyn; My wylde ys away. Y shall do you withowten dred: He that dede me that dede, Y shall quite hem his mede, Y tell you in fay.	<i>lands; destroyed</i> <i>rivers (hunting grounds) dried up</i>
440	Yeff y dey in the pleyn, He shall award hom eyan That my fosteres hath slain, As son as y may."	<i>To say the truth</i> <i>made war</i> <i>laid waste</i> <i>breeding grounds</i> <i>game has gone</i> <i>do [the same to] you doubtless</i>
445	Thanne spekes that wis inwith wan: "Ye have well good men yslayn; Y rede ye be at an, Or ther dey any moo." The knyght answeres an hy: "He schall that bargayn aby That dede me this vilany, As ever mote y goo. Madam, yef hit be your well, Y pray you, take hit not to ill, Y am holden thertyll To fyght on my foo. Y tell you trewly, Hyt leyves not so lyeghly; Many dowghty schall dey Or hyt ende soo."	<i>give him his just due</i> <i>I tell you the truth</i> <i>Even if</i> <i>pay compensation for them</i> <i>foresters</i>
450		<i>wise one (i.e., the countess) in the house</i>
455		<i>advise; reconciled</i> <i>Before any more die</i> <i>in a loud voice</i> <i>pay dearly for such an agreement</i> <i>Who</i>
460		<i>will</i> <i>It is my solemn duty</i> <i>stops; easily</i> <i>will have to</i> <i>Before</i>

465	The knyth hoves in the feld, Bothe weth ax and with sheld. The Eorlus doughder beheld That borlich and bolde.	<i>lingers</i>
470	For he was armed so clen, With gold and azour ful schen, And with his troweloves bytwen, Was joy to behold.	<i>excellent</i> <i>splendidly</i> <i>bright</i> <i>truelove knots</i>
475	She was comlech yclade: To ryche banlettes hur lade; All the beuté sche hade. <sup>1</sup>	<i>splendidly dressed</i> <i>Two knight-bannerets attended her</i>
480	That frely to folde, Wyth love she wondus the knyght; In hert trewly he hyeght That he shall love that swet wyght, Acheve how hit wold.	<i>lovely lady worthy of embrace</i> <i>wounds</i> <i>promised</i> <i>creature</i> <i>Achieve it however [he] might</i>
485	How as ever hit cheve, The knyght takes his leve: “Madam, takes not agreve A thyng that y you say.	<i>Whatever may come of it</i>
490	Gret well the Eorl thy lord, And sey we shall not acord Tyll my thyng be restored That he hath don awey. Her afore myght he eyth	<i>don't be upset</i> <i>[About] something</i> <i>Greet</i>
495	Son have made me aseyth. Nowe schall he magré his tyeth, For all is grete arey. Trewly, y undertake, Wer hit not for your sake,	<i>property</i> <i>destroyed</i> <i>easily</i> <i>redress</i>
500	Y schall hym wynly wake Or to-morrow it wer day. “Y lette, for my gentriese, To do swych roberyse, For seche fayr laydes	<i>shall he [make redress] in spite of his teeth</i> <i>Despite his great display [of military force]</i> <i>declare</i>
505	Ther casteles to fray. Sen y mey do no mare Tyll his freth wyl y fare; Y woll no wyld best spare, For soth, all this day.”	<i>with pleasure</i> <i>Before</i>
	Anon to forest they founde, Both with horn and with hound,	<i>desist; noble descent</i> <i>plundering</i> <i>From such</i> <i>attack</i>
		<i>woodland; go</i>
		<i>went</i>

<sup>1</sup> *She was perfectly beautiful (lit., she had all the beauty)*

- To breng the dere to the grond,  
     Alaund ther they lay.  
     Thus this games he began;  
 510     Rachis reyalley ran.  
     Sexti bockes, ar he blan,  
     Hadde he felde, in fay.
- In the country where  
     Hounds magnificently  
     before he blew [the end of the hunt]  
     slain, truly*
- Sir Degrevant, ar he reste,  
     Tenede the Eorl on the beste,  
 515     And hontede his foreste  
         Wyth bernus full bolde.  
     His depe dychys he drowe,  
     Hys whyght swannes he slow,  
     Grete luces ynowe,
- 520     He gat hom in wold.  
     Now hym lykys no pley,  
     To honte ne to revey,  
     For Mayd Melidor the may  
         His care wax all cold.
- 525     As he honted in a chas,  
     He told his squier his case,  
     That he loved in a place,  
     A frely to folde.
- Enraged; as best he could  
     men  
     ditches; dragged with nets  
         white; slew  
         pikes aplenty  
     got them into his possession  
         no amusement pleases him  
     Neither hunting nor hawking  
         Because of; maiden  
         indignation cooled down  
         forest (hunting ground)*
- “My love is leliche ylyeght  
 530     On a worthly wyeght.  
     Ther is no berell so bryght,  
         Ne cristall so clere.  
     She is ware and wyse,  
     Rode ronne hit ys,  
 535     As the rose in the ris,  
         Wyth lylle in lere.  
     She ys precious in pall,  
     Fere feyst of all,  
     Y say hur ones on a wall,  
 540     Y neyghed hur so nere.  
     Y hade levere she were myn  
     Than all the gold in the Reyn,  
     Fausoned on floren.  
         She is myn so der.”
- a [certain]  
     beautiful [lady] on earth*
- 545     His squier answered: “Ywyse,  
     Lat me wytte what she is,  
     And y wol syker thee this,  
         In payn of my lyff,  
     That y woll do that y mey,  
 550     Both be nyght and be day,
- truly settled  
     noble creature  
         beryl  
         Nor  
         prudent  
         Complexion suffused  
         Like; branch  
         cheek  
         dress [of rich cloth]  
         Companion  
         saw  
         approached; closely  
         would prefer  
         Rhine  
         Minted as florins*
- Certainly  
     know whosoever  
         warrant you  
         I will stake my life on it*

	Yeff y can be any way Wyn hur to your wylf.	<i>by any means</i>
	And here y shall thee ensur Thi consell never descur	<i>assure</i> <i>secret; reveal</i>
555	Whyll my body may endur; Wyth swerd and wyth knyef	<i>last</i>
	That y shall faythly fyeght, Both in worng and in ryght,	
	Or he be squier or knyght,	<i>Whether</i>
560	Agenese thee woll streff."	<i>Against; contend</i>
	"Melydor ys hur naume, Whyeght as the seys fame.	
	My bolde burnes wold me blam (What bot is that y ley?)	<i>White; sea's foam</i> <i>blame</i> <i>benefit; [if] I lie</i>
565	That I shoulde wow in a stede, Ageyn alle mene rede.	<i>woo; place</i> <i>advice</i>
	And bothe my lyff and my dede Ys loken in hur tye,	<i>And [yet]; death</i> <i>locked; net (lit., noose)</i>
	For she is frely and fair, And the Eorlus owun eyer.	<i>beautiful</i>
570	I wolde nothing of their, Broche ne bye;	<i>heir</i>
	I wolde aske tham na mare But hyr body all bare,	<i>from them</i>
575	And we frendes for evermar, What doel that I drye."	<i>ring</i>
	That sqwyer seyde hys avyse: "Think that ye er enemys!	<i>And [that] we [may be]</i>
	Lat some wye that ys wys Walk on thus nede.	<i>distress; suffer</i>
580	For I dar saffly swere, Gyff he take thee in werre	<i>gave</i>
	Alle Englond here Wold spek of thi dede,	<i>person</i>
	And say hyt ys a folly For to love thin enemy	<i>Mediate</i>
585	Gyf thou gett a vylony But maugré to mede.	<i>dare make an oath</i>
	Other ladyes wolde say Myghthe no womman thee apay	<i>captures</i>
	Bote Maiede Mylder the may, Vlonkest on wede."	<i>action</i>
590		
	Then saide Syr Degrivaunt: "Thou shal not mak thin avaunt	<i>dishonor</i>
		<i>And ill will as a reward</i>
		<i>please</i>
		<i>Except Maid Melidor the maiden</i>
		<i>Most lovely in clothing</i>
		<i>boast</i>

- 595 That I shall be recreaunt,  
For frende ne for foo.  
Thou woldest halde me ful made,  
For the Erle ful rade.  
Trouwst I be so made  
600 To leve my love so?  
At even arme thee well,  
Bothe in yren and in stel,  
And we shullen to the castel  
Bytwyx us owun two.  
605 Sertenly this ylke nyghht  
I wyll see hyr with sylghth,  
And spek with that byrde brygthth,  
For wel or for wo."
- Tow ryche coursers thei hente,  
610 And forthe here weys thei wente  
Undir a lynd, or thei lente  
By a launde syde.  
Whyle hyt dawed lyghth day  
The Eorle buskede on hys way,  
615 Out at a posterne to play,  
With knyghth of prude.  
Sir Degrivaunt helde hym stylle  
Whyle the Eorle passyde the hyll,  
And seid hys squier hym tyll  
620 Pryvaly that tyde:  
"I rede we hye us ful yerne  
In at the yond posterne.  
And let us halde us in derne  
The burde tyll abyde."
- Syr Degrivaunt tok non hede,  
625 In at the posterne he yede.  
The porter hade bene in drede  
Hadd he ben thare.  
He that the gatt shulde kepe,  
630 He was go for to slepe.  
In at an orcherd thei lepe,  
Yarmede as thei ware.  
The knyght and the squiere  
Resten in a rosere  
635 Tyll the day wex clere,  
Undurne and mare.  
Whyle that hurde thei a bell  
Ryng in a chapell;
- coward  
consider; mad  
afraid  
Do you think  
leave  
evening  
  
Just the two of us  
same  
with my eyes  
maiden  
For good or for worse  
  
warhorses; took  
tree; arrived  
Beside an open space  
dawned  
hastened  
back door; sport  
honor  
  
suggest; hurry quickly  
over there  
hiding  
To await the maiden  
  
paid no attention  
went  
would have been afraid  
  
gate  
had gone  
leapt  
  
Remained; rosebush  
it was broad daylight  
Midmorning and later  
Meanwhile

640	To chyrche the gay dammisel Buskede hyr yare.	<i>Hastened without delay</i>
	Sche come in a vyolet With whyghth perl overfret, And saphyrus therinne isett, On everyche a syde.	<i>violet [dress] white; embroidered</i>
645	All of pallwork fyn, With nuche and nevyn, Anurled with ermyng, And overt for pryde.	<i>work in rich cloth clasp; precious stone Bordered worn open to show off buttons; hard</i>
	To tell hur botenus was toor, Anamelede with azour, With topyes the trechour Overtrasyd that tyde.	<i>ENAMELED; AZURE topazes; ribbon [round the head]</i>
	Sche was receyvd aspanne Of any lyvand manne;	<i>Covered with tracings (see note)</i>
650	Of rede golde the rybanne Glemyd hur gyde.	<i>By; living ribbon Caused to shine; dress</i>
	Hyr herre was hyghthyd on hold With a coronal of golde. Was never made upon mold	<i>hair; pinned up circle on earth</i>
655	A worthelychere wygth. Sche was frely and fair, And well hyr semed hyr geyr, With ryche boses a payr, That derely were bydygth,	<i>more distinguished being lovely suited; clothes ornaments</i>
	With a front endent With peyrl of Orient, Out of Syprus was sent, To that burd brygth.	<i>preciously; arrayed inlaid resplendent pearl Cyprus beautiful</i>
660	Hur kerchevus was curyus, Hyr vyssag ful gracious.	<i>head-scarves; finely made face</i>
	Sir Degrivaunt that amerus Had joye of that sygth.	<i>infatuated [one]</i>
	By that the Masse was iseid The halle was ryaly areyd The Eorlle hadd irevayd, And in hys yerd lyghthus.	
665	Trompers tromped to the mete. They weshen and went to sette; So duden all the grete,	
	Ladyes and knyghtus.	
670	When the bordys were drawin Ladyes rysen — was not to leyn —	
		<i>splendidly prepared hunted dismounts sounded the trumpet; meal took their seats</i>
675		
		<i>tables; cleared away rose; lie (i.e., truly)</i>

	And wentten to chaumbur ageyn, Anon thei hom dyghthus.	<i>made themselves ready</i>
685	Dame Mildore and hyr may Went to the orcherd to play; Ther Syr Degrivaunt lay, Thei com anonryghthus.	<i>relax Where; was straightaway</i>
690	Syr Degrivaunt withouten lett In an aley he hyr mete, And godlyche he hyr gret, That worthelych wyghth. And seyd: "Corteys lady and fre, Jhesu save thee, and see Thi servaunt wold I be, My trougth I thee plyghth. I wold spek (hadd I space) Prevely in a place. My lyff ys loken in thi grace, Thou worthilych wyghth."	<i>delay path courteously; greeted [may you] see [that]</i>
695	The byrd was gretely affraid, But natheles hoo was wel paid: He was so ryally arayd, That commolych knyghth.	<i>I give you my word of honor opportunity Secretly somewhere depends on</i>
700	The byrd was gretely affraid, But natheles hoo was wel paid: He was so ryally arayd, That commolych knyghth.	<i>lady she; pleased He was so royal in appearance comely</i>
705	The byrd answerus on hyghth: "Whethur thou be squier or knyghth, Me thenkus thou not dost ryghth, Sothely to say, That thou comyst armid on werre To maydenus to afferre, That walkes in her erbere Prively to play. By God and by Sent Jame, Y know not thi name. Thou erte gretely to blame, I tell thee in fay."	<i>in a loud voice</i>
710	The knyght kneled hyr tyll: "Medame, yf hit be your wyll, I graunt I have done yll, I may not ageynsay.	<i>as for war frighten Who; their garden To relax in private</i>
715	"As God save me of synne, I myghth with non other gynne Tyl your spech for to wynne, By day ne be nyghth. Fro I tell thee my name I am not for to blame.	<i>I don't even know truly before if that is what you think deny it</i>
720		<i>May God protect me from sin means Manage to speak to you</i>
725		<i>As soon as</i>

- And yf hit turne me to grame  
 I shal anonymyghth.  
 Hyt is I, Syr Degryvaunt.
- 730 And hit wer your avenaunt  
 I wold be your servaunt,  
 As y am trew knyghth." *If; grief*  
 Sho seyd: "Tratur, lat be thee!  
 Be Hym that dyed on tre *shall [tell it] immediately*
- 735 My lord hymself shal thee see  
 Hanged on hyghth." *If; pleasure*  
*forget it*  
*By; (i.e., the Cross)*  
*will see to it that you are*
- Than Syr Degrivaunt lough,  
 As he stod undur the bow:  
 "Madame, ye wyteth me with wough,  
 Gyf hyt be your wyll. *laughed*  
 I had never no gylt *branch*  
 Of al that blod that was spylt.  
 That wyll I prove as thou wylt  
 Above the yondur hyll.
- 745 Corteys lady and wyse,  
 As thou arte pervenke of prysse  
 I do me on thi gentryse. *blame me wrongfully*  
 Why wolt thou me spyll?  
 And I be slain in this stede  
 750 Thou shalt be cause of my dede.  
 Yet wolt thou rew that rede  
 And lyke hyt ful yll." *most perfect of ladies*  
*commit myself to your clemency*  
*kill*  
*If*  
*death*  
*regret that decision*  
*dislike it greatly*
- Sche said: "Tratur, thou shalt bye!  
 Why were thou so hardye  
 755 To do me this vylanye,  
 By day ar by nyghth.  
 For oure folk that thou hast slain  
 Thou shalt be honged and drawyn.  
 Theroft my fadyr wol be fayn *pay for it*
- 760 To see that with sygth." *pleased*  
 The knyght spak to this fre:  
 "Seththe hyt may no bettur be,  
 Go feche all hys many  
 With me for to fyghth.
- 765 And here my trougth: eer I be ton  
 The geyest of hem shal gron,  
 Gyf ther come fourty for on,  
 My trougth I thee plyghth. *here [is] my pledge; before; taken*  
*finest; groan*  
*[Even] if; against*
- 770 "And her my trougth I thee plyghthe:  
 Tho that lepeth now ful lyghth *here*  
*Those; run; fast*

- Shal be fay and we fyghth,  
For all her michel pryde.”  
The stout man was astered;  
Hys squier raughth hym hys swerd.  
775 Thanne the borlych berde  
No lenger durst byde.  
Tyl hyr chaumbur sche went  
And swor the knyghth shulde be schent.  
The mayde hur hood of hoe hent  
780 And knelyd that tyde:  
“Meydame, oppon Yowlus nyghth  
My waryson ye me hyghth.  
Y ne axe thee bote yonde knyghth  
To slep by my syde.”
- Blyve the burde gat a blame,  
Bot sche ne let for no schame  
That sche ne asked the same,<sup>1</sup>  
Sothly to say.  
“Damesel, go, do thi best.  
790 I pray thee, let me have my rest.  
Go and glad thi gest,  
In all the devyl way.  
For, as ever Gode me save,  
Haddest thou asked a knave,  
795 The symplust that I have,  
Hadd be more to my pay.  
I swer thee, by Godus grace,  
Come he ever in this place  
He passed never syche a pace,  
800 By nyghth ne by day.”
- “Maydame,” sche seid, “gramercy  
Of thi gret cortesy.”  
Blyve a chaumbur therby  
Busked was yare.  
805 And in sche feches the knyghth,  
Privaly withouten sygth,  
As wymen conn mychel slyghth  
And ther wylles ware.  
Sche dyght to hys sopere  
810 The foules of the ryvere.  
Ther was no deyntethus to dere,  
Ne spycses to spare.
- doomed if  
disturbed  
handed  
noble lady  
stay  
  
put to shame  
from her took  
  
Christmas Eve  
reward; promised  
but that yonder  
  
At once; reproach  
  
make happy; guest  
By the devil  
  
servant  
  
pleasure  
  
Should he come  
[would] escape; strait  
  
I am grateful  
  
Quickly; nearby  
Was made ready  
  
Secretly; being seen  
know; cunning  
tricks cover up  
prepared  
waterfowl  
delicacy too dear

<sup>1</sup> Lines 786–87: *But for no reproach would she be stopped / To ask the same thing again*

- 815     The knyght sat at hys avenaunt  
       In a gentyl jesseraunt;  
    The mayd mad hym semblaunt  
       And hys met schare.
- comfortably  
             *light tunic of mail*  
             *acted hospitably*  
             *meat cut*
- 820     Of all the met that she schar  
       The knyght ete never the mare.  
       Whan he sygthe ful sare  
    The mayden gan smyle.  
       Sone aftyr he seys:  
       “What useth the Eorl adayes?  
       Hontes he ar revayes?<sup>1</sup>  
       What does he this whyle?”
- nothing more  
             *sighed sorrowfully*  
             *right now*
- 825     The burd answerus agayn:  
       “Seththe hys chyvalry was slayn  
       He passed never out on the playn  
       Halvendel a myle.  
       Hys hurtus has hym so yderyd,  
       He has byn gretely afferyd.  
       The gatus has byn ay ysperyd  
       For dred of thi gyle.”
- went  
             *Half*  
             *wounds; afflicted*  
             *afraid*  
             *gates; always locked*  
             *treachery*
- 830     “Or hys yatis be ysperyd  
       I shal mak hym afferyd.  
       I shal schak hym by the berd,  
       The nexte tyme we mete.  
       But I let for hur sake  
       That I have chosen to my mak.  
       Sche doys me unwynly to wak  
       With wongus ful wete.  
       I had levere sche was saughth  
       Then all the golde in hys aughth,  
       And I in armus hade ylaughth  
       That commely and swete.
- Whether [or not]  
             *defer*  
             *wife*  
             *unhappily; wake*  
             *cheeks*  
             *reconciled*  
             *possession*  
             *taken*
- 835     Thann durste I safly syng;  
       Was never emporour ne kyng  
       More at hys lykyng,  
       An honde, I thee hete.”
- In higher spirits*  
             *My hand on it; assure*
- 840     The mayd answerus ageyn:  
       “Me think thou travelus in vayn.  
       Thou hast our kunred yslayn —  
       How myght hit so be?  
       I swer thee by Godus myghth,
- make an effort  
             *relatives*

<sup>1</sup> Lines 822–23: “How does the Earl spend his days? / Does he go hunting or hawking?”

- 855      Com thou ever in hur sygth  
           Thou bes honged on hyghth,  
           Hyie on a tre.  
           Hyr proferrys par amoure                          *propose*  
           Both dukes and emperoure;  
           Hyt were hyr disonowre                          *for her*  
 860      For to taken thee.  
           The Duke of Gerle for hir has sent                  *requested*  
           That he wol have a tornament.  
           Hyt ys my lordys assent                          *My lord has assented*  
           Withynne for to be.                                  *It will be held here*
- 865      Tho Duke comes of so gret arey                          *with such a display of power*  
           To juste and to tornay,  
           Thou comes nat at that play,                          *cannot participate*  
           By counsayl of me.  
           Hyt is my lordys ensent,                          *If you ask me*  
 870      Come thou to that torniment                          *intention*  
           Sertaynl thou be schent                                  *destroyed*  
           And all thi meynye.”                                  *company*  
           “Damesele, withouten drede,  
           Thou hast warnyd me of this dede,                  *informed; event*  
 875      Of this gret gentyl rede,                          *plan*  
           God foryelde thee.  
           And y swer be Sent Luke,  
           I shal juste with that Duke                          *[May] God reward*  
           Or I gete a rebuke,                                  *Even if I am put in my place*  
 880      However that hyt be.
- And, damesel, for thi chere                          *in exchange for; hospitality*  
           And for my god sopere  
           Thou shalt have my squiere;  
           Lok yf thee paye.                                  *[it/he] pleases*  
 885      Here I gyf yow be band                          *you (i.e., the squire); bond*  
           An hundred pownd worth of land.  
           Do tak hyr by the hond,  
           And do as y thee saye.”
- Whan here trouthus were plyghth  
 890      Sone torches were ilyghth,  
           And gaff hym ordyr of knyghth,                          *kindled*  
           For sothe as I say.                                  *[he, i.e., Sir Degrevant] dubbed him a knight*  
           “Recumaunde me, for Godys pyne,                  *Recommend; suffering*  
           To my lady and thine,  
 895      As thou wolt that I be thin                          *If*  
           To my dethus day.

	"Recumaund me pryvaly To that fayr lady, Or hur thenke lyghthely <sup>1</sup> That I am pore.	
900	Ther shal be emporour ne kyng That shal hyr to bed bryng. That I shall make a lettyng, I sey thee tho sothe.	<i>I will prevent that</i>
905	Here my trouth I thee plygth: Seyn fyrist I see hyr with sygth I sleped never o nygth Halvendel an hour.	<i>Since; saw</i>
910	Pray that corteys and hende That sche wold be my frend, And some socour me send For hyr mychel honowre."	<i>Half an hour gracious [one]</i>
	The maid seis: "I take on hand That I shal do thyn errand; Or I be flemyd out of lond Ylete for no dred.	<i>undertake</i>
915	I shall teche thee a gyn Out of this castel to wyn, And how thou shal come in Thyn erond to spedē.	<i>Before; banished cease trick how to get</i>
920	Ther ys a place in the wall, Bytwyne the chaumbur and the hal, Thor lygth a mychel waturwal Of fourty feyt brede.	<i>mission to accomplish</i>
925	Ther shalt thou come in a nygth, Prevaly withouten sygth, And here thi chaumbur shal by dyght And I can rygth rede."	<i>Where lies; moat wide</i>
930	"Damesel, for Godus grace, Teche me to that ylke place!" The maid privaly apace Passes byfore,	<i>Secretly; being seen</i>
	And ledes hym out at a gate, In at a waturgate,	<i>be prepared</i>
935	Ther men vytayled by bate That castel with cornes. "At ebbe of the see Thou shalt not wad to the kne."	<i>If; advise</i>
		<i>Show me; very quickly</i>
		<i>provided with victuals; boat grain</i>
		<i>The water will not come up</i>

<sup>1</sup> Even if it seems to her, without much ground



- That he wol wed to wyff  
But only thee allon.
- 985 Y warne thee of o thing:  
Ther shall be emperor ne kyng  
That shal thee to bede bryng —  
I owttake non —  
That he nol mak a lettyng.  
990 He sendys thee syche a gretynge:  
Lo, here ys a rede gold ryng  
With a ryche ston."
- The lady loked on that ryng,  
Hyt was a gyfte for a kyng.  
995 "This ys a merveylous thing!  
Wenus thou I be wode,  
To do syche a foly,  
To love my lordys enemy?  
Thow he were to so dowghty,  
1000 Nay, be the Rode!  
Y do thee wele for to wyte  
Y nel non housbond have ytte.  
Seye the knyghth, whan ye mete,  
I wol hym no gude.
- 1005 The Duk of Gerle hase ihyght  
That he wol soupe here this nyght,  
And gyf my chaumbur wer idyght  
Nothing foryeod."
- The Duk ys comen over the see  
1010 With a ful grete meyné.  
The Eorl, cortays and fre,  
Fayr hym gan praye  
To dwel at hys costage  
At bouche of court and wage,  
1015 With knyght, squier, and page,  
Tyl the tent day.  
A thousand hors and thre  
Of the Dukus meyné  
Ylke nyght tok lyveré  
1020 Of cowrun and of hay.  
The ryche Duk, whan he eet  
With Mayd Myldore the swet,  
The Eorle hertely hym hete  
To have hyr for ay.
- 1025 The knyghthus of the Eorles house  
Held the Duk so chyvalrous,
- inform*
- who intends*  
*exclude*  
*will not obstruct*
- something to marvel at*  
*Think; mad*
- twice as*  
*by the Cross*  
*know*  
*don't want*  
*Tell*  
*intend [to show]; favor*  
*promised*  
*dine*  
*if; prepared*  
*would go wrong*
- retinue*
- Courteously; requested*  
*cost*  
*With an allowance of food and drink; money*
- tenth*
- provender*  
*grain*  
*ate*
- promised*  
*keep her forever*
- ever so*

	For he was gay and amorous And made hyt so tow.	<i>had fought so fiercely</i>
1030	The Eorl told hym anon What armes he hadde tonn, And how hys chyvalré was slon Undir the wodbowe. “The baneret that wonnes hereby Wol asayl the cry.	<i>In the forest banneret; lives challenge; proclamation</i>
1035	He wroghthe me this vylany And dud me this wough.” The Duk answerus on hyghth: “Here my trouth I thee plygth, Whedur he wol tornay or fyghth, 1040 He shal have inow.”	<i>woe</i>
	The Duk answerus on hyghth: “Whereby knowus thou the knyghth?”	<i>recognize</i>
	The Eorle taughth hym ful ryghth With wordys, I wene.	<i>informed; correctly think</i>
1045	“He beres a cheef of azour Engrelyd, with a satur, With double tressour, And trewelovus bytwene. Hys bagges is blake:	<i>chief (see note) Engrailed; saltire treasure (cords) truelove knots badge</i>
1050	For he wol no man forsake A lyoun tyed to an ake, Of gold and of grene. An helme ryche to behold He beres a dolfyn of gold,	<i>Because oak</i>
1055	With trewelovus in the mold, Compasyd ful clene.	<i>[On] a on top Devised neatly</i>
	He ys a lyoun in feld When he ys spred undur scheld. Hys helme shal be wel steled,	<i>stretched out</i>
1060	That stond shal as stak. He ys so stalloworth in stoure, By Seynt Martyn of Toure, Couthe he love par amoure, I knew never hys mak.	<i>post brave in battle</i>
1065	All the londes that I welde Wold I gyf in my yelde To se hym falde in the feld. Ho wold hyt undurtake?”	<i>If he could match own old age brought down [But] who</i>
1070	The Duk lough hym to scorun, Hys oth heyl has isworun:	<i>laughed; scorn loudly</i>

- "He shal abyе tomowrun,  
Syre, for thi sake." *suffer for it*
- And on morow the Duk hym dyghth,  
Also fast as he might,  
The Earl, hardy and wygth,  
Cruel and kene. *made ready*  
*As*  
*The Earl [too]; valiant*
- 1075 The sonne schonne en clere;  
They uschen in with banere,  
Five hunderyd knyghtus in fere,  
Armed ful clene, *brightly*  
And ther servitourus bysyde. *entered [the lists]*  
All that contray so wyde  
Come thedur that tyde *as a group*  
That solas to sene. *Armed splendidly*  
*pages*
- 1080 1085 Sire Egrivaunt out of the west  
Broughth out of the forest  
Thre hundred knyghtus of the best,  
Was greythed al on grene. *Came there*  
*joyful event to see*  
*[Who] were dressed; in*
- 1090 Ther was non so hardy  
That durst asayl the cry; *challenge*  
The held this Duk so doughty  
For hys mychel pryd. *They considered; ever so*  
*Because of; prowess*
- 1095 But when thei se Syr Degrivans  
Com armed up a ferauns,  
Thei thonked Gode of her shaunce,  
Al that other syde. *upon an iron-gray [horse]*  
*their good fortune*
- 1100 Then thei drowe hym ful nere,  
Baneret and bachelere,  
To ben undur hys banere  
To tornay that tyde. *came to him quite close*  
*Knight; squire*
- With trompe and with naker  
And the scalmuse clere  
Folke frouschen in fere;  
In herd ys not to hyde. *kettledrum*  
*shawm*  
*struck violently together*  
*There is no reason to hide it*
- 1105 And when the renkus gan mete  
Fele was fouled undur fete,  
Knyghthus strewed in the strete,  
Stonyed with stedys. *men met*  
*trampled*  
*scattered all over the place*  
*Knocked out by*  
*bitterly; smote*
- 1110 With swerdus smartely thei smyt,  
The temes sadelus ful tyte;  
Ther was no lengur delyte,  
These worthely in wedus. *They emptied; quickly*
- Baronus syttys on the bent  
With shuldrys shamly shent; *[Among] these worthy*  
*field*  
*disgracefully injured*

1115	Bryghthe browus and bent Brodelyche bledus. Manye harmus has thei hent; That was never at hor asent To come to that tornament 1120 To do suche dedus.	<i>Fair and curved brows Profusely received with their consent</i>
1125	Syre Degriavaunt, withouten les, Prykkus fast therow the pres; To the cheventayn he ches And raughth hym a strok.	<i>without lying Rides; through; crowd leader; went dealt</i>
1130	The Duk doteder to the ground, On erthe swyftly he swouned. Syre Degriavaunt, within a stound, He wan hys sted blak. He was stalworth in stoure,	<i>reeled</i>
1135	For he loved par amoure The lady lay in the toure, That shuld be hys mak. Syre Degriavaunt, ar he blan (This sey many a man) 1140 Syxty stedus he wan, And broughth to stak.	<i>moment gained battle  [who] was wife before he stopped saw</i>
1145	Syre Degriavaunt that very day, The sertayn soth for to say, Al the prys of the play Was put on that fre. Sone that doughty undur sheld Had yvenkessyd the feld. Many a man hym byheld, So hardy was he.	<i>same tournament noble man  vanquished  [Because] he was one after another countess</i>
1150	Ladyes seyden al bydene, Bothe contasse and qwene: “Yond gentyl knyght on grene Hath deservyd the gre.” Bryghth burdus in ther boure Loved that knyghth par amoure, Gret ladyes of honoure, And alle that hym seyen.	<i>prize ladies; bower</i>
1155	The Duk was horsed agayn And prycked fast thorw the playn. The Eorl and he with a trayn To the castel gan fare. Thane an heroud gon crye And prayd al the chyvalrye	<i>retinue went  invited</i>

- 1160 To soupe at the maungerye,  
Gyff ther wyllus ware. dinner; banquet  
The good knyght Syre Degrivaunce  
He had ymade repurveaunce purveyance  
For al hys retenaunce, retinue  
Fourty days and mare,  
1165 In the syde at a fel slope; hill  
At a wel feyre castel,  
Whyle hym was lef for to dwel he liked to stay  
For to sle care. set aside anxiety
- 1170 The sterne knyghthus and the stout,  
Whylk that tornayde without, Who; outside  
Ryden away in hys rout, company  
Thre hundred and mo.  
And hundred pound and a stede  
He send the mynstralus to mede sent; as a reward  
1175 (Of gyffte was he never gnede, sparing  
For wele nor for wo). In good times or bad  
Tyl hys castel he rade;  
A ryal maungerye he made. banquet  
Alle the bold ther abade, stayed  
1180 Ther scapyd non hym fro. He let no one go  
At even seyd Syr Degrevaus:  
“I wol se the countenauns face to face  
Of the chyvalrye of Frauns, France  
As ever mote I go.” may
- 1185 Syr Egrivaunt at evynlyghthus nightfall  
Armed hym at al ryghthus, at all points  
And callyd to hym tow knyghthus, two  
That prystest were ay. most discreet; always  
“Ha dyght yow on stedus Get yourselves ready  
1190 In two damysel wedus, young men's clothes  
For I wol found in my nedus, see to  
As fast as I may.  
Tak ether of yow a spere,  
Bothe of pes and of were;
- 1195 Greyth myn hors on hor gere Array; horses; harness  
And lok that thei be gay, furnished in style  
That thai be trapped aget, [ornamental] covering (for horses); caparison  
In topteler and in mauntolet, violet [cloth]  
In a fyn vyolet,  
1200 And makes non delay.”
- And whan here hors wer held covered [with armor]  
Thei toke ther sperus and there scheldus

- And prycked fast on the felde;  
No lengur wolde thei dwel.  
1205 And syen thei ryden even west  
Thorw a fayr forest,  
With two trompess of the best  
That range as a bell.  
On an hull he gan hym rest.
- 1210 Thei gaf hym hys helm and hys crest;  
He was the sternest gest  
Fro Heven to Helle.  
Syr Degrivaunt withouten abad  
To the Eorlus castel he rade.
- 1215 He found the gat so brad,  
Swyche hap hym felle.
- And rydes up to the des,  
As thei were servid of her mes;  
To Mayd Myldor he ches  
And chalangys that fre.  
The Duk sterte up an hyght:  
“Here my trouthe y thee plyght,  
I shal delyver thee this bryght;  
Tomorrow shalt thou se.
- 1220 1225 Bytwene underun and prime,  
Loke at thou come at that tyme.  
Other swowne shal in sweme;  
The lady shal ise.  
And trewly, withouten les,
- 1230 1235 Thou shalt be servid or I sess  
Bothe of werre and of pess,  
Of aythur cours thre.”
- The knyghth was so dresse,  
Hytt was gret joye to se;  
1235 So fayr an horsman as he  
Seye thei never are.  
Some loked on hys stede,  
And some on hys rych wede,  
And some the resoun gan rede  
What the knyghth bare.
- 1240 He loutes down to them alle,  
Bothe to the grete and to the smalle,  
And rydys out of the halle  
And buskys hym yare.
- 1245 Of all that loked on the knyght  
Was non that knew hym with syght,
- stay  
then; straight  
horns  
severest stranger  
delay  
wide [open]  
luck  
dais  
their meal  
rode  
demanded [as his prize]  
leapt up  
fair [one]  
see [her]  
early in the morning  
See to it that  
One of us shall fall in a swoon  
watch  
lying  
desist  
Three courses of either  
dressed  
motto; interpret  
bows  
the high and the low  
gets ready

- Bot Mayden Myldor the bryght,  
Of all that ther ware. *Except*
- 1250 Hammard he rydes ryghth  
And as fast as he myghth.  
On the mowro he hym dyghth,  
Ryghth as he dude are,  
And fyndys the Duk in the feld  
Bothe with spere and with scheld. *Homeward; straightaway*
- 1255 The Earl hoved and byheld,  
Brem as a bare.  
Than seid the Duke on the land:  
“Whare ys now this geand?  
He wol hald no covenand,  
1260 For alle hys gret fare.” *waited*
- But when he say Syr Degrevault  
Come armed up a feraunt,  
Hys hert wex recreaunt  
And syghth ful sare. *Fierce; boar*
- 1265 The Duk send a squiere  
To wytt what hys wyll were:  
To juste o pesse or of were,  
So sore he hym dredus. *(see note)*
- 1270 The knyght answerd thertyll,  
Bothe with resoun and with skyll:  
“Hyt shal be at hys wyll,  
Tak what hap ledus.” *reason*
- Then the doughthy hem dyghth  
As faste as thei myghth.  
1275 Thei set helmus on hyghth,  
Thes doughty on dedus.  
To gret sperus of pese *as he chooses*
- Bothe these lordes hem chese,  
And prikes fast thorw the prese *luck brings*
- 1280 Opon stout stedus.
- Ther stedes styrres hom faste,  
The knyghthes jusset or they cast,  
Ther good speres al tobrast,  
That weren gode at nede. *move*
- 1285 Syr Degrevault, as he had ment,  
Gaf the Duk swych a dynt  
That bothe styroppus he tynt —  
An honde, I thee hete. *approached before*
- The Duke rekyvered agayne.  
1290 Hys frenchepys were fayn; *shattered*
- intended*
- blow*
- lost*
- My hand on it, I assure you*
- friends; happy*

- The proford hym paynmayn,  
Vernage, and Crete.
- The Duk swore by gret God of Heven:  
“Wold my hors go evene
- 1295 Yet wold I sett all on seven,  
For Myldor the swet.”
- Tow gret sperus ha they ton,  
And gerd there stedus whyll the gron;  
Wytt yow wel that many on  
Lokede on them two.
- The doughty knyghthus of prude  
Thorw the renckus gon thei ryde.  
Bote they myssede at that tyde —  
Thorw hap hyt fell so.
- 1305 The good knyghth Syre Auntorus  
Come in at the thryd cours;  
For he loved par amours  
In hert that he was thro,
- 1310 And strykus the Duk thorw the scheld  
Wyd opon in the feld.  
The Earl hoved and byheld,  
In hert he was wo.
- The damessel toke the stede  
And thorw the renkus gon hym lede
- 1315 And seys: “Have this for thi mede  
Tyl thou gete mo.”
- Yet she spekys a word of pride:  
“On this stede wol I ryde  
By my lemanus syde  
In lond whare I go.”
- 1320 That knyght dressyd hym in hys gere;  
Hys felawe raughth hym a spere,  
A scharpe wepon of were,  
The Duk for to slo,
- 1325 And seis: “Syre Duke avenaunt,  
I pray thee, hold covenauant!  
Yondur ys a knyghth erraunt,  
Why taryest thou hym so?”
- The Duk lay on the grownd,  
On erthe swyftely he swound;
- 1330 He was stonyed that stownd,  
Trewly, that tyde.  
And yit she cryes upon hyghth:  
“Yondur ys armed a knyghth,
- They gave; white bread  
(i.e., wines from Italy and Crete)*
- straight  
risk all*
- Two; have; taken  
prepared; they groan*
- lists; they went*
- Sir Daring (i.e., Sir Degrevant)*
- In his heart he was persistent*
- waited*
- lady*
- reward*
- Also  
want to  
sweetheart's  
Into*
- companion (i.e., Melidor) handed*
- handsome  
stick to the agreement  
wandering  
keep waiting*
- passed out  
dazed; moment  
time*

- 1335 All redy and ydyghth,  
     Thi comes for to abyde!"  
     The Duk answerd thertyl,  
     Bothe with reson and skyl:  
     "I am yhurte ful yl,  
 1340     In herd is not to hyde.  
     Pray hym tak hit nat agreff,  
     He ses I am at myscheff.  
     Y hope nat y may lyff,  
     So sore ys my syde."
- 1345 Syre Degrivaunt toke his stede  
     And gaff the mynstrelus to mede,  
     And to forest thei spedē,  
     As faste as the may.  
     The Duke that was this ydyght,  
 1350     He toke his leve that ylk nyght,  
     Bothe with baroun and with knyght,  
     And went on hys way.  
     Sir Degrivaunt on the morwoun  
     Come aye to the thorun  
 1355     Ther hys stede stod byforun,  
     And lenges all that day.  
     Privavly at the nygħth  
     He come in with his knyghth  
     To spek with Myldore the bryghth,  
 1360     Spede yf he may.
- The mayde wyst by a gynn  
     That the knyghth was comen in.  
     The lady of heye kynn  
     Perseved the thoughth:  
 1365     "Damesele, so have I rest,  
     Thou hast geton thee a gest  
     Of wylde men of the west;  
     Layne thou hom nougħth.  
     Prevavly, withouten sýgħth,  
 1370     Do me carp with that knyghth.  
     Here my trougħth y thee plyghth,  
     He has dere yboughth."  
     Thanne the mayden was glade;  
     Sche dude as the lady bade  
 1375     And up at the grese hoe him lade,  
     And to chaumbur hym broughth.
- The lady of honowre  
     Metes the knyght in the doure,
- prepared  
comings
- (i.e., that's the truth of it)  
not to take it hard  
in distress  
think
- reward
- they  
had thus been dealt with  
same
- morning  
again; hawthorn
- remains
- To see if he might further his case
- knew; device
- descent  
Apprehended
- From  
Hide; them  
being seen  
Let me talk
- dearly bought [me]
- stairs she
- at the door

1380	Knelyd doun in the floure, And fel hym to feet. Frek as fuyre in the flynt He in armes had hyr hynt, And thrytty sythes ar he stynt He kyst that swet.	<i>Promptly; fire from the flint seized times; stopped</i>
1385	"Welcome, Syre Aunterous. Me thenkus thou art mervelous! Wyst my lord of this hous, With grame wolde thee gret."	<i>Knew [it] anger; greet</i>
1390	Swythe chayres was isete And quyschonus of vyolete. Thus this semely was isete With mouth for to mete.	<i>Quickly cushions handsome [fone] Face to face</i>
1395	"Damesele, loke ther be A fuyre in the chymené, Fagattus of fytretré, That fecchyd was yare." Sche sett a board of yvore, Trestellus ordeyned therfor; Clothus keverede that ovur —	<i>Faggots; fir tree readily table of ivory prepared covered before</i>
1400	Swyche seye thei never are. Towellus of Elyssham, Whyghth as the see ys fame, Sanappus of the same, Thus servyd thei ware.	<i>Aylsham White; sea's foam Overcloths</i>
1405	With a gyld saler, Basyn and ewer, Watyr of everrose clere, They wesche ryghth thare.	<i>saltcellar Washbasin; pitcher Rose water</i>
1410	Paynemayn privayly Sche broughth fram the pantry, And served that semely, Same ther thei seet. Sche brought fram the kychene	<i>White bread storeroom (esp. for bread) handsome one Together; sat</i>
1415	A scheld of a wylde swyne Hastelettus in galantyne, An hand y yow hete. Seththe sche brought hom in haste Ploverys poudryd in paste;	<i>side; boar Pig's fry; [bread] sauce On my word of honor After that; them</i>
1420	Ther ware metus with the masté, I do yow to wytte. Fatt conyngus and newe, Fesauntus and corelewe;	<i>Plovers seasoned; pasty courses; in great quantities rabbits curlew</i>

	Ryche she tham drewe Vernage and Crete.	Amply <i>Italian and Cretan wine</i>
1425	To tell here metus was ter That was served at her soper; Ther was no dentethus to dere, Ne spycses to spare. And evere sche drow hom the wyn,	describe their food would be difficult dainties too costly Nor
1430	Bothe the Roche and the Reyn And the good malvesyn, Felde sche hom yare. And evere Myldore sche sete, Harpynge notus ful swet,	French and Rhenish wines malmsey (a sweet wine) Filled; readily (eagerly)
1435	And otherwhyle sche et, Whan hur leveste ware. Songe yeddyngus above; Swyche murthus they move In the chaumbur of love —	sometimes Whenever it pleased her most [She] sang songs as well pleasures; excite bower set aside
1440	Thus thei sleye care.	
	Ther was a ryal rooffe In the chaumbur of loffe. Hyt was buskyd above With besauntus ful bryghth;	magnificent love adorned
1445	All of ruelbon, Whyghth ogee and parpon, Mony a derewrothe stone, Endentyd and dyghth. Ther men myghth se ho that wolde	ivory White ogive; perpent (binding stone) precious Inlaid Whoever
1450	Arcangelus of rede golde, Fyfty mad of o molde, Lowynge ful lyghth. With the Pocalyps of Jon,	one design Glowing Apocalypse St. Paul's Epistles
1455	The Powlus Pystolus everychon, The Parabolus of Salamon, Payntyd ful ryghth.	The biblical book of Proverbs quite correctly
	And the foure gospellorus Sytyng on pyllorus, Hend, herkeneth and herus,	evangelists pillars
1460	Gyf hyt be youre wyll. Austyn and Gregorius, Jerome and Ambrosius, Thus the foure doctorus	Gentle [people]; listen If you please
	Lysten tham tylle.	
1465	There was purtred in ston The fylesoferus everychon,	to them portrayed learned writers

	The story of Absolon, That layked ful ylle.	<i>exerted himself</i>
1470	With an orrelegge on hyghth To ryng the ours at nygth, To waken Myldore the bryghth With bellus to knylle.	<i>clock</i> <i>hours</i> <i>ring</i>
1475	Square wyndowus of glas, The rechest that ever was; Tho moynelus was of bras, Made with menne handus.	<i>mullions</i>
	Alle the wallus of geete, With gaye gablettus and grete, Kynggus sytting in ther sete,	<i>black marble</i> <i>nice little gables</i>
1480	Out of sere londus. Grete Charles with the croune, Syre Godfray de Boyloune And Arthur le Bretoune, With here bryght brondus.	<i>various</i> <i>Charlemagne</i>
1485	The flour was paved overal With a clere crystal, And overkeveryd with a pal, Afflore where she stondes.	<i>swords</i> <i>floor</i> <i>covered over; rich cloth</i> <i>On the floor</i>
1490	Hur bede was of aszure, With testur and celure, With a bryght bordure Compasyd ful clene. And all a storye as hyt was Of Ydoyne and Amadas,	<i>bed</i> <i>headboard; canopy</i> <i>Devised; neatly</i>
1495	Perreye in ylke a plas, And papageyes of grene. The scochenus of many knyght Of gold and cyprus was idyght, Brode besauntus and bryght,	<i>Jeweled</i> <i>parrots</i> <i>coats of arms</i> <i>costly fabric; adorned</i> <i>ornamental besant patterns</i>
1500	And trewelovus bytwene. Ther was at hur testere The kyngus owun banere; Was nevere bede rychere Of empryce ne qwene.	<i>high headboard</i>
1505	Fayr schetus of sylk, Chalkwhyghth as the mylk, Quyltus poyned of that ylk, Touseled they ware; Coddys of sendal,	<i>Chalk-white</i> <i>Embroidered of the same (i.e., of silk)</i> <i>Tasseled</i> <i>Pillows of thin silk</i>
1510	Knoppus of crystal	<i>Knobs</i>

- That was mad in Westfal  
With women of lare.  
Hyt was a marvelous thing  
To se the rydalus hyng  
1515 With mony a rede gold ryng,  
That home upbare.  
The cordes that thei on ran  
The Duk Betyse hom wan;  
Mayd Medyore hom span  
1520 Of meremaydenus hare.
- Westphalia*  
*By skilled women*  
*curtains*  
*supported them*  
*mermaids'*
- Ryght abought mydnyght  
Seyd Syre Degrivaunt the knyght:  
"When wolt thou, worthely wyght,  
Lysten me tyll?  
1525 For love my hert wyl tobrest!  
When wylt thou bryng me to rest?  
Lady, wysse me the best,  
Gyf hyt be thi wyll."  
The burde answered full yare:  
1530 "Nevene thou that eny mare  
Thou schalt rew hyt ful sare  
And lyke hyt ful ylle.  
Sertes, tho thou were a kyng,  
Thou touchest non swych thing  
1535 Or thou wed me with a ryng,  
And maryage fulfylle.
- creature*  
*burst*  
*When will you give me peace of mind?*  
*show*  
*lady; eagerly*  
*[If] you mention*  
*regret*  
*even if*  
*come to*
- "Leff thou well, withouten lette,  
The ferste tyme y thee mette  
Myn hert on thee was sette,  
1540 And my love on thee lyghth.  
I thoughthe never to have non,  
Lord nothur leman,  
Bot onely thee allon;  
Caysere ne knyghth,  
Emperor
- descended*  
*one*  
*lover*
- Kyng ne non conquerour,  
Ne no lord of honour,  
And gyff hyt were the Emperour,  
1545 Most proved of myghth.  
Forthy, syr, hald thee styll  
Whyle thou get my fadyr wylle."  
Tho knyght sentus thertylle,  
And trouthus thei plyghth.
- Even if*  
*Therefore*  
*Until; consent*  
*consents to that*
- And whan here trouthus was plyght,  
Than here hertus were lyghth;
- light*

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
|      | Was never faukon of flyght<br>So fayn as thei ware.<br>Thai lay doun in ther bede,<br>In ryche clothus was spred.<br>Wytte ye wel or thei wer wed                          | falcon<br>happy; were<br><i>[Which] with</i>  |
| 1560 | Thei synnyd nat thare.<br>Than spekus tho burd brygght<br>To Syre Degrivaunt the knyghth:<br>"Swet syre, come ylke nyghth<br>And loke how we fare."                        | make out<br>squire<br><i>Accepted; pretty</i><br><i>continued</i>   |
| 1565 | And the bold bachylere<br>Toke the damysele clere.<br>This han thei dured that yere,<br>Thre quarterus, and mare.  |   |
| 1570 | At missomere in a nyghth —<br>The mone schone wondur bryght —<br>Syr Degrivaunt and hys knyght<br>Busked to wend.<br>The doughty knyghthus so fre<br>Lyghth doun by a tre. | <i>midsummer one night</i><br><i>Prepared to go</i><br><i>Dismounted</i><br><i>forester saw them</i><br><i>In the place where they stopped</i><br><i>followed them</i><br><i>went</i><br><i>water</i> |
| 1575 | A prout foster gan tham se<br>Alaund ther thei lende,<br>And folewes hom thorw the wode,<br>Alle the weyes that thei yode,<br>And how thei passed the flode,               |   |
| 1580 | The knyghthus so hende.<br>So dud the weyt on the wall;<br>The Eorlus owne mynstrall,<br>Sey tham wende to the hall,<br>And wyst nevere what hyt mende.                    | <i>watchman</i><br><i>Saw</i><br><i>realized; meant</i>   |
| 1585 | The pypere haldus hys pays,<br>Tyl no man he hyt says<br>(Mynstralus shuld be cortays<br>And skyl that thei ben).  | <i>/bag/piper; peace</i><br><i>To</i>   |
| 1590 | The foster tolde anonerygghthus<br>To the Eorle and hys knyghthus<br>How thei come armeade anyghthus,<br>As he hadde ysen.   | <i>[fit is] reasonable</i><br><i>forester; immediately</i><br><i>at night</i>   |
| 1595 | The styward was chyvalrous,<br>Syre Eymur the kayous.<br>With offycyrus of that hous,<br>Cruel and kene,   | <i>uncourtly (villainous)</i><br><i>bold</i><br><i>ambush</i>   |
|      | A gret buschement hadde he sette<br>Ther the foster hom mette,   |   |

- 1600 And thoughth Syre Degrivaunt lette  
The wayes ful grene. *block off*
- The stywarde heyle hath swornme:  
"And he come be this thornne  
We bryng hys hed on the mornne  
And non othur mede." *loudly*  
*If*
- 1605 Dame Myldor wyst nougth  
What al this folkys hade thoughth;  
She wende no man that had bene wroughth  
Hade wyten of hor dede. *prize*  
*not at all*
- 1610 Ryghth as he was trew knyghth,  
To speke with Myldore that nyghth,  
And Syre Degrivaunt hadde yhighth,  
Ryhth as he was trew knyghth, *thought no living creature*  
*their*  
*promised*
- 1615 And lene hym grace in that fyght  
Wel for to sped. *leave off*  
*give*
- Syre Degrivaunt at evenelyghth  
Armede hym and hys knyghth,  
And toke on privavly for sygtht *nightfall*  
*secretly against being seen*
- 1620 Two gownes of grene.  
Nothur schelde ne spere,  
Ne no wepen of werre,  
Bot twey swerdus thei berre *sharp*  
*valley*  
*rushed upon them*
- 1625 Whan thei come to the slac  
The bolde buschement brac,  
Stoute opon stedus bac,  
Armede ful clene. *valley*
- Syre Degrivaunt, ys nat to layn,  
Blyve hys swerde had ydrayn. *it is not to be concealed*  
*Quickly; drawn*
- 1630 He that come formast was slain  
In the schaw schene. *bright thicket*
- Whan thei Syr Degrivaunt mett  
Sevene sperus on hym ysett,  
Evene in hys bassonett, *at him threw*  
*Straight; helmet*
- 1635 Brasten a two;  
Some bare hym thorw the gown,  
Some brast on hys haberjown.  
Hys sqwyer was born down, *[Which] burst*  
*pierced*  
*coat of mail*  
*overthrown*
- 1640 Hys swerd cast hym fro.  
Then Syre Degrivaunt lyghth,  
And rescowede hys knyghth, *dismounted*

- And cryed to hym an hyghth:  
“Why wolt thou lyen so?”
- 1645 The beste stedes that thei hade  
By the scholders he them schrade.  
He was never so hard ystade,  
For wele ne for wo.
- The styward, Syre Eymere,  
Com a lytyl to nere:  
Hys hede by the coler  
He kerves away.
- 1650 The body sytts opon the hors,  
Hyt was uncomely to the cors.  
The stede stert over a fosse  
And strykys astray.
- 1655 Y wyst never how hyt ferde:  
He betus hom fast to the erthe;  
With hys twohonde swerde  
He made swych paye
- 1660 That syxty lay on the feld,  
Bothe with sper and with scheld,  
That never wepen myghth weld  
Sen that ylke day.
- 1665 The panter, the boteler,  
The Eorlus cheff sqwyer,  
Ther lyes slay yfer  
In the schawe schene.
- 1670 Than the remenaunt fles  
On the sort that thei sees,  
And some lorkus undur tres,  
In slowes unshene.
- 1675 Thonkede be Godes grace:  
He has venkest hys face  
And made a chyvalrous chace,  
That crewel and kene.
- 1680 Noughth fourty fot fram the wal  
He slowe the marchal of the hal,  
And other gode sqwyers withal,  
Mo then fyftene.
- By that hyt dawed ney day,  
By that he hade endyd this play,  
Some scaped away  
And many on was slayne.
- 1685 Than sayd Syre Degrevant the knyght:  
“Here my trouthe y thee plyght:
- they; cut to pieces  
pressed
- neckpiece [of his armor]  
cut off
- inconvenient; body  
jumped; ditch  
ran  
went
- levied; toll
- wield  
Since; very
- officers in charge of the bread and the drinks
- slain together  
bright thicket
- fate; see [ahead]  
hide  
dirty quagmires
- vanquished his foes  
pursuit  
merciless; bold [one]
- in addition
- By the time it dawned near

- I shal speke with Myldore tonyght,  
To dey in the payn."  
Thei set here stedus ther thei stode,  
1690 And fayr passede the flode.  
To the Eorlus castel the yode,  
The gatus ful gayn.  
Than the lady so bryghth,  
Fayr sche welcomed the knyghth.  
1695 She had nat hard hore fyghth  
Therof wer thei fayn.
- She had wondur in hyr wyt  
Why here clothus war toslyt,  
As thei in holtus had byn hyt,  
1700 With dyntus of spere.  
Here gay gownus of grene  
Were ful schamely besene.  
"Leve syre, where have ye bene,  
Youre clothus to tere?"  
1705 The knyghth sat semely  
And seide tyl hyr prively:  
"We sey never selly  
That shold us aughth dere.  
But as we passed by a thorn  
1710 Thus wer our gownus totorn.  
We shalle have new tomorn;  
We cownte hyt not a payr."
- The knyghth had foughten as a bar,  
So that hym fersted ful sare.  
1715 The mayde broughth hym ful yar  
The spyces and the wyn.  
Dyverse spicies thei ete,  
And ofte with mowthus thei mete.  
Sche broughthe hem Vernage and Crete,  
1720 And wyne of the Reyn.  
He toke his leve at the day  
At Mayde Myldore the may.  
Yet wyste ho note of the fray;  
That she harde seyne.  
1725 The knyghth wendys on his way  
Ther the dede men lay,  
And seyde soufft on his play:  
"Yondur was stout hyne."
- Thei broughthe hom on bere,  
1730 The stywarde Syr Eymer
- [Even if] effort*  
*they went*  
*The most direct way*  
*glad*  
*mind*  
*cut*  
*As if; woods*  
*strokes*  
*Were a shame to see*  
*Dear*  
*becomingly*  
*saw [nothing] unusual*  
*harm*  
*torn to pieces*  
*We could not care less*  
*boar*  
*thirsted greatly*  
*quickly*  
*met*  
*sweet wine from Italy and Crete*  
*daybreak*  
*she; fight*  
*afterwards*  
*sport*  
*company of followers*  
*bier*

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
|      | And other gode sqwyer,<br>Of fryththus unfayn,<br>And cryide out overall<br>Both gret and small.   | <i>From woods unhappy<br/>called in every direction</i>  |
| 1735 | The mayde wyndus to the hall<br>Tythyngus to frayn.<br>The Yorle spekus to that fre:<br>“Y wytt Syr Degriuvant and thee<br>The slaughttur of my mené;            | <i>goes<br/>News to ask<br/>Earl<br/>blame<br/>retinue<br/>deceit</i>  |
| 1740 | This is yowr false treyn.<br>By Hym that dyede on tre,<br>This day shall thou dede be.<br>I wat well hit is he<br>That hase thee belayn.”                        | <i>lain with you</i>   |
| 1745 | The mayde answerde agayn<br>And seis: “Petur, I am fayn<br>And that knyghth be not slayn;<br>What bote is that I lye.<br>Sene he was chosen my fyrist make       | <i>[By St.J Peter<br/>If that<br/>What good will it do if I lie<br/>spouse</i>   |
| 1750 | Shall I hym never forsake.<br>What deth that I take,<br>Or dool that I drye.”<br>Than the Yorle wax wode<br>And swor: “Be bonus and blode,                       | <i>Whatever<br/>grief; suffer</i>  |
| 1755 | Mete ne drynk shall do me gode<br>Ar I se thee dye!”<br>The Contasse knelyd tho anon:<br>“Gode schylde, syr, that he be slon.<br>We hade never chyl but hyr on,” | <i>By [Christ's] bones and blood</i>   |
| 1760 | And cryid ful hye.   | <i>then<br/>God prevent; she be killed<br/>alone<br/>loudly</i>  |
|      | The Contasse cryed: “Alas!<br>Ye have ben to longe foas.<br>Wycked tonge hit mas;<br>God gif them shame.   | <i>foes<br/>causes</i>   |
| 1765 | I dar savely say<br>The knyghth went on his way,<br>Owre men bysett hym the way;<br>He was not to blame.   | <i>barred</i>  |
|      | Was not his fosteres slayn   |  |
| 1770 | While he werred in Spayn?<br>Hys woddys and hys waryn,<br>Ye made hem all tame.<br>Y rede ye saughthle with the knyghth,<br>That is so hardy and wygght,         | <i>waged war<br/>breeding grounds<br/>put them under your control<br/>advise [that] you become reconciled<br/>Who; valiant</i> |

- 1775 And graunte hym Myldore the bryght,  
By hyr ryghth name." *(i.e., formally)*
- Than spekus Myldore the brygth:  
"Ther was but he and a knyghth.  
I speake with hym this nygth —
- 1780 Why shulde I spare? *refrain [from saying so]*  
He is my love and my lorde,  
Myn hele and my counforde. *well-being; comfort*  
Hyt is gode ye be acorde,  
And yowre wyllus ware. *If*  
1785 And giff ye holde us agret *in sorrow*  
Shall I never ete mete." *food*  
The Yorl for angur gan swet,  
And sygthe ful sar. *sorrowfully*  
"Damesele, ar thou be spylte, *dead*
- 1790 I forgiff thee the gylte.  
Hit is all as thou wylte,  
I can say na mar."
- Bylyve a lettur ho sent *Quickly; she*  
Thow the Yorlus comandment; *order*
- 1795 A messenger has hyt hent, *taken*  
With tythingus ful newe. *messages*  
She bad hym cum prively, *secretly*  
With hys best chyvalry,  
As he was gode and doughty
- 1800 And holden for trewe. *considered to be respectable*  
And hoe shuld make swych acord *That [it]*  
Bytwene hym and hur lorde,  
That shulde be a counforde  
Tyll all that hym ever knewe.
- 1805 Yet Syr Degrevant hym drade; *was afraid*  
Syxty knyghthus he clade, *equipped*  
Tyl the Yorlus castel he spedē *hastened*  
By the day dewe. *At daybreak*
- The Yorle metus hym withoute *outside*  
1810 With sterne knyghthus and stoute. *Amazingly; bowed*  
Wonder low gan he loute *welcomes; noble [one]*  
And haylus that hende,  
And says: "Syr, by Goddys grace,  
Welcome to this place.
- 1815 We have ben to longe fase, *foes*  
Now wyl I be thi frende." *now*  
Prively that no man wyste  
All wrongus was redressyde.

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
|      | The Yorle and he hade keste<br>And to chaumbur thei wende.  | kissed  |
| 1820 | Withoutyn mor rehersyng<br>Made was the saughthlyng,<br>And grauntyd hym Myldor the yng<br>Till hys lyves ende.                                   | <i>preliminaries</i><br><i>reconciliation</i><br><i>young</i>     |
| 1825 | Was never sych a purvyaunce,<br>In Englond ne in Fraunce,<br>As was at Sir Degrivvance<br>And Myldor the schene.                                  | <i>preparation</i>  |
|      | Ther com tyl hir weddyng<br>An emperour and a kyng,<br>Erchebyschopus with ryng<br>Mo then fyftene.   | <i>at [the wedding of]</i><br><i>beautiful</i>                    |
| 1830 | The mayster of Hospitall<br>Come over with a cardinall,   | <i>[the Knights] Hospitallers</i>                                 |
| 1835 | The gret kyng of Portyngall<br>With knyghthus ful kene.<br>All the lordys of that lond<br>War holy at that offorand,<br>And ladyes, y undyrstond, | <i>Were without exception; offering</i>                           |
| 1840 | Emperye and qwene.  | <i>Empress</i>  |
|      | On the Trinité day,<br>Thus in romance herd y say,<br>He toke hyr in Godus lay<br>Tyll hys lyvys ende.  | <i>Trinity Sunday</i>   |
| 1845 | Solempnely a cardinal,<br>Revestyd with a pontifical,<br>Sang the Masse ryal<br>And wedded that hend.   | <i>law</i><br><i>Dressed; bishop's robe</i>                       |
| 1850 | And the ryche emperour<br>Gaff hur at the kyrkedor,<br>With worship and honour,<br>As for hys owne frend;   | <i>gracious [couple]</i><br><i>noble</i>                          |
|      | And sew gold in that stonde,<br>Well a thowsand pounde,   | <i>Gave her away at church door</i>                               |
| 1855 | Lay glyteryng in the gronde<br>By the way as thei wende.  | <i>dignity</i><br><i>[Sir Degrevant] strewed on that occasion</i> |
|      | Than the semelede the sale,<br>Kyng and cardynale<br>And the emperour ryale,  | <i>[Which] lay; on</i>  |
| 1860 | With barnus ful bolde.<br>So dud ladies bydene,<br>Both contasse and qwene,   | <i>men</i><br><i>one after another</i>                            |

- Bryghth burdys and schene,  
Was joye to beholde.
- 1865 Fro the mangery bygan  
Wyn in condyt ran,  
Redy tyll ylke man  
Take ho so wolde.  
Ther come in a daunse
- 1870 Nine Doseperus of Fraunce;  
Me thowghth syche a countynaunce  
Was joye to beholde.
- I knewe nevere man so wys  
That couth tell the servise
- 1875 Ne scrye the metys of prys  
Was servyd in that sale.  
Mynstrallus hade in halle  
Grete gyftys withalle,  
Ryche robus of palle
- 1880 With garnementus hale.  
Ylke day that fourtynghth  
Justyng of seryd knyghthus;  
To revele he best myghth  
With wyn and with ale.
- 1885 And on the fyftenthe day,  
Thus in romauance herd y say,  
They toke her leve and went her way,  
Thys worthely to wale.
- 1890 Al thei maketh ther avaunt  
Of the lord Syr Degrevant,  
Cortays and avenaunt,  
Ladyes and knyghthus.
- 1895 He gaff stedus that stound  
Worth a thousand pound,  
Withouten haukus and hound  
And faukun of flyghthus.
- 1900 The Yorle dyede that same yer  
And the Contasse cler.  
Bothe hor beryelus yfer  
Was gayly bydyghth.  
Syr Degrevant bylefte ther eyr  
With brod londus and fair;  
Was never peres myghth hym peyr,  
By reson ne ryghth.
- 1905 Thrytty wyntur and mare  
Thei lyvede togydur without care,
- Beautiful ladies; lovely*
- From [the time] the banquet*  
*fountain*  
*for each*  
*whoever*
- Douzepers*
- It seemed to me; display*
- food*
- Nor describe the splendid foods*  
*[That] were; hall*
- indeed*
- fine cloth*
- whole garments*
- [There was] jousting of contentious knights*  
*revel whoever*
- worthy [ones] excellent*
- spoke proudly*
- well-favored*
- on that occasion*
- Not counting*  
*falcons for pursuit of game*
- beautiful Countess as well*  
*funerals together*
- splendidly arrayed*
- remained behind as their heir*
- nobles; cause damage*

- And seven chyldur she hym bare,  
That worthly in wede.
- 1910 And sene sche dyed, *y* undurstond,  
He seysed hys eyr with hys hond  
And went into the Holy Lond,  
Heven be hys mede.  
At Port Gaff was he slon,  
Forjustyd with a soudon.
- 1915 Thus to Gode is he gon,  
Thus doughty in dede.  
Lord Gode in Trinité,  
Gyff hem Heven for to see  
That loves gamen and gle,  
And gestus to fede.
- after  
endowed; by oath*
- reward  
Jaffa  
Overcome by a sultan*
- This doughty [one]*
- pleasure; entertainment  
guests; feed*



## EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *SIR DEGREVANT*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** **C** = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern MS); **Cn** = Casson edition (1949); **L** = Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS Cathedral 91 (the Thornton MS); **Lu** = Luick edition (1917).

- 26      *nevev full ner*. Some have argued that Degrevant is a variant of Agravain, who would be one of Arthur's "near" nephews (Davenport, "Sir Degrevant and Composite Romance," p. 115). The name appears as Degrevant in two lists of Arthurian knights in the Healing of Sir Urry episode in Malory and in the muster of knights for the burial of Galahad in Hardyng's *Chronicle*. See Kennedy, "Malory and His English Sources," pp. 27–55, as cited by Davenport, p. 115n10.
- 47      *ganne*. Variants *gon/gun, can*; auxilliary of the past tense, indicating that the verb preceding or following is in the past tense.
- 50      *revay*. "To go hawking on riverbanks."
- 97      *him besyd*. The Earl is Sir Degrevant's neighbor and territorial rival, a situation not entirely unlike rivalries in the Old West where ranchers might poach or harm the water supply as aggressive harassment of neighbors whose land they coveted.
- 99      *forestes*. The word is here used in a specialized sense, either "woodland set apart for hunting" or "a wood enclosed by walls, a park."
- 100     *bowres*. The word *bower* is ambiguous; it may mean "chamber," "dwelling," but also a "place overarched with trees, arbour" (*OED*). In view of the context (the forests in the preceding line) the latter meaning has been adopted here.
- 108     *he*. Refers back to "his" in the previous line and therefore denotes Sir Degrevant.
- 117     *For he was in the Holy Lond*. See Edwards on "identifiable social issues" rooted in the poem, particularly with reference to crusader knights whose property was threatened by trespass during their absence ("Gender, Order and Reconciliation," pp. 54–55). See Lloyd, *English Society and the Crusade*, pp. 163–75, as cited by Edwards.
- 131     *frount*. The word makes clear that Sir Degrevant was in the vanguard.
- the Garnad*. The definite article was standard with a number of place-names (compare "the Rodes" for Rhodes in *The Squire of Low Degree*, line 198).
- 136     *twelthe nyght*. The feast of Epiphany on 6 January commemorates the visit of the three Magi to the newborn Christ child twelve days after His birth and in the Middle Ages marks the end of the Christmas celebrations.

- 141      *tenantrie*. Forste-Grupp notes the legal implications of the term: “The poet specifies that the persons whose properties were pillaged were not serfs but householders with their own income.” Degrevant is an astute administrator who “takes particular care of those persons who pay him rent” (“For-thi a lettre has he dyght,” p. 118).
- 143      *parkes*. *MED* cites *park* n.1(a) as “an enclosed tract of land; an enclosed area surrounding or bordering a castle or manor.”
- 151–52    *lawe . . . schore*. “The word *lawe* implies that Degrevant could bring his case before one of the king’s justices, state his grievance, give his evidence, and listen to the earl’s defense. The word *schore* implies a forceful and immediate response to an affront to one’s honor” (Forste-Grupp, “For-thi a lettre has he dyght,” p. 120). The poet emphasizes Degrevant’s concern with legality, even though the Earl forces retaliatory violence, the point being that Degrevant’s behavior is governed “by the same rules which govern the behavior of the audience of the romance” (Forste-Grupp, p. 120, citing Beckman, “Adding Insult to *Iniuria*”).
- 153      *lettre has he dyght*. Forste-Grupp finds it noteworthy that Degrevant is literate and writes the letter himself. This fact “places Degrevant in a new generation of progressive English nobility who could write as well as read” (Forste-Grupp, “For-thi a lettre has he dyght,” p. 121). On the other hand, the phrase *could* also mean that “he has a letter prepared” by someone else.
- 155–56    *ryght . . . wherfore*. Degrevant’s letter is a writ *praecipe*, an open patent letter, calling for *ryght, wherfore* justice may be achieved. Forste-Grupp emphasizes that Degrevant “assumes juridical authority by appropriating the language of the royal government to insist that the earl do what is right or explain his actions” (“For-thi a lettre has he dyght,” p. 123). The letter has teeth, for if the Earl chooses to ignore it, Degrevant will bring the matter to the attention of King Arthur. That the Earl fails to recognize the letter “as a document of power, authority, and intent” suggests that he is “of an older generation of nobility who distrusted writing and refused to learn the new skill despite ample opportunity” (p. 126).
- 167      *many knyghte*. In OE “manig” is an adjective that is normally followed by a noun in the singular (hence the translation “many a”), and although the plural is found increasingly towards the end of the OE period, the combination of “many” and a singular noun is still quite common in ME.
- 174–76    Immediately when he sees him the squire rides towards the Earl and pulls up his horse so that his horse’s front is level with that of the Earl’s horse.
- 188      *woderys*. The Earl implies that the tree’s branch might well serve as a gallows.
- 196      *In herde is nat to hyde*. The phrase is a typical filler, not only occurring here but also in lines 1104 and 1340 as well. Proverbial; see Whiting H281. The proverb is found with variants in *Amis and Amiloun* (line 501), *Guy of Warwick* (line 237), *Otuel and Roland* (line 649), *Horn Childe* (lines 39, 57, 189, 396, 669, 729), Chester’s *Sir Launfal* (line 57), *Sir Owain* (line 420), *Ipomadon* (lines 2479, 2608, 3918, 4803), *Emaré* (lines 120, 996), *Sir Gowther* (line 189), and *Tryamore* (line 1629). Here *herd* seems to mean “heart”; the Lincoln MS reads “In hert es noght

to hyde,” as in metaphors of the telltale heart; (i.e., “it can’t be kept a secret” — see *MED*), though sometimes *herd* seems to mean “retinue,” as “there’s no hiding in a crowd,” and in others (*Ipomadon* in particular) the spelling is “erde” or “erthe,” rather than “herd,” with the sense being “there’s no hiding place on earth,” with a biblical overtone as in the African-American spiritual.

- 236     *wede*. *Under wede* is as much a filler as “under gore,” but *wede* may mean “armor, coat of mail,” which is appropriate here.
- 250     *Withinne the knyghtus boundus*. The hounds are unleashed while they are still on Sir Degrevant’s property (“groundus” — line 251).
- 252     *halowede*. *MED* cites *halouen* v.1 (a): “To shout in the chase, either at the hunted animal or at the hunting dogs to incite them to attack, halloo.”
- 263     *gyant*. A sarcastic reference to Sir Degrevant.
- 270     *game*, as in Modern English, can mean both “joke” or “entertainment” and “quarry.”
- 275     *baner*. Here not just the ensign itself, but also the men fighting under it.
- 278     *Both lase and the mar*. Lit., “both those of high and of low social status,” thus, implying everyone.
- 298     *armere*. N.b. the break in rhyme scheme. Compare line 143.
- 364     *Ne worse be a pere*. The expression is proverbial, and has variants with straw, bean, tare, fly, etc., for pear (see also line 1712). See Whiting P84.
- 383     The words of the Earl make sense only if we take *Y take my leve* to mean “I will desist from.”
- 395     *cors of wer*. The standard expression for a “round” in a joust.
- 424     *My troth y thee plyght*. Variants on the phrase occur more than a dozen times in the poem in what Edwards defines as “a sort of symbolic marker” (compare lines 696, 765, 768, 769, 971, 1038, 1222, 1371, 1552, etc.). “The referentiality of the concept of ‘trouth’ . . . shifts [in the course of the poem] from courtly, amatory fidelity to martial prowess, serving to remind us of the complex social and personal issues that need to be resolved for the creation of harmony” (“Gender, Order and Reconciliation,” p. 61). The interrelationship of “different forms of ‘trouȝth’ . . . can only be achieved through the integration of these worlds — inner/outer, masculine/feminine — that the poem explores” (p. 62).
- 434     *reveres*. The banks of streams where waterfowl were hunted with hawks. See *MED* *rivere* n.2 (a). The destruction of such sites by the diverting of the water was an age-old means of aggression by troublesome neighbors.
- 439     *warreyn*. Another technical term: “a piece of land enclosed and preserved for breeding game.”
- 449     *inwith wan*. Another tag, like “under wede” (line 236).

- 471      *troweloves*. Casson translates “fleurs-de-lis,” because of the heraldic context, but there is little support for that elsewhere.
- 497      *gentriese*. Denotes both Sir Degrevant’s noble descent and the qualities that should go with it, like courtesy, clemency, or mercy.
- 529–44    See Edwards (“Gender, Order and Reconciliation,” p. 60) on the poem’s formalized emphasis on the use of direct utterance in this “self-contained lyric in which Degrevant declares his love for Melidor.” Between a quarter and a third of the poem is cast in direct speech.
- 542      *all the gold in the Reyn*. The story of the *Nibelungenlied* (first recorded c. 1200) was still sufficiently known in the later Middle Ages in most countries in Western Europe for a poet to assume that such a reference would be understood by his audience.
- 543      *Fausoned on floren*. Compare Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale, where Alison’s beauty is praised by analogy with a newly minted coin: “Ful brighter was the shynyng of hir hewe / Than in the Tour the noble yforged newe” (*CT I[A]* 3256–57).
- 570      *the Eorlus owun eyer*. Degrevant’s love of Melidor is certainly romantic, as her love for him subsequently is. Yet both recognize the politics of the situation in which the relationship constitutes a kind of revenge on the Earl. Forste-Grupp notes Melidor’s literacy to suggest that Degrevant’s showing her the written document — “Here the chartur in thi hand, / Thiself may hyt see” (lines 975–76) — is a “formidable force” in establishing their relationship, documenting that he is “a canny, literate lord who not only knows the details of land transferral and tenure but also composes and writes legal documents to achieve his own objectives” (“For-thi a lettre has he dyght,” p. 129). Melidor is a good match for him, since she too “can decipher a charter and ascertain its validity . . . the new ideal of the late medieval English lady — beautiful and literate” (p. 131).
- 613      *hyt*. Grammatically superfluous, daylight being the subject.
- 646      *nuche*. A “nucheum,” or “ouch,” is an ornament (brooch, clasp, earrings) with one or more mounted gems.
- 647      *Anurled*. An *orle*, in heraldry, is a border following the outline of a shield, but within it. It here probably denotes fur lining of Melidor’s dress, which she wears turned back to show the fur.
- 653–54    *aspanne*. C, Cn: *a spanne*; the first does not occur in the *MED*, the second in no useful meaning for this context. Reading *recevyd* as *retenyd* does not make the lines any clearer either. Casson admits being unable to interpret these lines satisfactorily. However, if we take *spanne* as “embrace (by the hands),” *aspanne* might mean “in an embrace by the hands.” Still, as they stand these two lines constitute an odd interruption of the description of Melidor’s outward appearance (unfortunately L is defective here: lines 652–55 were apparently skipped by the scribe).
- 657      *hold*. So C, L. Casson reads *on mold*, the sense being “adorned on top.” See *MED* “holde” n. 2. Although there is no citation in the *MED* of “hold” meaning

- “pinned up,” perhaps that sense might be extrapolated from hold, meaning “to hold together” or “to elevate.” This reading avoids the *rime riche* of lines 657–59, a device which is seldom found in *Sir Degrevant*.
- 663     **boses.** According to the *MED* a *bos* is an ornament, so here it could mean a medallion or a pendant. Since the text mentions *a payr*, it is just possible that “horns” are meant, a kind of headdress popular with women in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and mocked by Lydgate in his poem *Horns Away*.
- 681     **bordys.** Cn; L: *borde*; C: *lordys*. Tables usually consisted of planks placed on trestles. Because they took so much space they were cleared away after every meal and stored against the wall. Not so, however, in the house of Chaucer’s epicure the Franklin, about whom it is said that the tables “in his halle alway / Stood redy covered al the longe day” (*General Prologue, CT I[A]353–54*).
- 682     **was not to leyn.** A stopgap: lit., “it was not to be concealed.”
- 690     **he.** Superfluous here, as Sir Degrevant (line 689) is the real subject.
- 694     **see.** The grammar is ambiguous, and various meanings are possible: (a) “May Christ save you and see [you]”; (b) “May Christ save you and see I want to be your servant”; (c) “May Christ save you, and may you see that . . . ” I have opted for (c), Casson for (a).
- 703     **ryally arayd.** This could be translated both as “splendidly dressed” and as “royal in appearance.” The second translation emphasizes the impression Degrevant makes.
- 779     **hur hood of hoe hent.** The phrase is ambiguous but most likely means that the maid takes off the hood of her lady.
- 884     **Lok yf thee paye.** Since no personal pronoun is given the phrase could mean either “See if he pleases you” or “See if it pleases you.”
- 885     **I gyf.** A bond is a deed by means of which one binds oneself to pay a certain sum of money to a certain person.
- 889     **Whan here trouthus were plyghth.** After the squire and the maid plight their troth as a result of which they are formally, i.e., legally, engaged to be married, Sir Degrevant dubs his squire a knight (see also lines 969–72).
- 895     **As thou wolt that I be thin.** Sir Degrevant cannot, of course, mean this too literally, as he “belongs” to the lady; he probably merely wants to express his feeling of obligation towards the maid.
- 900     **pore.** Casson translates “worthless,” but the word mainly indicates the difference between a suitor like the Duke of Gerle and Sir Degrevant.
- 904     **sothe.** Considering that the other three tail lines have a French rhyming word ending in “-o(u)r,” *sothe* must be a scribal mistake, perhaps for “for sure.”
- 923     **waturwal.** *MED* defines *waturwal* or *wough* as “a retaining wall beside a body of water; a wall on either side of a mill wheel forming a sluice.”

- 951      *thei*. In view of the singular “byrd” in the preceding line, *thei* may refer to Sir Degrevant and his squire, and not the lady and her maid; or perhaps it refers to “that gentyl knyght” (line 949) and “that byrd bryght” (line 950).
- 964      *As ever mote thou the*. This is a variant of the stopgap “so mote I the,” in which *the* means “to prosper.” As there is no modern equivalent for this phrase, translations tend to result in awkward English.
- 1021–24    The quatrain makes little sense as it stands in C: *The ryche Duk, whan he eet, / The Eorle hertely hym hete / And with Mayd Myldore the swet / To have hyr for ay*. I have reversed the order of lines 1022 and 1023, and slightly adjusted C’s 1023, on the basis of L. Another possibility would be to delete *And with* from line 1023. Casson also suggests transposing these two lines, but follows the manuscript in his text.
- 1039      *Whedur he wol tornay or fyghth*. I.e., whether he wants to challenge me in a tournament or on the battlefield.
- 1045–48    *cheef . . . trewelovus bytwene*. The “chief” denotes the upper third of the shield. The partition line with the lower part is engrailed (*Engrelyd*), i.e., it shows a series of low arcades. The color of the chief is blue (*azour*), that of the lower part is not given. It is not clear on which part the St. Andrew’s cross is found (*satur*; Cn has *engrelyd* refer to the saltire). It is not clear either whether the double tressure, i.e., a double band following the edge of the shield, extends over the entire shield or is limited to the lower part. This tressure is ornamented with truelove knots (*trewelovus*). The in-itself-rare feature of the tressure is characteristically Scottish if ornamented with fleur-de-lis (it occurs, e.g., on the Scottish royal arms), something that poet and audience were no doubt aware of. The chief, saltire, and tressure are all so-called ordinaries, of which some fifteen exist; however, usually a shield displays only one of them. Hence we must conclude that, in spite of all the details given, Sir Degrevant’s coat of arms is a fairly poor fabrication by the poet.
- 1049      *is*. Since the Earl is describing a knight in full armor, as he would appear on the battlefield, this quatrain probably presents Sir Degrevant’s standard, on which the badge would normally appear.
- 1060      *stak*. Stake or post driven into the ground.
- 1062      *Seynt Martyn of Toure*. As an officer in the Roman army, St. Martin gave away half of his mantle to a naked beggar. He later became bishop of Tours in France, where he died in AD 397.
- 1064      *knew*. The Earl is thinking of the common belief that nobody fights better than a man in love (see also lines 1129–32).
- 1092      *pryd*. In contexts like the present one *pryd* combines the features of arrogance, prowess, and splendor.
- 1098      *bachelere*. A bachelor was a knight of the lowest degree.
- 1107      *strete*. Here a straight strip of land, making up the tournament field.

- 1129–32 These lines repeat lines 1061–64 and show that the Earl's premonitions about the outcome of the tournament proved only too justified. Note the wordplay on *mak*, which first meant "match, equal," and here "mate, wife."
- 1131 *The lady lay in the toure.* Casson, by putting a semicolon at the end of line 1130, makes lines 1131–32 an independent statement which comes rather unexpectedly and serves no clear purpose. If, on the other hand, line 1130 is made to run on, line 1131 ("the lady [that] lay in the toure") becomes the direct object of "loved," and the sense is much improved.
- 1137–40 The grammar of these lines is faulty: line 1137 is superfluous, except that it explains that Degrevant is the *fre* of line 1140.
- 1190 *damysel.* In ME the word usually denotes a young lady (OF *damoiselle*), but it is obvious from the context that the masculine sense is required here, as in OF *damoisel*.
- 1198 *topteler.* On the poem's rich vocabulary of specialized interest in horses, armor, castle architecture, heraldry, jewels, furniture, and the refinements of castle life, see Davenport, "Sir Degrevant and Composite Romance," pp. 116–19. Casson (pp. xlvi–xlix) notes that many of the terms, particularly those devoted to the court and the refined life, are derived from French; many reflect the earliest use of the word in English.
- 1211 *gest.* Here used in the original sense, with rather ominous overtones, of "someone coming from outside," hence "a stranger."
- 1217 *des.* The dais was the raised platform on which the "high" table stood. It is not exceptional for a knight to ride into a hall and up to the dais (see, e.g., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 221–22).
- 1225 *Bytwene underun and prime.* The order is a bit odd, since *underun* is the third and *prime* the first hour of the day after sunrise. The *MED* also lists a third meaning for *underun*, "late afternoon or early evening," but this also makes little sense — unless the time referred to is the middle of the night.
- 1239 *resoun.* In line 214 of *The Squire of Low Degree* the context leaves no doubt that "motto" is the required sense. Unfortunately we are not told what the motto is.
- 1267 *o pesse or of were.* In tournaments there were two types of combat: *à plaisirance* and *à outrance*. In the latter case one fought with the normal weapons of war, and death of the opponent was a calculated risk if not the real aim; the other type of combat was primarily for entertainment, and lighter, rebated (blunted) weapons were used.
- 1302 *renckus.* The course down which the opponents rushed toward each other. Each rode on his own side of the barrier, the fence dividing the lists into two separate tracks.
- 1313 *the stede.* The definite article is curious, as this horse had not been mentioned before.

- 1321 Apparently Sir Degrevant had taken off his armor, so that he now had to get ready for the final course.
- 1325 After addressing Sir Degrevant in a most encouraging way Melidor now turns to the Duke, who lies on the ground in bitter agony (see the next stanza), with a taunting remark.
- 1346 This is a strange moment to reward the minstrels, but since C and L agree here, we shall just have to accept the text as it stands.
- 1354 This is the same tree as the hawthorn of line 944. In this episode Melidor's maid had shown him a secret entrance to the castle.
- 1364 *Perseved the thoughth.* I.e., Melidor guessed that her maid knew that Sir Degrevant had come in.
- 1368 ff. The gist of the passage is that the maid tells her lady not to conceal herself from her guest and his men because, on her word of honor, he has dearly paid for her. Although it is not said, Melidor apparently consents, which gladdens the maid, who goes out to meet Sir Degrevant and lead him up the stairs and to Melidor's room.
- 1372 *He has dere yboughth:* from L's reading — *Dere he hase me boghte* — it appears that Melidor is speaking here. It is not uncommon for her to address her maid with the word "dameselle," e.g., see below, line 1393. In L the maid explicitly states that it was she who was bought by Sir Degrevant.
- 1385 *Welcome, Syre Aunterous.* Davenport notes that the courtly tone of welcome to a conquering hero is appropriate to aristocratic taste that might be pleased with the literary refinements of a "chaumbur of love," a grand banquet, the "rich variety of wine and Meliador's singing to the harp creates an evocative atmosphere of hedonism and sensual enjoyment which might appropriately lead to love-making" ("Sir Degrevant and Composite Romance," p. 124).
- 1401 *Elysshamb.* As Casson points out, Aylsham in Norfolk was famous for its linen at the time.
- 1403 *Sanappus.* Over-cloth to protect the tablecloth.
- 1441 ff. On the inner world of the castle with its splendidly decorated bedroom, a veritable Chamber of Venus, see Davenport, "Sir Degrevant and Composite Romance," pp. 124–29. Although the passage is "purely literary," it nonetheless is reminiscent of chambers like those of Longthorpe Tower, with its splendid wall paintings. See illustrations in Davenport, pp. 126–27, or the verbal luxuries of the love grotto in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, or the wonders of the Indian Temple in the *Wars of Alexander*, lines 3664–3703.
- 1446 *ogee and parpon* are architectural terms, indicating the diagonal rib of a vault and a binding stone respectively.
- 1459 *Hend.* The poet here addresses the audience, hence "gentle people."

- 1461–62 *Gregorius . . . Ambrosius.* A: *Gregory . . . Ambrose.* I have emended to maintain the rhyme. These two church fathers, together with the other two, are traditionally referred to as the four doctors, i.e., great teachers, of the (Roman Catholic) Church.
- 1466 *fylesoferus.* These would include Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, but also others. Their writings carried the same authority as those of the four doctors of the Church, and in didactic, moralizing texts one may find them side by side (see, e.g., Chaucer's Parson's Tale).
- 1467–68 The story of Absalom is the stock example of pride going before a fall (2 Kings [2 Samuel] 18).
- 1475 *moynelus.* Mullions are the vertical stone bars between window panes.
- 1481–83 Charlemagne, Arthur, and Godfrey of Bouillon are the three Christians among the Nine Worthies, the others being three pagan kings (Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar) and three Jewish heroes from the Old Testament (Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus).
- 1490 *testur.* The tester was the paneling at the head end of the bed, or the wooden framework, on which the canopy rested.
- 1493–94 *And all a storie as hyt was / Of Ydoyne and Amadas.* L's reading definitely makes better sense here: *Also a story ther was.* The story of *Amadace et Ydoine*, though not surviving in English, was well known, judging by the references in this and other texts, like *Emaré*. The ME *Sir Amadace* is not related.
- 1511 *Westfal.* As Casson points out, *knop* "is of Low German origin, and the manufacture of crystal gems and other objects was carried on in Germany from Carolingian times until the sixteenth century at least" (p. 143).
- 1518 *The Duk Betyse.* The name of the Duke, Betis, occurs nowhere else in the text, and, as Casson asserts, is in fact known only from the Old French *Voeux du Paon*. There is, however, no obvious link between *Sir Degrevant* and that story. See textual note to this line.
- 1523 ff. The conversation has definite sexual overtones, brought out more clearly in L: *When thou gase to thi reste, / Lady, wysse me the beste, / Giff it be thi will.* An awareness of this will help to understand Melidor's snappy reply, in which the line *Thou touchest non swych thing* is not free from sexual innuendo either.
- 1565 *bachylere.* This is the squire who had just been knighted, and who follows the example of Sir Degrevant with Melidor's maiden.
- 1594 *kayous.* According to both the *OED* and the *MED* this word occurs only here; its meaning is obscure. Casson suggested "resembling Sir Kay, hence 'uncourtly,'" which was adopted by the *MED* as "? A steward, the 'Sir Kay' of this romance." L's *gracyous* is certainly wrong. Casson suggests that the original may have had something like *kaytyvous*, "villainous" (from *caitiff*).
- 1740 *yowr.* The plural form makes clear that the Earl is accusing both his daughter and Sir Degrevant of treachery.

- 1757–86 On the concerted advisory effort of Melidor and the Earl's wife to end the Earl's stubborn predatory behavior, see Edwards, "Gender, Order and Reconciliation," pp. 58–59.
- 1793–94 *Bylyve a lettur ho sent / Thorw the Yorlus comandment.* The Earl acknowledges the intellectual authority of his daughter and the new circumstances. See Forste-Grupp, "For-thi a lettre has he dyght," pp. 132–33, who notes that "one of the two surviving copies of *Sir Degrevant* was copied by two women"; and, especially, Edwards on the relationship of gender issues to the Findern MS: "If women were a significant element in the early readership of this manuscript, then this would suggest that the romance had an audience that may have had good reason to be particularly responsive to the representation of the crucial, harmonizing female role in *Sir Degrevant*" ("Gender, Order and Reconciliation," p. 64).
- 1841 *Trinité day.* Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday following on Whitsun (Pentecost).
- 1870 *Nine Doseperus.* The Douzepers, lit., "the twelve equals," were in origin the twelve bravest and most important nobles at the court of Charlemagne. The number nine here is an obvious mistake, possibly by confusion with the Nine Worthies (of whom Charlemagne was one; see note to lines 1481–83). As Casson remarks, the display described here is no doubt a "masque" or "disguising," comparable to the theatrical "mumming" wherein masks representing great heroes of the past were worn by the performers.
- 1881–84 This quatrain has a faulty rhyme in *knyghthus* and shaky grammar and makes doubtful sense. Since the impression is given that the jousting consisted in a drinking contest, *revele* must mean "to revel," forms of the verb "to reveal" being extremely rare in the fifteenth century.
- 1882 *seryd.* According to the *OED* the word *serried*, "close together, shoulder to shoulder" (used of armed men), came into use only in the seventeenth century. But the Old French verb from which it is derived, *serrer*, was borrowed a hundred years earlier as *serr*. The appearance of the past participle *seryd* at an even earlier moment is therefore not as unlikely as it at first sight seems. On the other hand, it could be a scribal mistake for *sere*, "various" (as in line 1480); that would definitely make better sense.
- 1910 *He seyed hys eyr with hys hond.* Sir Degrevant put his heir in possession of all his property by means of a verbal agreement, sworn in front of witnesses.



## TEXTUAL NOTES TO SIR DEGREVANT

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** See Explanatory Notes.

With C's first scribe, *e* cannot always be distinguished from *a* or *o*, while his *r* (in any position) causes problems time and again; the second scribe writes exactly the same sign for *n* and *u*. Small corrections by the scribes, like a letter inserted or a word crossed out or corrected, have been mentioned in the notes to the first one hundred lines only; after that only the more significant alterations are given.

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| Title | <i>degreuuauant</i> . Written at the top of the page, with <i>theynke and thanke</i> added in a different hand.   |
| 2     | <i>to</i> . Written above the line, a dot between <i>for</i> and <i>se</i> indicating where to insert it.   |
| 4     | <i>gestys</i> . C, corrected from <i>gestus</i> or possibly <i>gesstus</i> .  |
| 7     | <i>hem</i> . Inserted above the line in another hand, a caret below the line indicating where to insert it.   |
| 8     | <i>on</i> . C; Cn: <i>in</i> .  |
| 9     | <i>y</i> . The first scribe consistently uses a lower case <i>y</i> for <i>I</i> , the second a capital <i>I</i> (retained in the edition), while the third has both (with a predilection for <i>I</i> ).   |
| 12    | <i>of dede</i> . The scribe originally wrote <i>and wyght</i> , crossed that out and added <i>of dede</i> above the line.   |
| 13    | <i>knyght</i> . C reads <i>kyngh</i> ; obviously, the scribe meant <i>knyght</i> . Casson misread C and transcribed <i>knygh</i> .  |
| 14    | <i>he</i> . Inserted between <i>that</i> and <i>fond</i> by means of a caret.   |
| 15    | <i>In Fraunce</i> . After the scribe had written <i>In ffraunce</i> he apparently produced a stain, crossed out these words, and started again on the next line.  |
| 25    | <i>He was dowghty and der</i> . The scribe first wrote <i>he was herdy and wyght</i> , then crossed it out, continuing to write the correct verse on the next line. Cn's wording gives the wrong impression of what happened: "he was herdy and wyght written above the line, and cancelled." |
| 27    | <i>myght</i> . Also written after <i>he</i> , but crossed out.  |
| 37    | <i>on</i> . C: <i>in</i> .  |
| 39    | The whole line was added later in a smaller script (but by the same hand).  |
| 47    | <i>parke</i> . Cn: <i>perke</i> . Both scribes use one and the same abbreviation for <i>per-</i> and <i>par-</i> (a <i>p</i> with a cross stroke through the descender). Since the word <i>parke</i> is written in full in line 70 that spelling has been used throughout.                    |
| 50    | <i>honte and</i> . Cn; C: <i>honte to and</i> .   |

- 53      *To.* Cn; C: *Tho.* Although the grammatical construction resulting from Cn's emendation is still shaky (the infinitive is not connected to any finite verb), a sentence with *tho*, "then," produces no better grammar and less sense. In fact, on the basis of *seththe*, "after that," in line 55 one would have expected the line to open with a word like "first."
- 54      *Trewly.* In C followed by *to* crossed out.
- 68      *muchell.* Cn; C: *muchll.*
- 71      *herdus.* C; Cn translates "harts," probably on the basis of L's *hertes*, or because C also occasionally has *herd(e)* for *herete*, *heart* (lines 196, 1104, 1340). On the other hand, C could just as well have intended *herdus* to mean "herds" here.
- 77      *he.* Inserted above the line.
- 88      *Of.* Followed by a word looking like *Gvld* but crossed out and hence practically illegible.
- 96      *whan.* This spelling for *wan*, *won*, occurs only here, elsewhere it is used strictly for *when*; apparently the scribe was not paying close attention to what he was copying.
- 97      This line is the fourth line of the second column of fol. 96v. The first three repeat lines 77–79 but were subsequently canceled. One gets the impression that lines 77–79 caught the scribe's eye because they opened a column in his exemplar while he was opening one in his own text.
- 104     *grade.* Cn; C: *grodē.*
- 113     *drowhe.* Cn; C: *drow he.*
- 118     *Dede.* This is the old, endingless plural form (from OE *dāde*).
- 127     *sey.* "Saw," C; Cn: *seyde*, "said."
- 131     *the Garnad.* C; L: *Degranaide*; Cn: *Garnad* (for C), *Granade* (for L).
- 137     *maner.* Inserted, *masynges* crossed out.
- 143     *comen.* C; Cn: *comoun.* There is no need to emend, see, e.g., the spelling *armere* (line 298, "armor"), rhyming with "stour" and "honor." His lands had become "common property," as it were, because the Earl had destroyed the fences and gates.
- 147     *hem.* Cn; C: *hen.*
- 149     *for to.* Cn; C: *for.*
- 154     *of gret myght.* L; C, Cn: *opo myght*; although the C text makes no sense Cn has adopted it without comment.
- 157     *And wyth a sqwer.* Emended; C, Cn: *And wyth sqwer*; L: *With a sqwyere.*
- 161–76    *hit.* Cn; C: *him.* Note that *he/hys* in lines 157–60 first refer to Sir Degrevant, then to the squire, and finally to the Earl.
- 179     This stanza is missing in C; the text given here is from L.
- 193     *sethens.* Cn; C: *sethes.*
- 209     *barown.* Cn; C: *bowron.*
- 237     *sone.* Cn reads C as *somo*, but the last letter could well be a badly formed *e* (compare *plece* in line 427, or *trowe* in line 471).
- 261     *wroth.* Cn; C: *worth.*
- 261     *was yarmed.* Cn; C: *W* (crossed out) *was y armed*, with *y* crossed out and *r* inserted.
- 261     *Eorl.* Cn; C: *dukes.*

- 267      *sese*. Written above the line.
- 279      *yare*. L; C, Cn: *bare*. Repetition of the same rhyming word is rare; moreover, the L reading, meaning “ready,” makes more sense.
- 289      *enjoined*. A peculiar kind of suspension stroke occurs over the *n*; hence Cn reads *ennjoined*. But the stroke was added by the corrector, and looks rather as if he has struck out something; the same hand also inserted the *i*.
- 300      *hethene*. Cn; C: *hethene*. The scribe first erroneously wrote *hethne*, then mistook this as a scribal error for *hethene* (“heathen”) and corrected accordingly. The word obviously needed here is *hethene*, “heath.”
- 301      *They*. Cn; C: *Then*.
- 312      *dedus*. C; L: *bledis*. C’s *dedus* seems less likely to be the original than L’s version: “many a bold one bleeds”; it moreover has the same word in line 316.
- 315      *Wo wrekeshare wryth*. C. The text in L appears more logical: *With waa wreke thay thaire wrythe*, “By inflicting woe they avenge their anger.”
- 322      *Bryttenes*. Cn; C: *Brightenes*.
- 343      *knyght*. C: *knygh*.
- 344      *mornyng*. Cn; C: *mornyg*.
- 345      *Degrevvant*. Cn; C: *Degrevvat* (ibid. lines 353, 385).
- 349      *laf*. C; L: *lefte*. Since the weak verb “to leave” has always formed its preterite by means of a dental suffix (as in L), *laf* is best taken as a scribal error for *laft*.
- 355      *grat*. Metathesized form from *gart*, a characteristic feature of the text (see also lines 384, 422, 437, 558, 944, etc.).
- 358      *myle*. Cn; C: *mele*.
- 360      *dud*. In C corrected from earlier *and* (by merely writing *d* over *a*).
- 361      *schygynge*. First *y* corrected from *e*.
- 368      After this line the scribe has written: *Her endyth the furst fit*, to which another hand has added: *Howe say ye? will ye any more of hit*. No other fits are distinguished.
- 370      *knyght*. C has *knygh* (as in line 343), but the rhyme requires the final *-t*. It must be concluded that the copyist did not double-check what he wrote.
- 379      *is*. Corrected to *his* by a later hand.
- 381      *was*. Corrected from *wys* by a later hand.
- 383      *leve*. Ibid., from *lyfe*.
- 384      *wornges*. Another instance of metathesis.
- 385      *Degrevvant*. Cn; C: *Degrevvat*.
- 396      *knythus*. The spelling of this word and of “hytus” (line 400) on the one hand, and of *whyght*, *whyghth* (lines 518, 1402) on the other, proves that at least in the idiolect of the two scribes the *gh* was no longer pronounced.
- 408      *under wede*. See explanatory note to line 236.
- 411      After the scribe had written this line (with *mesger* for *mesager*), he crossed it out — only to write it again one line down.
- 417      *wall*. L; C: *hall*. As Cn put it: “C has missed the point of the carefully thought out localization of the incident . . . Sir Degrevant and his knights remain outside the castle while the porter goes to the Earl with the message. As they are waiting, the Countess and her daughter appear on the

- castle *wall*, not in the *hall*. 539 makes the author's intention quite clear." In spite of this apt observation Cn retained C's *hall*.
- 418–19 The scribe had written these lines in the order 419–18, and subsequently corrected this by writing *b, a* in the margin.
- 422 *seyth*. Cn; C: *seygh*.  
*knyghe*. Cn; C: *kyngthes*.  
*chevalerus*. The word has been crossed out, possibly because the scribe thought it was the rhyming word (compare *plyght* in line 424).  
*plece*. *c* written over *ee* (or *oe*?).
- 428 *nyght*. Cn; C: *nynght*.
- 437 *Spayn*. C: *spyan*.
- 447 *slayn*. The scribe started off with the wrong rhyme word, and on seeing his mistake, crossed out what he had written, probably *flyi*. Cn saw correctly that the scribe probably reversed the order of lines 446 and 447; unlike Cn I have adopted that emendation in the text, finding support for this in L's reading: "Or I shall dy in the Payne / He that my fosters hase slayne / I sall rewarde hym agayne."
- 455 *vilany*. Cn; C: *vlany*.  
470 *and*. Added Cn; not in C.  
475 *beuté*. Cn; C: *beut*.  
477 *wondus*. Cn; C: *wendus*. L: *wondid*.  
485 *thy*. Cn; C: *they*.
- 506–07 The scribe made the same mistake here as with lines 418–19, with the same correction.
- 514 *Tenede*. Cn; C: *temede*.  
515 *foreste*. Cn; C: *forste*.  
516 *bernus*. After the scribe had written this word the ink ran out, and so he wrote it again, without crossing out his first attempt. Such rewritten words occur regularly with the first two scribes.
- 520 *in wold*. *in* added Cn, but the emendation is unnecessary (compare *Floris and Blancheflour* E207, A366).  
537 *in pall*. L, Cn; C: *pall*.  
541 *levere*. L, Cn; C: *leve*.  
544 *der*. L, Cn; C: *drer*.
- 546 After this line the scribe erroneously started with lines 548–49: *In payn of my liue / That y*; he then discovered his mistake, crossed out these lines except for *y*, which he made the first word of line 547 (and which caused a faulty word order). Note that the scribe used two different spellings for the word "life" within these two lines.  
*And y*. Cn; C: *y and*.  
556 *knyef*. In C *n* is represented by a suspension stroke over the *y*.  
560 *streff*. C; Cn: *stryeff*.
- 565 This line begins a new quire and here the second scribe takes over. He consistently spells *I* where the first scribe wrote *y* for the personal pronoun (1st sg.). Other differences are that his *e* is quite distinct from his *o*, while on the first page and a half the three rhyming lines have been bracketed.
- 591 *Bote*. Cn; C: *bete*.

- 596      *For.* Cn; C: *fro*.  
 609      *coursers.* Cn; C: *cousers*.  
 646      *nuche.* C; Cn: *nouche*, L: *miche*. C's spelling makes good Latin but bad Middle English.  
 647      *Anurled.* Cn; C: *an erlud*.  
 651      *the.* C and; Cn: *hur*.  
 657      *herre.* C; L, Cn: *here*.  
 660      *hold.* C, L; Cn: *mold*.  
 660      *worthelychere wyghth.* The letters after *-ly* are smudged, and have been rewritten below the line (which was the last of that column). The emendation is Cn's.  
 693      *Corteys.* Cn; L: *curtayse*, C: *certys*.  
 707      *thou not dost ryghth.* The word order is obviously wrong, *not* and *dost* having changed places, but apparently not wrong enough for the scribe to notice or correct it.  
 733      *lat be thee.* C; L: *lat be*, which is the normal expression.  
 757      *oure.* C; Cn: *our*. As with *werre* and *erbere* (lines 709, 711) there is a dot over the final *r*, which in the earlier lines was taken as an abbreviation by Cn, too.  
 765      *be ton.* Cn; L: *be tane*; C: *leton*.  
 798      *ever.* Cn; C: *never*.  
 802      One folio is missing here from L, resulting in the loss of lines 802–1008 (L has two columns per page, and roughly fifty lines per column).  
 848      *An.* Cn; C: *and*.  
 885      *I gyf.* Cn; C: *I gyf l*; Lu: *igfy I*.  
 893      *Recumaunde me.* Cn; C: *me* left out.  
 899      *thenke.* Cn; C: *thonke*.  
 901      *shal be.* My emendation; C, Cn: *shal*. Either "that shal" of line 902 is superfluous, or a verb should be added to line 901.  
 932      *byfore.* "An odd collocation of textual errors in the tail-rimes: *byfore, cornes, morow, hawthrone*. The original must have had *byforne, corne, morne, hawthorne*" (Cn).  
 943      *stod.* Written over what was probably *wer*, crossed out; Cn reads *wor*, but the form would be exceptional for C.  
 944      *hawthrone.* Another case of metathesis (see above, lines 355, 384, 422, 437, 558). Its occurrence here with the second scribe shows that it is a feature of the text rather than of one of the scribes.  
 946      *retenu.* Cn: *retenue*; C: *reten*; the scribe must have read *n* for his exemplar's *u* and ignored the suspension stroke.  
 952      Since we do *not* hear anymore of how they spent their night, *ne* probably dropped out.  
 979      *Degrivaunt.* Cn; C: *Degrivaunant*.  
 982      *no.* Cn; C: *now*.  
 986      *kyng.* Cn; C: *kyg*.  
 989      *nol.* My emendation; C, Cn: *wol*.  
 999      *to so.* Cn glosses "ever so (?)" ; this use of *to* is not recorded elsewhere.  
 1008      *foryeod.* C; Cn: *forzood*.  
 1014      *of.* Cn; C: *and*.

- 1025      *knyghthus*. Cn: *knyȝthus*; C: *kyȝthus*.  
 1029      *told*. Cn; C: *tol*.  
 1030      *armes*. Cn is undoubtedly right in assuming that L has the right reading:  
               *harmes*; confusion concerning initial *h*- is no exception in the text (see,  
               e.g., the textual note on *is*, line 379).  
*tonn*. Cn; C: *conn*.  
 1030–31     These lines too had been written in the wrong order, but this time the scribe  
               corrected himself by means of the letters *b* and *a* in the margin.  
 1041      This line verbally repeats line 1037. L is only slightly better, with *ansuerde*  
               *this knyght* in line 1037.  
 1042      *knowus*. Cn; C: *kowus*.  
 1045      *a*. Cn; C: *s*.  
 1049      *is*. Cn; C: *þis*.  
 1057–58     L has the superior reading here: *He es bown [ready] to the felde, / Bath with*  
               *spere and with schilde*.  
 1064      *knew*. Cn; C: *kew*.  
 1070      *isworun*. Cn; C: *iswrun*.  
 1077      *sonne*. The MS has a *c* inserted between the *s* and the *o*, while the entire word  
               has been struck out. Cn's explanation deserves to be quoted in full:  

The present MS. reading may be regarded as a modified haplography:  
               the scribe wrote *sonne*, then his eye picked up the following word *schonne*  
               in his copy, and he assumed he had made a mistake in the word already  
               written. So he inserted the *c*, saw there was no room for the *h*, cancelled  
               the word without referring to his copy, and went on with *schonne*, think-  
               ing he was repeating the word already cancelled.

1091      *this*. The MS reads *þs*, with the *s* slightly above the line. We are therefore  
               justified in seeing the *s* as the, very common, abbreviation for *is*. Cn's  
               emendation to *þis* is in fact no emendation at all.  
 1110      *sadelus*. Cn; C: *sadely*.  
 1115      *bent*. C; Cn's emendation to *brent*, on the basis of L, is unnecessary.  
 1137      *that very*. My emendation; C, Cn: *every*; L: *that ilke*.  
 1152      *alle*. L, Cn; C: omitted.  
 1167      *lef*. Cn; C: *lefte*; compare L: *Whare hym lyked for to dwelle*.  
 1170      *tornayde*. Cn; C: *tornyment*.  
 1187      *tow*. Cn; C: *tolly*. C's mistake may be due to a misreading of a *w* in his orig-  
               inal. It once again shows he was writing without much attention to the  
               meaning of the text.  
 1188      *pryvest*. C; Cn: *þryvest*.  
 1189      *Ha*. Cn. In the MS two letters, *dd*, probably canceled, follow *Ha*.  
 1197      *aget*. C; Cn: *a get*; L: *in gete*. I have interpreted the *a-* in *aget* as a shortened  
               form of "on," as in "aknee" or "aloft" (and compare line 1341: *agreff*).  
 1207      The scribe first copied line 1209 here, discovered his mistake, canceled it  
               and wrote line 1207 on the next line. In his first attempt he wrote *hul*, in  
               his second *hull*.

- 1210      *and.* L, Cn; C: *in*, a common mistake in medieval writing, as the difference between the abbreviations for *and* and *in* is slight.
- 1215      *crest.* L, Cn; C: *rest.*
- 1227      *brad.* C, Cn; L: *opyn brade.*
- 1242      *in.* Cn; C: *i.*
- 1242      *grete.* Cn; C: omitted; L: *ryche.* Cn provides the standard expression.
- 1251      *mowro.* C; Cn emends to *morow*, but the MS spelling occurs elsewhere with this scribe, e.g., *mowroun* in line 953.
- 1254      *scheld.* Cn; C: *sched.*
- 1262      *feraunt.* Cn; C: *ferauns.*
- 1272      *what hap.* Suggested by Cn, but not in his text; C: *hap what.*
- 1273      *hem.* Cn; C: *hym.* The next line shows that the plural form is required here.
- 1282      *knyghthes.* C: *knyzthes*; Cn: *knyzthes[s]*, but the last letter looks more like an *s*, written a little above the line and signaling the abbreviation “es” (as in line 1091, above).
- 1286      *jusset.* Cn correctly observes that the word makes sense only if translated as “approached,” but that *jusset or* was more likely a scribal error for *feutor* (L *fewtir*), “support for the spear on the saddle.”
- 1286      *they.* C, Cn: *thy*; as it is the only time C has this spelling an emendation is justified.
- 1289      *Gaf.* Cn; C: *And gaf.*
- 1293      *agayne.* Cn; C: *azyn.*
- 1293      *Heven.* L, Cn; C: *heve.*
- 1294      *go.* Cn; C: *so.*
- 1298      *whyll.* Cn; C: *wyll*, with a letter, probably *h*, written over the initial *w*. Still ME “tyll” would have seemed more logical (compare L *to*).
- 1310–11    Having written these lines in the wrong order the scribe corrected this by means of the letters *b* and *a* in the margin.
- 1320      *In.* Cn; C: *I.*
- 1322      *felawe.* C, Cn; L’s reading *mayden* makes clear that Melidor is meant.
- 1332      *Trewly, that tyde.* A stopgap if ever there was one, since *that tyde* merely repeats *that stound* of the preceding line.
- 1341      *agreff.* See textual note to line 1197.
- 1343      *Y hope nat y may lyff.* Cn; C: *y hape nat y my lyff*, L: *I hope noghte I may leue.*
- 1368      *Layne.* L, Cn; C: *Delayne.*
- 1378      *knyght.* L, Cn; C: omitted.
- 1389      *isete.* Since L reads *fett* and double rhymes are rare we must assume that the scribe read *isete* for his original’s *ifete*.
- 1392      *With mouth for to mete.* C, Cn; L uses the plural, as is common with this expression: *And thare thir [these] semly wer sett / With mowthis to mete*, i.e., with their mouths so close that they (almost) met, hence face to face.
- 1395–96    The double *tt* and *cc* in words like *fagattus* and *fecchyd* are not always clearly distinct; in the case of these two words one might just as well read *fagactus* or *fecthyd* (as is suggested by Cn). However, since this is a general problem not limited to this one scribe, it is better to give the scribe the benefit of the doubt and opt for the more common reading.
- 1397      *yvore.* Cn; L: *yvorye*; C: *yuorere.*

- 1402      *see ys.* Since C reads *see ys* it may be that not the genetive form (*the seeyfame*, “the sea’s foam”; thus Cn) was meant but the combination of noun + possessive pronoun (“the sea his foam”).
- 1423      *Ryche.* C, Cn; L’s *riche wyne* looks more like the original text.
- 1424      *Crete.* It looks as if the first letter has been changed to a *g*, which might give *grece*.
- 1427      *dentethus.* The odd spelling is no doubt caused by confusion between *y* and *p* (compare L’s *dayntese*).
- 1430      *Roche.* According to the MED this word occurs only once in ME. It probably denotes a wine from the French city La Rochelle.
- 1433      *Myldore sche.* One of the many places where the C text uses a double subject.
- 1436      *hur.* In *hur* the *h* had to be supplied due to a hole in the manuscript. From this page (fol. 106r) onwards stains on the manuscript page and several holes have obliterated (parts of) words, but usually the manuscript itself (viewed by means of UV light) or L provide enough information to reconstruct the text. My scrutiny of the MS, which I carried out together with Dr. Elizabeth Blom and with the help of UV light, revealed that some letters that could still be seen by Cn were now no longer legible or even visible (in a few cases this has been mentioned).
- 1438      *Swyche.* *y* supplied.
- 1446      *ogee.* Cn; C: *oger*.
- 1461      *Gregorius.* C: *Gregory*. I have emended to match the rhyme.
- 1462      *Ambrosius.* C: *Ambrose*. I have emended to match the rhyme.
- 1464      *Lysten tham.* L, Cn; C: *Lystened than*.
- 1468      *layked.* Cn; C, L: *lyked*.
- 1470      *ours at.* C: *ourſ at]*.
- 1471      *the bryghth.* C: *th[e b]ryzth*.
- 1473      *glas.* C: *glajs*.
- 1480      *sere.* Cn; C: *sure*.
- 1482      *de.* Cn; C: *þe*.
- 1488      *Afflore.* C; Cn: *A flore*; L: *On floure*.
- 1501      *testere.* C: has *testere*, but with the abbreviation sign *ur* written over the second *e*.
- 1502      Again L appears to have the better reading: *The Erles awen banere*.
- 1518–19    *The Duk Betyse.* C, Cn; L: *The dere Duk*.
- Medyore:* C, Cn; L: *Edoyne*. With so many uncertainties in C, one is tempted to adopt L’s reading.
- 1523      *worthely wyght.* My emendation; C, Cn: *the worthely wyght*. Because the definite article *the* has no function here, I have followed L in omitting it.
- 1526      *me.* C: *[m]e*.
- 1527      *best.* L, Cn; in C only the ascender of the *b* is visible.
- 1529      *full yare.* L, Cn; C: *ffull ȝaſre*.
- 1555      *faukon.* Cn; L: *fawcon*, C: *faukons* (with the *u* represented by a line over the *a*).
- 1567      *han.* Cn; C has part of a hole here.
- 1568      *quarterus.* Cn; C: *[qua]rterus*, L: *quarter*.
- 1569      *missomere.* L, Cn; C: *[mis]somere*.
- 1570      *The mone.* L, Cn; C: *P[e mo]ne*.

- 1571      *Syr Degrivaunt.* L, Cn; C: *Syr De]grivaunt.*  
 1572      *Busked.* L, Cn; C: *[Bus]ked* (the *k* is partly visible).  
 1573      *The.* Cn; L: *Pis*; in C there is room for a capital and one letter only.  
 1574      *Lyghth.* L, Cn; C: *[L]yȝth.*  
 1575      *gan.* L, Cn; C: *gam.*  
 1597      *sette.* L, Cn; C has part of a hole.  
 1601      *heyle.* Cn; with UV light much of this stanza can be read, except where letters  
               are really missing. In *heyfle]* two letters are not there.  
 1602      *this thornne.* Cn; C: *piſ porjnne.*  
 1603      *hed on the mornne.* Cn; L: *hed ham to morne*; C: *h[ed on b]e mornne.*  
 1605      *wyst nougtht.* Cn; C: *wyſt n]ouȝth.*  
 1606      *hade thoughth.* Cn; L: *had thoghte*; C: *hade þ]ouȝth.*  
 1607      *had bene.* Cn; C: *ha[d ben]e.*  
 1608      *dede.* L, Cn; C: *de[de].*  
 1609      *yhighth.* Cn; L: *hight*; C: *y[hiz]th.*  
 1610      *knyghth.* C: *k[n]yȝth.*  
 1627      *Stoute.* Cn; C: *[Sto]ute.*  
 1628      *Armede.* L, Cn; C: *[Ar]mede.*  
 1629      *Syre.* C: *[S]yre.*  
 1630      *Blyve.* Cn; C: *[B]lyue.*  
 1646      *schrade.* Cn; C: *scharde*; L: *strade.*  
 1655      *fosse.* C, Cn; L's *force* (from ON *fors*, "waterfall") is more likely to be the ori-  
               ginal.  
 1662      *scheld.* L, Cn; C: *sche[ld].*  
 1663      *weld.* L, Cn; C has a hole here.  
 1670      *sort.* The meaning "fate" is quite common in ME, and would do here. Cn  
               translates: "In any way they see," but he adds that it is only just possible  
               to make sense of the line as it stands. On the basis of C and L he suggests  
               the following reconstruction: "For the syght that they sees."  
 1701      *Here.* C: *[H]ere.*  
 1702      *Were.* C: *[W]ere.*  
 1703      *Leve.* L, Cn; C: *[Le]ue.*  
 1704      *Youre clothus.* L, Cn; C: *[zoure c]lothus.*  
 1707      *never selly.* Cn; L: *no celly.* Cn does not argue his choice for *never* instead of  
               L's *no*. In the manuscript there is room for an abbreviated form of *never*  
               only; on the other hand, the result is more satisfactory both metrically  
               and semantically.  
 1708      *shold us.* L, Cn; C: *shfold vs].*  
 1709      *as we passed.* Cn; L's *we come* is too short for the space available, hence Cn's  
               conjecture. Apparently he could still see the *s* of *as*.  
 1710      *wer our gounus.* Cn; L: *oure clothis were*; C: *fwer oujr gounus.*  
 1711      *shalle.* L, Cn; C: *sh[alle].*  
 1712      *cownte.* L, Cn; C: *[cownt]e.* For the expression, see explanatory note to line 364.  
 1713      *knyghth.* Cn; L: *knyȝthen*; C: *[knyȝ]th.*  
 1714      *So that.* Cn; C: *S[o that].*  
 1715      *The mayde.* L, Cn; C: *[Pe m]ayde.*  
 1716      *The spyces.* L, Cn; C: *[Pe s]pyces.*

- 1717 At this line scribe C takes over.
- 1725 *wendys*. Written between the lines, with a caret pointing at the wrong place for insertion (between *on* and *his*).
- 1737 *Yorle*. This form of the word is typical of scribe C.
- 1742 *thou dede*. L, Cn; C: *b[ou de]de*.
- 1743 *is he*. L, Cn; C has a hole here.
- 1744 *belayn*. Cn; L: *forlayne*; C: *be[layn]*.
- 1745 *answerde agayn*. L, Cn; C: *answe[rde azayn]*.
- 1746 *am fayn*. L, Cn; C: *[am flayn]*.
- 1747 *not slayn*. L, Cn; C: *[not slay]n*.
- 1748 *lye*. L, Cn; C: *l[ye]*.
- 1749 *my fyrist make*. Cn; L: *me to make*; C: *my ffyrst m[ake]*.
- 1750 *forsake*. L, Cn; C: *forsa[ke]*. Cn could still read the entire word.
- 1757 *tho*. Cn; C: *be*.
- 1767 *Owre*. Cn; C: *[Ow]re*.
- 1768 *He*. L, Cn; C: *[He]*.
- 1769 *Was*. Cn; C: *[W]as*.
- 1770 *While*. Cn; L: *When*; C: *[W]hile*.
- 1827 *Degrivvance*. Cn; C: *Degrivvace*. at Sir Degrivvance: L more logically has *for Sir Degreviance*.
- 1831 *Erchebyschopus*. The last two letters in the manuscript are either *vʒ*, which could for once replace the normal plural ending *-us*, or *bʒ*, which could be due to a misreading of the usual abbreviation for this same *-us*.
- 1849 *the ryche emperour*. In C we are not told which emperor this is, in L he is *Of Almayne the Emperour*.
- 1850 *hur*. Cn; L: *hir*; C has a hole.
- 1851 *worship*. Cn; L: *wyrchip*; C: *w/orship*.
- 1852 *for hys*. L, Cn; C: *flor hys*.
- 1853 *sew*. L, Cn; C: *[se]w*.
- 1854 *Well*. C: *W[ell]*; Cn has *Welle*, but after the *W* there is hardly room for four letters.
- 1855 *Lay glyteryng*. L: *Laye gleterand*; C: *l[ay g]lyteryng*. Cn has no indication of letters missing, which seems more of an oversight than anything else, as the hole has rather sharp edges here.
- 1856 *By the*. Cn; C: *By b[e]*.
- 1857 This line had originally been written as the last line of fol. 108r, but when the scribe discovered that it was the first line of a new stanza he cancelled it and wrote it again on the reverse page. Once more the spelling differences between the two versions are revealing: *ben bei semeled be sale* vs. *ban pe semelede be sale*.
- 1860 *barnus*. C, Cn; L: *barouns*. Since C uses the word *barn* only here the original probably had *baruns*.
- 1885 *fyftene*. Cn; C: *fyftepe* (the first *e* looks very much like an *o* here).
- 1886 *herd y*. Cn; L: *I herd*; C: *h[er]d y*.
- 1887 *went*. L, Cn; C has a hole.
- 1888 *wale*. Cn; C: *w[ale]*.
- 1903 *peres*. L, Cn; C: *perves* or *pernes*, but neither makes sense.

- 1920 After the last line there follows the beginning of another, which has been struck out: *here e.* In the hand of the second scribe two names have been added: *Elisabeth Koton* and *Elisabet Frauncys*, and also, in a different hand, *Rokeldo.*



## INTRODUCTION TO *THE SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE*

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Unlike practically all other Middle English romances, *The Squire of Low Degree* is known from printed editions only: there is one complete text, comprising 1132 lines, printed by William Copland around 1560, while two fragments, of 60 and 120 lines respectively, survive of an earlier edition printed by Wynkyn de Worde c. 1520. Beside these printed texts there is a much later and much shorter version of 170 lines, which has been recorded in the Percy Folio Manuscript (c. 1650). Both the Copland and the Percy texts are presented here.

### COPLAND'S EDITION AND THE DATE OF COMPOSITION

Over a hundred years ago, in his introduction to what is still the standard edition of *The Squire of Low Degree*, William Edward Mead argued that the language of the poem was that of the London area of the fifteenth century, and represented “the common literary language of the day” (p. lii). On the basis of the vocabulary he further specified the date as “about 1450, possibly a decade earlier” (p. lxxvi). More recent critics have tended to put it somewhat later (but not much later than 1500), and a date in the late fifteenth century will now meet with little opposition.

The continued popularity of the poem is evinced not only by the two sixteenth-century editions but also by numerous references to it by authors in that century, and even in the seventeenth.<sup>1</sup> And in addition to these there is of course the abbreviated version in the Percy Manuscript.

That the text printed by William Copland is based on Wynkyn de Worde’s edition becomes clear when one compares the surviving fragments of the latter with the Copland text. The two are identical except that Copland has reset the entire text, meanwhile updating the spelling and making a number of corrections. A few lines from the opening passage will illustrate this (lines 5–8):

#### **Wynkyn de Worde**

He serued the kyng her fader dere  
Fully the tyme of seuen yere  
For he was marshall of his hall  
And set the lordes bothe grete and small

#### **William Copland**

He serued the kyng her father dere  
Fully the tyme of seuen yere  
For he was marshall of his hall  
And set the lords both great and small

In the process of adjusting his exemplar Copland himself made a few mistakes, e.g., by leaving out words, thus marring the meter, while in other cases his modernization of the

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Spenser and Shakespeare. For a more extensive list, see *Squyr of Lowe Degre*, ed. Mead, p. xiii.

spelling sometimes led to a faulty rhyme (for examples, see the notes). But on the whole Copland's interventions are limited and do not lead to any basic changes in the text.

#### FORM

At first sight *The Squire of Low Degree* is no different from all the other romances that were produced in the fifteenth century, except that the poem begins, most unromancelike, *in medias res*: there is no call for silence or attention, no initial prayer, not even a few lines to introduce us to the protagonist, his parents, or his court. With the first lines we are plunged right into the story: "It was a squyer of lowe degré / That loved the kings daughter of Hungré" (lines 1–2). We never learn where the squire came from, how he came to be at the court of the king of Hungary, or how, as a young man from the lower ranks of the nobility, he achieved his position as the court's master of ceremonies. Nor are we told anything about the princess or her father.

Wynkyn de Worde, followed in this by Copland, apparently considered the text as complete, judging by the fact that he provided the first word with a five-line decorated initial, the only one for the entire text. This is different in the Percy text, where we do get some essential information on the squire's past:

It was a squier of England borne,  
He wrought a forfett against the crowne,  
Against the crowne and against the fee;  
In England tarry no longer durst hee,  
For hee was vexed beyond the see  
Into the kings land of Hungarie. (lines 1–6)

Considering that the Percy manuscript presents what is on the whole a heavily condensed version of the story, it seems probable that a longer, more complete text once existed but was not known to either Wynkyn de Worde or Copland.

But there is more to it: not only is the poem headless, there are also numerous incongruities within the text. The most glaring one occurs in the following passage.<sup>2</sup> The treacherous steward has revealed to the king that his daughter is secretly seeing the squire, and that he would certainly have spent the night with her had he, the steward, not suddenly come in. The king's reaction is very indulgent: he knows the squire as a courteous and loyal young man, even worthy to win his daughter. Therefore he has no objection to their meeting; his daughter may even kiss him. But if the steward should catch them "with the dede" (line 390), he may arrest or kill him. To keep an eye on her the steward gets thirty-three men. That same day the squire asks (and obtains) leave from the king to "passe the sea, / To prove my strenthe with my ryght hande / On Godes enemyes in uncouth land," and to win himself a reputation as a "venterous" knight (lines 472–78). When he and his men have arrived at their first night's lodging he suddenly realizes that he has forgotten to say farewell to the lady. He immediately rides back to the castle, where, we are told, the steward is lying in ambush outside the lady's room.

There are ample opportunities here for the author to create suspense, and he makes a promising start: the squire, confident that no one has seen him, enters the castle by a back

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<sup>2</sup> For more examples of structural incongruities, see Tigges, "Romance and Parody," p. 143.

access, unaware, unlike the audience, of what is awaiting him. If he had been, he would not have come there all by himself, the author assures us (lines 521–24). And then the smooth narrative begins to falter: if the lady had known he was coming to her room

She would have taken hym golde and fe,  
Strength of men and roylté. (lines 527–28)

What exactly is meant by these lines is not clear. Most likely the author wants to express that if she had known where the squire was and what his intentions were, she would have taken gold and a group of armed men, and gone out to meet him somewhere, away from the castle.

When the squire arrives at the lady's chamber he asks her: "Undo your door! I am beset with many a spy!" (lines 534–36). This comes as a surprise since so far we have not heard anything about the squire discovering the steward, and certainly not of a fight; it is left to the audience to work this out. Even more curious is what happens next: at first the lady does not recognize her squire, and she orders him to go away, as she will open her door only for the man whom she loves and who will marry her. The squire at once assures her that it is he, but instead of quickly unlocking her door and letting him in, the lady embarks on a seemingly endless monologue, in which she repeats, sometimes even verbatim, the instructions she had given him earlier in the poem, when she first promised him her love. Small wonder that the steward and his men can meanwhile approach and attack the squire.

#### STRUCTURE

The poem as we have it has an almost natural tripartite structure.<sup>3</sup> In the first part the squire is introduced, a young man of insignificant nobility and little financial means, but in love with the king's daughter. Often he withdraws to the garden, where this time the lady overhears his lament, comforts him by giving him her love, and also instructs him on how to win her. While they are talking the steward overhears them. Next we hear that the squire serves the king at table; the steward reveals to the king the love of the squire for his daughter; the squire asks the king permission to go abroad, and he leaves (lines 1–488).

In the second part the squire returns to say farewell to the lady, a decision that leads to the catastrophic encounter with the steward, with the lady as a blind witness behind her door. The steward is killed, the squire arrested, and the lady embalms the body of the steward. Having put the squire into prison, the king attempts to cheer up his daughter (lines 489–858).

In the last part the king releases the squire, and allows him to undertake his journey. After the agreed period of seven years he returns to the king, having done exactly as the lady had advised him. The king now accepts him as his son-in-law, but first goes to his daughter to test her love for the squire. He overhears her lament and reveals the treachery of the steward. The couple are finally united, and the story ends with their wedding and the squire's coronation (lines 859–1132).

The poet frequently alerts the audience to a shift of scene by such phrases as "But leve we of the steward here, / And speke we more of that squyer" (lines 301–02), or "Leve we here of this squyer wight, / And speake we of that lady bryght" (lines 669–70, repeated in reverse order in lines 859–60).

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<sup>3</sup> Fewster argues in favor of a diptych structure (*Traditionality and Genre*, pp. 139–43).

## STYLE

If the form of the poem was unusual, it also shows uncommon features in other respects. A summary, e.g., as provided by Hornstein,<sup>4</sup> would give us the impression that it is full of the conventional knightly activities, with the obligatory pursuit of love and display of doughtiness in battle, and with the hero fulfilling the central role.

It is not that these things are absent from *The Squire*, but the emphasis, as Carol Fewster observed, “shifts from actions as actions, to action as narrated, and even to narration without action.”<sup>5</sup> When the lady overhears the complaint of the squire, and admits that she loves him in return, she advises him in a long address (over one hundred lines) what she expects him to do to win his spurs. Her sermon is amusingly undercut as the squire, while she pontificates, is struggling against the steward for his very life. When, much later in the story and seven years later in time, her father releases the squire from prison to let him go on his journey across the sea, we are told about his exploits in various countries, and his return to Hungary, in a mere fifteen lines. Moreover, what there is in the way of action (whether real or intended) is practically always prompted by one person overhearing another. As A. C. Spearing has argued “there is perhaps none [of the English romances] in which secrecy, spying, storytelling, and the relationship among them are of such importance as in *The Squyr of Lowe Dregre*.<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, the poem is characterized by an abundance of direct speech: it takes up two-thirds of the text. However, instead of creating the impression of reported drama, with dialogues linked by the “voice-over” of the poet, the text presents a series of monologues, with short intervals of dialogue, connected by the narrator’s account of events and his comments. The division of direct speech among the four main characters is also surprising: the speeches of the lady and the king each amount to about 27 to 28 percent of the text, whereas those of the squire add up to no more than 7, and of the steward to 2 percent. The squire makes only two speeches of any length: the first is his lament, at the beginning of the story, of twenty-one lines, the second his address to the lady (in fact another lament) of thirty-three lines. The lady on that occasion advises him with a monologue of 128 lines, the gist of which she repeats when the squire is outside her door (seventy-six lines). Finally, when she is making up her mind to bury the bodily remains of what she thinks is the squire, she has a last monologue of thirty-eight lines. The king is given even more to say: his words to the steward on how to go about watching his daughter are given in two monologues of forty-seven and forty lines respectively. When he tries to cheer up his daughter he uses 114 lines, and another forty-nine when, at the end of the poem, he gives her an account of all that has happened. In other words, if the squire is the focus of attention, he is practically always the subject of a speech by the king or the lady, and not the agent propelling the events. As Mead put it: “The squire is the central figure — or is intended to be. Yet . . . he has little or nothing to do.”<sup>7</sup> Another consequence of this narratological device is that the story is entirely centered on the court as the place where everything happens, for it is here that

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<sup>4</sup> Hornstein, “Miscellaneous Romances,” p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre*, p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Squyr of Lowe Dregre*, ed. Mead, p. lxxx.

- the lady tells the squire where to go and what to do
- the fight between the squire and the steward takes place
- the king puts the squire in prison (and later releases him)
- the lady embalms the wrong body
- the king tries to comfort his daughter with a long list of possible diversions
- the squire reports back to the king
- the wedding and coronation take place.

In fact, the story moves away from the court only twice: on the two occasions that the squire leaves to go overseas. But although the first time he returns the same night, and the second after seven years, the difference in time span does not show in a difference in the number of lines used, fewer than twenty in either case. The court remains firmly the center of our attention, and with it the father-daughter relationship.

When the steward reports on the squire's meeting with his daughter the king reacts in an almost unmedieval manner. In the first place he does not readily believe the steward in his accusations, which in most romances he would, and he even tells him that if the squire should win the lady's consent to marry her, he would be worthy to have her (lines 369–72). He even goes so far as to say that there is nothing against their meeting secretly outside her room, and kissing. Only if the squire should attempt to break into her room, or harass her, should the steward immediately arrest him. Concern for the well-being of his daughter also makes the king guess the cause why she is losing her beauty and good humor, and it is equally manifest in the many diversions he suggests to give her back her joy of life. Seven years later he releases the squire from prison and allows him to leave and win himself the desired reputation, while after the squire's return, again after seven years, he brings the couple together, renouncing the throne in favor of the squire and thereby making his daughter both queen and his successor.

The emphasis on the poem's concern, in the words of Spearing, "with social mobility and the contribution of wealth to social status"<sup>8</sup> had earlier been signaled by Kiernan and was later worked out in more detail by Seaman.<sup>9</sup> When the squire is first introduced he is called "curteous and hend" (line 3), and "an hardy man . . . and wight, / Both in batayle and in fyght" (lines 9–10); in other words, he has all the right qualifications, except one: he is "of lowe degré" (line 1) and poor (line 19). When he makes his lament in the orchard, under the lady's window, the first thing he complains of is that he is not rich enough to marry the lady (lines 68–70), and that is also what he ends with: "Wayle a waye! / For poverté passeth all my paye!" (lines 87–88). The lady initially behaves more like the typical romance heroine in that she tells him that if he wants to win her "With chyvalry ye must begynne, / And other dedes of armes to done, / Through whiche ye may wynne your shone" (lines 172–74). But she deviates from that image when she not only describes in great detail what will make him an accomplished knight but goes on to offer him the financial means to do it (lines 273–74). That it is, in the end, not the lady herself but her father who provides the squire with the necessary resources and company of men does not detract from the intrinsic importance of money for the squire's social advancement.

<sup>8</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> See Kiernan's "Undo Your Door and the Order of Chivalry" and Seaman's "Waning of Middle English Chivalric Romance," respectively.

Here an interesting discrepancy crops up in the way in which on the one hand the squire, and on the other the lady and the king, assess the situation: the squire thinks that the combined factors of his poverty and humble descent constitute an insurmountable obstacle to a marriage with the lady, while she and her father find the squire unacceptable only because he has not yet made a name for himself. Either of these concerns sounds familiar in a romance context and yet they are, in their combination, quite unlike those of the more traditional romances, which emphasize “inherited, blood-based nobility of character and behavior” for their heroes.<sup>10</sup> Regarding this difference between *The Squire of Low Degree* and these earlier poems Fewster has observed: “The *Squyr* evokes a sense of narrative convention and of genre in its allusion to other romances” but it does so “without necessarily being wholly within or defined by that style.”<sup>11</sup> The questions raised by the poem make it distinctly different from, though not independent of, the established romance tradition.

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

Both Wynkyn de Worde and William Copland printed a large number of books, often illustrated, e.g., Copland’s *Valentine and Orson*, which contains a famous series of seventy-two splendid woodcuts. It is therefore noteworthy that his edition of *The Squire of Low Degree* is a rather poor affair. It is a small and thin booklet, containing only the text of this poem, and illustrated with two woodcuts, one the frontispiece and the other facing the first page of the text. As is clear from the surviving de Worde fragments, the latter, showing a nobleman and a lady, had already been used by de Worde for his edition, and even then it was a ‘recycled’ illustration: he had adapted it from his edition of Chaucer’s *Troylus and Cresyde* of 1517 by erasing the names of the two protagonists, originally written in two balloons over their heads, from the woodblock.<sup>12</sup> To produce a book in this manner is a clear indication of its intended audience: the not-so-wealthy commoners, who had only just started to read and buy books, and who were more easily contented than the members of the upper class or the rich merchants.

Apart from such indications provided by the outward appearance of the book, the text itself has a number of features that point in the same direction. When the lady sets about to instruct the squire how he may “win his spurs” (line 174), she begins by describing in some detail the hardships of the outdoor life of a questing knight (lines 175–85). This is a subject apparently quite deterring to outsiders like the lady, for whom it was not a daily reality, but one that in the regular medieval romances receives very little attention.<sup>13</sup> Another element is the coat of arms that the lady designs for the squire. The vocabulary she uses is replete with heraldic terms and yet the resulting arms are not even remotely like a correctly blazoned escutcheon.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Seaman, “Waning of Middle English Chivalric Romance,” p. 187, argues the point more extensively.

<sup>11</sup> Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre*, pp. 132, 136.

<sup>12</sup> *Squyr of Lowe Dregre*, ed. Mead, p. xl.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Twain also elaborates upon this in Chapter 12 (“Slow Torture”) of his novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889).

<sup>14</sup> Compare Kiernan, “Undo Your Door and the Order of Chivalry,” pp. 352–55.

The extensive catalogues may belong here as well: in essence they are comprehensive lists, enumerating more examples or aspects of a general concept than are ever found together elsewhere. In the description of the orchard, the list of trees comprises sixteen species (among which are some flowers and shrubs), while the list of birds has nineteen. The king's suggestions for entertainment to his daughter include minute descriptions of the luxurious objects with which the nobility are surrounded and which are indicative of the rich ambience in which they live. Thus the litter in which his daughter might go hunting is described with all its precious details, as are her clothes, both the ones she will wear during the hunt and those for evensong, the rich pavilion for her supper, with its costly tapestries, delicious dishes, and seventeen different wines, and especially her bedroom to which she will retire for the night. When, at the end of the poem, the squire and his lady are finally united there is "myrth and melody" (line 1069) with seventeen different musical instruments. Neither in their immediate context, nor in the poem as a whole, do these lists serve any obvious narratological function; rather, their main purpose seems to be to impress an audience with the wealth of a social group to which they themselves do not belong.

In spite of all that has been said in the previous paragraphs, the contemporary audience of the poem, and that of later ages, apparently found qualities in it that ensured its lasting success.<sup>15</sup> Maybe its source was nostalgia for a genre of which this poem has been called, in our days, the swan song.<sup>16</sup> But the effect is, likewise, surely comical in its indulgence.

#### THE SQUIER IN THE PERCY FOLIO MANUSCRIPT

When a narrative that with 1132 lines was not complete is reduced to a mere 170 lines it must necessarily suffer some losses. In the Percy version, the treacherous steward has completely disappeared as have the exploits of the squire. What is left is a truncated story in which, nevertheless, the basic structure of the original can be discovered:<sup>17</sup>

- the unhappy squire withdraws to the orchard
- the lady overhears his complaint under her window and advises him
- the squire is attacked by twenty men stationed at the lady's room by her father (no reason is given), and in vain asks her to open her door
- the squire is arrested and a dead man is taken from the gallows, his face mutilated and the body placed before the lady's door
- the lady embalms (parts of) the body, thinking it is the squire
- her lament is overheard by her father, who asks for whom she is mourning
- the king offers all kinds of diversions but none are acceptable to his daughter
- finally the king reveals that the one she loves is kept in his prison
- when she asks why he did all this to her the king answers that he had hoped to marry her to a king
- the lady's wedding concludes the story.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion of the mixed audience of *Squire* and other later fifteenth-century English romances see Pearsall's astute essay, "Audiences of the Middle English Romances."

<sup>16</sup> *Squire of Low Degree*, ed. Sands, p. 250.

<sup>17</sup> For an extensive comparison of the two versions, see *Squyr of Lowe Degre*, ed. Mead (pp. xiv–xvi).

In this highly abbreviated version the role of the lady is even more prominent than in the longer one: the squire never leaves the court, and his active part is restricted to his lament in the orchard and his fight with the king's men. At the end the dialogue is entirely focused on the lady and her father, and it is her marriage that is described, without any reference to the squire, let alone to a possible coronation.<sup>18</sup>

One aspect, though, has remained: the squire still sees lack of money and noble descent as impediments to his marrying the lady. She apparently agrees, since after delineating how he may win himself a reputation and successfully woo her, she gives him a hundred and three pounds to meet the costs.

Due to the condensation of the narrative the reader is left with a number of questions, such as: Why did the king install twenty men at his daughter's chamber? Why did she not open her door to the squire, with whom she had just been talking? And what is it that marginalized the young man? Beside this there seems to be a break in the time span of the story. In her monologue over the dead man's corpse, the lady says that she will cast his fingers and hair in wax, bury his bowels, and set up the remainder at the head of her bed (lines 93–98). In the same breath, however, she announces that she will put him in a coffin and bury him, as he cannot be kept any longer (lines 99–103). One gets the impression that this is a vestige of the original story, in which there is a lapse of seven years between the embalming and the dialogue of father and daughter.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the numerous differences between the texts, there can be no doubt that they are two versions of the same original, a conclusion that is corroborated by the amount of lines they share, sometimes with exactly the same words.<sup>20</sup>

#### NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text of *The Squire of Low Degree* is presented here as it occurs in William Copland's edition, that of *The Squier* as in the Percy Folio Manuscript. Variant readings from Wynkyn de Worde's edition are given in the notes to *The Squire of Low Degree*.

#### MANUSCRIPTS AND EARLY PRINTS

Indexed as item 1644 in Brown and Robbins, eds., *Index of Middle English Verse*:

- London, British Library MS Additional 27879 (the Percy Folio Manuscript), fols. 444–446. (P)
- Wynkyn de Worde, "Here begynneth vndo your Dore." San Marino, CA, The Huntington Library, Rare Books 62181 (3 fragments). (W)
- William Copland, "The Squyr of Lowe Degre," or "Here begynneth vndo youre dore." London, British Library, C.21.c.58. (C)

<sup>18</sup> Also in the Percy Folio dialogue takes up two-thirds of the poem, but it is here rather differently distributed: the squire has 9 percent, the lady 40 percent, and the king 15 percent of the text.

<sup>19</sup> Mead goes so far as to say that "[The Percy folio] is not a compact, homogeneous original but a mangled and clumsily condensed form of an earlier version" (*Squyr of Lowe Degre*, ed. Mead, p. xix).

<sup>20</sup> See *Squyr of Lowe Degre*, ed. Mead, pp. xvii–xviii. In view of the high number of lines in the Percy Folio for which there is no equivalent in Copland's edition it seems unlikely that the Percy Folio is directly based on Copland.



## THE SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE

	It was a squyer of lowe degré That loved the kings daughter of Hungré. The squir was curteous and hend, Ech man him loved and was his frend.	<i>gracious; polite</i>
5	He served the kyng her father dere, Fully the tyme of seven yere (For he was marshall of his hall, And set the lords both great and smal).	<i>years</i> <i>master of ceremonies</i> <i>placed [at table]</i> <i>bold; courageous</i>
10	An hardy man he was and wight, Both in batayle and in fyght. But ever he was stylly mornyng, And no man wiste for what thyng;	<i>secretly mourning</i> <i>knew what for</i>
15	And all was for that lady, The kynges daughter of Hungry. There wiste no wyghte in Christenté Howe well he loved that lady fre.	<i>person; Christendom</i> <i>noble</i>
20	He loved her more then seven yere, Yet was he of her love never the nere. He was not ryche of golde and fe, A gentyll man forsooth was he.	<i>closer (i.e., to fulfilment)</i> <i>as regards; property</i> <i>truly</i> <i>dared; complaint</i> <i>sorely all by himself</i> <i>always; sad</i>
25	To no man durst he make his mone, But syghed sore hymselfe alone. And evermore, whan he was wo, Into his chambre would he goo,	
30	And through the chambre he toke the waye Into the gardyn that was full gaye. And in the garden, as I wene, Was an arber fayre and grene;	<i>very pleasant</i> <i>suppose</i> <i>orchard</i>
35	And in the arber was a tre, A fayrer in the world might none be: The tre it was of cypresse, The fyrst tre that Jesu chose.	<i>there could not</i>
	The sother-wood and sykamoure, The reed rose and the lylly-floure, The boxe, the beche, and the larel tre, The date, also the damyse,	<i>wormwood</i> <i>red</i> <i>beech; laurel</i> <i>damson (kind of plum)</i>
	The fylbyrdes hangyng to the ground,	<i>filbert (hazel)</i>

	The fygge-tre, and the maple round,	
	And other trees there was mané one,	<i>many a one</i>
40	The pyany, the popler, and the plane,	<i>peony</i>
	With brode braunches all aboute,	
	Within the arbar, and eke withoute.	<i>also</i>
	On every braunche sate byrdes thre,	
	Syngynge with great melody,	
45	The lavorocke and the nightyngale,	<i>lark</i>
	The ruddocke, the woodwale,	<i>robin; oriole</i>
	The pee and the popinjaye,	<i>magpie; parrot</i>
	The thrustele sange both nyght and daye,	<i>thrush</i>
	The marlyn, and the wrenne also,	<i>merlin</i>
50	The swalowe whippynge to and fro,	<i>darting</i>
	The jaye jangled them amonge,	<i>chattered</i>
	The larke began that mery songe,	
	The sparowe spredde her on her spraye,	<i>spread her [wings]; twig</i>
	The mavys songe with notes full gaye,	<i>song-thrush; very merry</i>
55	The nuthake with her notes newe,	<i>nuthatch; tunes</i>
	The sterlynge set her notes full trewe,	<i>formed; accurately</i>
	The goldefynche made full mery chere	
	Whan she was bente upon a brere,	<i>perched; briar</i>
	And many other foules mo,	<i>birds more</i>
60	The osyll and the thrushe also.	<i>ousel</i>
	And they sange wyth notes clere	<i>pure (fine)</i>
	In confortynge that squyere.	
	And evermore, whan he was wo,	
	Into that arber wolde he go,	<i>orchard</i>
65	And under a bente he layde hym lowe,	<i>grassy slope; down</i>
	Ryght even under her chambre wyndowe,	
	And lened hys backe to a thorne	<i>thornbush</i>
	And sayd, "Alas, that I was borne!	
	That I were ryche of golde and fe	<i>If only; property</i>
70	That I might wedde that lady fre,	<i>So that; noble</i>
	Of golde good, or some treasure,	<i>[Rich] of fine gold</i>
	That I myght wedde that lady floure!	<i>paragon of ladies</i>
	Or elles come of so gentyll kynne	<i>[had] come; noble family</i>
	The ladyes love that I myght wynne.	<i>That I might win the lady's love</i>
75	Wolde God that I were a kynges sonne,	
	That ladyes love that I myght wonne!	
	Or els so bolde in eche fyght	
	As was Syr Lybius that gentell knyght,	
	Or els so bolde in chyvalry	<i>[deeds of] chivalry</i>
80	As Syr Gawayne, or Syr Guy;	
	Or els so doughty of my hande	<i>[be] so valiant</i>
	As was the gyaunte Syr Colbrande,	<i>giant</i>
	And it were put in jeoperdé	<i>If; to the test</i>
	What man shoulde wynne that lady fre,	

85	Than should no man have her but I, The kinges daughter of Hungry."	<i>Because of; all my pleasure disappears sorrowful expression fell down in a swoon</i>
90	But ever he sayde: "Wayle a waye! For poverté passeth all my paye!" And as he made thys rufull chere, He sowned downe in that arbere.	<i>oriole where precious</i>
95	That lady herde his mournyng all, Ryght under the chambre wall, In her oryall there she was, Closed well with royall glas.	<i>Completely covered; pictures one after another device</i>
100	Fulfullid it was with ymagery; Every wyndowe by and by On eche syde had there a gynne, Sperde with many a dyvers pynne. Anone that lady, fayre and fre, Undyd a pynne of yveré, And wyd the windowes she open set, The sunne shone in at her closet. In that arber fayre and gaye She sawe where that squyre lay.	<i>Fastened; different Immediately ivory wide room</i>
105	The lady sayd to hym anone: "Syr, why makest thou that mone? And whi thou mournest night and day Now tell me, squyre, I thee pray. And, as I am a true lady,	<i>at once</i>
110	Thy counsayl shall I never dyscry. And, yf it be no reprefe to thee, Thy bote of bale yet shall I be." And often was he in wele and wo, But never so well as he was tho.	<i>secret; reveal shame remedy from misery had been; happiness happy; then</i>
115	The squyer set hym on hys kne, And sayde: "Lady, it is for thee: I have thee loved this seven yere, And bought thy love, lady, full dere. <sup>1</sup> Ye are so ryche in youre aray	<i>these garments</i>
120	That one word to you I dare not say, And come ye be of so hye kynne, No worde of love durst I begynne. My wyll to you yf I had sayde, And ye therwith not well apayde,	<i>descended; high family dared desire</i>
125	Ye might have bewraied me to the kinge, And brought me sone to my endyng. Therfore, my lady fayre and fre, I durst not shewe my harte to thee.	<i>{were} not well pleased betrayed destruction</i>

<sup>1</sup> *I have bought your love, lady, dearly (i.e., suffered dearly for it)*

- 130     But I am here at your wyll,  
       Whether ye wyll me save or spyll;  
       For all the care I have in be,  
       A worde of you might comfort me.  
       And, yf ye wyll not do so,  
       Out of this land I must nedes go;  
       I wyll forsake both lande and lede,  
       And become an hermyte in uncouth stede,  
       In many a lande to begge my bread,  
       To seke where Christ was quicke and dead.  
       A staffe I wyll make me of my spere,  
       Lynen cloth I shall none were;  
       Ever in travayle I shall wende,  
       Tyll I come to the worldes ende;  
       And, lady, but thou be my bote,  
       There shall no sho come on my fote.  
       Therfore, lady, I thee praye,  
       For Hym that dyed on Good Frydaye,  
       Let me not in daunger dwell,  
       For His love that harowed Hell.”  
       Than sayd that lady milde of mode,  
       Ryght in her closet there she stode:  
       “By Hym that dyed on a tre,  
       Thou shalt never be deceyved for me;  
       Though I for thee should be slayne,  
       Squyer, I shall thee love agayne.
- 140     clothes  
       hardship; go  
       unless; help  
       shoe
- 145     where
- 150     betrayed because of  
       in return
- 155     stop; secret  
       know
- 160     want to obtain what you desire  
       Hear; still  
       destroy you if; can  
       knew  
       betray
- 165     At once because of; arrested  
       submit to  
       Perhaps [be]; drawn  
       I do not wish to
- 170     For if you; wish to  
       spurs  
       dangerous
- 175     And ryde through many a peryllous place,

	As a venterous man to seke your grace, Over hylles and dales, and hye mountaines, In wethers wete, both hayle and raynes; And yf ye may no harbrouge se,	<i>venturous</i>
180	Than must ye lodge under a tre, Among the beastes wyld and tame; And ever you wyll gette your name, And in your armure must ye lye,	<i>lodging</i>
185	Eevery nyght than by and by, And your meny everychone, Till seven yere be comen and gone, And passe by many a peryllous see,	<i>increase; reputation</i>
	Squyer, for the love of me, Where any war begynneth to wake,	<i>one after another followers every one</i>
190	And many a batayll undertake, Throughout the land of Lumbardy, In every cytie by and by. And be avised, when thou shalt fight,	<i>arise [you must] undertake advised</i>
195	Loke that ye stand aye in the right. And, yf ye wyll take good hede, Yet all the better shall ye spedē, And whan the warre is brought to ende,	<i>always do what's right pay proper attention succeed</i>
	To the Rodes then must ye wende. And, syr, I holde you not to prayes,	<i>Rhodes</i>
200	But ye there fyght thre Good Frydayes; And if ye passe the batayles thre, Than are ye worthy a knyght to be, And to bere armes than are ye able	<i>hold up; praise Unless survive</i>
205	Of gold and goules sete with sable; Then shall ye were a shelde of blewe, In token ye shall be trewe, With vines of golde set all aboute	<i>coat of arms; qualified red; black escutcheon; blue</i>
	Within your shelde and eke without, Fulffilled with ymagery,	<i>As a sign; faithful</i>
210	And poudred with true loves by and by. <sup>1</sup> In the myddes of your sheld ther shal be set	<i>Filled; pictures</i>
	A ladyes head, with many a frete;	<i>fret (ornament for the hair)</i>
	Above the head wrytten shall be	
	A reason for the love of me:	<i>motto</i>
215	Both O and R shall be therin, With A and M it shall begynne. The baudryke, that shall hange therby, Shall be of white sykerly;	<i>baldric certainly red</i>
	A crosse of reed therin shall be,	

<sup>1</sup> Sprinkled over with lovers' knots close together

- 220 In token of the Trynyté.  
 Your basenette shall be burnysshed bryght,  
 Your ventall shal be well dyght,  
 With starres of gold it shall be set,  
 And covered with good velvet.
- 225 A corenall clene corven newe,  
 And oystryche fethers of dyvers hewe.  
 Your plates unto your body embraste  
 Shall syt full semely in your waste,  
 Your cote armoure of golde full fyne,
- 230 And poudred well with good armyne.  
 Thus in your warres shall you ryde,  
 With syxe good yemen by your syde.  
 And whan your warres are brought to ende,  
 More ferther behoveth to you to wende,
- 235 And over many perellous streme,  
 Or ye come to Jerusalem,  
 Through feytes, and feldes, and forestes thicke,  
 To seke where Christe were dead and quycke.  
 There must you drawe your swerde of were,
- 240 To the sepulchre ye must it bere  
 And laye it on the stone,  
 Amonge the lordes everychone,  
 And offre there florences fyve,  
 Whyles that ye are man on lyve;
- 245 And offre there florences thre,  
 In tokenyng of the Trynyté.  
 And whan that ye, syr, thus have done,  
 Than are ye worthy to were your shone.  
 Than may ye say, syr, by good ryght,
- 250 That you ar proved a venturous knyght.  
 I shall you geve to your rydinge  
 A thousande pounde to your spendinge;  
 I shall you geve hors and armure,  
 A thousande pounde of my treasure,
- 255 Where through that ye may honoure wynn  
 And be the greatest of your kynne.  
 I pray to God and Our Lady  
 Sende you the whele of vyctory,  
 That my father so fayne may be
- 260 That he wyll wede me unto thee,  
 And make thee king of this countré,  
 To have and holde in honesté,  
 Wyth welth and wynne to were the crowne,  
 And to be lorde of toure and towne,
- 265 That we might our dayes endure  
 In parfyte love that is so pure.
- (metal) headpiece; polished  
neckguard; adorned
- circlet [of gold] bright carved  
color  
armor; strapped*
- sprinkled; ermine
- retainers (yeomen)
- You need to go even farther  
across  
Before  
(see note)*
- war
- In the presence of  
gold coins (florins)  
Because; alive*
- As a symbol of
- spurs
- knightly expedition  
for costs*
- [To] send; weal/wheel  
So that; pleased  
give me in marriage*
- honor  
wealth; joy
- spend  
perfect

	And if we may not so come to, Otherwyse then must we do.	achieve that <i>Differently; act</i>
270	And therfore, squyer, wende thy way, And hye thee fast on thy journay, And take thy leve of kinge and quene, And so to all the courte bydene. Ye shall not want at your goyng Golde, nor sylver, nor other thyng.	<i>hasten; quickly</i> <i>one after another</i> <i>journey</i>
275	This seven yere I shall you abyde, Betyde of you what so betyde; Tyll seven yere be comen and gone I shall be mayde all alone."	<i>wait for</i> <i>(i.e., whatever may happen to you)</i>
280	The squyer kneled on his kne, And thanked that lady fayre and fre; And thryes he kyssed that lady tho, And toke his leve, and forth he gan go. The kinges steward stode full nyne, In a chambre fast them bye,	<i>three times; then</i> <i>went</i> <i>near</i> <i>close to them</i> <i>quite well</i> <i>part</i>
285	And hearde theyr wordes wonder wele, And all the woyng every dele. He made a vowe to heaven kyng For to bewraye that swete thyng, And that squyer taken shoulde be,	<i>to betray</i>
290	And hanged hye on a tre. And that false stewarde full of yre, Them to betraye was his desyre. He bethought hym nedely,	<i>wrath</i> <i>He beat his brains</i>
295	Every daye by and by, How he myght venged be On that lady fayre and fre, For he her loved prvely, And therfore dyd her great envye.	<i>avenged</i> <i>secretly</i> <i>felt; resentment</i> <i>misfortune</i> <i>secret</i>
300	Alas! It tourned to wrotherheyle That ever he wiste of theyr counsayle. But leve we of the stewarde here, And speke we more of that squyer, Howe he to his chambre went	<i>let us leave</i>
305	Whan he past from that lady gente. There he araid him in scarlet reed, And set his chaplet upon his head, A belte about his sydes two, With brode barres to and fro;	<i>left; noble</i> <i>dressed</i> <i>headband (worn as a badge of office)</i>
310	A horne about his necke he caste, And forth he went at the last To do hys office in the hall Among the lordes both great and small. He toke a white yeard in his hande,	<i>stripes</i> <i>at last</i> <i>staff</i>

	Before the kynge than gane he stande,	<i>stood</i>
315	And sone he sat hym on his knee, And served the kynge ryght royally, With deynyt meates that were dere, With partryche, pecoke, and plovere, With byrdes in bread ybake,	<i>precious</i>
	The tele, the ducke, and the drake, The cocke, the curlewe, and the crane, With fesauntes fayre, theyr were no wane; Both storkes and snytes ther were also, And venyson freshe of bucke and do,	<i>baked</i>
320	And other deyntes many one, For to set afore the kynge anone. And when the squyer had done so He served the hall to and fro.	<i>teal</i>
	Eche man hym loved in honesté, Hye and lowe in theyr degré.	<i>was; lack</i>
325	So dyd the kyng full sodenly, And he wyst not wherfore nor why. The kynge behelde the squyer wele, And all his rayment every dele.	<i>snipes</i>
330	He thought he was the semlyest man That ever in the worlde he sawe or than. Thus sate the kyng and eate ryght nougħt, But on his squyer was all his thought.	<i>doe</i>
335	Anone the stewarde toke good hede, And to the kyng full soone he yede.	<i>genuinely</i>
	And soone he tolde unto the kyng All theyr wordes and theyr woynge, And how she hyght hym lande and fe, Golde and sylver great plentyé,	<i>according to their rank</i>
340	And how he should his leve take, And become a knight for her sake. “And thus they talked bothe in fere,	<i>seemliest</i>
	And I drewe me nere and nere. Had I not come in, verayly,	<i>before</i>
345	The squyer had layne her by. But whan he was ware of me Full fast away can he flee.	<i>absolutely nothing</i>
	That is sothe: here is my hand To fight with him while I may stand.”	
350	The kyng sayd to the steward tho: “I may not beleve it should be so.	
	Hath he be so bonayre and benyngne, And served me syth he was younge, And redy with me in every nede,	
355	Bothe true of word, and eke of dede.	
		<i>promised; property</i>
		<i>together</i>
		<i>moved; closer</i>
		<i>truly</i>
		<i>would have lain with her</i>
		<i>aware</i>
		<i>did he flee</i>
		<i>courteous; considerate</i>
		<i>since</i>
		<i>for me</i>
		<i>also</i>

	I may not beleve, be nyght nor daye, My daughter dere he wyll betraye, Nor to come her chambre nyne That fode to longe with no foly.	<i>I am not able to</i> <i>child; crave; wantonness</i>
365	Though she would to hym consente, That lovely lady fayre and gente, I truste hym so well, withouten drede, That he would never do that dede.	<i>Even if</i> <i>without any doubt</i>
370	But yf he myght that lady wynne In wedlocke to welde, withouten synne, And yf she assent him tyll, The squyer is worthy to have none yll,	<i>Unless</i> <i>possess</i>
	For I have sene that many a page Have become men by mariage.	<i>meet; adversity</i>
375	Than it is semely that squyer To have my daughter by this manere, And eche man in his degré Become a lorde of ryaltyé,	<i>fitting</i> <i>in this way</i> <i>in accordance with; rank</i> <i>in the service of the crown</i>
380	By fortune and by other grace, By herytage and by purchace. Therfore, stewarde, beware hereby, Defame hym not for no envy.	<i>(i.e., draw your conclusion from this)</i>
	It were great reuth he should be spylte, Or put to death withouten gylte,	<i>pity [if]; ruined</i>
385	And more ruthe of my daughter dere For chaungyng of that ladyes chere (I woulde not for my crowne so newe That lady chaunge hyde or hewe),	<i>for</i> <i>As it would change; complexion</i>
	Or for to put thyselfe in drede, <sup>1</sup>	<i>grow pale</i>
390	But thou myght take hym with the dede. For yf it may be founde in thee That thou them fame for envyté, Thou shalt be taken as a felon,	<i>Unless; in the act</i> <i>discovered</i> <i>defame out of envy</i> <i>arrested; criminal</i>
	And put full depe in my pryon, And fettered fast unto a stone,	
395	Tyl twelfe yere were come and gone, And drawn wyth hors throughe the cyté, And soone hanged upon a tre.	<i>horses</i> <i>thereupon</i>
	And thou may not thy selfe excuse,	<i>If</i>
400	This dede thou shalt no wise refuse. And therfore, steward, take good hed, How thou wilt answer to this dede."	<i>death; escape</i>
	The stewarde answered with great envy: "That I have sayd, that I wyll stand therby;	<i>deed</i> <i>resentment</i>

<sup>1</sup> Or fit would be great pity if you should] put yourself in danger

405	To suffre death and endlesse wo, Syr kynge, I wyl never go therfro. For, yf that ye wyll graunt me here Strength of men and great power, I shall hym take this same nyght	<i>Even if I had to depart from it if force catch</i>
410	In the chambre with your doughter bright. For I shall never be gladde of chere, Tyll I be venged of that squyer." Than sayd the kynge full curteysly Unto the stewarde, that stode hym by:	<i>beautiful avenged on</i>
415	"Thou shalte have strength ynough with thee, Men of armes thirty and thre, To watche that lady muche of pryce, And her to kepe fro her enemyes. For there is no knyght in Chrystenté,	<i>protect Christendom</i>
420	That wolde betray that lady fre, But he should dye under his shelde And I myght se hym in the feldde. <sup>1</sup> And therfore, stewarde, I thee pray, Take hede what I shall to thee say.	<i>noble lady</i>
425	And if the squiere come to-night, For to speke with that lady bryght, Let hym say whatsoever he wyll, And here and se and holde you stylle, And herken well what he wyll say,	
430	Or thou with him make any fray. So he come not her chambre within, No bate on hym loke thou begyn; Though that he kysse that lady fre, And take his leave ryght curteysly,	<i>Before; fight If strife; see to it [that you do not]</i>
435	Let hym go, both hole and sounde, Without wemme or any wounde. But yf he wyl her chamber breke, No worde to hym that thou do speke. But yf he come with company	<i>whole injury Unless; break into</i>
440	For to betraye that fayre lady, Loke he be taken soone anone, And all his meyné everychone, And brought with strength to my pryon As traytour, thefe, and false felon.	<i>See to it; seized followers under security</i>
445	And yf he make any defence, Loke that he never go thence; But loke thou hew hym also small As fleshe whan it to the potte shall.	<i>puts up cut; as meat; into; must go</i>

<sup>1</sup> Lines 421–22: *Who would not die under his shield (i.e., fighting) / If I were to meet him on the battlefield*

- And yf he yelde hym to thee,  
450 Brynge him both saufe and sounde to me. *surrenders*  
I shall borowe for seven yere  
He shall not wedde my daughter dere.  
And therfore, stewarde, I thee praye,  
Thou watche that lady nyght and daye."  
455 The stewarde sayde the kynge untyll:  
"All your byddyng I shall fulfull."  
The stewarde toke his leave to go,  
The squyer came fro chambre tho,  
Downe he went into the hall.  
460 The officers sone can he call,  
Both ussher, panter, and butler,  
And other that in office were. *servant in charge of the pantry*  
There he them warned sone anone  
To take up the bordes everychone. *told tables*  
465 Than they dyd his commaundement,  
And sythe unto the kyng he went.  
Full lowe he set hym on his kne,  
And voyded his borde full gentely.  
And whan the squyre had done so  
470 Anone he sayde the kynge unto:  
"As ye are lorde of chyvalry,  
Geve me leve to passe the sea,  
To prove my strenthe with my ryght hande  
On Godes enemyes in uncouth land, *cross (i.e., in battle)*  
475 And to be knowe in chyvalry,  
In Gascoyne, Spayne, and Lumbardy,  
In eche batayle for to fyght,  
To be proved a venterous knyght."  
The kyng sayd to the squyer tho:  
480 "Thou shalt have good leve to go.  
I shall thee gyve both golde and fe,  
And strength of men to wende with thee.  
If thou be true in worde and dede,  
I shall thee helpe in all thy nede."  
485 The squyer thanked the kyng anone,  
And toke his leve and forth can gone,  
With joye, and blysse, and muche pryd,  
With all his meyny by his syde.  
He had not ryden but a whyle,  
490 Not the mountenaunce of a myle, *amount*  
Or he was ware of a vyllage. *Before; aware*  
Anone he sayde unto a page:  
"Our souper soone loke it be dyght,  
Here wyll we lodge all to-nyght."  
495 They toke theyr ynnes in good intente, *supper; prepared we all lodging with good intentions*

- And to theyr supper soone they wente.  
 Whan he was set, and served at meate,  
 Than he sayd he had forgete  
 To take leve of that lady fre,  
 500 The kynges daughter of Hungré.  
 Anone the squyer made him yare,  
 And by hymselfe forth can he fare.  
 Without strength of his meyné  
 Unto the castell than went he.
- 505 Whan he came to the posterne gate  
 Anone he entred in thereat,  
 And his drawen swerd in his hande,  
 There was no more with him wolde stande.  
 But it stode with hym full harde,
- 510 As ye shall here nowe, of the stewarde.  
 He wende in the worlde none had be  
 That had knownen of his prývité.  
 Alas, it was not as he wende,  
 515 For all his counsayle the stewarde kende.  
 He had bewrayed him to the kyng  
 Of all his love and his woyn.  
 And yet he laye her chambre by,  
 Armed with a great company,
- 520 And beset it one eche syde,  
 For treason walketh wonder wyde.  
 The squyer thought on no mystruste,  
 He wende no man in the worlde had wyste.  
 But yf he had knownen, by Saynt John,
- 525 He had not come theder by his owne;  
 Or yf that lady had knownen his wyll,  
 That he should have come her chamber tyll,  
 She would have taken hym golde and fe,  
 Strength of men and roylté.  
 530 Where that squyer was become,  
 But forth he went hymselfe alone  
 Amonge his servauntes everychone.  
 Whan that he came her chambre to,  
 Anone he sayde: "Your dore undo!
- 535 Undo," he sayde, "nowe, fayre lady!  
 I am beset with many a spy.  
 Lady as whyte as whales bone,  
 There are thyrti agaynst me one.  
 Undo thy dore, my worthy wyfe,
- 540 I am besette with many a knyfe.  
 Undo your dore, my lady swete,  
 I am beset with enemyes great;
- dinner  
forgotten  
*prepared himself  
rode*  
*rear  
through it*  
*no one  
But he was yet to have a hard time of it  
[because] of  
thought; been  
secret*  
*secret; knew  
Regarding  
Even then; close to*  
*surrounded; every  
betrayal spreads like wildfire  
distrust  
known [it]  
would not; there by himself*  
*Force; splendor  
servant  
What had happened to that squire  
Except that  
From among*  
*surrounded by  
alone*

- And, lady, but ye wyll aryse,  
I shall be dead with myne enemyes.  
545 Undo thy dore, my frely floure,  
For ye are myne, and I am your.”  
That lady with those wordes awoke,  
A mantell of golde to her she toke;  
She sayde: “Go away, thou wicked wyght,  
550 Thou shalt not come here this nyght;  
For I wyll not my dore undo  
For no man that cometh therto.  
There is but one in Christenté  
That ever made that forwarde with me;  
555 There is but one that ever bare lyfe,  
That ever I hight to be his wyfe;  
He shall me wedde, by Mary bryght,  
Whan he is proved a venterous knyght;  
For we have loved this seven yere,  
560 There was never love to me so dere.  
There lyeth on me both kyng and knyght,  
Dukes, erles, of muche might.  
Wende forth, squyer, on your waye,  
For here ye gette none other praye.  
565 For I ne wote what ye should be,  
That thus besecheth love of me.”  
“I am your owne squyr,” he sayde,  
“For me, lady, be not dismayde.  
Come I am full pryvely  
570 To take my leave of you, lady.”  
“Welcome,” she sayd, “my love so dere,  
Myne owne dere heart and my squyer;  
I shall you geve kysses thre,  
A thousande pounde unto your fe,  
575 And kepe I shall my maydenhede ryght,  
Tyll ye be proved a venturous knyght.  
For yf ye should me wede anone  
My father wolde make slee you soone.  
I am the kynge’s daughter of Hungré,  
580 And ye alone that have loved me.  
And though you love me never so sore,  
For me ye shall never be lore.  
Go forth, and aske me at my kynne,  
And loke what graunt you may wynne.  
585 Yf that ye gette graunte, in faye  
Myselue therto shall not say nay.  
And yf ye may not do so,
- unless; get up  
by  
lovely*  
*put on  
creature*  
*arrangement  
was alive  
promised*  
*are courting me*  
*Go  
reward*  
*secretly*  
*marry [too] soon  
have you killed*  
*ever so deeply  
lost*  
*for my hand from my family  
favor*  
*on my word*

	Otherwyse ye shall come to. <sup>1</sup>	
590	Ye are bothe hardy, stronge, and wight, Go forth and be a venterous knight.	<i>brave; courageous</i>
	I pray to God and our Lady, To send you the whele of victory,	<i>success</i>
	That my father so leve ye be, That he wyll profer me to thee.	<i>[to] my father so dear will you be offer you my hand</i>
595	I wote well it is lyghtly sayd, 'Go forth, and be nothyng afrayde.'	<i>not</i>
	A man of worshyp may not do so: He must have what neds him unto; <sup>2</sup>	
	He must have gold, he must have fe, Strength of men and royalté.	
600	Golde and sylver spare ye nougnt Tyll to manhode ye be brought;	<i>not</i>
	To what batayll soever ye go, Ye shall have an hundredth pounde or two.	<i>Before; have grown whatsoever</i>
605	And yet to me, syr, ye may saye That I woulde fayne have you awaye,	<i>gladly</i>
	That profered you golde and fe Out of myne eye syght for to be.	<i>[I] who</i>
	Neverthelesse it is not so,	
610	It is for the worshyp of us two. Though you be come of symple kynne,	<i>reputation</i>
	Thus my love, syr, may ye wynne, Yf ye have grace of victory,	<i>humble descent</i>
	As ever had Syr Lybyus (or Syr Guy) —	<i>In the following way</i>
615	Whan the dwarfe and mayde Ely Came to Arthoure kyng so fre	<i>the good fortune</i>
	As a kyng of great renoune — That wan the lady of Synadowne.	<i>once</i>
	Lybius was graunted the batayle tho;	
620	Therfore the dwarfe was full wo, And sayd: 'Arthur, thou arte to blame.	<i>then</i>
	To bydde this chylde go sucke his dame Better hym semeth, so mote I thryve, <sup>3</sup>	<i>upset</i>
	Than for to do these batayles fyve	
625	At the chapell of Salebraunce.'	
	These wordes began great distaunce;	<i>discord</i>
	They sawe they had the victory,	
	They kneled downe and cryed mercy.	

<sup>1</sup> By some other means you must achieve your goal

<sup>2</sup> Lines 597–98: A man of honor cannot do such [as you appear to be doing]: / It is necessary for him to have what is fitting

<sup>3</sup> Lines 622–23: Upon my soul, it would be more fitting for him to go and suck from his mother's breast

	And afterward, syr, verament,	<i>truly</i>
630	They called hym knyght absolent:	<i>accomplished</i>
	Emperours, dukes, knyghtes, and quene,	<i>Under</i>
	At his commaundement for to bene.	<i>May such fortune</i>
	Suche fortune with grace now to you fall	<i>castle</i>
	To wynne the worthyest within the wall,	
635	And thynke on your love alone,	
	And for to love that ye chaunge none."	<i>waver not a bit</i>
	Ryght as they talked thus in fere,	<i>together</i>
	Theyr enemyes approched nere and nere,	<i>nearer</i>
	Foure and thyrti armed bryght;	<i>glittering armed men</i>
640	The steward had arayed hym to fyght.	<i>lined them up</i>
	The steward was ordeyned to spy,	<i>had prepared himself</i>
	And for to take them utterly.	<i>unreservedly</i>
	He wende to death he should have gone,	<i>thought</i>
	He felled seven men agaynst hym one.	<i>struck down; alone</i>
645	Whan he had them to grounde brought,	
	The stewarde at hym full sadly fought.	<i>bitterly</i>
	So harde they smote together tho	
	The stewardes throte he cut in two,	
	And sone he fell downe to the grounde,	
650	As a traitour untrewe with many a wound.	
	The squyer sone in armes they hente,	<i>by force of arms; seized</i>
	And of they dyd his good garmente,	<i>off</i>
	And on the stewarde they it dyd,	<i>put</i>
	And sone his body therin they hydde.	<i>hid</i>
655	And with their swordes his face they share	<i>mutilated</i>
	That she should not know what he ware.	<i>who he was</i>
	They cast hym at her chambre dore,	
	The stewarde that was styffe and store.	
	Whan they had made that great affraye	
660	Full pryvely they stale awaye.	
	In arme they take that squyer tho,	
	And to the kynge's chambre can they go,	
	Without wemme or any wounde,	<i>injury</i>
	Before the kynge bothe hole and sounde.	<i>whole</i>
665	As soone as the kynge him spyd with eye,	
	He sayd, "Welcome, sonne, sykerly!"	<i>certainly</i>
	Thou hast cast thee my sonne to be:	<i>got it into your head</i>
	This seven yere I shall let thee."	<i>obstruct you [in this]</i>
	Leve we here of this squyer wight,	<i>courageous</i>
670	And speake we of that lady bryght,	
	How she rose, that lady dere,	
	To take her leve of that squyer.	
	Also naked as she was borne,	
	She stod her chambre dore beforne.	
675	"Alas," she sayd, "and weale away!"	

- For all to long now have I lay." *lain*  
 She sayd, "Alas, and all for wo!  
 Withouten men why came ye so?  
 Yf that ye wolde have come to me,  
 680 Other werninges there might have be. *warnings; been  
too dearly*  
 Now all to dere my love is bought,  
 But it shall never be lost for nought."  
 And in her armes she toke hym there,  
 Into the chamber she dyd hym bere.  
 685 His bowels soone she dyd out drawe, *in accordance with Christian practice*  
 And buried them in Goddes lawe. *impregnated; aromatic spices*  
 She sered that body with specery, *pure wax; dry cumin*  
 With vyrgin waxe and commendry; *[coffin of] maple*  
 And closed hym in a maser tre,  
 690 And set on hym lockes thre. *ingenious devices*  
 She put him in a marble stone,  
 With quaynt gynnes many one,  
 And set hym at hir beddes head,  
 And every day she kyst that dead.  
 695 Soone at morne, whan she uprose,  
 Unto that dead body she gose. *In front of it*  
 Therfore wold she knele downe on her kne,  
 And make her prayer to the Trynité,  
 And kysse that body twyse or thryse,  
 700 And fall in a swowne or she myght ryse.  
 Whan she had so done, *go*  
 To chyrche than wolde she gone. *hear*  
 Than would she here Masses fyve,  
 And offre to them whyle she myght lyve:  
 705 "There shall none knowe but heven kyng  
 For whome that I make myne offryng."  
 The kyng her father anone he sayde:  
 "My daughter, wy are you dysmayde,  
 So feare a lady as ye are one, *fair*  
 710 And so semely of fleshe and bone? *beautiful*  
 Ye were whyte as whales bone,  
 Nowe are ye pale as any stone;  
 Your ruddy read as any chery,  
 With browes bent and eyes full mery. *complexion red  
arched*  
 715 Ye were wont to harpe and syng,  
 And be the meriest in chambre comyng;  
 Ye ware both golde and good velvet, *wore*  
 Clothe of damaske with saphyres set;  
 Ye ware the pery on your head, *diadem*  
 720 With stones full oryent, whyte and read; *very resplendent*  
 Ye ware coronalles of golde, *circlets*  
 With diamoundes set many a foulde. *manifold*

	And nowe ye were clothes of blacke, Tell me, doughter, for whose sake?	
725	If he be so poore of fame That ye may not be wedded for shame, Brynge him to me anone ryght, I shall hym make squyer and knight;	<i>reputation</i>
	And yf he be so great a lorde	
730	That your love may not accorde, Let me, doughter, that lordynge se; He shall have golde ynougue with thee."	
	"Gramercy, father, so mote I thryve,	<i>Thank you, father, as I may prosper</i>
	For I mourne for no man alyve.	
735	Ther is no man, by heven kyng, That shal knowe more of my mournyng."	
	Her father knewe it every deale,	<i>detail</i>
	But he kept it in counsele:	<i>secret</i>
	"To-morowe ye shall on hunting fare,	<i>go</i>
740	And ryde, my doughter, in a chare, It shal be covered with velvet reede,	<i>litter</i>
	And clothes of fyne golde al about your hed,	<i>red</i>
	With damaske, white and asure blewe,	
	Wel dyapred with lyllyes newe;	<i>adorned</i>
745	Your pomelles shal be ended with gold,	<i>knobs [of the litter]</i>
	Your chaynes enameled many a folde,	
	Your mantel of ryche degré,	<i>high quality</i>
	Purypal palle and armyne fre;	<i>fine cloth; ermine</i>
	Jennettes of Spayne that ben so wyght,	<i>Small horses; swift</i>
750	Trapped to the ground with velvet bright.	<i>Caparisoned</i>
	Ye shall have harpe, sautry, and songe,	<i>psaltery</i>
	And other myrthes you amonge;	<i>entertainment</i>
	Ye shall have rumney and malmesyne,	<i>white Spanish and sweet wine</i>
	Both ypocrasse and Vernage wyne,	<i>spiced cordial; Italian white wine</i>
755	Mountrose and wyne of Greke,	<i>(see note); from Greece</i>
	Both algrade and respice eke,	<i>Cretan wine; raspis (red wine)</i>
	Antioche and bastarde,	<i>wine from Antioch; sweet Spanish wine</i>
	Pyment also and Garnarde,	<i>Wine with honey; wine from Granada</i>
	Wyne of Greke and muscadell,	<i>muscatel</i>
760	Both clare, pyment, and Rochell.	<i>claret; wine from La Rochelle</i>
	The reed your stomake to defye,	<i>red; to help digest</i>
	And pottes of osey set you by.	<i>Alsatian wine</i>
	You shall have venison ybake,	<i>roasted</i>
	The best wylde foule that may be take.	<i>birds</i>
765	A lese of grehound with you to streke,	<i>leash (i.e., three); run</i>
	And hert and hynde and other lyke.	<i>and the like</i>
	Ye shal be set at such a tryst	<i>place</i>
	That herte and hynde shall come to your fyst,	
	Your dysease to dryve you fro,	<i>distress; from</i>

- 770 To here the bugles there yblow,  
With theyr begles in that place,  
And sevenscore raches at his rechase.  
Homward thus shall ye ryde,  
On haukyng by the ryvers syde,  
775 With goshauke and with gentyll fawcon,  
With egle horne and merlyon.  
Whan you come home, your men amonge,  
Ye shall have revell, daunces, and songe,  
Lytle chyldren, great and smale,  
780 Shall syng as doth the nyghtyngale.  
Than shall ye go to your evensong,  
With tenours and trebles among;  
Threscore of copes of damaske bryght,  
Full of perles they shal be pyght;  
785 Your auuter clothes of taffata,  
And your sicles all of taffetra.  
Your sensours shal be of golde,  
Endent with asure many a folde.  
Your quere nor organ songe shall wante  
790 With countre-note and dyscant,  
The other halfe on orgayns playeng,  
With yonge chyldren full fayre syngyn.  
Than shall ye go to your supere,  
And sytte in tentes in grene arbere,  
795 With clothes of Aras pyght to the grounde,  
With saphyres set and dyamonde,  
A cloth of golde abought your heade,  
With popinjayes pyght, with pery read,  
And offykers all at your wyll,  
800 All maner delightes to bryng you tyll.  
The nightingale sitting on a thorne  
Shall syng you notes both even and morne.  
An hundred knightes truly tolde  
Shall play with bowles in alayes colde,  
805 Your disease to drive awaie;  
To se the fisses in poles plaie,  
And then walke in arbere up and downe  
To se the floures of great renowne.  
To a draw-brydge than shall ye,  
810 The one halfe of stone, the other of tre;  
A barge shall mete you full ryght  
With twenti-thre ores full bryght,  
With trompettes and with claryowne,  
The fresshe water to rowe up and downe.  
815 Than shall ye go to the salte fome,  
Your maner to se or ye come home,
- hunting horns; blown  
beagles  
140 hounds; recall
- hawking  
falcon  
(a kind of hawk); merlin
- Sixty cloaks  
adorned
- altar cloths; glossy silk fabric  
cyclas (see note)
- censers
- Ornamented  
choir; lack
- contrapuntal singing; descant
- garden  
tapestries; hung
- about  
parrots decorated; jewelry red  
disposal
- to  
thornbush
- tunes; evening; morning  
all told
- at skittles; paths cooled
- distress
- ponds
- you will [go]  
wood  
right there
- clarion
- foam (i.e., sea)  
manor; before

	With eighty shypes of large towre, With dromedaryes of great honour, And carackes with sayles two,	<i>tower</i> <i>dromonds (large ships)</i> <i>carracks (galleons)</i>
820	The swetest that on water may goo, With galyes good upon the haven, With eighty ores at the fore staven. Your maryners shall syng arowe 'Hey how and rumbylawe.'	<i>galleys</i> <i>oars; stem</i> <i>in a canon</i>
825	Than shall ye, doughter, aske the wyne, With spices that be good and fyne, Gentyll pottes with genger grene, With dates and deynties you betwene; Forty torches brenyng bryght,	<i>ginger</i>
830	At your brydges to brynge you lyght. Into your chambre they shall you brynge With muche myrthe and more lykyng; Your costerdeis covered with whyte and blewe, And dyapred with lyles newe,	<i>burning</i>
835	Your curtaines of camaca all in folde, Your felyoles all of golde, Your tester pery at your heed, Curtaines with popinjayes white and reed, Your hyllynges with furres of armyne,	<i>pleasure</i> <i>bed hangings</i> <i>adorned; lilies</i>
840	Powdred with golde of hew full fyne. Your blankettes shall be of fustyan, Your shetes shall be of clothe of Rayne. Your head shete shall be of pery pyght, With dyamondes set and rubyes bryght.	<i>brocaded silk cloth; folds</i> <i>bedpost finials</i> <i>jewelled canopy; head (of bed)</i>
845	Whan you are layde in bedde so softe, A cage of golde shall hange alofte, With longe peper fayre burnning, And cloves that be swete smellyng, Frankensence and olibanum,	<i>coverings; furs of ermine</i> <i>Ornamented; appearance</i> <i>fustian</i> <i>Rennes</i>
850	That whan ye slepe the taste may come. And yf ye no rest may take, All night minstrelles for you shall wake." "Gramercy, father, so mote I the, For all these thinges lyketh not me."	<i>pillow cover; jewelry adorned</i>  <i>pleasantly</i>  <i>aromatic gum</i> <i>come [to you]</i>
855	Unto her chambre she is gone, And fell in sownyng sone anone, With much sorow and sighing sore; Yet seven yeare she kept hym thore. But leve we of that lady here,	<i>as I may prosper</i> <i>But; are not to my liking</i>  <i>swoon</i> <i>sorely</i> <i>there</i>
860	And speake we more of that squyer, That in pryon so was take For the kinges doughters sake. The kyng hymselfe upon a daye	

- Full pryvely he toke the waye. *secretly*  
 865 Unto the pryon sone he came; *took*  
 The squyer sone out he name,  
 And anone he made hym swere  
 His counsayl he should never discure. *secret; reveal*  
 The squyer there helde up his hande,  
 870 His byddyng never he should withstande. *wish; act counter to*  
 The kyng him graunted ther to go  
 Upon his journey to and fro, *here and there*  
 And brefely to passe the sea, *soon*  
 That no man weste but he and he; *knew fit; the two of them*  
 875 And whan he had his jurnay done,  
 That he wolde come full soone,  
 "And in my chambre for to be,  
 The whyles that I do ordayne for thee;  
 Than shalt thou wedde my doughter dere,  
 880 And have my landes both farre and nere." *property*  
 The squyer was full mery tho,  
 And thanked the kynge, and forth gan go,  
 The kyng hym gave both lande and fe.  
 Anone the squyer passed the se.  
 885 In Tuskyne and in Lumbardy, *deeds of prowess*  
 There he dyd great chyvalry.  
 In Portyngale nor yet in Spayne,  
 There myght no man stand hym agayne;  
 And where that ever that knyght gan fare,  
 890 The worshyp with hym away he bare. *withstand him*  
 And thus he travayled seven yere *went*  
 In many a land bothe farre and nere,  
 Till on a day he thought hym tho  
 Unto the sepulture for to go. *honor; took*  
 895 And there he made his offerynge soone, *traveled*  
 Right as the kinges doughter bad him don. *intended; then*  
 Than he thought hym on a day *sepulcher (of Christ)*  
 That the kynge to hym dyd saye.  
 He toke his leve in Lumbardy,  
 900 And home he came to Hungry. *What*  
 Unto the kynge soone he rade,  
 As he before his covenaunce made.  
 And to the kyng he tolde full soone  
 Of batayles bolde that he had done,  
 905 And so he did the chyvalry *rode*  
 That he had sene in Lumbardy. *covenant*  
 To the kynge it was good tydande; *told about*  
 Anone he toke him by the hande,  
 And he made him full royall chere,  
 910 And sayd, "Welcome, my sonne so dere!" *news*  
*gave him a royal welcome*

	Let none wete of my meyné That out of prison thou shuldest be, But in my chamber holde thee styll, And I shall wete my doughters wyll."	<i>know; retinue</i>
915	The kynge wente forth hymselfe alone, For to here his doughters mone, Right under the chambre window, There he might her counseyle knowe.	<i>remain quietly</i>
	Had she wyst, that lady fre,	<i>know</i>
920	That her father there had be, He shulde not, withouten fayle, Have knownen so muche of her counsayle. Nor nothing she knew that he was there,	<i>complaint</i>
	Whan she began to carke and care.	<i>secret</i>
925	Unto that body she sayd tho: "Alas that we should parte in two!" Twyse or thryse she kyssed that body, And fell in sownynge by and by.	<i>known</i>
	"Alas!" than sayd that lady dere,	<i>would be</i>
930	"I have thee kept this seven yere, And now ye be in powder small, I may no lenger holde you with all. My love, to the earth I shall thee bryngne,	<i>undoubtedly</i>
	And preestes for you to reade and syngne.	<i>Not at all</i>
935	Yf any man aske me what I have here I wyll say it is my treasure. Yf any man aske why I do so, 'For no theves shall come thereto.'	<i>grieve; lament</i>
	And, squyer, for the love of thee,	<i>be separated</i>
940	Fy on this worldes vanyté! Farewell golde pure and fyne; Farewell velvet and satyne;	<i>time and again</i>
	Farewell castelles and maners also;	<i>fine dust</i>
	Farewell huntynge and hawkynge to;	<i>indeed</i>
945	Farewell revell, myrthe, and play; Farewell pleasure and garmentes gay; Farewell perle and precyous stone;	<i>manors</i>
	Farewell my juielles everychone;	<i>too</i>
	Farewell mantell and scarlet reed;	
950	Farewell crowne unto my heed; Farewell hawkes, and farewell hounde;	
	Farewell markes and many a pounde;	<i>jewels</i>
	Farewell huntynge at the hare;	
	Farewell harte and hynde for evermare.	
955	Nowe wyll I take the mantell and the ryngne, And become an ancresse in my lyvynge. And yet I am a mayden for thee.	<i>money</i>
		<i>anchoress</i>
		<i>I am still</i>

- And for all the men in Chrystenté  
 To Chryst I shall my prayers make,  
 Squyer, onely for thy sake.  
 And I shall never no Masse heare  
 But ye shall have parte in feare:  
 And every daye whyles I lyve  
 Ye shall have your Masses fyve,  
 And I shall offre pence thre,  
 In tokenyng of the Trynyté.”  
 And whan this lady had this sayde,  
 In sownyng she fel at a brayde.  
 The whyle she made this great mornynge  
 Under the wall stode har father the kynge.  
 “Doughter,” he sayde, “you must not do so,  
 For all those vowes thou must forgo.”  
 “Alas, father, and wele awaye!  
 Nowe have ye harde what I dyde saye.”  
 “Doughter, let be all thy mournynge,  
 Thou shalt be wedede to a kynge.”  
 “Iwys, father, that shall not be  
 For all the golde in Christenté;  
 Nor all the golde that ever God made  
 May not my harte glade.”  
 “My doughter,” he sayde, “dere derlyng,  
 I knowe the cause of your mournyng.  
 Ye wene this body your love should be,  
 It is not so, so mote I the.  
 It was my stewarde, Syr Maradose,  
 That ye so longe have kept in close.”  
 “Alas! Father, why dyd ye so?”  
 “For he wrought you all thys wo.  
 He made revelation unto me  
 That he knewe all your pryytē,  
 And howe the squyer, on a day,  
 Unto your chambre toke the way,  
 And ther he should have lyen you bi,  
 Had he not come with company;  
 And howe ye hyght hym golde and fe,  
 Strengthe of men and roylté;  
 And than he watched your chambre bryght  
 With men of armes hardy and wyght,  
 For to take that squyer  
 That ye have loved this seven yere.  
 But as the stewarde strong and stout  
 Beseged your chambre rounde about,  
 To you your love came full ryght,  
 All alone about mydnight.
- share [it] with me  
while  
pennies  
suddenly  
her  
revoke  
married  
Certainly  
gladden  
darling  
think  
closed up  
Because; contrived  
secret  
would; lain  
promised; property  
suitable regalia  
brave; courageous  
catch  
indeed

- 1005 And whan he came your dore unto,  
 And 'Lady,' he sayde, 'undo.'  
 And soone ye bade hym wende awaye,  
 For there he gate none other praye.  
 And as ye talked thus in fere,
- at once; asked; to go  
 at that point; would get; favor  
 together
- 1010 Your enemyes drewe them nere and nere,  
 They smote to him full soone anone,  
 There were thyrti agaynst hym one.  
 But with a baslarde large and longe  
 The squyer presed in to the thronge,
- closer
- 1015 And so he bare hym in that stounde,  
 His enemyes gave hym many a wounde.  
 With egre mode and herte full throwe  
 The stewardes throte he cut in two.  
 And than his meyné all in that place
- hour
- 1020 With their swordes they hurte his face,  
 And than they toke him everichone  
 And layd him on a marble stone  
 Before your dore, that ye myght se,  
 Ryght as your love that he had be.
- eager; persistent
- 1025 And sone the squier there they hent,  
 And they dyd of his good garment,  
 And did it on the stewarde there  
 That ye wist not what he were.  
 Thus ye have kept your enemy here,
- (the steward's) followers  
 cut up  
 all together
- 1030 Pallyng more than seven yere.  
 And as the squyer there was take  
 And done in prysyon for your sake.  
 And therfore, let be your mourning,  
 Ye shal be wedded to a kyng,
- Just as if; been  
 seized  
 took off
- 1035 Or els unto an emperoure,  
 With golde and sylver and great treasure."
- In order that; knew; who
- "Do awaye, father, that may not be,  
 For all the golde in Chrystente.  
 Alas, father," anone she sayde,
- Languiishing (decaying)  
 also  
 put  
 give up
- 1040 "Why hath this traytour me betraide?  
 Alas," she sayd, "I have great wrong  
 That I have kept him here so long.  
 Alas, father, why dyd ye so?
- I have been greatly wronged
- Ye might have warned me of my fo;
- 1045 And ye had tolde me who it had be,  
 My love had never be dead for me."  
 Anone she tourned her fro the kyng,  
 And downe she fell in dead sownyng.
- enemy  
 If
- The kyng anone gan go,  
 And hente her in his armes two.  
 "Lady," he sayd, "be of good chere,
- went  
 took

- Your love lyveth and is here.  
 And he hath bene in Lombardy,  
 And done he hath great chyvalry.
- 1055 And come agayne he is to me,  
     In lyfe and health ye shall him se.  
     He shall you wede, my daughter bryght,  
     I have hym made squier and knyght;  
     He shal be a lorde of great renoune,
- 1060 And after me to were the crowne.”  
     “Father,” she sayd, “if it so be,  
     Let me soone that squyer se.”  
     The squyer forth than dyd he brynge,  
     Full fayre on lyve and in lykynge.
- 1065 As sone as she saw him with her eye,  
     She fell in sownyng by and by.  
     The squyer her hente in armes two,  
     And kyssed her an hundredth tymes and mo.
- 1070 There was myrrh and melody  
     With harpe, getron, and sautry,  
     With rote, ribible, and clokarde,  
     With pypes, organs, and bumbarde,  
     With other mynstrelles them amonge,
- 1075 With sytolphe and with sautry songe,  
     With fydle, recorde, and dowcemere,  
     With trompette and with claryon clere,  
     With dulcet pipes of many cordes:  
     In chambre revelyng all the lordes,
- 1080 Unto morne that it was daye.  
     The kyng to his daughter began to saye:  
     “Have here thy love and thy lyking,  
     To lyve and ende in Gods blessinge.  
     And he that wyll departe you two,
- 1085 God geve him sorow and wo!  
     A trewer lover than ye are one  
     Was never yet of fleshe ne bone;  
     And but he be as true to thee  
     God let him never thryve ne thee.”
- 1090 The kyng in herte he was full blithe,  
     He kissed his daughter many a sithe,  
     With melody and muche chere.  
     Anone he called his messengere,  
     And commaunded him soone to go
- 1095 Through his cities to and fro  
     For to warne his chevalry  
     That they should come to Hungry  
     That worthy wedding for to se  
     And come unto that mangeré.
- returned  
Alive  
marry  
  
*in good condition*  
  
*more*  
  
*cittern; psaltery*  
*fiddle, rebec; bells*  
*bombard (bass shawm)*  
  
*citole*  
*flageolet; dulcimer*  
  
*sweet-sounding; harmonies*  
*with all the lords revelling*  
*when*  
  
*pleasure*  
  
*separate*  
  
*nor*  
*Unless*  
*prosper*  
*happy*  
*time*  
*Amidst the music*  
  
*here and there*  
*advise his knights*  
  
*festivities*

- That messenger full sone he wente,  
 1100 And did the kinges commaundemente. *carried out; order*  
 Anone he commaunded bothe olde and yonge  
 For to be at that weddyng,  
 Both dukes and erles of muche myght,  
 And ladyes that were fayre and bryght. *power*  
 1105 As soone as ever they herde the crye,  
 The lordes were full soone redy. *announcement*  
 With myrth and game and muche playe  
 They wedded them on a solempne daye. *entertainment; amusement*  
 A royll feest there was holde,  
 1110 With dukes and erles and barons bolde,  
 And knyghtes and squyers of that countré,  
 And sith with all the comunalté. *held*  
 And certaynly, as the story sayes,  
 The revell lasted forty dayes,  
 1115 Tyll on a day the kyng himselfe  
 To hym he toke his lordes twelfe, *called*  
 And so he dyd the squyer  
 That wedded his doughter dere,  
 And even in the myddes of the hall  
 1120 He made him kyng among them al. *right; middle*  
 And all the lordes everychone  
 They made him homage sone anon;  
 And sithen they revelled all that day,  
 And toke theyr leve, and went theyr way,  
 1125 Eche lorde unto his owne countré,  
 Where that hym semed best to be.  
 That yong man and the quene his wyfe,  
 With joy and blysse they led theyr lyfe.  
 For also farre as I have gone, *paid*  
 1130 Suche two lovers sawe I none.  
 Therfore blessed may theyr soules be,  
 Amen, amen, for charyté!

FINIS

Thus endeth undo your doore, otherwise called the squyer of lowe degré.  
 Imprented at London, by me Wylyam Copland.



## EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** **C** = Copland; **FH** = French and Hale edition, in *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1964); **K** = Kittredge readings suggested in M (1904); **M** = Mead edition (1904); **R** = Ritson edition, in *Ancient English Metrical Romances* (1802); **S** = Sands edition, in *Middle English Verse Romances* (1966); **W** = Wynkyn de Worde.

- Title      This is the title as in C; W has: “Here begynneth undo youre dore.”
- 1      *It was a squyer of lowe degré*. Hudson explores class and family issues in the poem, noting “the fact that its hero has no proper name,” nor at the end, after his new status has been earned, is he given one (“Construction of Class,” p. 80). In some romances, where class boundaries are crossed (e.g., Gower’s Tale of the Three Questions, where Peronelle and the others are given names at the end, once the new order has been established) the nouveaux receive names as a mark of their new status, but not here. Here, the squire simply moves up by good fortune and self-determination. See Crane (*Insular Romance*, p. 211), on insular romances in the fifteenth century that open up the accessibility of courtly values to commerce beyond aristocratic hegemony.  
*squier of lowe degré*. Mead (p. xiii) notes that the phrase is used by Spenser, Nashe, Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher, always with derogatory connotations.
- 2      *the kings daughter of Hungré*. “The daughter of the king of Hungary.” This mixing of inflected and periphrastic genitives was common in late ME, and continued into Shakespeare and the seventeenth century.  
*Hungré*. Kiernan notes that the word is not capitalized in any of the three early printed editions and argues that though it can refer to Hungary, it should be left lower case to keep alive the pun on “avarice,” which is also a meaning of the word and thus part of a satiric commentary on the squire, who should be read as an avaricious fop or dandified buffoon (“*Undo Your Door* and the Order of Chivalry,” pp. 348–59), the tone of the poem moving “very close to slapstick” (p. 393). But see Pearsall’s rejection of this position as “an insensitive modern reading of the poem” (“English Romance in the Fifteenth Century,” p. 66n1). See also Spearing (“Secrecy, Listening, and Telling,” p. 275) along with the cogent arguments of Fewster (*Traditionality and Genre*, p. 130n9) on the point.
- 3      *The squir was curteous and hend*. Certainly, wealth was a key component of upward mobility in the fifteenth century, though courtesy and graciousness were necessary components as well. On the particularity of fairy-tale aspirations of younger

- sons hoping to find rich princesses, see Carpenter, “Fifteenth-Century English Gentry,” p. 52.
- 13–14 *all was for that lady, / The kynges doughter of Hungry.* See Ramsey (*Chivalric Romances*, p. 158) on the notion that the greatest threats to family structure in domestic romances like *Squire* and *Floris* come from within the family itself. On plots “built around such taboos as incest, prenuptial sex, illegitimacy, patricide, and infanticide — a heightened figuring of the gentry reality” (Hudson, “Construction of Class,” p. 83), see also Knight, “Social Function.” Hudson goes on to note that “this greater attention to women in the romances occurs at a time when the legal and marital power of women was apparently diminishing” (p. 89).
- 20 *forsoth* indicates a contrast here: “Although he was not rich he was nevertheless a man of noble birth.” Wynkyn de Worde’s version is more explicit: “A gentylman borne for sothe was he.”
- 26 *Into the gardyn.* On the juxtaposition of private and public spaces and the *hortus conclusus* effects of the *chaumbre / gardyn* in the poem, see Spearing (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, pp. 178–80).
- 28 *arber.* From the earliest romances onwards the orchard has been associated with love, e.g., as a meeting place for lovers. Although fruit trees are usually found in it, it was more a part of the garden in which trees had been planted than an orchard in the modern, restricted sense of the word.
- 31 Traditionally the cypress is one, but not necessarily the first, of the three or four kinds of tree from which the Cross was made. In the account of the Invention of the True Cross in his extremely popular *Golden Legend* (c. 1260), Jacobus de Voragine gives the four as the palm tree, the cypress, the olive, and the cedar (*Golden Legend*, p. 270).
- 34 *reed rose . . . lyly-floure.* If the presence of the rose, being a shrub, and the tree peony in line 40 can be defended on a list of trees, the *lyly-floure* certainly seems uneasily placed here.
- 45 Both *lavorocke* and “larke” (line 52) mean “lark,” *lavorocke* being the older form; the two forms were sometimes used side by side (compare Chaucer’s *Romaunt of the Rose*, lines 662 and 915), as were “thrustele” (line 48) and “thrushe” (line 60). Still, it is possible that they may have indicated different birds: the lark and the skylark, and the thrush and the song thrush.
- 46 *woodwale.* The identity of the *woodwale* is uncertain. The *OED* gives two possibilities: “woodpecker” and “(golden) oriole.” In a list of singing birds the oriole seems the better choice, even if some of the other birds can hardly be qualified as “Syngynge with great melody” (line 44) (e.g., the magpie and the popinjay or the “jaye [that] jangled them amonge” [line 51]). Compare Chaucer’s *Romaunt of the Rose*, lines 657–65.
- 63 This line is the same as line 23.
- 73 The sentence is elliptical: “If only I had been of such noble family . . .”

- 78      *Syr Lybius*. Gawain's illegitimate son (also called Gingelein) and hero of the romance *Lybeaus Desconus* (*The Fair Unknown*).
- 80      *Syr Guy*. Sir Guy of Warwick, hero of the romance of that name.
- 82      *Syr Colbrande*. A giant killed by Sir Guy of Warwick.
- 93      *her oryall*. See Spearing on the almost exclusive “matter of listening rather than watching” (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 179) in the poem. “Oriel,” in this sense of a windowed recess, appears to have been a rare word in pre-Tudor English. Here, the Princess’s *oryall*, elegantly lit with pictorial glass, provides a private space or *closet* for the lady to sit alone or talk with her intimates; at the same time, by projecting from the wall, it offers a vantage point for watching and listening to whatever happens in the arbour below. The vantage point is secret, because the coloured glazing admits light and sound but conceals the person behind it from a watcher outside. . . . [It] is also capable of being opened (the domestic technology being advanced enough to enable a lady to manage this without difficulty) so as to give a clearer view and make two-way communication possible” (pp. 179–80). Contrast the spying of the steward in lines 283 ff.
- 94      *royall glas*. Windows with glass were still a rarity in the fifteenth century and a sign of great wealth, hence “royale” and the extensive description. See explanatory note to line 93.
- 136–44    What is described in the following lines is not so much a hermit as an amalgamation of hermit and pilgrim. Neither hermit nor pilgrim should wear linen (line 140), but wool (not mentioned); a hermit, not a pilgrim, went barefoot (line 144). The staff (line 139) belongs to the pilgrim, who might of course visit the Holy Land, while the hermit was not supposed to leave his cell and travel (lines 137–38).
- 141      *Ever in travayle*. Either “forever in hardship” or “forever traveling” which, considering the way in which the medieval poor had to travel, was no more than a difference in nuance.
- 148      *harowed Hell*. After Christ had died on the Cross He went down to Hell (or, more precisely, Limbo) to free the good and the just, like Adam and Abraham, and take them up to Heaven.
- 174      *shone*. In his complaint the squire had announced his intention never to wear shoes unless the lady would love him (lines 143–44). Here the lady takes that up by telling him how he may “win his shoes” (i.e., spurs).
- 198      *Rodes*. Rhodes (usually called “the Rhodos”) was a regular stop on the way to the Holy Land.
- 203–32    G. Wright, following up on Kiernan’s reading of the poem, suggests a “parodic substitution (livery for armor)” that places the squire in the company of Chaucer’s Sir Thopas, as a “well-intentioned but foppish pretender” (“Parody, Satire, and Genre,” pp. 21–22).

- 209 In heraldic terminology the field of the shield carried a charge, a decoration which could take the form of a band, a cross, an animal, a plant, etc. Both the field and the charge (if a band) could be powdered with smaller images, as is the case here with the lovers' knots (line 210). A woman's head as a heraldic charge was not uncommon, and here it may be adorned with frets (a kind of network made of jewelry or flowers) as ornaments (line 212). On the other hand, a fret is also a heraldic term, denoting a net of interlacing little bands; this could adorn the field around the head.
- 215 As Kiernan points out, the order is odd: why not mention the A and M first, and then the O and R? For the rhyme it would make no difference. The letters O and R together form the French word *or*, indicating the heraldic color "gold," but also the word for "gold, money." Kiernan sees this as "a gibe at the squire's avarice" ("Undo Your Door and the Order of Chivalry," p. 355).
- 219–20 The cross described here corresponds to the cross worn by the crusaders. The reference to the Trinity, however, is peculiar, as the cross is normally associated with Christ.
- 225 *corenall*. A coronal was a circlet or coronet worn over the helm.
- 226 The ostrich feather already occurs on the shield of peace of the Black Prince.
- 227–28 As it stands line 225 is certainly too long from a metrical point of view. The syntax of lines 227–28 is possible but awkward and unusual for C. The subject for *Shall* in line 228 seems to be *Your plates* (line 227); or, possibly a relative pronoun is understood after *plates*. The lines would then have to be translated as follows: "Your plates (of armor), [which] will be strapped unto your body, will fit very becomingly around your waist."
- 229 The *cote armoure* was a tunic worn over the plates. Here it is embroidered with gold and "semé" (i.e., sprinkled) with ermine spots.
- 237 *feytes*. French and Hale (*Middle English Metrical Romances*, p. 729) speculate that the word ought to be *frithes* ("woodland meadows"), which suits the sense better than *feytes* ("fights").
- 243–44 *florences fyve*. The five coins are symbolic of the five wounds of Christ by means of which He bought mankind's freedom and (eternal) life.
- 250 Mead nicely translates "a veteran knight" (p. 61).
- 251–61 These lines once again make clear that the princess fully supports the idea of a marriage with the squire, and is prepared to invest a large sum of money in that future, provided that he succeeds in winning a shining reputation for himself so that her father will accept him as her husband and his heir.
- 258 Mead rightly sees here a possible pun on "weal" and "wheel [of Fortune]," and translates: "I hope that the wheel of Fortune may so turn as to grant you victory" (p. 61).
- 263 *welth* means both "spiritual well-being, happiness" and "wealth."

- 267–68    *if we may not so come to, / Otherwyse then must we do.* G. Wright sees the practical considerations of the princess not as wantonness so much as “a retreat from the idealized romance aether in which she habitually moves,” an abrupt (albeit momentary) acknowledgment of “the mundane exigencies of a world outside romance” (“Other Wyse Then Must We Do,” p. 28). That she suffers so painfully for so long in that “otherwyse” circumstance moves quite beyond the fabliau qualities of the “undo your door” passage to a poignancy much deeper than the satiric. After her seven penitential years engrossed with death, her simple lament “Alas, father, why dyd ye so?” (line 1043) articulates a wretched pathos that her father never adequately addresses, except with his resurrection paradigm, that perhaps nullifies the loss, but not the years of grief.
- 282    *gan go.* Went; *gan* (or *can*, e.g., line 352) has no meaning of its own, it merely signifies that the following verb is in the past tense.
- 289    The syntax is faulty here, possibly due to haplology, the scribe having written *that* only once instead of twice: “And that *that* squyer taken shoulde be.”
- 291    Wrath and slander also go hand in hand in the portrait of *Ira* in the famous confession scene in Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (B-text, lines 133–85).
- 306    The wreath is unlikely to be a wreath of flowers, its usual meaning; one should rather think of a headband which was part of the squire’s uniform. The same holds for his horn (line 309), which originally was a drinking horn, but here merely has a ceremonial function.
- 329    *in honesté.* Literally, “in all decency,” but Sand’s translation makes more sense here.
- 330    *in theyr degré.* A typical stopgap. The meaning of the words is clear enough, less so what the rank of the lords has to do with their love for the squire.
- 332–38    Apparently the happiness springing from his newfound love is radiated by the squire to the extent that it is perceived by the king and his lords, even though they are not consciously aware of what exactly it is they notice. See G. Wright on the reversal of convention as “the king displaces the squire from the subject (lover) to object (loved), anti-heroically feminizing him in a way that recalls criticism of Sir Thopas,” with the implied homoeroticism delivering “an additional joke at the expense of both king and squire” (“Other Wyse Then Must We Do,” p. 23).
- 356    *I may not believe it should be so.* See notes to lines 3 and 13–14 above on the domestic composure of the conflict and the king’s support of the squire, even against the cost of long established customs and aristocratic social positions. Spearing (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 184) discusses the king’s insistence on proclaiming himself narrator of the plot, here as he defends the squire and warns the steward, and later when he specifies the seven-year delay before he permits the squire and his daughter to realize their aspirations. Spearing makes the crucial point that “It is much concerned with social mobility and the contribution of wealth to social status, rather than with the transcendent concepts of knighthood and nobility that tend to govern earlier romances,” that is a tale not of satire but of engagement with the real interests of the period in which it was written” (p. 177).

- 358      *younge*. Considering the ages of the king, the lady, and the squire, Wynkyn de Worde's *ynge* is the better reading. C's modernization has once again spoiled the rhyme.
- 364      *no* is a double negative and should be left untranslated.
- 375-76    The text as it stands is a mix of two constructions: "it is semely that squyer to have my daughter" or "it is semely that the squyer hath (or, sholde have) my daughter."
- 380      *purchace*. The term is not restricted to its modern sense, as it includes every way to acquire an estate (and the title going with it) except inheritance.
- 388      *hyde or hewe*. Literally, skin and complexion; the changing refers to her turning white and red alternately.
- 389      *for to put* is best taken as dependent on "It were great reuth" in line 383 or on "[It were] more ruthe" in line 385.
- 390      *But thou myght take hym with the dede*. Spearing observes that "the only acceptable evidence of illicit sexual relations was to catch the culprits *in flagrante delicto*" (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 183). This fact makes the concealed watcher or listener such a necessary figure in romances.
- 398      Hanging and quartering was the traditional punishment for those who had been found guilty of high treason. There is, however, no obvious connection with the term of imprisonment preceding it.
- 432      The word order is peculiar but not impossible: "See to it that you begin no strife with him."
- 461      The usher was the servant stationed at the door, the panter was in charge of the bread, which was kept in the *pantry* (both related to French *pain*, "bread," as is clear from *Sir Degrevaunt*, lines 1409–10), while the butler (related to French *bouteille*, "bottle") looked after the drinks. Later the offices of the panter and the butler were subsumed under that of the latter.
- 472      In the fifteenth century the kingdom of Hungary included modern Croatia, and thus bordered on the Adriatic Sea.
- 473      Swords were typically held in the right hand.
- 508      *no more*. I.e., "no one"; compare line 888.
- 520      Apparently proverbial though not identified as such by Whiting or Tilley.
- 534      The dramatic phrase "Undo your door" has given the poem its alternative title; its repetition lends a distinctly ballad-like quality to the passage.
- 536      *I am beset with many a spy*. Rivers speculates that the squire is only pretending to be in danger ("Focus of Satire," p. 382). Spearing, on the other hand, suggests that the abruptness of narrative events is ballad-like, the effect being to drive us "into the position of listeners who do not hear all we wish and must struggle to interpret

- what we do hear" (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 185). Verisimilitude is not a "prime consideration" (p. 186).
- 537 A common compliment for a courtly lady. See *Pearl*, line 212, *Sir Eglamour*, line 1086, *Firumbras*, line 2429, and the *Destruction of Troy*, line 3055. See also line 711, below. Whalebone was usually derived from the tusks of walruses or the narwhal.
- 539 She is his *wyfe* because they have, albeit secretly, plighted their troth, a vow that had legal status; compare also lines 546 and 556.
- 549 *Go away, thou wicked wyght.* Rivers reads her rejection as a terrified retreat from male sexuality as she "attempts to mark her inhibitions behind the stylized posturings of courtly love, accepting her squire as suitor but manipulating the conventions of the code in order to keep him at a respectful distance" ("Focus of Satire," pp. 379–80). Fewster puts the matter this way: "Her role is of generic importance — she encodes the norms of romance as a reader of previous romances, and directs this poem from within to follow those earlier texts" (*Traditionality and Genre*, p. 142). Glenn Wright points out that the generic parody relies less on exaggerated romance conventions "than on the fact that they receive their fullest treatment in the princess's imagination" ("Other Wyse Then Must We Do," p. 27). See note to lines 267–68.
- 563 *squyer.* Here used as a mere term of address.
- 580 *that.* The word is either superfluous or part of a slightly elliptical construction: "you are the only one who has loved me."
- 614 In the following lines the lady recounts episodes from the romance *Lybeaus Desconus*, but, in Sands' understatement, these "do not match altogether incidents present in the surviving ME [version], where a maiden Elene and a dwarf accompany Libeaus to free a lady of Sinadoune" (S, p. 266). The extant Old French text uses a form for the maiden's name, Helie, which is closer to Ely (line 615), used here. The names of Lybyus and Guy of Warwick have no other relation to this passage than that they evoke the lady's earlier advice in lines 78–82.
- 618 Lines 614–20 only make sense if *That* in line 618 is seen as referring back to the still unknown Lybyus, and the line is translated as "The Lybyus who was later to win the lady of Synadowne." There must be a stop after this line, since the dwarf cannot possibly know that the seemingly unpromising Lybyus is to be successful.
- 626 At the beginning of their journey Elene and the dwarf heaped scorn and disdain on Lybyus, but when he defeated one opponent after another their attitude changed into one of admiration. Compare the analogue in Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth," another fair unknown who, at first, serves as a kitchen helper.
- 643–44 The references are a bit confusing: Sands thinks that the first *he* refers to the steward, the second to the squire, and the *he* in line 644 to the squire as well. This would result in the following translation: "The steward thought the squire ought to be killed; the squire struck down seven men against the steward alone." But other solutions are plausible.

- 650 The steward is called a traitor because he had acted against the king's command to apprehend the squire only if he came with an armed force and tried to break into the lady's room, and to kill him if he defended himself (compare lines 425–50). On whose command the steward's followers carried out their cruel act of deceit we are not told. It just appears later (line 737) that the king knows everything.
- 658 *styffe*. Meaning “fearless, bold”; a pun with “stiff” may have been intended.
- 704 *to them*. Probably refers to the members of the clergy collecting the money offered during services.
- 711–12 The description of beauty destroyed in these lines is reminiscent of a similar if much more forceful passage in *Sir Orfeo* (lines 81–88).
- 739–852 See Spearing's discussion of the king's 114-line speech as “an astonishing demonstration of the power of language to transform reality into the image of desire (and thus too a demonstration of the king's power as a storyteller)” (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 187). But n.b. also the princess' poignant resistance to that transformation. See Fewster's argument on the text's concern with “narrativity” as the emphasis shifts “from actions as actions to action as narrated, and even to narration without action” (*Traditionality and Genre*, p. 139).
- 744 *dyapred*. The modern heraldic term indicates a diamond-like pattern, but according to the *MED* the sense in Middle English was less restricted: “textile fabric having a repeated pattern of figures or geometrical designs.”
- 750 *Trapped*. “Covered with a caparison,” a long decorated covering for horses.
- 755 *Mountrose*. Chateau Montrose, in the Bordeaux area in France, still produces a high-quality claret.
- 767 *tryst*. A hunting station at which the hunters awaited the game that was driven towards them.
- 772 *raches*. Hounds that hunt by scent.
- rechase*. To blow the recall, the sign of the return. The rather undetermined “theyr” (line 771) and *his* (line 772) probably refer to the hunters and the bugler.
- 786 *sicles*. An upper garment made of *siclatoun*, an “expensive cloth” (compare Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas [CT VII(B<sup>2</sup>)734]).
- taffetra*. As far as can be ascertained this is merely a verbal variant of *taffeta*.
- 788 *Endent*. Ornamented with a zigzag border.
- 790 *MED*, s.v. *countre* 6. *Countre note* has the following illuminating quotation from c. 1430: “For bi ther grete criyng of song, as deschaunt, countre note and or-gene, thei ben lettid [kept] fro studynge and prechynge of the gospel.”
- 795 *pyght*. “Hung” (S, p. 270). Tapestries were used to decorate the walls and to provide some protection against the cold; hence Sands' interpretation is no doubt correct.

- 798 Described are “embroidered figures of parrots with the red color worked in precious stones” (Mead).
- 804 An alley is a path in a garden, usually bordered with shrubs or trees. This is the first attested use according to the *OED*.
- 815 We must assume that the lady’s manor is at the sea front to understand this excursion. It would also explain the presence of so many Mediterranean types of ships, and why the squire had to go overseas.
- 817 *towre*. Fortified structures were sometimes built on battleships, or in their masts.
- 818 *dromedaryes*. Like “carackes” (line 819) and “galyes” (line 821), these are typically Mediterranean vessels.
- 827 *genger*. Ginger, dates (line 828), pepper (line 847), cloves (line 848), frankincense, and olibanum (line 849) had all reached England only fairly recently, and were still a sure sign of luxury.
- 828 *you betwene*. The use of prepositions is at times bewildering: between whom are the dainties placed? The same holds for the galleys “upon” the harbor (line 821).
- 841 *fustyane*. Fustian, according to the *MED* and *OED*, is a kind of cloth woven from cotton or flax, sometimes, but not always, coarse and of poor quality. However, the *OED* describes another kind of fustian that would be more fitting for this context; a “Fustian of Naples” is “a kind of cotton velvet.” While the king does not use this specific term, we should imagine blankets of a similar luxurious quality.
- 847 *longe peper*. A kind of pepper used as incense.
- 899 The squire must have returned to Lombardy after his visit to Jerusalem.
- 914 *I shall wete my daughters wyll*. See Spearing on the king’s almost divine omniscience as he, “right under the chambre window” (line 977), plays “God’s deputy on earth” as he enters into her privy counsel to learn what she would never willingly let him know (*Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 188). Spearing’s essay is rich in cross references with Shakespeare, particularly *Cymbeline*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*, in his assessment of a proto-Tudor sensibility in this poem. The conclusion that the tale projects is less moral or psychological than aesthetic. “The best storyteller wins, but that does not mean that the moral and psychological questions go away. They are the more haunting because they are never formulated, except as a bewildered ‘Why, father?’ The king successfully conceals his ‘counseyle’ from us as well as from the other characters, and his final triumph, like Prospero’s, is an act of abdication, writing himself out of his own story” (p. 193).
- 923 *Nor*. Editors usually suggest to read *for*.
- 955 When a nun made her definitive entry in an order (after a period of probation), “she was formally married to the church” with a bridal costume and a wedding ring (FH 2.750).

- 957–58    The lady will remain a virgin not so much out of piety but because of her (unfulfilled) love of the squire (compare also lines 959–60). The reference to the other men of Christendom is perhaps because she had always intended to marry a man of this world rather than Christ.
- 1005    *whan*. *Than* would have made better sense.
- 1008    *there* is an adverb of time here: “at this point in time.”
- 1016    *hym*. So C and most editors, but *he* (Mead) would certainly improve the meaning; after all, it is the squire who is praised (line 1015).
- 1030    *Pallyng*. As Sands rightly observes (S, p. 276), the meaning depends on who is thought to be *palling*, the lady (*ye*) or the steward (*enemy*); hence the two alternatives.
- 1101    *yonge*. Another of C’s “faulty” rhymes (compare note to line 358).
- 1116    *twelfe*. The usual number for a king’s privy council.



## TEXTUAL NOTES TO *THE SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** See Explanatory Notes.

- 13 W reads: "And al was for that *faire* lady." This fourth stressed syllable makes the line metrically more regular.  
15 *Christenté*. C: *Chrinstente*.  
32 *chose*. W: *chese*. This is one of the cases where Copland modernized the spelling and by doing so ruined the rhyme, which demands the form *chese* (as in W).  
33 *sykamoure*. C: *lykamoure*.  
46 W supplies *and* between the two bird names.  
48 *sange*. C: *saynge*.  
69 *golde*. C: *goldy*.  
83 *it*. Supplied by R.  
jeoperdé. C: *ieopede*.  
86 *doughter*. C: *goughter*.  
124 *And*. C: *dan* (the lower case *d* was read as *P* by M and others).  
150 *closet*. C: *closed*.  
158 *arbere*. C: *arbery*.  
206 W supplies *that*: *In token that ye . . .*  
207 *set*. M's emendation; C has *yet*.  
226 *oystryche*. C: *oytryche*  
227 *your body*. C: *you body shalbe*.  
228 *Shall*. C: *Sal*.  
299 *wrotherheyle*. Emended by M; C: *wroth her heyle*.  
315 W supplies *than*: *he went than at the last*.  
316 *kynge*. C: *kyuge*.  
333 *the*. C: *they*. W supplies *bothe*: *He served the hall bothe to and fro*.  
353 *here is my hand*. W supplies *is*. Unlike, e.g., FH and S, I have adopted this as it is an improvement both grammatically and metrically.  
358 *he was*. W; C: *I was*.  
371 W supplies *wyll*: *And yf she wyll assent him tyll*.  
375 *that*. M; C: *that the*.  
392 *envyté*. C and W both read *enuyte*, but in spite of that practically all editors emend to *enmite*.  
398 *upon*. C: *vopn*.  
404 Grammatically speaking the second *that* is superfluous; hence M's emendation to: *That I have sayd, I wyll stand therby*.

- 425       *come*. M; C: *come not*.  
430       *make*. C: *made*.  
431       *within*. C: *win*. There is a dot over the *w*; moreover, in shape *w* is different from that in, e.g., *wemme* or *wounde* in line 436. It therefore probably represents an abbreviated form of *within*, which I have accordingly expanded.  
452       *not*. C: *uot*.  
456       *byddyng*. C: *bydgdyng*.  
465       *Than they*. C: *thant hey*.  
501       *yare*. C: *ayre*.  
511       *be*. M; C: *bene*.  
514       *kende*. Not in C; supplied by R.  
523       *by*. M; C: *ne by*.  
593       *ye*. FH; C: *he*.  
594       *he*. Not in C.  
627       *They*. This is the first of several places where C has either *the* or *thy* for *they* (also in lines 654, 661, 784).  
688       *victory*. C: *wictory*.  
690       *vyrgin*. C: *wyrgin*.  
743       *lockes*. C: *lackes*.  
754       *damaske*. C: *damske*.  
765       *ypocrasse*. C: *ypocraffe*.  
771       *grehound*. C: *hrehound*.  
835       *begles*. M; C: *bugles*, an error probably caused by the word *bugles* in the preceding line.  
837       *curtaines*. C: *curtianes*.  
888       *tester*. M; C: *fester*.  
982       *stand*. C: *stan*.  
992       *mournyng*. C: *mournyg*.  
1009       *your*. M; C: *her*.  
1013       *ye talked thus*. M; C: *he talked thys*.  
1015       *baslarde*. M; C: *bastarde*.  
1061       *bare*. C: *bate*.  
1064       *it so be*. M; C: *it be so*.  
1085       *and*. C: *an*.  
1086       *treuer lover than*. C: *trewe louer that*.  
1126       *yet of*. Supplied by K.  
1126       *semed*. Supplied by FH.





## THE SQUIER OF LOW DEGREE, PERCY FOLIO

- It was a squier of England borne,  
He wrought a forfft against the crowne,  
Against the crowne and against the fee;  
In England tarry no longer durst hee,  
5 For hee was vexed beyond the see<sup>1</sup>  
Into the kings land of Hungarye.  
He was no sooner beyond the fome  
But into a service he was done.  
Such a service he cold him gett,  
10 He served the kings daughter in her seate;  
Such a service he was put in,  
He served the kings daughter with bread and wine.  
He served this lady att table and chesse  
Till hee had woone her love to his.  
15 He was made usher of the hall,  
The setter of the lords both great and small.  
The squier was soe curteous and kind,  
Every man loved him and was his freind.  
And alwaies when the squier was woe  
20 Into his arbour he wold goe:  
The maple trees were faire and round,  
The filbert hangs downe to the ground,  
The jay jangles them amonge,  
The marttin song many a faire songe,  
25 The sparrow spread upon her spray,  
The throstle song both night and day,  
The swallow swooped too and froe.  
The squires hart was never soe woe;  
He leaned his backe untill a thorne  
30 And said: "Alacke that ever I was borne!  
That I had gold, soe had I fee,  
Marry I might yond faire ladye.  
O, that I were borne of soe hye a kin
- committed an offense*  
*fief*  
*foam (i.e., sea)*  
*Than that; position; appointed*  
*could*  
*backgammon*  
*won*  
*server*  
*so*  
*friend*  
*sad*  
*orchard*  
*hazel*  
*chatters*  
*martin (a kind of swallow) sang*  
*spread her wings; twig*  
*thrush*  
*swished*  
*against a thornbush*  
*If only; as well as property*  
*that*  
*high; family*

<sup>1</sup> *He was harassed so much that he crossed the sea*

- 35     The ladyes love that I might win!"  
       The lady lay in her chamber hind,  
       And heard the squier still mourning.  
       Shee pulled forth a pin of ivory,  
       Like the sun itt shone by and by.  
       Shee opened the casement of a glasse,  
       Shee saw the squier well where hee was.  
       "Squier," shee sayes, "for whose sake  
       Is that mourning that thou dost make?"  
       "Ladye," he sayes, "as I doe see,  
       Of my mourninge I dare not tell yee,  
       40   For you wold complaine unto our king,  
       And hinder me of my livinge."  
       "Squier," shee sais, "as I doe thrive,  
       Never while I am woman alive!  
       Squier," shee sais, "if you will my love have,  
       50   Another fashion you must itt crave,  
       For you must to the feild and fight,  
       And dresse you like an other wise knight;  
       And ever the formost I hold you first,  
       And ever my father hold you next.<sup>1</sup>  
       55   And hee will take such favor to yee,  
       Soone marryed together wee shal bee."  
       Lady," he saies, "that is soone said:  
       How shold a man to the feild was never arraid?  
       Lady," he said, "itt were great shame  
       60   A naked man shold ryde from home."  
       Thou shalt have gold, thou shalt have fee,  
       Strenght of men and roaltye."  
       Shee went to a chest of ivory,  
       And feicht out a hundred pound and three.  
       65   "Squier," shee saies, "put this in good lore.  
       When this is done, come feitch thee more."  
       Shee had no sooner these words all said  
       But men about her chamber her father had laid.  
       "Open your doore, my lady alone,  
       70   Heere is twenty, I am but one."  
       "I will never my dore undoe  
       For noe man that comes me to,  
       Nor I will never my dore unsteake
- beautiful chamber  
secretly  
constantly  
window  
*as I see it*  
*make my life difficult for me*  
*prosper*  
*In a different way*  
*must go; battlefield*  
*any other knight*  
*[who] was; equipped [for that]*  
*[If] a*  
*Forces; splendor*  
*fetched*  
*set; to sound instruction*  
*finished*  
*her father had stationed*  
*open*  
*unfasten*

<sup>1</sup> Lines 53–54: *And in the first place I will consider you the best of all, / And next my father will think of you so as well*

- Until I heare my father speake."
- 75 Then they tooke the squier alone,  
And put him into a chamber of stone;  
And to the gallow tree they be gone,  
And feitched downe a hanged man.  
They leaned him to her chamber dore,  
80 The dead might fall upon the floore.  
They mangled him soe in the face,  
The lady might not know who he was.  
Shee harde the swords ding and crye;  
The lady rose upp by and by,  
85 Naked as ever shee was borne,  
Saving a mantle her beforne.  
Shee opened the chamber dore,  
The dead man fell upon the flore.  
"Alacke," shee saith, "and woe is aye!"  
90 Something to long that I have lay.<sup>1</sup>  
"Alacke," shee sais, "that ever I was borne!  
Squier, now thy liffe dayes are forlorne!  
I will take thy fingars and thy flax,  
I will throwe them well in virgin wax;  
95 I will thy bowells out drawe,  
And bury them in Christyan grave;  
I will wrapp thee in a wrapp of lead,  
And reare thee att my beds head.  
Squier," shee sayes, "in powder thoust lye,  
100 Longer kept thou cannott bee.  
I will chest thee in a chest of tree,  
And spice thee well with spicerye,  
And bury thee under a marble stone,  
And every day say my praiers thee upon.
- 105 And every day, whiles I am woman alive,  
For thy sake gett masses five."  
Through the praying of our Lady alone,  
Saved may be the soule of the hanged man.  
"Squier," shee sais, "now for thy sake  
110 I will never weare no clothing but blacke.  
Squier," shee sais, "Ile never looke att other thing,  
Nor never weare mantle nor ringe."  
Her father stood under an easing bore,  
And heard his daughter mourning ever more.

<sup>1</sup> *I have remained in bed a little too long*

- 115 "Daughter," he sais, "for whose sake  
 Is that sorrow that still thou makes?"  
 "Father," shee sayes, "as I doe see,  
 Itt is for no man in Christentye.  
 Father," shee sayes, "as I doe thrive,  
 Itt is for noe man this day alive.
- 120 For yesterday I lost my kniffe,  
 Much rather had I have lost my liffe!"  
 "My daughter," he says, "if itt be but a blade,  
 I can gett another as good made."
- 125 "Father," shee sais, "there is never a smith but one  
 That can smith you such a one."  
 "Daughter," hee sais, "to-morrow I will a hunting fare,  
 And thou shalt ryde uppon thy chaire.  
 And thou shalt stand in such a place
- 130 And see thirty harts come all in a chase."  
 "Father," shee sayes, "godamercye,  
 But all this will not comfort mee."  
 "Daughter," he sais, "thou shalt sitt att thy meate,  
 And see the fishes in the floud leape."
- 135 "Father," shee sais, "godamercy,  
 But all this will not comfort mee."  
 "Thy sheetes they shall be of the Lawne,  
 Thy blanketts of the fine fustyan."  
 "Father," shee sais, "godamercy,
- 140 But all this will not comfort mee."  
 "And to thy bed I will thee bring  
 Many torches faire burninge."  
 "Father," shee sais, "godamercy,  
 But all this will not comfort mee."
- 145 "If thou cannott sleepe, nor rest take,  
 Thou shalt have minstrells with thee to wake."  
 "Father," shee sais, "godamercy,  
 But all this will not comfort mee."  
 "Peper and cloves shall be burninge,
- 150 That thou maist feele the sweet smellinge."  
 "Father," shee sais, "godamercy,  
 But all this will not comfort mee."  
 "Daughter, thou had wont to have been bothe white and red,  
 Now thou art as pale as beaten leade.
- 155 I have him in my keeping  
 That is both thy love and likinge."  
 He went to a chamber of stane,  
 And feitcht forth the squier, a whales bone.
- secretly  
as I see it  
Christendom
- forge  
go hunting  
litter
- may God reward you
- meal  
water  
many thanks
- ffine linen off Laon  
fustian
- sense
- pleasure  
stone

- When shee looked the squier upon  
160 In a dead swoone shee fell anon. *at once*  
Through kissing of that worthye wight  
Uprise that lady bright. *creature*  
“Father,” shee sayes, “how might you for sinn  
Have kept us two lovers in twin?” *Up rose*  
165 “Daughter,” he said, “I did for no other thinge  
But thought to have marryed thee to a king.” *apart*  
To her marriage came kings out of Spaine,  
And kings out of Almaigne, *Than that I thought*  
And kings out of Normandye, *Germany*  
170 Att this ladyes wedding for to bee.  
A long month and dayes three,  
Soe long lasted this mangerye. *celebration*  
Thirty winters and some deale moe,  
Soe longe lived these lovers too. *a little more*  
*two*

FINIS



## TEXTUAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE SQUIER OF LOW DEGREE*, PERCY FOLIO

**ABBREVIATIONS:** **P** = the Percy Folio Manuscript; **K** = Kittredge readings suggested in M (1904); **M** = Mead edition (1904).

- 5        *see.* P: *fome*, which is probably due to the *fome* of line 7; it was emended to *see* by Percy himself.
- 16      *setter.* The household officer responsible for the table arrangement; usually this was not the usher but the marshal (see *Squire of Low Degree*, lines 7–8).
- 17      *curteous.* P: *Curterous*; this looks like a contamination of *courtier* and *curteous*.
- 52      *an other wise knight.* A mix-up, M suggests, of “You must dress you otherwise” and “You must dress you like any other knight.”  
      *an.* M; P: *and.*
- 64      *pound.* P: *li* (for Latin *libra*).
- 68      A verb describing the action of the men is missing here.
- 69      It is left to the reader to find out that lines 69–70 are said by the squire, there being of course no quotation marks, or any such signs, in the MS. Apart from that, it is incomprehensible that the lady refuses to open the door to the squire whom she had just been talking with and had given a hundred pounds.
- 76      *stone.* K; P: *from.*
- 79      *They.* P: *the.*
- 82      *The.* P: *they.*
- 94      *virgin.* P: *virgins.*
- 96      *grave.* P; M suggests *lawe* (as in *Squire of Low Degree*, line 686).
- 101     *tree.* M; P: *stree*, which in the context makes no sense.
- 118     The lady does not mean that her sorrow is for someone who is not a Christian, but, as the next lines make clear, for a man who is dead.
- 121     The knife no doubt has phallic overtones here. M, following K, prints a parallel in which a knight has lost his lady and complains:  
          . . . I've lost my knife  
          I loved as dear almost as my own life.  
          But I have lost a far better thing,

I lost the sheath that the knife was in.

(“Leesome Brand,” in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 1.177)

- 126     *can*. M; omitted in P.
- 137     *the*. P: *they*.
- 138     *fustyan*. A kind of cloth made of cotton, flax, or wool, and especially used for the coverlet of a bed. See the explanatory note to line 841 of *The Squire of Low Degree*.
- 139     *Father*. P: *fathe*.
- 142     *torches*. P: *torchers*.
- 153     The face of perfect beauty combined white (for the brow) and red (for the cheeks).
- 157     *stane*. K; P: *frane*.
- 158     *a whales bone*. M suggests the reading “white as whales bone,” which certainly must come close to the original (unless much more text has been lost).
- 161     *Through*. M; P: *Throug*.





## INTRODUCTION TO *THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM AND THE FEAST OF TOTTENHAM*

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Burlesque is not a genre of which much survives in Middle English, and most reference works by necessity limit their examples to Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas, or *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*, a few short poems like *The Man in the Moon*, and, in some cases, *The Tournament of Tottenham*. Another reason why the *Tournament* takes a place of its own is because it belongs to that small group of Middle English texts that was printed as early as the seventeenth century. In a letter prefaced to his edition of 1631, "To the Courteous Reader,"<sup>1</sup> William Bedwell informs us that the manuscript (Harley 5396) belonged to a friend of his, who had recommended the poem to him. After transcribing it in his leisure moments, for the interest of himself (he was rector of Tottenham) and the other inhabitants, he made it public "for the honour of the place."

### MANUSCRIPTS, DATE, AND PROVENANCE

*The Tournament of Tottenham* is extant in three manuscripts, one in the British Library in London (MS Harley 5396; H), one in the University Library in Cambridge (MS Ff.5.48; C), and one in Harvard University Library (MS English 590F; E). In MS Harley 5396 three unrelated manuscripts are bound together; *The Tournament of Tottenham* is found in the third. Besides this poem the manuscript contains a peculiar mixture of accounts of trading transactions, two letters, and a variety of religious and other lyrics, as well as a few more longer poems like *The Adulterous Falmonth Squire* and *How the Wise Man Taught his Son*. The collection has received a personal stamp through the two letters, in one of which the author tells his parents that he has been to the writing school and has written this letter himself. Carol Meale, on the basis of the presence of such personal traits alternating with accounts and copies of poems,<sup>2</sup> would see the manuscript as possibly produced "by a scribe who was associated in some capacity with men engaged in trade, although it is not clear whether he himself was an apprentice, or whether he was training as a clerk or a scrivener whose potential employers were merchants."<sup>3</sup> Another question that cannot easily be resolved is whether the scribe made this collection at the request of the people who employed him or because he had an interest in poems himself. Again the presence of the letters, and the sudden appearance of a page and a half of business notes interrupting the text of the *Tourna-*

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by Hazlitt in his edition of 1866 (pp. 368–69).

<sup>2</sup> Considering the highly personal content and tone of the letters, Meale is probably right that they are more likely to be drafts of letters written by the scribe of the manuscript than copies of letters written by someone else. Meale's description and subsequent discussion of the two manuscripts, H and C, should be consulted for further details (Meale, "Romance and Its Anti-Type?" p. 114n38).

<sup>3</sup> Meale, "Romance and Its Anti-Type?" p. 114.

*ment*, point to a document made for the scribe's personal use, but one which came in handy when unexpectedly some paper was needed for taking down a commercial transaction or something else for his merchant employers. What certainly adds to the impression that the person who wrote the texts was relatively untrained is the type and the number of mistakes, such as the misreading of letter(s) (e.g., *dabnsed* for *daunsed*, line 16), the transposition of letters, and the like. In view of the fact that the two private letters were written in Northampton and that the business contacts mentioned in the accounts concern people from London and places like Banbury, Northampton, and the Gloucester area, a general Midland provenance is probable.<sup>4</sup> The dating of the text is easier: in the same hand as the rest of the text there are "various memoranda dated 34 Henry VI," which Meale interprets as 1455.<sup>5</sup>

The Cambridge manuscript is a miscellany consisting of almost thirty poems and a few prose fillers (two in Latin). The range of the poems is wide, from Mirk's *Instruction for Parish Priests*, with which it opens, to *A Little Jest of Robin Hood and the Monk*, the last item. The manuscript is made up of five sections, which may have existed as separate booklets,<sup>6</sup> and was written by at least four, possibly five, different hands.<sup>7</sup> In the manuscript the *Tournament* and *The Feast of Tottenham* do not occur together, but if Meale is right that scribes 1 and 4 are the same person, and Furrow that the booklets were originally independent entities, then this physical distance may be unintentional, since the *Tournament* is the last piece of booklet 1, and the *Feast* the first of booklet 4. Unlike H, the Cambridge manuscript cannot be dated with any certainty, for even though the name of scribe 1 is given in an *explicit* as Gilbert Pylkyngton, such knowledge does not bring us any further than the suggestion that he may have belonged to a "distinguished family by that name [who] lived in the town of Pilkington, Lancashire, in the fifteenth century."<sup>8</sup> Still, the suggested date, late fifteenth century, is in keeping with the script of the other scribes, while the dialect of at least the texts written by scribe 1 would tally with the supposed West Midlands provenance.<sup>9</sup>

The third manuscript, E, is "essentially a modernization of the C text,"<sup>10</sup> made in the second half of the sixteenth century, and due to that has played only a minor part in the editions of the poem.

#### METER

The author of the *Tournament* has chosen to use one of the most complex stanza forms available to a Middle English poet. It is a slightly simplified version of what is the "trademark" of the Wakefield Master, the author of, among other works, *The Second Shepherds'*

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<sup>4</sup> This conclusion leaves unaccounted for such typically northern forms as the -a in words like *twa*, *sa*, *tha* and *ga*, all in rhyming position (lines 181–84). Compare Meale, "Romance and Its Anti-Type?" pp. 113–14.

<sup>5</sup> Meale, "Romance and Its Anti-Type?" p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Furrow, *Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Meale thinks there were four ("Romance and Its Anti-Type?" p. 111n30), Furrow five hands (*Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems*, p. 46).

<sup>8</sup> Furrow, *Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Furrow, *Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems*, pp. 46, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Klausner, "Harvard Manuscript," p. 677.

*Play.* It has a rhyming quatrain and a triplet (called the wheel), each followed by a single line, rhyming with each other, giving the rhyme scheme: aaaab–cccb.<sup>11</sup> The meter of the quatrain is four-beat, i.e., it has four stressed syllables. That of the other lines is more difficult to establish. Normally speaking the triplet consists of three-beat lines, while the b-lines are even shorter with only one or two beats. In the case of the *Tournament* the opening stanza, where one would expect that the meter is determined for the rest of the poem, both the b-lines and the triplet have two beats. On the other hand, in the fourth stanza the meter shows the “regular” pattern of 4-2-3-2 beats.

In addition to a rhyme scheme that shapes stanzas, the poet has used alliteration; but although he has used it abundantly it is not consistent. Rather, it serves the purpose of ornamentation, of a little extra value added to entire lines or to specific phrases. If we look again at the first stanza we see that in three of the four lines of the quatrain all four beats partake in the alliteration; the exception is the third line, in which only the first two beats alliterate. When we read on, we soon discover that two alliterating syllables is the norm but that any number from zero to four alliterating syllables may be found (with four alliterations constituting a very small minority):

Four alliterating syllables:

It were harme sych hardynes were holden byhynde (line 4)  
Ther was clynkyng of cart-sadellys and clattiryng of connes (line 163)

Three alliterating syllables:

For to wynne my doghther with dughtness of dent (line 48)  
Saw thu never yong boy forther hys body bede! (line 119)

Two alliterating syllables:

Theder com al the men of tho contray (line 12)  
A gay gyrdyl Tyb had on, borwed for tho nonys (line 82)

Zero alliteration:

Tyl the day was gon and evnsong past (line 19)  
With tho haly rode tokenyng was wretyn for tho nonys (line 85)

Double alliteration occurs too, as in the following line (*Coppeld-Kent* and *brode-brought*):

And Coppeld, my brode henne, was broght out of Kent (line 49)

It goes without saying that the shorter lines may show alliteration as well, but here there are also entire passages without any alliteration at all, as in the following wheel lines (lines 78–81):

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<sup>11</sup> In the manuscript these b-lines are written beside the quatrain and triplet respectively, and are connected by a red bracket. For examples (sometimes far more complicated) of this stanza form, see, e.g., Turville-Petre, ed., *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages*.

For cryeng of al the men  
 Forther wold not Tyb then,  
 Tyl scho had hur gode brode-hen  
 Set in hur lap.

## STRUCTURE

The story of the *Tournament* is a simple and straightforward narrative. All three manuscripts contain the complete text, and there are no major discrepancies between them. The only significant differences are found in the wheels describing the mock coats of arms of the contestants. Since there is no logical connection between the owner and his escutcheon they could easily be switched around, and thus lines 104–08 in H correspond to lines 113–17 in C, and lines 121–26 in H to lines 104–08 in C. Such differences typically point to oral transmission, as was argued by Zaerr and Ryder.<sup>12</sup>

There is one other place where the texts diverge significantly. It occurs towards the end, when Perkyn and Tyb withdraw for the night:

[H] Thay gaderyd Perkyn about everych syde,  
 And grant hym ther the gre, the more was hys pride.  
 Tyb and he with gret myrthe homward con thay ryde,  
 And were al nyght togedyr tyl the morntyde,  
 And thay in fere assent.  
 So wele hys nedys he has sped  
 That dere Tyb he had wed.  
 The prye folk that hur led  
 Were of the tornament. (lines 208–16)

*gathered around; [on] every  
 granted; prize  
 rode  
 together; daybreak  
 agreed with each other  
 he has obtained what he wanted  
 excellent; accompanied them*

[C] They gedurt Perkyn aboute on every side  
 And graunt hym ther the gre, the more was his pride.  
 Tib and he with gret myrth hamward can ride,  
 And were alnyght togedur til the morow tide,  
 And to chirch they went.  
 So wel his nedis he hase spedde  
 That dere Tibbe he shall wedde.  
 The chefe men that hir thider ledde  
 Were of the turnament. (lines 208–16)

According to canon law a marriage consummated in bed but not solemnized in church was valid but not licit. In C it is stated explicitly that the couple, after their night together, go to church to get properly married; in H this is merely implied.

## GENRE AND STYLE

For any audience of the *Tournament* the humor is inescapable: the bumpkin heroes in their stuffed sheepskins fighting with flails for the reeve's daughter, who is watching them with her pet hen on her lap, are a spectacle not easily forgotten. When the reeve announces

<sup>12</sup> Zaerr and Ryder, "Psycholinguistic Theory and Modern Performance," p. 28.

that a tournament will be held for the hand of his daughter the idea is accepted as a matter of course. At this point the audience has not yet been prepared for a mock knightly combat, but in what follows it appears that the word "tournament" has been taken literally by the "bachelery" (line 25), who in all seriousness start to equip themselves as if they were real knights. Yet when we look at the main characters we see that they are consistently depicted as what they are. Their outfit is completely composed of what is at hand locally, and there is not the slightest trace of the typical romance style in the way the contestants speak and behave, or in the description of the tournament itself and its outcome. The humor, therefore, is in the discrepancy between the social setting, a village community, and the concept of a tournament in such an environment, and with such fighters, but not only in that: it is as much in the casualness with which the proposal of a tournament is accepted by everyone, and the way in which they set to work to prepare themselves, as if it were the most natural thing to do. With such a description terms like "parody" or "burlesque" come easily to mind, and have been used by critics. It has also been called a satire, for instance by Lee C. Ramsey, who compares it to Chaucer's Sir Thopas because both employ the device of "romance conventions in the hands of the lower classes" although in the *Tournament* "the humor is much cruder."<sup>13</sup> Other texts that could be mentioned here are Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale, in which the cock Chantecler and his lady Pertelote are described both as courtly lovers and as chickens in a farmyard, and the "Canterbury Interlude" preceding the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Beryn*, where the Pardoner arms himself with a pan and a ladle to ward off the man whose girl he had tried to meet for the night.<sup>14</sup>

In an often quoted article George F. Jones has tried to link up the *Tournament* with the German mock-epic genre of the "peasant-tournament," a phenomenon with a long folkloristic and literary tradition in Germany. In spite of the geographical distance between the two countries there are many parallels with the *Tournament*, and these are certainly useful in that they help the reader to visualize a tournament as described in the English text, which stands unique of its kind.

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The question of the nature of the humor is closely related to that of the intended audience, or, in the words of Thomas Garbáty: "Knightly rituals of tournaments . . . are obviously being burlesqued. But whether the tournaments of gentry are being satirized, or the rustics themselves, is open to question."<sup>15</sup> When we look at the opening lines we meet a poet who speaks somewhat condescendingly (but not unaffectionately) of the "subjects" of his story. But how high above them is his own position in the social hierarchy? There may

<sup>13</sup> Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances*, p. 213. Both Mehl (*Middle English Romances*, p. 114) and Pearsall (*Old English and Middle English Poetry*, p. 265) call it a burlesque; Thomas Cooke is more wary when he says that "its humor seems to stem from both a burlesque of popular poetry and an affectionate satire of peasant life" ("Tales," p. 3164). Meale rejects both satire and burlesque on the grounds that they are nonmedieval genre indications, and prefers parody, since this is "[t]he critical concept which best encompasses the function of *Tottenham*" ("Romance and Its Anti-Type?" pp. 121-22).

<sup>14</sup> For the text, see Bowers, ed., *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*, pp. 60-79.

<sup>15</sup> *Tournament of Tottenham*, ed. Garbáty, p. 410.

be some internal evidence that renders a hypothesis of upper-class authorship untenable: the idea of a courtly tournament is evoked more by the actions leading toward the fight and the tournament itself than by the vocabulary of the poet, while also the attitude towards the characters is too sympathetic for an author belonging to (or residing in) the circles of the court. Additional evidence, like the other texts in the manuscripts, especially in the case of H, points more to a mercantile or urban context. In order to get a grip on the intended readership of the Cambridge manuscript, Meale considered the kinds of compilations in which five texts from C occurred elsewhere. No solid evidence emerged from her investigation, but enough to warrant the general conclusion that they may “all be representative of the expanding burgess and lower-gentry classes of book-buyers and/or commissioners.”<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, it is clearly evident that both the *Tournament* and the *Feast* lend themselves well to sophisticated entertainment. Support for an urban audience is found in a reference to a fifteenth-century performance of *The Tournament of Tottenham* in Exeter Castle. As W. Cooke points out, “there is much dramatic potential in the description of the peasant champions’ array, and in their boastful speeches.”<sup>17</sup> The piece might have been delivered as a dramatic recitation, or it might have been acted out with a stylized melée. There is ample evidence that such spectacles were common features of court activity, from royal receptions — even coronations — to manor-house entertainments.<sup>18</sup> Jones notes the popularity of “peasant tournaments” in German literature, though he also observes that “I have not yet found any convincing proof that the peasants actually indulged in this kind of sport, since I doubt that these passages can be accepted as evidence.”<sup>19</sup> The entertainment value of a small-scale production of the poem as we have it has been made brilliantly apparent in the work of Linda Marie Zaerr, whose recitation of the poem with harp accompaniment has been highly successful. Zaerr recorded her performance with the Quill Consort on an album entitled “Three Middle English Romances”; she has also successfully directed a production of the *Tournament* with a cast of twenty students.<sup>20</sup> And see her discussion of the performative qualities of the piece, co-authored with Joseph Baldessare. If the rude mechanicals might successfully have performed before Theseus and Hippolyta in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, surely the satiric wit and comedy of the *Tournament* might well have appealed to a broad fifteenth-century audience, cutting across many social barriers.

#### *THE FEAST OF TOTTENHAM*

If the scribe of C was indeed of the opinion that the *Feast* was the sequel to the *Tournament*, as was argued above, then what made him think so? At first sight the two texts have little in common: the meter changes from a rare and intricate 9-line stanza to the extremely common and simple 6-line tail-rhyme stanza of the popular romances, and the narrator shifts his stance from an observing reporter to a persona involved in the action of the poem,

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<sup>16</sup> Meale, “Romance and Its Anti-Type?” p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> W. Cooke, “*Tournament of Tottenham*” (1986), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> W. Cooke, “*Tournament of Tottenham*” (1986), pp. 2–3.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, “Tournaments,” p. 1126.

<sup>20</sup> Private correspondence with Zaerr, 11/11/04. See her website (<http://english.boisestate.edu/lzaerr/>) for details of her performances and recordings of the *Tournament* as well as performances of numerous other pieces of medieval literature.

as the caterer of the party he tells us about, his best ever. On the other hand, the opening line does assume a continuation of the dramatic action when the narrator says that he will tell of *this* feast, but he does so without as much as a hint at what feast is meant. It is only towards the end, in line 80, that an explicit link is found: here the *Tournament*'s hero, Perkyn, is mentioned, followed by a reference to Tybbe (line 91).

Here, in this part of the *Feast*, with the clumsy dancing of the men and a farting Tybbe stumbling over a stool, for the first time a congeniality with the general tone of the *Tournament* is felt. There is a marked contrast between these lines and the body of the poem, ten of the seventeen stanzas, which is taken up by an endless list of impossible courses, presented with much gusto as delicacies not to be despised. The basic pattern is that of an incongruous object, e.g., a ladle or a saddle, as the main substance of a dish of which the other ingredients are given in detail, and if there is one thing that can be deduced about the poet it is that he must have had a sound knowledge of contemporary recipes. The same cannot be said of the copyist, who has given us a text with many insolvable semantic riddles (for examples, see the notes to the text, e.g., to line 40).

#### NOTE ON THE TEXTS

As in practically all preceding editions, the text of the *Tournament* is based on H; where C (or E) offers interesting variant readings, these are discussed in the notes. The text of the *Feast* is based on C, the one surviving manuscript.

#### MANUSCRIPTS

Indexed as items 2354 and 2615 in Brown and Robbins, eds., *Index of Middle English Verse*, and Cutler and Robbins, eds., *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*:

- London, British Library, MS Harley 5396, fols. 306r–310r. [H, the base text for this edition].
- Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.5.48, fols. 62r–66r [the *Tournament*]; 115r–116r [the *Feast*]. [C]
- Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Library, MS English 590F. [E]





## THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM

- Of all thes kene conquerours to carpe it were kynde,  
Of fele feghtyng folk ferly we fynde,<sup>1</sup>  
The turnament of Totenham have we in mynde.  
It were harme sych hardynes were holden byhynde,
- 5      In story as we rede,  
      Of Hawkyn, of Herry,  
      Of Tomkyn, of Terry,  
      Of them that were doughty  
            And stalworth in dede.
- 10     It befel in Totenham on a dere day      *happened; precious (i.e., memorable)*  
      Ther was mad a schartyng be tho hy-way.      *entertainment by the*  
      Theder com al the men of tho contray,  
      Of Hyssylton, of Hygatte, and of Hakenay,  
            And all the swete swynkers.
- 15     Ther hepped Hawkyn,  
      Ther daunsed Dawkyn,  
      Ther trumped Tomkyn —  
            And all were trewe drynkers —
- 20     Tyl the day was gon and evynsong past  
      That thay schuld rekyn ther scot and ther contes cast.<sup>2</sup>  
      Perkyn tho potter into tho press past,  
      And sayd: “Rondol tho refe, a doghter thu hast,  
            Tyb the dere.
- 25     Therfor wyt wold I  
      Whych of all thyss bachelery  
      Were best worthy  
            To wed hur to hys fere.”      *To marry her as his mate (i.e., wife)*

*a pity /if/ such; withheld  
As we read it in stories*

*doughty*

*fragrant (sweaty) workmen  
hopped  
danced  
trumpeted  
true*

*group went  
reeve  
dear  
know would  
these “knights”*

*To marry her as his mate (i.e., wife)*

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1–2: *It is in our nature to talk about all these bold victors, / About many fighters we find amazing things*

<sup>2</sup> *And they had to calculate their share and settle their accounts*

- Up styrt thos gadelyngs with ther long staves,  
And sayd: "Rondol tho refe, lo, thos lad raves!"  
30 Baldely amang us thy doghter he craves,  
And we er rycher men then he and more god haves  
    Of catell and corn."  
Then sayd Perkyn to Tybbe: "I have hyght  
That I schal be alway redy in my ryght,  
35 If that it schuld be thys day sevenyght,  
    Or ellis yet to-morn."
- Then sayd Randolfe the refe: "Ever be he waryed  
That about thys carpyng lenger wold be taryed!<sup>1</sup>  
I wold not my doghter that scho were myscaryed,  
40 But at hur most worschyp I wold scho were maryed.  
    Therfor a turnament schal begyn  
Thys day sevenyght,  
With a flayl for to fyght.  
45 And that ys of most myght  
    Schall brouke hur with wynne.
- Whoso berys hym best in the tournament,  
Hym schull be granted the gre be the comon assent,  
For to wynne my doghter with dughetyss of dent,  
50 And Coppeld, my brode henne, was broght out of Kent,  
    And my donnyd kowe.  
For no spens wyl I spare,  
For no catell wyl I care:  
    He schal have my gray mare  
    And my spottyd sowe."
- 55 Ther was many bold lad ther bodyes to bede.<sup>2</sup>  
Than thay toke thayr leve and homward thay yede,  
And all the woke afterward thay graythed ther wede,  
Tyll it come to the day that thay suld do ther dede.  
    Thay armed ham in mattes,
- 60 Thay set on ther nollys  
(For to kepe ther pollys)  
Gode blake bollys,  
    For batryng of battes.<sup>3</sup>
- jumped; fellows  
this  
Boldly; claims  
are; property have  
grain  
promised  
always; [to defend] my rights  
Whether; a week from today  
tomorrow
- reeve; Forever; cursed  
would come to grief  
with full honors
- to fight with  
[he who] is  
enjoy; happiness
- does  
will; prize by  
To have won; hardihood of blows  
brood hen, [which] was  
dun cow  
expense  
*I will not care about costs*
- went  
week; prepared; apparel  
deed (i.e., fighting)  
themselves; mats  
heads  
protect; heads  
Good black bowls

<sup>1</sup> Who would be delayed any longer over this bickering

<sup>2</sup> There was many a bold lad willing to take his chances

<sup>3</sup> [To protect them] against the battering of clubs

	Thay sowed tham in schepe-skynnes for thay suld not brest; <sup>1</sup>	
65	Ilkon toke a blak hat insted of a crest, A harow brod as a fanne aboune on ther brest, And a flayle in ther hande for to fyght prest;	<i>Everyone on top of the clothing (see note) ready</i>
	Furth gone thay fare, Ther was kyd mekyl fors	<i>Forth they went shown great display of strength</i>
70	Who schuld best fond hys cors. He that had no gode hors	<i>[As to] who; defend; body got himself</i>
	He gat hym a mare.	
	Sych another gadryng have I not sene oft! When all the gret company com rydand to the croft	<i>Such; gathering riding; field</i>
75	Tyb on a gray mare was set upon loft, On a sek ful of federys for scho schuld syt soft,	<i>on high sack; feathers; she</i>
	And led hur to tho gap. For cryeng of al the men	<i>[they] led; opening [in a hedge] Because of [the]</i>
	Forther wold not Tyb then,	<i>would not [go]</i>
80	Tyl scho had hur gode brode-hen Set in hur lap.	<i>brood hen</i>
	A gay gyrdyl Tyb had on, borwed for the nonys, And a garland on hur hed, ful of rounde bonys,	<i>girdle; borrowed; occasion bones</i>
	And a broche on hur brest, ful of safer stony,	<i>sapphire</i>
85	With tho haly rode tokenyng was wretyn for tho nonys; No catel was ther spared. <sup>2</sup>	
	When joly Gyb saw hur thare, He gyrd so hys gray mere	<i>there set spurs to; mare</i>
	That sche lete a faucon fare	<i>fart go</i>
90	At the rereward.	<i>rear end</i>
	"I vowe to God," quod Herry, "I schal not lefe behende! May I mete with Bernard on Bayard tho blynde	<i>said; remain behind Should</i>
	Ich man kepe hym out of my wynde, For what-so-ever that he be befor me I fynde, <sup>3</sup>	
95	I wot I schul hym greve." "Wele sayd," quod Hawkyn, "And I avow," quod Dawkyn, "May I mete with Tomkyn	<i>know; harm make a vow</i>
	Hys flayl I schal hym refe."	<i>take away from him</i>

<sup>1</sup> *They sewed themselves in sheepskins so as to protect their bodies from injuries*

<sup>2</sup> Lines 85–86: *With the sign of the Holy Cross especially engraved in it; / Money was no object there*

<sup>3</sup> Lines 93–94: *Let each man keep out of my way, / For whoever he may be that I find before me*

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 100 | "I vow to God," quod Hud, "Tyb, sone schal thu se<br>Whych of all this bachelery grant is tho gre.<br>I schal scomfet thaym all for tho love of thee,<br>In what place so I come thay schul have dout of me!<br>Myn armes ar so clere:  | <i>To whom; granted will be the prize</i><br><i>discomfort them; you</i><br><i>whatever place; fear</i><br><i>illustrious</i> |
| 105 | I bere a reddyl and a rake,<br>Poudred with a brenand drake,<br>And thre cantells of a cake<br>In ych a cornare."   | <i>sieve</i><br><i>Studded; fire-breathing dragon</i><br><i>wedges</i><br><i>each</i>   |
| 110 | "I vow to God," quod Hawkyn, "yf I have the gowt,<br>Al that I fynde in tho felde presand here aboute,<br>Have I twyes or thryes redyn thurgh the route,<br>In ych a stede ther thay me se of me thay schal have doute" <sup>1</sup><br>When I begyn to play.   | <i>even if; gout</i><br><i>rushing</i><br><i>two or three times ridden; throng</i><br><i>sport</i>                            |
| 115 | I make a vow that I ne schall<br>(But yf Tybbe wyl me call<br>Or I be thryes doun fall)<br>Ryght onys com away."  | <i>not</i><br><i>Unless; call back</i><br><i>have fallen down</i><br><i>Not even once withdraw</i>                            |
| 120 | Then sayd Terry and swore be hys crede:<br>"Saw thu never yong boy forther hys body bede!" <sup>2</sup><br>For when thay fyght fastest and most ar in drede,<br>I schal take Tyb by tho hand and hur away lede!   | <i>by his creed</i><br><br><i>hottest; anguish</i><br><i>lead</i><br><i>fully armed</i>                                       |
| 125 | I am armed at the full;<br>In myn armys I bere wele<br>A dogh trogh and a pele,<br>A sadyll withouten a panell,   | <i>coat of arms; indeed</i><br><i>dough trough; baker's shovel</i><br><i>saddlecloth</i><br><i>fleece; wool</i>               |
| 130 | With a fles of woll."<br>"I vow to God," quod Dudman, and swor be the stra,<br>"Whyls me ys left my mere thu getis hur not swa," <sup>3</sup><br>For scho ys wele schapen and lyght as the ro,<br>Ther ys no capul in thys myle befor hur schal go. <sup>4</sup><br>Sche wil me noght begyle:<br>She wyl me bere, I dar wele say,<br>On a lang somerys day, | <i>straw</i><br><br><i>shaped; nimble; roe</i><br><br><i>not let down</i><br><i>bear; dare</i><br><i>summer's</i>             |

<sup>1</sup> In each place where they see me they will be filled with fear of me

<sup>2</sup> You never saw a young man willing to risk more

<sup>3</sup> While I still dispose of my mare you will not get her in that way

<sup>4</sup> There is no horse within a mile's distance that will go before her (i.e., will outdo her)

- 135     Fro Hyssylton to Hakenay,  
        Noght other half myle.”
- Islington; Hackney  
[But] not another
- “I vow to God,” quod Perkyn, “thu spekis of cold rost.<sup>1</sup>  
I schal wyrch wyselyer, withouten any bost:  
Fyve of tho best capullys that ar in thys ost,  
I wot I schal thaym wynne and bryng thaym to my cost,
- act more wisely; boast  
horses; host  
win; side  
hereby
- 140     And here I grant tham Tybbe.  
Wele, boyes, here ys he  
That wyl fyght and not fle,  
For I am in my jolyté  
With jo for to gybbe.”
- I am delighted  
pleasure; utter gibes
- 145     When thay had ther vowes made, furth gan they hye,  
With flayles and hornes and trumpes mad of tre.  
Ther were all the bachelerys of that contré;  
Thay were dyght in aray as tham selfe wold be. *dressed in clothing of their own choice*
- forth; hurried  
trumpets; wood  
young men; area  
glittering
- 150     Thayr baners were ful bryght,  
Of an old raton fell;  
The cheverone of a plow-mell  
And tho schadow of a bell,  
Poudred with mone-lyght.
- rat skin  
chevron; plow-mallet  
outline  
Sprinkled
- 155     I wot it ys no chyldergame whan thay togedyr met,  
When ich a freke in tho feld on hys felay bet,  
And layd on styfly, for nothyng wold thay let,  
And faght ferly fast tyll ther horses swet,<sup>2</sup>
- child's play  
each man; fellow struck  
strongly; stop  
[were] spoken  
entirely split
- 160     And fewe wordys spoken.  
Ther were flayles al to-slatred,  
Ther were scheldys al to-flatred,  
Bollys and dysches al to-schatred,  
And many hedys brokyn.
- completely smashed  
Bowls; shattered  
heads bashed
- Ther was clynkyng of cart-sadellys and clattiryg of connes;  
Of fele frekis in tho feld brokyn were ther fannes.
- tinkling; canes  
many men; winnowing fans
- 165     Of sum were the hedys brokyn, of sum tho brayn panes,  
And yll ware they be-seyn or thay went thens  
With swypypyng of swepyllys.<sup>3</sup>
- skulls  
*they were ill-looking before; away*  
exhausted by the fighting

<sup>1</sup> “... you speak of cold roast (perhaps: you are counting your chickens before they are hatched)”

<sup>2</sup> And fought amazingly eagerly until their horses sweated

<sup>3</sup> Due to the striking with the swipples (*i.e.*, the loose end of the flail that is used in thrashing)

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
|     | That thy myght not fyght mare oloft,<br>But creped then abaut in the croft,<br>As they were crooked crepys.   | <i>fight any more on horseback<br/>crept; field<br/>As if; deformed cripples</i>                       |
| 170 | Perkyn was so wery that he began to loute:<br>“Help, Hud, I am ded in thy ylk rowte!<br>A hors for forty pens, a gode and a stoute,   | <i>slump<br/>this very group<br/>forty pence</i>   |
| 175 | That I may lyghtly come of my noye out,<br>For no cost wyl I spare.”<br>He styrt up as a snayle,<br>And hent a capul be tho tayle,<br>And raght Dawkyn hys flayle,  | <i>quickly; trouble<br/>leapt up like<br/>seized a horse<br/>took from<br/>won</i>                     |
| 180 | And wan ther a mare.  |  |
|     | Perkyn wan fyve and Hud wan twa.<br>Glad and blythe thay ware that thay had don sa;<br>Thay wold have tham to Tyb and present hur with tha.<br>The capull were so wery that thay myght not ga,                                  | <i>two [horses]<br/>happy; so<br/>take; them<br/>were not able to go<br/>still they stood<br/>lose</i> |
| 185 | But styl gon thay stand.<br>“Allas,” quod Hudde, “my joye I lese.<br>Me had lever then a ston of chese<br>That dere Tyb had al these,<br>And wyst it were my sand.” <sup>1</sup>  |  |
| 190 | Perkyn turnyd hym about in that ych thrange;<br>Among thos wery boyes he wrest and he wrang.<br>He threw them doun to tho erth and thrast thaim amang,<br>When he saw Tyrry away with Tyb fang,<br>And after hym ran.           | <i>turned round; very throng<br/>wrested; twisted<br/>thrust<br/>go</i>                                |
| 195 | Of hys hors he hym drogh<br>And gaf hym of hys flayl inogh.<br>“We te-he!” quod Tyb, and lugh,<br>“Ye er a doughty man!”  | <i>From; drew<br/>with; plenty<br/>Whee tee-hee; laughed<br/>are; doughty</i>                          |
| 200 | Thus thay tugged and rugged tyl yt was nere nyght.<br>All the wyves of Totenham come to se that syght,<br>With wypes and kexis and ryschys ther lyght,<br>To fech hom ther husbandes that were tham trouth-plyght. <sup>2</sup> | <i>yanked; almost<br/>women; came</i>  |

<sup>1</sup> Lines 187–89: Rather than a stone (fourteen pounds) of cheese I would have it / That dear Tybbe had all these, / And knew they were sent by me

<sup>2</sup> Lines 201–02: *With the light of wisps [of straw] and dried hemlock and rushes, / To fetch home their husbands who were bound to them by their marriage vows*

- And sum broght gret harwes  
 Ther husbandes hom for to fech,  
 205 Sum on dores and sum on hech,  
 Som on hyrdyllys and som on crech,  
 And sum on welebaraws.
- Thay gaderyd Perkyn about everych syde,  
 And grant hym ther the gre, the more was hys pride.  
 210 Tyb and he with gret myrthe homward con thay ryde,  
 And were al nyght togedyr tyl the morntyde,  
 And thay in fere assent.  
 So wele hys nedys he has sped  
 That dere Tyb he had wed.
- 215 The prye folk that hur led  
 Were of the tornament.
- To that ylk fest com many for the nones;  
 Some come hyphalt and sum tryppand on the stony,  
 220 Sum a staf in hys hand and sum two at onys,  
 Of sum were the hedys broken, and sum tho schulder-bony;  
 With sorow com thay thedyr.  
 Wo was Hawkyn, wo was Herry,  
 Wo was Tomkyn, wo was Terry,  
 225 And so was al the bachelary,  
 When thay met togedyr.
- At that fest thay were servyd with a ryche aray,  
 Ever fyve and fyve had a cokenay.      Every fifth person had a cock's egg (see note)  
 And so thay sat in jolyté al the lang day,  
 And at the last thay went to bed with ful gret deray.
- 230 Mekyl myrth was them amang,  
 In every corner of the hous  
 Was melody delycyous,  
 For to here precyus,  
 Of six menys sang.

harrows  
 fetch  
 doors; hatch (lower half of a door)  
 hurdles; cratch (rack for fodder)  
 wheelbarrows

gathered around; [on] every  
 granted; prize  
 rode  
 together; daybreak  
 agreed with each other  
 he has obtained what he wanted

excellent; accompanied them

certainly  
 limping; tripping over  
 two together  
 heads bashed  
 there  
 Woe

company of "suitors"

display  
 tumult  
 Much  
 delightful  
 hear  
 song for six voices

EXPLICIT

*Here it ends*



## EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM*

**ABBREVIATIONS:** **C** = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.5.4.8; **E** = Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Library, MS English 590F; **FH** = French and Hale edition, in *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1964); **G** = Garbáty edition, in *Medieval English Literature* (1984); **H** = London, British Library, MS Harley 5396; **S** = Sands edition, in *Middle English Verse Romances* (1966).

- 1–9 See G. Wright (“Parody, Satire, and Genre,” pp. 158–59) on the poem’s mock-literature evocation of a heroic past, subversion by alliterative dignification, the use of literary formulas (*in story as we rede* — line 5) and the potent list of heroes (Hawkyn, Herry, Tomkyn, Terry, and other such that *were dughthy* — line 8). The deployment of such “purely poetic” devices and words like “freke” (line 155) and “frekis” (line 164) “in a narrative involving squabbling peasants is palpably parodic” (p. 158). One might add that the parody is designed for the eye and ear of each audience steeped in literary tradition that is experienced in performative situations — recitations, whether dramatized with a cast of performers or simply by the voice of a good raconteur.
- 10 *on a dere day*. French and Hale and Sands gloss as “memorable day,” though W. Cooke (“Tournament of Tottenham” [1988], p. 114) suggests “a day of harm” as apt as well. N.b. *MED* *dere* adj. [2].
- 13 At the time Tottenham, Hyssylton (Islington), Hygatte (Highgate), and Hakenay (Hackney) were all little villages north of London.
- 14 *swete swynkers*. French and Hale gloss *swete* as “blessed”; Sands reads “dear.” I have followed W. Cooke’s suggestion of “either ‘delightful’ (*OED* ‘Sweet’ a.5c) or ‘fragrant’ (*ibid.* 2) used ironically. The word may . . . be modern sweaty” (“Tournament of Tottenham” [1988], p. 114).
- 19 *evynsong*. Evening prayers, the sixth of the seven hours for prayer in a day, and usually indicative of the time around sunset.
- 22 *Rondol tho refe*. Whether the reeve here is the foreman of a manor or the sheriff of the shire, he was, as Garbáty remarks, “a person of prestige.” Harris places the poem within a more historical context, arguing that the tournament is a travesty modeled on a *behourde*, a small-scale, informal contest that was a customary practice at upper-class weddings, *à plaisirance* where blunted arms were replaced by cudgels. Randall the Reeve, father of Tyb, as “the manager of a landholder, or possibly a sheriff . . . stands in for an organizing and sponsoring lord, per-

- haps even for the king, who alone had the right in England to call for a full-scale tourney" ("Tournaments," p. 83).
- 25      *bachelery*. French and Hale gloss the term to mean "group of young men." But see W. Cooke who would have something more specific: "In the poet's time the word probably meant 'youth of the knightly class' and he has applied it ironically to the competitors for Tyb's hand; they are *bachelery* only inasmuch as they are a body of bachelors in the usual modern sense of the word, but for the collective norm that seems to have been a nonce sense in the poet's time" ("Tournament of Tottenham" [1988], pp. 114–15). Harris supports Cooke's proposition that bachelors "satirically means 'knights in training'" ("Tournaments," p. 83).
- 28      *gadelyngys*. French and Hale gloss "rogues"; Perry "idle fellows." I follow Sands and Garbáty, mindful of Harris' caveat that the term implies "base-born" ("Tournaments," p. 83).
- 32      *catell*. In ME this can mean both "cattle" and "chattel, goods." Here it no doubt is the former, but in line 52 it is the latter. The point introduced by the "gadelyngys" (line 28) suggests issues of economic class early on. Harris points out that "Randall tells these less-than-noble contestants that he who fights best will win, but it is interesting not that Perkin wins Tib but that he does so by simply outlasting everyone else, a common feature of the early *melée* — and one still continued in the *behourdes*, if not in the more formal jousts" ("Tournaments," p. 83).
- 35      *If that. That* is here no more than a meaningless particle; it is often added to conjunctions, as in the famous opening line of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: "Whan that April with its shoures soote" (When April . . . ).
- 53      *He schal have my gray mare*. Harris notes that tournaments demand horses, many of which were, in fact, borrowed or rented. But "no one would have gone into battle on a mare . . . and no contestant in the poem seems to ride anything else. Perkin and Hud want to capture horses and give them to Tib, perhaps a glancing reference at one of the main ways of enriching oneself in a tourney: capture the horses" ("Tournaments," p. 86).
- 62      *blake bollys*. Black bowls in place of tournament helmets is clearly comical, but Harris points out that "the evolution of helmets . . . offers some grounding in reality, at the end of the fourteenth century. The great helm was replaced by the frog-mouthed helm which does resemble a bowl far more than the heavy visored jousting helmets" ("Tournaments," p. 84). See also Jones ("Tournaments," p. 1125) on the use of bowls as helmets in peasant tournaments.
- 64      *brest*. The basic idea of bursting is that of a rupture caused by an inward force, whereas one should here rather think of injuries caused by the assaults of the opponents.
- 65      *crest*. The crest is the device mounted on the helmet.
- 66      *harow . . . fanne*. A notorious crux. According to the *MED* a *fanne* is, in the first place, a winnowing basket or shovel, in the second "a wicker shield used in mock jousts or in the training of novices" (this is also the meaning of the word in line

164). One of the quotations given is enlightening regarding the text of line 66: “*ȝonge kniȝtes . . . ffirſt . . . ſchuld haue a ſchelde made of twigges, ſomwhat rounde in manere of a gredire, þe which is clepid a vanne.*” The *gredire* is, again according to the *MED*, beside a “gridiron,” “a grating, a lattice of metal or wood,” a description that comes very close to what a harrow looks like. With this information it is now possible to try to give some sense to the line. Since the scribes of H and C apparently did not fully understand the original text, the result was very different but incorrect in either case. The literal translation of H is: “A harrow as broad as a wicker shield above their chest,” whereas it probably should have been: “A wicker shield as broad as a harrow/looking like a harrow before their chest.” In the case of C the scribe understood that the text contained a word for basket, but did not know what was meant by it, and so he gave us two synonyms: “A basket or a panier . . .” As Jones notes (“Tournaments,” p. 1138), *harow* is not “arrow” (FH and S), but rather “harrow,” in the sense of “frame”: *MED harwe* 2[a] and [c] (W. Cooke, “*Tournament of Tottenham*” [1988], p. 115).

- 68      *gone*. *Gone* or *gan* (line 145) and *con* or *can* (line 210) are often no more than meaningless auxiliaries indicating that the main verb is in the past tense.
- 72      Men were not supposed to ride mares, least of all in battle.
- 85      The double use of the stopgap *for tho nonys* in lines 82 and 85 is remarkable, as even the weaker poets would not easily stoop so low. But it occurs in these lines in all three MSS, and is therefore probably original.
- 89      *faucon fare*. Herry’s vow to “not lefe behende” (line 91) initiates the competitive boasting among the bachelery and also refers to the fart of Gyb’s horse in line 89 — perhaps Herry has a phobia similar to Absolom’s in Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale.
- 91–144    See G. Wright on the motif of ritual boasting, which “consumes almost a quarter of the poem” (“Parody, Satire, and Genre,” p. 160). Certainly the effect is satiric and parodic, as Wright points out, but perhaps the most useful approach is “the aspect of *play* in this contrivance [which] is unmistakable as is its inspirations” (p. 161). The playfulness of the poem — its performative play — is what keeps the poem so lively, rather than any particular literary mode or social commentary. We are dealing with a “theme”—tournament as entertainment, rather than real tournaments or peasants or the marketing of hens, horses, and women. Wright cites Joseph Danes on “reductivism as a cardinal virtue” in streamlining the entertainment effect of the kinds of “genuine collaboration between romance and social phenomenon” in its comic flattening through the opposing concepts of satire and parody (p. 165).
- 92      Bayard is the strongest and most colossal horse in the romance tradition, but is equally well known from popular tales (in which his blindness is much more significant). He belonged to Renaud of Montauban, one of the four sons of Aymon, who all rebelled against Charlemagne. The four brothers could ride the horse together. Caxton printed his translation of the Old French text c. 1489. The reference to Bernard is odd, not only in the context of Bayard (none of the brothers is called that), but because it is not associated with romance heroes in general.

- 93     *Ich man kepe hym out of my wynde.* French and Hale gloss *wynde* as “course,” cognate with modern Scots *wynd*, “lane.” But W. Cooke notes that that sense derives from OE *gewind*, “winding way” while the word here is *OED wind* 5b<sup>14</sup> “notice” or “ken,” with a pun intended by the poet on the sense “scent” (Cooke, “*Tournament of Tottenham*” [1988], p. 115).
- 104    *Myn armes ar so clere.* The arms that are so bright and shining could be Hud’s weapons or his coat of arms. If the former, then the brightness of the weapons causes the fear mentioned in line 103 but at the same time the description of the coat of arms in lines 105–08 comes a bit suddenly. If the radiance refers to the coat of arms, then these display an uncommon feature. French and Hale gloss “shining,” an allusion to the “light-giving power of the arms of heroes”; Sands glosses as “clear.” I have followed W. Cooke: “it is evident that Hud’s *armes* are his mock-heraldic devices, not his weapons, and *clere* means ‘illustrious’ as in *William of Palerne* 2037 or the *Wars of Alexander* 2692. This, of course, is more irony: for when described, Hud’s devices turn out to be the tools of his lowly trade” (“*Tournament of Tottenham*” [1988], p. 115).
- 105    *reddyl.* Both the *MED* and the *English Dialect Dictionary* give “sieve” as the only meaning for this word. French and Hale gloss as a “gardener’s hedging-stick,” for which, however, there is no ground in the dictionaries. W. Cooke (“*Tournament of Tottenham*” [1988], p. 115) rejects Sand’s gloss “seive” [sic] to suggest that “more likely it is ‘raddle’ meaning ‘wattle’ or ‘lath.’” But this sense does not fit the context either, in which the word “sieve,” because of its shape, can more easily be associated with the harrow and the fan of line 66.
- 106    *Poudred.* If the shield of a coat of arms is “powdered” with an object, e.g., a cross, this means that a number of fairly small crosses are distributed evenly over it (hence heraldically speaking the singular here is impossible). The really important figures, the so-called charges (here the sieve and the rake), are laid over the field and may partly or in whole cover the powdered objects; compare *Squire of Low Degree*, line 209 and note. Because these powdered objects can only be depicted fairly small the application of a complex figure like a fire-breathing dragon supports the impression of a parody.
- 114–17   These lines in H only; C and E have a description of another coat of arms:
- |                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I ber a pilch of ermyne     | <i>fur (coat); ermine</i>         |
| Poudert with a catt-skyn;   |                                   |
| The chefe is of pechmyn     | <i>chief; /roll off parchment</i> |
| That stondis on the creste. | <i>crest</i>                      |
- The chief is the upper third of the shield, here apparently formed by a roll of parchment. It is rare for the crest to consist of the same object as is depicted on the shield.
- 119    *forther.* The -er abbreviation is faded, but, on close examination, clearly reads -er. French and Hale read *forþi*, but suggest emending the word to *forther*, where no emendation is necessary. W. Cooke reads *forþi*, which, he says, “yields excellent sense”; as he puts it: “Terry says ‘You never saw [a sensible] young boy risk his

- body for this,’ and proceeds to boast that while others are busy flailing each other, he will steal Tyb anyway. This he later tries to do” (*Tournament of Tottenham* [1988], p. 115).
- hys body bede.* *bede* is OE *bēodan*, “offer,” hence “offer to risk,” not French and Hale’s “undertake.” “This is one more mock-heroic touch, since real knights were said to hazard or adventure their bodies when they gave or accepted challenges” (W. Cooke, *“Tournament of Tottenham”* [1988], p. 115).
- 123     *wele.* Lit., “well”; a typical stopgap, without much meaning but providing a rhyme.
- 128     In this line *hur* still refers to Tybbe, but in the next the references shift to Dudman’s mare — a telling mistake.
- 134     *Fro Hyssylton to Hakenay.* The distance between the two places was about three miles (G).
- 145     *gan.* See the note to line 68.
- 151     The chevron is a broad band like an upside-down V with the point touching the top line of the shield in the middle. The mallet had a similar shape.
- 153     *Poudred with mone-lyght.* Another heraldic oddity. French and Hale suggest that it may mean that “moons [are] sprinkled over the field,” which at least makes sense.
- 163     *cart-sadellys.* A cart-saddle was a small saddle placed on the horse’s back on which the shafts of the cart rested.
- 164     *fannes.* It is obvious that the wicker shields used by the combatants (see note to line 66 above) are not of the same quality as a real shield, and do not provide sufficient protection.
- 174     *A hors for forty pens.* 40 pence, or 2 shillings, is certainly less than a kingdom, but still a considerable sum, considering who did the bidding. But, from a more established point of view, “The humor arises from the contrast of Perkin’s stingy offer of forty pence to his claim that he will spare no expense” (Harris, “Tournaments,” p. 86). See line 176: “For no cost wyl I spare.” Compare Randall the Reeve’s similar boast in line 51, backed up with “notably down-scale prizes: a mare, a sow, and a hen, female animals all” (Harris, “Tournaments,” p. 86).
- 197     The exclamation “Te-he” is not peculiar to this text; it is also used by Alisoun, the carpenter’s wife in Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale, when she closes the window after having been kissed by Absolon: “Teehee!” quod she, and clapte the wyndow to” (CT I[A]3740).
- 202     *trouth-plyght.* I have read *trouth-plyght* here to mean “married,” though W. Cooke notes that it could mean “engaged” or “promised,” and that *husbandes* is used loosely for “intended husbands.” “The poet designed the spectacle of the peasant champions being trundled off by the girls they had jilted to go after Tyb as an ironic contrast to the ideals of the chivalric romance, in which the knight is true to his first love despite all temptations and rescues her from distress, not the other way round” (*Tournament of Tottenham* [1988], p. 116).

- 212 C and E read: "And to chirch they went," followed by the announcement that "he shall wedde" Tybbe, making clear that the real wedding ought to take place in church and not in bed. Still, a marriage that had been consummated with mutual consent of the partners (as is the case in H) was valid if not licit.
- 227 *cokenay*. *MED* suggests "bad egg"; *OED* offers "small egg." But see W. Cooke ("Tournament of Tottenham" [1988], p. 116), who suggests that "*cokenay* means 'cock's egg,' alluding to a popular belief that unusually small or misshapen eggs were laid by cocks." He goes on to note that the term meaning "'small or misshapen egg' was applied to men thought to have small or misshapen testes and hence to any man thought to lack virility" (See *Promptorium Parvulorum* and *Catholicon Anglicum*). See also The Reeve's Tale (*CT* I[A]4208).



## TEXTUAL NOTES TO *THE TOURNAMENT OF TOTTENHAM*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** See Explanatory Notes.

In H certain letters occasionally cause confusion, either because they were apparently not very distinctive in H's exemplar and thus were copied wrongly, or because they are not always easily distinguishable in H itself. These letters are: *v/b*, *s/f*, *c/t*, and *a/o/e*.

Title	<i>Tournament of tottenham</i> . H; no title in C, E. The third line, functioning as a kind of title but split up into separate words and syllables, has been written at the top of the pages containing the poem, fols. 306v–309r, and 310r: “The / Ture / Mente / Of / tot / Ney haue We // Yn mynde”.
8	<i>dughyt</i> . H: <i>dughyt</i> .
11	<i>tho</i> . The usual form for “the” in H.
14	<i>swynkers</i> . H: <i>swynke</i> , with <i>rs</i> lost due to cropping of the MS.
16	<i>daunsed</i> . H: <i>dabnsed</i> for regular <i>davnsed</i> .
21	<i>press</i> . H: <i>prest</i> .
23	<i>dere</i> . So C; H has <i>re</i> written over <i>vell</i> , changing <i>devell</i> to <i>dere</i> .
31	<i>then</i> . H: <i>the</i> .
34	<i>redy in my ryght</i> . H: <i>in my</i> struck through before <i>redy</i> .
36	<i>ellis</i> . H: <i>ell</i> .
38	<i>taryed</i> . H: <i>atryed</i> .
39	H: <i>I wold not that my doghter that scho were myscaryed</i> . Either the first <i>that</i> or the subsequent <i>that scho</i> is superfluous. C and E leave out the first <i>that</i> , and I have followed that emendation.
40	<i>But</i> . H: <i>Vut</i> .
48	<i>dughyness</i> . C, E; H: <i>dughyt</i> ; the adjectival form in H rarely occurs as a noun.
52	<i>For no</i> . H: <i>ffor no</i> , with <i>or</i> scribbled in later.
62	<i>bollys</i> . H: <i>bellys</i> .
65	<i>Ilkon</i> . H: <i>ikkon</i> .
67	<i>fylght</i> . H: <i>syght</i> .
74	<i>company</i> . H: <i>cmpny</i> .
76	<i>federys</i> . C: <i>senye</i> ; E: <i>senby</i> , “mustard.” H reads <i>fedys</i> , with an abbreviatory sign for <i>er/re</i> added after the <i>d</i> in a slightly darker ink, resulting in <i>federys</i> . If, however, one takes into account the potential <i>f/s</i> confusion and assumes that the abbreviation is a later addition, H may just as well read, or have intended to read, <i>sedys</i> , “seeds” (FH, S). Since <i>senvy sedis</i> often occurs as a collocation, this is what the original text may have had, from which H and C made their own independent and deviant versions.

- 77        *gap.* H: *cap.*
- 89        *That.* H: *þe*, no doubt due to the similarity of the abbreviations for the two words.
- 91        *vowe.* H: *wowe.*
- 95        *schul.* H: *schu.*
- 99        *I schal.* C, E; omitted by H.
- 107        *cantells.* H: *cantell.*
- 109        *yf I.* FH; H: *yf he.* In C and E the first two lines of the stanza are completely different and moreover ascribe the vow to Dudman. Since in these MSS Dudman swears another oath in 127 ff., the reading of H is more likely to be correct.
- 110        *felde.* H: *felte.* The grammar of lines 110–12 is shaky. It could be improved by switching lines 110 and 111 around.
- 112        *se of.* H: *so af.*
- 125        *sadyll.* H: *fadyll.*
- 128        *ys.* *has* has been written over *ys* struck out.
- 131        *begyle.* H: *be g* (the rest of the word is lost due to cropping).
- 133        *somerys.* H: *sonerys.*
- 134        *to.* H: *ha* struck out before *to.*
- 136        *Perkyn.* H: *Perkny.*
- 137        *wyselyer.* H: *swyselyer.*
- 144        *With jo for to gybbe.* H: *with jo forth gybbe;* C: *joe forth tibbe;* E: *ioo forth tibbe.* Since none of these readings makes any sense some emendation is called for. One possibility is that *jo* is an error for original *zo*, “you”; it makes an acceptable reading but a mix-up of the letters *j* and *z* is rare. Considering that the dialect of the text is northern, *jo* may perhaps be taken as the Scottish word for “joy, pleasure” (from Old French *joie*). The two words *forth* and *gybbe* could together make up the verb “forthgibe,” but a spelling error seems more likely, with *forto* resulting in *forth*. The form *tibbe* in C and E was probably repeated from line 140.
- 145        *made* (H: omitted) and *gan* (H: *an*) have been supplied from C and E.
- 148        *hye.* H; C and E have *te*, “draw, go,” which fits the rhyme, unlike *hye.*
- 150        *in.* H: *i.*
- 155        *raton fell.* H, C; FH and S prefer E: *rotten fell*, but even if a rat skin is rather small for a banner, and a rotten hide may therefore seem to provide the better reading, the testimony of the two oldest MSS should not be too easily discarded.
- 156        *tho.* H: *Ju* (for *þo*); C, E: *þe.*
- 158        *felay.* H; C, E: *fel(l)ow.*
- 159–61      *bet.* H: *be;* C: *bette;* E: *bet.*
- 166        *on.* H: *o.*
- 158        *wordys spoken.* So H; C: *wordis were spokyn;* E: *words were spoken.*
- 159–61      The rhyme words in C are: *to-flaterde, to-claterde, to-baterde*; in E the first is *to-slattered*, the other two are the same as in C.
- 166        *yll ware they be-seyn.* H: *yll ware I be sayn,* C, E: *euel were they be sene.* H is practically illegible here.

- 169      *oloft.* H: *olsst* (with a round, sigma-like *s* followed by a tall *s*).  
172      *loute.* H: *louter*.  
173      *I am.* H: *and*, following *I*, struck out.  
          *route.* H: *rowet*.  
192      *thaim.* H: *pan*, with a nasal stroke over the *n*, showing the scribe may mis-  
          takenly have read *pann[e]* for *paim*.  
199      *Thus.* H: *bys*.  
209      *the gre.* Omitted H.  
          *pride.* H: *pide*.  
210      *myrthe.* H: *mothe*; C, E: *myrth*.  
215      *pryse.* FH; H: *prayse* (C, E: *chefe*).  
          *hur:* H: *hIRR*.  
216      *tornament.* H: *tonament*.  
219      *hys.* Since *sum* implies a plural one would expect *hyr* (their) instead of *hys*,  
          but all three MSS agree on the latter.  
          *sum two at onys.* C, E. H has *sum (twa, struck out) be schulder-bonys*, which in  
          C and E is the second half of the next line. An inexplicable mistake: one  
          could imagine that the copyist's eye had jumped to the wrong *sum*  
          phrase, but the writing and subsequent deletion of *twa* is incompatible  
          with such an explanation.  
221      *thedyr.* H: *pedy*, *r* lost due to cropping of the MS.  
225      *togedyr.* H: *togedy*, with *r* trimmed away.  
          Here, at the end of fol. 309r, the text is interrupted for two-and-a-half pages  
          of accounts; in the same hand, and without so much as a line of white, the  
          poem is completed on fol. 310r.  
231      *every.* H: *euer*.



## THE FEAST OF TOTTENHAM

- Now of this feest telle I can,  
I trow, as wel as any man,  
    Be est or be west,  
For over alle in ilke a schire  
5   I am send for as a sire  
    To ilke a gret fest.
- For, in feith, ther was on,  
Sich on saw I never non,  
    In Ingland ne in Fraunce!  
10   For ther hade I the maistry  
    Of alle maner of cucry,  
    Sich then was my chaunce.
- Thar was meytis wel dight,  
Well sesoned to the right,  
    Of rost and of sew.  
15   Ther was meytis, be heven,  
    That were a maistre al to neven,<sup>1</sup>  
    But sum I con yow shew.
- Ther was pestels in porra,  
And laduls in lorra  
    For potage,  
And som saduls in sewys,  
And mashefattis in mortrewys  
    For the leest page.
- 25   Ther was plenté of alle  
To theym that were in halle,  
    To lesse and to more.  
Ther was gryndulstones in gravy
- trust  
By east  
everywhere; every shire  
sent; great lord
- in truth; one  
Such a one  
England nor  
I was in charge  
kinds; cookery  
luck
- There were dishes; prepared  
properly  
roast; stew  
dainties, by heaven  
describe
- pestle (pork); soup  
ladles; gelatin  
stew (soup course)  
saddles; stews (broths)  
mash tubs; thick soup (or stew)  
lowest servant
- everything  
For the high and the low  
grindstones

<sup>1</sup> It would be quite an accomplishment to mention them all

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 30 | And mylstones in mawmany,<br>And al this was thore.  | millstones; spiced dish<br>there  |
| 35 | But yet lett thei for no costis,<br>For in cum mylne postis,<br>Three in a disshe,<br>And bell clapurs in blawndisare<br>With a nobull cury,<br>For tho that ete no fisshe.            | stopped<br>came mill posts<br>clappers; minced chicken<br>Prepared with great cooking skill<br>them                   |
| 40 | Ther come in jordans in jussall,<br>Als red as any russall,<br>Come ther among,<br>And blobsterdis in white sorre,<br>Was of a nobull curry<br>With spicery strong.                    | came; chamber pots; hotchpotch<br>russel (woollen fabric)<br>horse turds (?) in white sauce<br>cuisine                |
| 45 | Ther come chese crustis in charlett,<br>As red as any scarlette,<br>With ruban in rise.<br>Certes, of alle the festis<br>That ever I saw in gestis<br>This may ber the prise.          | cheese rinds; pork custard<br>red cloth<br>ribbon; rice pudding<br>Certainly<br>romances<br>win                       |
| 50 | Ther was costrell in combys,<br>And capuls in cullys<br>With blandament indorde.<br>The nedur lippe of a larke<br>Was broght in a muk cart<br>And set befor the lorde.                 | flask; ? honey combs<br>horses; strong broth<br>blandishment glazed with egg<br>lower<br>muck                         |
| 55 | Then come in stedis of Spayn<br>And the brute of Almayne,<br>With palfrayes in paste,<br>And dongestekis in doralle,<br>War forsed wele with charcoll.<br>(But certis that was waste!) | steeds from<br>stew<br>riding horses; dough<br>turds (dung sticks); custard pie<br>[Which] had been seasoned (farced) |
| 60 | Then come in the fruture<br>With a nobull savour,<br>With feturlokis fried;<br>And alle the cart whelis of Kent,<br>With stony s of the payment,<br>Ful wel wer thei tried.            | fritters<br>fetterlock<br>pavement<br>selected  |

- Then come in a horse hed  
In the stid of French brede,  
With alle the riche hide.
- 70 Now, had I not this seen  
Sum of yow wold wene  
Ful lowde that I lyed.
- Ther come in the kydde,  
Dressyd in a horse syde,  
That abyly was to lese;  
Thre yron harows,  
And many whele barowes  
In the stid of new chese.
- When they had drawnen the borde  
80 Then seid Perkyn a worde,  
Hymselfe to avownce:  
“Syn we have made gode chere  
I red ilke man in fere  
Goo dresse hym to a downce.”<sup>1</sup>
- 85 Ther ye myght se a mery sight  
When thei were sammen knytt,  
Without any fayle.  
Thei did but ran ersward,  
And ilke a man went bakward,  
90 Toppor over tayle.
- Tybbe wexe full charre of hert;  
As sche dawsid she late a fart  
For stumbulyng at a stole.  
Now, sarris, for your curtesy,  
95 Take this for no vilany,  
But ilke man crye “Yole!”
- Of this fest can I no more,  
But certes thei made hem mery thore  
Whil the day wold last.
- 100 Yet myght thei not alle in fere
- head  
*Instead; bread*  
*costly*
- think
- kid (*young goat*)  
*Placed*  
*suitable; to be sliced*
- place (stead)*
- cleared away the table*
- move forward*
- together joined  
*For certain*  
*nothing but; backwards*
- Head over heels*
- became; embarrassed
- Due to; stool  
*sirs*
- Yule!*
- themselves; there*

---

<sup>1</sup> Lines 82–84: *Since we have had a great time together / I suggest that everyone in this company / Prepare himself for a dance*

Have eton the meytis I reckond here,  
But their bodys had brast.

*enumerated  
Without their bodies bursting*

EXPLICIT FABULA

*tale*



## EXPLANATORY NOTES TO *THE FEAST OF TOTTENHAM*

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**ABBREVIATIONS:** **C** = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.5.48; **F** = Furrow edition, in *Ten Fifteenth-Century Comic Poems* (1985); **Hz** = Hazlitt edition, in *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England* (1866).

- 19      *pestels*. Lit., “pestle,” but also “leg of a pig or chicken, used for food”; a typical instance of the poet’s sense of humor.
- porra*. “Thick soup made from leek or peas” (compare *porre*, “leek”).
- 23      *mashefattis*. Barrels in which warm water was mixed with malt to form wort (unfermented beer).
- 29      *mawmany*. A dish of chopped meat (usually chicken), spices, and other ingredients.
- 32      *mylne postis*. The supporting shafts of a windmill.
- 34      *blawndisare*. Probably from OF *blanc de soré*; it is a dish of minced chicken or fish.
- 37      *jussall*. A dish made of eggs, sometimes mixed with grated bread, and cooked in a seasoned broth.
- 38      *russall*. For the use of the word as a substantive meaning “something red or reddish” the *MED* refers to this line only. It is likely that the meaning here is tainted by *russell*, “a kind of cloth, possibly from Rijssel, i.e., Lille.”
- 40      *blobsterdis*. So C, Hazlitt; another nonce word of uncertain meaning. The *MED* tentatively has “? blend of *lopster* and *blober*,” perhaps implying a fish dish in white sauce. This was not convincing to Furrow, as the text nowhere else uses such a combination, nor does it, one should add, account for the final *d*; Furrow therefore suggests *horstordis*, observing that “Burlesques are often scatological” (p. 369). I have adopted her sense in my gloss but without the emendation. See also line 58 for another scatological wordplay.
- 43      *charlett*. Probably from OF *char laitée*, meat with milk. The cookery books make clear that it is a dish with at least meat (e.g., pork), eggs, and milk.
- 49      *combys*. This is close to the MS spelling (see textual note), but the meaning “honey” is forced (still, this is the lemma under which it is listed in the *MED*, but with the comment “meaning unknown”). One might think of *cambys* as an odd spelling for *cambace*, “canvas,” or even of *cambric*, “fine white linen (from Cambrai in Flanders).” Furrow’s suggestion of *comfyt*, “sugar glaze,” results in “the

weakest rhyme in the poem" (p. 369), but it does have the merit that it is in line with the other "dishes," which always consist of a ludicrous object (except for "blandament" in line 51) presented in a realistic makeup, like a broth, a sauce, or a custard.

- 51      *blandament*. Not in the *MED*, but undoubtedly related to *blaundish(ment)*, "flatter; flattery."
- indorde*. Past participle of *endoren*, "to cover with a glaze made from the yolks of eggs."
- 56      *brute of Almayne*. From the *MED*'s quotations under (b) it is clear that there were various kinds of stew, and that *Almayne* here may mean both "almond" and "Germany" since almonds were used in some soups while another distinction derived from the provenance of the recipe (there were stews from Lombardy, from Spain, and even from "Sarcynesse").
- 57      *paste*. Considering the context it is interesting that the *MED* under this lemma gives one quotation for the meaning "dough for making horse feed."
- 58      *dongestekis*. C: *dongesterkis*. See note to line 40. Furrow emends to *dongestekis*, emphasizing the scatology of the term (see p. 40). Conceivably, "sterkis" could be a morpheme for cattle. See *MED stirk*, noun (a), in which case, "cow turds" might be the sense, though the morphology of the verbal compound is awkward.
- doralle*. According to the *MED* this is a mistake for *dariol*, "a kind of pastry: pasty, custard, tart."
- 75      *That abyI was to lese*. Furrow's interpretation of the sense of the line, "that could be sliced" (p. 370), is attractive even if the *MED* under none of the lemmata of *lese* and related forms gives this particular meaning.
- 81      *Hymselfe to avownce*. One could take this figuratively, viz. that Perkyn wanted to advance himself, but it hardly makes sense in the context; hence the literal one is perhaps to be preferred.
- 90      *Toppor over tayle*. Under *topper* the *MED* has the meaning "head" only for this place, and gives the entire phrase with the translation as provided in the gloss.



## TEXTUAL NOTES TO *THE FEAST OF TOTTENHAM*

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Part of the text is hardly legible, even under UV light, due to damp stains. As the damage is limited to the right-hand margin on fols. 115r and 116r and the left-hand on 115v, the words causing difficulties are mostly found in the tail lines (traditionally written to the left of the text) on the recto pages, and in the body of the text on fol. 115v.

**ABBREVIATIONS:** See Explanatory Notes.

- 9           *Fraunce*. F; C: final *e* illegible.  
11          *Of*. C: *Off*. So too in lines 16 and 97.  
11          *cucry*. Second *c* added above the line by the scribe. By this change the word probably assumed its more common form (at least in pronunciation), “cookery.” Still, *cury* in line 35 implies that this may have been the poet’s original word.  
12          *Sich*. F; C, Hz: *sith*.  
12          *my chaunce*. F; C: *my thaun* (*ce* illegible); Hz: *myschaunce*.  
18          *shew*. F; C: *ew* illegible.  
20          *lorra*. F; C: *rorra*; Hz: *rore*.  
30          *thore*. Hz, F; C: *ore* illegible.  
36          *tho*. Hz, F; C: *o* illegible.  
36          *fisshe*. F, Hz: *fish*; C: only *f* legible.  
49          *combys*. C, Hz: *cambys*.  
58          *dongestekis*. Hz, F; C: *dongesterkis*; the emendation parallels the scatological humor of line 10.  
91          *wexe*. F; C, Hz: *were*.  
91          *charre*. F; C, Hz: *tharre*. For the spelling *tharre* the *MED* is of no help while under *charri* we find only such vaguely relevant meanings as “sorrowful,” or “cherished (person).” The *OED*’s first citation for the meaning suggested by F is from 1567, but at least it fits the context.  
93          *a stole*. F; C: illegible. I have adopted F’s creative solution to the illegible rhyme words of lines 93 and 95.  
98          *mery*. Added above the line by the scribe.  
102         *brast*. Hz, F; C: *ast* illegible.





## GLOSSARY

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**aboune** *over the clothing*

**aplight** See **plight**

**ar** See **or**

**ate frome** *at first, to begin with*

**avys(e)** *opinion*

**awreke (wreke)** *avenge*

**ay(e)** *always*

**bachelery** *group of young men*

**baneret** *squire*

**be** *be, been, by*

**bent(e) (n.)** *field*

**berde** *lovely lady*

**bern** See **burn**

**bewraye** *betray*

**blithe (blythe)** *glad, happy*

**bord(e)** *table*

**bordych** *noble, beautiful*

**bote** *remedy, help*

**bour(e)** *chamber, bower; harem*

**burd(e)** *lovely lady*

**burn (bern)** *man; warrior*

**busked(e)** *made ready, prepared; hastened*

**bryght** *shining, splendid; beautiful*

**bydene** *immediately, at once; one after another*

**capul(l) (capullys)** *horse*

**carp(e) (karppe, carppe)** *speak*

**certis** *certainly*

**chere** *manner, disposition, mood; complexion*

**clen(e)** *splendidly; neatly*

**cors** *body*

**coupe** *basket*

**couth(e)** *know, understand; be able*

**deceive** *trick, deceive; betray, destroy*

**degré** *social rank; quality*

**dent** *blow*

**derie** *injure*

**dout(e)** *fear*

**dowghty (doughty, dughty)** *brave, strong (man)*

**dyght(h) (dight, idight)** *prepare, make ready; array; arm (oneself)*

**everichone (everychone)** *each one; all together*

**fare** *traveled, went*

**fayn** *pleased, happy*

**fee** *fief, landholding*

**feere (fere, in feere, ifere)** *together; wife, mate*

**fele** *worthy*

**fellon (feld) (v.)** *kill, slay*

**ferly** *marvel, wonder; marvelously*

**ferraunt (ferauns)** *gray horse*

**fond(e)** *try*

**foryolde** See **yolde**

**fray (v.)** *frighten; attack*

**fray (n.)** *fight*

**fre(e)** *noble, generous*

**freke** *man*

**frely** *beautiful, lovely*

**gin(ne) (gynne)** *ruse, plan, strategem, device, means; ingenuity; sexual parts; machine*

**gle** *music, entertainment*

**graunt(e)** favor  
**gre** prize

**hap** luck, chance  
**hem** them  
**hend(e)** gentle, gracious (person)  
**hent(e)** took, seized  
**her** their  
**hi, hi** she  
**ho(e)** she  
**hom** them, themselves  
**hote (ihote)** called  
**hoved(e)** waited, lingered  
**hur** her  
**husbond(es)** tenant(s)  
**hyght(h) (hight, het)** aloud (upon  
  *hyghte*); height; high; promised

**ihote** See **hote**

**ilk(e) (ylke)** same; each, every  
**ilkon** each one, everyone  
**iplight** See **plight**  
**iyolde** See **yolde**

**karp** See **carp**  
**kene** fierce, merciless; sharp

**lefe** remain  
**leman** sweetheart, beloved  
**lett** cease; delay; allow  
**leve** dear  
**ligge** lie, lying  
**lore** learning, study  
**lyght(h) (v.)** dismount; descend  
**lyght (adj.)** nimble

**mai** maiden  
**mak, make** spouse, wife; match  
**mechill (michel, mychel)** great,  
  large  
**menske** honor, dignity  
**mere** mare  
**meyny (meynē)** troop, company;  
  retinue  
**bold(e)** top; earth  
**neb(be)** face

**nill(e) (nelle)** will not, wish not  
**nime (nam)** go; fetch; take

**or (ar)** before

**pall(e) (pallwork)** fine cloth  
**park (parke, parkes)** private estate,  
  fenced-off area of land  
**paye (n.)** pleasure; toll  
**payen (payd, apay(e)) (v.)** please  
**plight** promise, pledge; assure  
**pomel** ornamental globe, headpiece  
**postern(e)** back door, back gate  
**potage** stew, soup  
**prykkus (prikes, pryck)** rides  
**pryvyté** privacy; secret  
**pyght (pight)** adorned, decorated;  
  hung

**raches** hunting hounds  
**rath(e)** quickly  
**rayment** clothing  
**rede (n.)** advice, counsel  
**reden (v.)** to advise  
**renkus (renks)** men; lists

**schen(e)** bright; beautiful  
**schenent (yschent)** destroyed; put to  
  shame  
**scheping** trading  
**scho** she  
**semely** fitting; attractive, beautiful  
**seththe (sethens)** since  
**seye** saw  
**sithen** then  
**sithes (sythes)** times  
**soth(e) (south, sothely)** truth; truly  
**spede** assist; accomplish; hasten  
**stede** place; horse  
**stound** time, moment, occasion  
**swyth(e) (swithe)** quickly,  
  immediately, instantly; very  
  (intensifier)

**the** the, they  
**thilke** those  
**tho** then

**thore** *there*

**thous** *thus*

**thryve** *prosper*

**trouth(e)** *pledge, oath*

**trow(e)** *trust, believe*

**tyl(l)** *to*

**undernome** *traveled*

**underyete(n)** *discovered, perceived*

**unnethes** *reluctantly, scarcely*

**venterous** *brave, adventurous*

**wede** *clothes, array; armor, coat of  
mail*

**ween (wene)** *think, suppose, doubt*

**wende** *went; though*

**wete (wite, white)** *know*

**wold(e)** *wish, want*

**wone (n.)** *habit*

**wone (v.) (wonede, wondde)** *to be  
accustomed; live*

**wreke** See *awreke*

**wyete (wyte)** *know*

**wyght** *creature, person; courageous,  
valiant, brave*

**wyst** *knew*

**wytte** *intelligence*

**yare** *ready; eagerly, without delay*

**ych** *each, every*

**Yrl** *Earl*

**ywys(e)** *certainly, for certain*





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