

THE MIDDLE ENGLISH  
*SEVEN SAGES OF ROME*

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## ABBREVIATIONS LIST

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|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A</b>  | The Southern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck Manuscript) [base manuscript lines <b>A</b> 120– <b>A</b> 2770, fols. 85r–99v]. Also Brunner's base manuscript lines <b>A</b> 120– <b>A</b> 2770. |
| <b>A*</b> | The French prose version of the <i>Roman des sept sages</i> in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 2137, fols. 1r–46v, ed. Derniame, Henin, and Nais.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Ar</b> | The Southern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in London, British Library, MS Arundel 140, fols. 152r–165v, variants and partial edition in Brunner.                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Aw</b> | The Welsh version of the <b>A</b> -text of the <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 120, fols. 47r–67r, trans. Jones.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>B</b>  | The Southern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, fols. 18r–54r, variants and partial edition in Brunner.                                                                                                                                        |
| Brunner   | Brunner, ed., <i>The Seven Sages of Rome: Southern Version</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>C</b>  | The Northern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E. IX, fols. 25r–48r, ed. Campbell.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Campbell  | Campbell, ed., <i>The Seven Sages of Rome</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| CUL       | Cambridge University Library                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>D</b>  | The Midland version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd. 1. 17, vol. 3, fols. 54r–63r, ed. Whitelock.                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>D*</b> | The French prose version of the <i>Roman des sept sages</i> in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 5036, fols. 42r–72r, ed. Paris, pp. 1–54.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Do</b> | The Latin prose <i>Dolopathos</i> by Johannes de Alta Silva in Luxemburg, Bibliothèque nationale, MS 110, fols. 139r–170v, trans. Gilleland.                                                                                                                                                             |
| DMF       | <i>Dictionnaire du Moyen Français</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>E</b>         | The Southern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in London, British Library, MS Egerton 1995, fols. 3r–54v [base manuscript lines <b>E1–E103</b> , <b>E903–07</b> , and <b>E2786–E3579</b> , fols. 3r–4r, 16r, and 43r–54v]. Variants and partial edition also in Brunner. |
| <b>EETS</b>      | Early English Text Society                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>EETS e.s.</b> | Early English Text Society, extra series                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>EETS o.s.</b> | Early English Text Society, original series                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>EETS s.s.</b> | Early English Text Society, special series                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>F</b>         | The Southern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. 2.38, fols. 134r–156v, ed. Brunner.                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>He</b>        | The English version of the <b>H</b> -text of the <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> published by Wynkyn de Worde, ed. Gomme.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Hs</b>        | The Scots version of the <b>H</b> -text of the <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 16500, fols. 167r–209v, ed. van Buuren.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>K</b>         | The French verse version of the <i>Roman des sept sages</i> in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 1553, fols. 338v–367v, ed. Speer and Foehr-Janssens.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>L</b>         | The French prose version of the <i>Roman des sept sages</i> in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS 19166, fols. 1r–30r, ed. Le Roux de Lincy.                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>M</b>         | The French prose version of the <i>Roman des sept sages</i> in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Ashburnham 52, fols. 136v–162r, ed. Runte.                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>MED</b>       | McSparran et al., <i>Middle English Dictionary</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>OED</b>       | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>R</b>         | The Northern version of the Middle English <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 175, fols. 109r–131v, variants in Campbell.                                                                                                                               |
| <b>S</b>         | The Latin prose version of the <i>Seven Sages of Rome</i> in Johannes Gobi the Younger's <i>Scala celi</i> in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 13538, fols. 5r–160r, trans. Beaulieu, in <i>Education, prédication, cultures</i> , pp. 213–32.                                    |
| <b>SindA</b>     | The version of the Arabic <i>Book of Sindbad</i> in Istanbul, Şehid Ali Paşa Library, MS 2743.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## INTRODUCTION

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SindA1001</b>         | The version of the Arabic <i>Book of Sindbad</i> in the <i>One Thousand and One Nights</i> , trans. Lyons, 2:546–610.                   |
| <b>SindA101</b>          | The version of the Arabic <i>Book of Sindbad</i> in the <i>One Hundred and One Nights</i> , ed. and trans. Fudge, pp. 216–81.           |
| <b>SindGr</b>            | The Byzantine version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> by Michael Andreopoulos, trans. Beneker and Gibson.                                 |
| <b>SindHeb</b>           | The Hebrew version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> , ed. and trans. Epstein.                                                              |
| <b>SindP1</b>            | The Persian prose version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> by Zahiri of Samarqand, trans. Bogdanović.                                      |
| <b>SindP2</b>            | The anonymous Persian verse version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> extracted in Clouston, pp. 3–121.                                     |
| <b>SindP3</b>            | The prose version of the Persian <i>Book of Sindbad</i> in <i>Tales of a Parrot</i> by Ziya‘al-Din Nakhshabi, trans. Simsar, pp. 55–68. |
| <b>SindSp</b>            | The Spanish version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> , trans. Keller.                                                                      |
| <b>SindSyr</b>           | The Syriac version of the <i>Book of Sindbad</i> , trans. Gollancz.                                                                     |
| Speer and Foehr-Janssens | Speer and Foehr Janssens, eds., <i>Le Roman des Sept Sages</i>                                                                          |
| STC                      | <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland</i> , ed. Jackson, Ferguson, and Pantzer.                  |
| Whitelock                | Whitelock, ed., <i>The Seven Sages of Rome: Midland Version</i>                                                                         |
| Whiting                  | Whiting and Whiting, <i>Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases</i>                                                                 |



## INTRODUCTION

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The wife of the Roman emperor Diocletian gives birth to a son, Florentine, and dies shortly after. When Florentine is seven, Diocletian gives the boy to the seven sages of Rome, who take him to a school outside the city, where they teach him for seven years. In the meantime, Diocletian remarries. Although Florentine's stay outside Rome is kept secret, the new empress soon discovers the boy's existence and plots his destruction. The empress organizes Florentine's return to Rome, whereupon she offers him her love and, when she is rejected, simulates an attempted rape. Florentine cannot defend himself against the empress's accusations because he has seen in the stars that if he speaks before the eighth day after his return to Rome both he and the sages will be lost; only the intervention of Diocletian's lords secures the postponement of his judgment for a day. That night, the empress tells a story that reignites the emperor's ire but the next morning a further stay of execution is procured by one of the sages, who tells a story that changes the emperor's mind. So begins a week-long exchange of tales between the empress and the sages, who speak for Florentine. On the eighth day after his arrival in Rome, Florentine tells his own story and denounces his stepmother, who is burnt on the pyre that she meant for him.

This, in brief, is the story told in the Middle English *Seven Sages of Rome*.<sup>1</sup> The poem belongs to a long tradition of storytelling linking medieval England to the continent and Asia; its popularity in England and elsewhere in the Middle Ages contrasts with its relative neglect in anglophone scholarship. We attribute this neglect in part to the absence of a good teaching text of the Middle English *Seven Sages* and we aim to remedy this lack with the present METS edition of the Auchinleck copy of the poem. At the same time, with the apparatus that we provide, we hope to highlight the interest that the *Seven Sages* holds for a broad constituency of medievalists. In particular, the text is a rich source of evidence for anyone working on the histories of east-to-west cultural transfer, the exemplum and exemplary writing, and misogyny. The impressive transmission history of the *Seven Sages* makes possible comparative approaches to these topics that consider, for example, the ways in which attitudes towards women in fiction might change over time and from place to place. With a view to facilitating enquiries of this kind, our Explanatory Notes record plot variations across different languages and versions of the *Seven Sages* as well as between the extant Middle English texts of the poem.

This Introduction describes first the origins and transmission of the *Seven Sages of Rome* and next the Middle English texts of the poem and the manuscripts in which they survive; we also give our reasons for choosing to edit the Auchinleck text. We then discuss the reception of the *Seven Sages* in scholarship; offer a reading of one of the poem's inset tales; and advance an approach to the text's misogyny. Notwithstanding the judicial context in which the inset tales are couched, we contend that they are best read as a commentary on their given purposes rather than as an illustration of them. The text's equivocal presentation of its arguments extends to the misogyny of its frame. We propose that the *Seven Sages* makes patent the

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed Plot Summary, see Appendix 3.

contradictions at the heart of misogynist rhetoric and that at key moments the collection generates sympathy for the women whose lives it depicts.

## ORIGINS AND TRANSMISSION

The roots of the *Seven Sages of Rome* can be traced back to western and south Asian story-telling traditions. The text takes its frame narrative and four of its tales from the *Book of Sindbad*, a work surviving in ten versions whose earliest, now lost, redaction is thought to have originated in Persia at the end of the eighth century CE.<sup>2</sup> Over the following centuries, this putative Middle Persian original was translated into later forms of Persian and into Arabic, and from Arabic into Syriac, Greek, Spanish, and Hebrew. The dating of these versions is difficult to determine. Many of the surviving manuscripts of the *Book of Sindbad* postdate the composition of the versions that they transmit, often by a significant margin, and the extant texts have paratextual materials referring back to precedent texts that are now lost. The most recent work on the transmission of the *Book of Sindbad* argues that the Arabic version preserved as part of the *One Hundred and One Nights* is the closest analogue to the Middle Persian composition standing at the root of the tradition.<sup>3</sup>

In Table 1 we list the extant texts of the *Book of Sindbad* and give the translations of these works that we refer to in this edition. Versions thought to have been composed earlier are listed towards the top of the table with texts thought to have been composed later towards the bottom. We draw this rough chronology from Bettina Krönung, “Fighting with Tales 1.”

TABLE 1: TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS OF THE *BOOK OF SINDBAD*

| SIGLUM           | LANGUAGE | TITLE AND TRANSLATION USED (1)                                                                                            |
|------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SindA101</b>  | Arabic   | “Story of the Prince and the Seven Viziers”<br>in <i>A One Hundred and One Nights</i> , ed. and trans. Fudge, pp. 216–81. |
| <b>SindA</b>     | Arabic   | <i>The Seven Viziers</i><br>in Istanbul, Şehid Ali Paşa Library, MS 2743 (2).                                             |
| <b>SindA1001</b> | Arabic   | “The King and His Seven Viziers”<br>in <i>The Arabian Nights</i> , trans. Lyons, 2:546–610.                               |
| <b>SindSyrr</b>  | Syriac   | “The History of Sindban and the Seven Wise Masters”<br>trans. Gollancz.                                                   |
| <b>SindGr</b>    | Greek    | <i>The Byzantine Sinbad</i><br>by Michael Andreopoulos, trans. Beneker and Gibson.                                        |
| <b>SindP1</b>    | Persian  | <i>Le Livre des sept vizirs</i> by<br>Zahiri of Samarqand, trans. Bogdanović (3).                                         |
| <b>SindSp</b>    | Spanish  | <i>The Book of the Wiles of Women</i><br>trans. Keller.                                                                   |

<sup>2</sup> See Perry, “The Origin of the Book of Sindbad.” For a defense of the earlier theory that the *Book of Sindbad* originates in India, see Upadhyaya, “Indic Background of *The Book of Sindibad*.” On the Indian origins of some of the collection’s inset tales, see Artola, “The Nature of the *Book of Sindbad*.”

<sup>3</sup> See Krönung, “Fighting with Tales 1.”

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| SIGLUM         | LANGUAGE | TITLE AND TRANSLATION USED (1)                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SindHeb</b> | Hebrew   | <i>Tales of Sendebār</i><br>ed. and trans. Epstein.                                                                                                                            |
| <b>SindP2</b>  | Persian  | “The Book of Sindibād”<br>extracted in <i>The Book of Sindibād</i> , ed. Clouston, pp. 3–121 (4).                                                                              |
| <b>SindP3</b>  | Persian  | “Story of the Prince, the Seven Viziers, and [. . .] His Father’s Handmaiden” in Nakhshabi, <i>The Cleveland Museum of Art’s Ṭūṭī-nāma</i> , ed. and trans. Simsar, pp. 55–68. |

### NOTES ON THE TABLE:

- (1) For references to editions of these texts in their original languages, see Krönung, “Fighting with Tales 1.”
- (2) There is no translation of **SindA** into a language that we can read.
- (3) We know of no English translation of **SindP1**.
- (4) *The Book of Sindibād*, ed. Clouston, provides a partial account of **SindP2** rather than a full translation.

It is via one or more of these versions that the *Book of Sindbad* became known in the west, where in the second half of the twelfth century it appeared in French as the *Roman des sept sages de Rome*.<sup>4</sup> In the process of transmission, the text’s Persian roots were almost totally effaced.<sup>5</sup> A variety of channels has been proposed for the transfer, including written transmission from Greek to Latin, Hebrew to Latin, or Arabic to Spanish, as well as oral transmission between Christian and Arab territories, perhaps as a consequence of crusader traffic.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the vector or vectors of transmission by which the *Book of Sindbad* reached Europe, the *Seven Sages* was so speedily adapted and translated that by the end of the Middle Ages, the story collection was circulating in all the major European vernaculars and in Latin. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the text’s most diligent bibliographer, Killis Campbell, counted at least forty different versions of the work surviving in more than two hundred manuscripts and nearly two hundred and fifty early prints.<sup>7</sup>

The transmission history of the *Seven Sages* is complex; Campbell provides the overview that remains standard.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this edition, Campbell’s scheme can be simplified as follows:

<sup>4</sup> For this date, see Speer and Foehr-Janssens, pp. 64–74.

<sup>5</sup> See Foehr-Janssens, “De Jérusalem à Rome,” “Le désir et le savoir,” and “Misogyny and the Trends.” On the alterations that the frame narrative of the *Book of Sindbad* undergoes, see too the headnotes to the Prologue and the Conclusion in the Explanatory Notes. For two instances where orientalizing elements appear to have been introduced, see the Explanatory Notes to lines E61–62 and the headnote to *Roma*; see too Critten, “Sodomy and the East.”

<sup>6</sup> See Belcher, “The Diffusion of the Book of Sindbād,” pp. 49–53. On the theoretical stakes associated with attempts to trace the east-west passage of texts like the *Book of Sindbad*, see Mallette, “Reading Backward.”

<sup>7</sup> See Campbell, p. xvii. See too the repertoires of texts in Runte, Wikeley, and Farrell, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, pp. 25–157; and *Seven Sages of Rome Database* by editor Bettina Bildhauer, data manager Jane Bonsall, and database creator M. North at the University of St Andrews, <https://db.seven-sages-of-rome.org>.

<sup>8</sup> See Campbell, pp. xxi–xxxv.

The now lost first redaction of the *Seven Sages*, written in the second half of the twelfth century, in French verse, **V**, gives rise to three more versions in French: **K**, in verse; **D\***, in prose, derhymed from a text closely related to **K**; and **A\***, a prose abbreviation. **A\*** then gives rise to numerous translations, referred to as the **A** group or branch, which includes all the Middle English verse versions and a Welsh version as well as another French prose version, **L**, which follows **A\*** closely except in its selection of inset tales at its close. The **A** group also includes a Latin prose version, **H**, which gives rise to its own group, including translations into English prose and Scots verse; a group of Italian texts, **I**; and another French prose version, **M**, which rewrites the *Seven Sages* to take account of the sequel romances that the work attracted. In a shorter, independent line of transmission, the *Dolopathos* (**Do**), a late twelfth-century Latin prose version of the *Seven Sages* materials, was translated into French verse in the thirteenth century. An abbreviated Latin prose version of the *Seven Sages*, **S**, was also compiled as part of Johannes Gobi's *Scala celi* in the early fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

Although this summary presents the processes of translation and adaptation sequentially, it should be borne in mind that the chronology of the manuscripts does not always match up with the order of Campbell's scheme. The unique surviving copy of **D\*** post-dates the earliest Middle English translations of **A\***, for example. It is also the case that readers could have simultaneous access to texts belonging to different branches of transmission. Thus, the Middle Scots text of the *Seven Sages* combines elements belonging to both Campbell's groups **A** and **H**.<sup>10</sup>

This edition cites the French texts of the *Seven Sages* as is shown in Table 2. Our ordering of the versions in this table reflects the presumed order of their composition, which does not correspond to the order in which the surviving manuscripts were made. We rank the texts from earliest (**K**) to latest (**M**).

TABLE 2: FRENCH TEXTS OF THE *SEVEN SAGES*

| SIGLUM    | EDITIONS USED, WITH THEIR BASE COPIES                                                                                     | MS DATE (1) |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>K</b>  | <i>Le Roman des sept sages de Rome</i><br>ed. Speer and Foehr-Janssens (2)<br>Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 1553. | Late 1200s  |
| <b>D*</b> | <i>Deux rédactions du Roman des sept sages</i><br>ed. Paris, pp. 1–54<br>Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 5036. (3)  | 1400s       |
| <b>A*</b> | <i>Les Sept sages de Rome</i><br>ed. Derniame, Henin, and Nais<br>Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 2137.             | Late 1200s  |
| <b>L</b>  | “Roman des sept sages de Rome”<br>ed. Le Roux de Lincy Paris<br>Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 19166.                     | 1200s       |

<sup>9</sup> For two attempts to represent the transmission history of the *Seven Sages* in the form of a stemma, see *Li Ystoire de la male marastre*, ed. Runte, p. xviii; and *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, ed. van Buuren, p. 187.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, ed. van Buuren, pp. 131–81.

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| SIGLUM   | EDITIONS USED, WITH THEIR BASE COPIES                                                                             | MS DATE (1) |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>M</b> | <i>Li Ystoire de la male marastre</i><br>ed. Runte<br>Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Ashburnham 52. | 1300s       |

### NOTES ON THE TABLE:

- (1) We reproduce the manuscript dates given by their editors.
- (2) See too the earlier edition with English apparatus, *Le Roman des sept sages de Rome*, ed. Speer.
- (3) **K** and **D\*** are extant only in the manuscripts cited above. The other texts survive in multiple manuscripts. For further details, see *Le Roman des sept sages de Rome*, ed. Speer and Foehr-Janssens, pp. 12–17.

In this edition, we also refer to a sample of texts representing other groups, languages, and traditions: the Welsh **A** text (**Aw**); two early modern **H** texts in English (**He**) and Scots (**Hs**); and the Latin *Dolopathos* (**Do**) and *Scala celi* (*Stairway to Heaven*) (**S**) redactions, as is shown in Table 3. Under “Insular texts” and “Latin texts,” the versions are given in their presumed order of composition; again, this order does not correspond to the order in which the surviving manuscripts were made. We list the earliest versions first.

TABLE 3: SOME OTHER RENDITIONS OF THE SEVEN SAGES MATERIALS

| SIGLUM    | TEXT    | EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS USED, WITH THEIR BASE COPIES                                                                                                                                                                | MS DATE       |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Aw</b> | Insular | “The Seven Wise Men of Rome”<br>trans. Jones<br>Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 120.                                                                                                              | end 1700s (1) |
| <b>He</b> | Insular | <i>The History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome</i><br>ed. Gomme<br><i>Thystorye of ye vii. wyse maysters of Rome</i> , ed. Wynkyn de Worde.                                                                         | 1506? (2)     |
| <b>Hs</b> | Insular | <i>The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis</i><br>ed. Van Buuren<br>Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 16500.                                                                                                           | ca. 1515 (3)  |
| <b>Do</b> | Latin   | <i>Dolopathos</i><br>by Johannes de Alta Silva, trans. Gilleland<br>Luxemburg, Bibliothèque nationale, MS 110.                                                                                                        | end 1200s (4) |
| <b>S</b>  | Latin   | Abbreviated redaction in Johannes Gobi the Younger’s <i>Scala celi</i><br>trans. Beaulieu. In Beaulieu, <i>Education, prédication, et cultures</i> , pp. 213–32 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 13538. | 1400s (5)     |

### NOTES ON THE TABLE:

- (1) The text of the *Seven Sages* that Jones translates was copied in the late eighteenth century from a fifteenth century manuscript, now Oxford, Jesus College, MS 20. For details of these manuscripts, see Gadsden, “*Chwedleu Seith Doethon Rufein*.”

- (2) Gomme dates this text to 1520 but *STC* 21298 gives “1506?” as the date of the publication. Where Gomme’s copy of the *de Worde* text is deficient, he supplies the missing text from a chap-book dating to 1671 (this procedure is described on his p. iii).
- (3) For this date, see van Buuren, *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, p. 1.
- (4) For this date, see *Historia septem sapientum*, ed. Hilka, p. vii.
- (5) For this date, see Beaulieu, *Education, prédication, et cultures*, pp. 53–79.

In the Explanatory Notes, we focus on elucidating the relationships between the Middle English texts of the *Seven Sages* and the versions listed in tables 1–3. Consultation of the *Book of Sindbad* in its various manifestations allows for a sense of how the narrative frame of the work and its stories change as they move through time and space. The French and Latin versions include the source of the Middle English poems (**A\***) as well as several close analogues; they are representative of versions of the work that English audiences might have met either at home or abroad. The inclusion of a Welsh text (**Aw**) and later versions in English (**He**) and Scots (**Hs**) completes the Insular perspective on the *Seven Sages*. The *Dolopathos* (**Do**) serves as a reminder of the track that the *Seven Sages* did not take. It may be that some of the distinguishing features of the *Dolopathos* restricted its popularity. In contrast to the *Seven Sages*, the narrator of the *Dolopathos* is monastic; his perspective is anti-courtly and anti-woman throughout; and the empress is given no tales of her own to tell.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the *Scali celi* redaction (**S**) is an abbreviation of a now lost *Liber de septem sapientibus*; the morals that it draws from the inset tales on occasion differ from those offered in the other versions of the collection.

#### THE MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS OF THE SEVEN SAGES OF ROME AND THEIR MANUSCRIPTS

There are eight extant manuscript copies of the Middle English *Seven Sages of Rome*. Following Campbell, the poem’s editors group these texts into three versions that correspond to the dialects in which they were written: southern, midland, and northern. Campbell determined that all eight of the Middle English texts of the *Seven Sages* derive from one original Middle English translation of the French prose text **A\***. At the same time, Campbell also showed that none of the Middle English texts copies from any of the other extant texts.<sup>12</sup> A corollary of this observation is that there must have been more copies of the Middle English poem circulating in the Middle Ages than now survive. The textual history that Campbell describes also indicates the importance of oral transmission in the propagation of the work.<sup>13</sup>

Table 4 lists the manuscript copies of the Middle English *Seven Sages* as well as the important scholarly editions by Brunner, Campbell, and Whitelock to which we have referred. We group the texts as these editors do, according to dialect; within these groupings the order follows the date of manuscript production. The composition of the poem must predate the making of the Auchinleck Manuscript (1330s) but it is not clear by how long. Campbell suggests that the parent translation of the Middle English *Seven Sages* was written ca. 1275.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On the relationship of the *Dolopathos* to the Sindbad tradition, see Ziolkowski, “Vergil as Shahrazad.”

<sup>12</sup> See Campbell, pp. xl–lvii. Brunner (pp. xx–xxi) suggests that **D** might represent an independent translation of the French source but Whitelock (pp. xli–xlix) disproves this supposition.

<sup>13</sup> See Whitelock, pp. xxxviii–xlvi.

<sup>14</sup> See Campbell, p. lix.

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TABLE 4: MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS OF THE *SEVEN SAGES*

| SIGLUM    | VERSION,<br>EDITOR        | VERSIONS AND EDITIONS USED, WITH COPIES                                                                                                                 | MS DATE (1) |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>A</b>  | Southern,<br>ed. Brunner  | Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 Auchinleck Manuscript, fols. 85r–99v (ff. 334) (2)                                        | 1330s       |
| <b>Ar</b> | Southern,<br>ed. Brunner  | London, British Library, MS Arundel 140, fols. 152r–165v (of the first booklet, ff.165; a second booklet was added later)                               | Early 1400s |
| <b>E</b>  | Southern,<br>ed. Brunner  | London, British Library, MS Egerton 1995, fols. 3r–54v (ff. 58)                                                                                         | Late 1400s  |
| <b>F</b>  | Southern,<br>ed. Brunner  | Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38, fols. 134–156v (ff. 261) (3)                                                                                  | ca. 1500    |
| <b>B</b>  | Southern,<br>ed. Brunner  | Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, fols. 18r–54r / pp. 39–112 (ff. 242 / pp. 514)                                                                         | Early 1500s |
| <b>D</b>  | Midland, ed.<br>Whitelock | Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd.1.17, fols. 54r–63r (of the third volume of this manuscript; vol. 1 is ff. 261; vol. 2 is ff. 93; vol. 3 is ff.87) | Late 1300s  |
| <b>R</b>  | Northern, ed.<br>Campbell | Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 175, fols. 109r–131v (ff. 136)                                                                             | Mid 1300s   |
| <b>C</b>  | Northern, ed.<br>Campbell | London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E. IX, fols. 25r–48r (ff. 114) (4)                                                                             | Early 1400s |

### NOTES ON THE TABLE:

- (1) These dates are from Whitelock.
- (2) Brunner takes **A** as his base text for the extant text of **A** and gives variant readings from **Ar**, **B**, and **E**. Where **A** lacks text, Brunner gives parallel texts of the other southern versions; the texts of **Ar** and **F** are also incomplete. The abbreviation “ff.” is used to indicate the total number of folios in the manuscript.
- (3) Brunner transcribes **F** independently at pp. 193–210 and 129–92.
- (4) Campbell edits **C** listing variants from **R**, which is incomplete.

### *Manuscript transmission*

The manuscripts that contain the Middle English *Seven Sages* are a valuable source of information regarding the poem's late-medieval readers and audiences. The following survey aims to draw out patterns in their compilation and the reader profiles that they implicate. Our aim is to narrativize and otherwise flesh out the information that we give more schematically in Table 4. We hold back more detailed descriptions of our base text **A** for the next subsection of this Introduction; on the language and scribes of **A** and on **E**, which we use to supplement **A** where **A** is deficient, see too the commentary in *How We Made This Edition*.

The earliest manuscript containing the Middle English *Seven Sages* is the **Auchinleck Manuscript (A)**. Produced in London in the 1330s, Auchinleck was written by six scribes whose clear bookhands, treatment

of mise-en-page, and collaboration all suggest a lay, commercial production context.<sup>15</sup> Today, Auchinleck contains 44 items across 334 parchment folios (250 x 190mm in format), although originally it was larger and had at least 60 items. Numerous leaves have been lost or intentionally cut out and there is no trace of an original binding, the current modern binding being at least the manuscript's third. Despite these losses, Auchinleck preserves a wide array of Middle English verse texts, many unique or in their earliest copies, including hagiographical, devotional, moral, historical, and satirical works. It is perhaps most famous today for its large collection of romances, several of which treat the establishment and defense of England by iconic figures such as Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton, Arthur, and Horn.<sup>16</sup>

For a manuscript containing almost entirely Middle English material, Auchinleck was quite lavishly produced. It is likely that many of its items were introduced by a miniature, resulting in fifty or more illuminated illustrations across the book (all but five of these have since been removed or lost to damage).<sup>17</sup> In its layout and decoration, Auchinleck most closely resembles books containing French and Latin that were being produced for members of the elite of London society at around the same time.<sup>18</sup> The great expense its manufacture must have incurred — which may have included the translation of some of its items<sup>19</sup> — indicates that its first owners were very wealthy. Book historians argue for a mercantile, noble, or even royal commissioner.<sup>20</sup> It may have been a book associated with the court of Edward III. There are links between Auchinleck and the books owned by Walter de Milemete, courtier and tutor to Edward before he became king.<sup>21</sup> Another possible owner is Edward III's queen, Philippa of Hainaut.<sup>22</sup>

The manuscript of the Middle English *Seven Sages* that is most like Auchinleck in respect of content is **Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.2.38 (F)**. As it now stands, having lost leaves at various points, this book contains 43 items across 261 folios.<sup>23</sup> The first quarter of the book (63 folios) contains 33 shorter texts covering basic doctrinal instruction, moral topics, saints lives, and texts concerned with the proper upbringing, education, and behavior of members of the patriarchal household, such as *How the Goode Man Taght Hys Sone*, *How a Merchande Dyd Hys Wyfe Betray*, and *A Gode Mater of The Marchand and Hys Sone*. The remaining bulk of the volume includes the *Seven Sages* alongside nine other romances, three of which are shared with Auchinleck (*Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, and *Sir Degaré*, the *Seven Sages* coming between *Bevis* and *Guy*).<sup>24</sup> While this book would have been a less costly production than the Auchinleck Manuscript — it lacks decoration and is written on paper — its format is sizable (297 x

<sup>15</sup> The standard account of the making of the book is Shonk, "A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript."

<sup>16</sup> For a facsimile and edition, see Burnley and Wiggins, *The Auchinleck Manuscript*. See too *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, intro. Pearsall and Cunningham. For a recent description, see Fein, "Introduction."

<sup>17</sup> On Auchinleck's post-production career, see Connolly and Edwards, "Evidence for the History of the Auchinleck Manuscript." Whereas the putative miniature that once opened the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* would be a unique instance of illustration in the corpus of Middle English *Seven Sages* manuscripts, several of the books containing French prose text **A\*** were illustrated. These illustrations offer a thought-provoking guide to the late-medieval reception of the *Seven Sages*. See Runte, "The Scribe and Miniaturist as Reader."

<sup>18</sup> See Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 104–47. Further description of the decoration in Auchinleck is provided in the Textual Notes.

<sup>19</sup> See Pearsall, "The Auchinleck Manuscript."

<sup>20</sup> For an overview, see Olson, "Romancing the Book," pp. 99–116.

<sup>21</sup> See Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 116–17.

<sup>22</sup> See Meale, "Deluxe Copies of Middle English Romance," p. 96; and Critten, "The Affordances."

<sup>23</sup> For a facsimile and a description, see *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38*, intro. McSparran and Robinson.

<sup>24</sup> On the mix of romance and penitential materials in the codex, see Radulescu, "Macrocosm and Microcosm."

210mm) and it appears to have been produced by a commercial scribe for a bourgeois urban household. Because the scribe's dialect can be located to Leicester and because the book shares a paper stock with another manuscript whose connections to Leicester are secure — Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61 — it has been argued that CUL Ff.2.38 was produced for use by a patron in that town.<sup>25</sup>

**London, British Library, MS Arundel 140 (Ar)** differs from both CUL Ff.2.38 and the Auchinleck Manuscript in its provision of co-texts for the Middle English *Seven Sages*. Alongside our poem, the Arundel codex compiles copies of *Ypotis*, *Mandeville's Travels*, the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, and the *Prick of Conscience*.<sup>26</sup> These are all interesting companion pieces for the *Seven Sages*. *Mandeville's Travels* narrates a voyage across the Islamic world and shows a clear fascination with the east that contrasts with the studious avoidance in the *Seven Sages* of any mention of its source in the *Book of Sindbad*. The frame of the *Seven Sages* is mirrored in *Ypotis*, which gives a dialogue between a wise child and the Roman emperor Hadrian. Hadrian interrogates the child on topics ranging from the origins of heaven and earth to the varieties of sin and the means of their overcoming; at the text's close, the child declares that he is Christ and departs for heaven.<sup>27</sup>

The copy of the *Speculum Gy* in Arundel 140 links the book to the Auchinleck Manuscript, which also has a copy of this text, but the Arundel manuscript's support — paper leaves measuring 290 x 215mm — combined with its lack of decoration suggest that its audience was more like that addressed by CUL Ff.2.38. The interest in penitence manifested in CUL Ff.2.38 is amplified in Arundel 140, which contains a copy of the popular *Prick of Conscience*. Arundel's moralizing impetus may have made it an attractive host for the copy of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Melibee* with which it was bound in the later fifteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

The *Prick of Conscience* is copied with the Middle English *Seven Sages* in two further manuscripts: **London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E. IX (C)** and **Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 175 (R)**. Both these books have been attributed to a team of North Yorkshire scribes who made books for laypeople; study of the ownership marks in the codices shows that they stayed in the vicinity of their production — possibly Ripon in North Yorkshire — into the early modern period.<sup>29</sup> Galba E. IX puts the Middle English *Seven Sages* and the *Prick of Conscience* alongside a Middle English translation of Chrétien de Troyes's *Chevalier au lion*, passion lyrics, the historical poems of the northern writer, Laurence Minot, and two Middle English texts associated with *Cursor mundi*, a massive history of the world covering creation to Doomsday.<sup>30</sup>

Galba E. IX is large in format (335 x 220mm) and written on parchment; it was probably designed for reading at a lectern. Rawlinson Poet. 175 is a more modest production.<sup>31</sup> While this book is also written on parchment, its format is smaller (268 x 190mm), and the codex appears designed for private reading. Rawlinson Poet. 175 presents the Middle English *Seven Sages* and the *Prick of Conscience* alongside shorter

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<sup>25</sup> See Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, pp. 119–22, and “Two Leicestershire Romance Codices.”

<sup>26</sup> For a description, see Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>27</sup> For an edition of the text recording variant readings from Arundel 140, see *Altenglische Legenden*, ed. Horstmann, pp. 511–26.

<sup>28</sup> See Jackson, “Chaucer's *Melibee*,” pp. 106–15.

<sup>29</sup> See Hanna, *Introducing English Medieval Book History*, pp. 96–131; and Johnston, “Copying and Reading *The Prick of Conscience*,” pp. 765–66.

<sup>30</sup> For descriptions, see Hanna, *Introducing English Medieval Book History*, pp. 98–99; and Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>31</sup> For a description, see Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, p. 116.

religious items, which include the *Gast of Gy*, a purgatory poem that stages a conversation between a priest and Gy, formerly a citizen of the French town of Alés, who speaks of purgatory from beyond the grave.<sup>32</sup>

All the manuscripts mentioned thus far seem to have been made with a lay audience in mind. In contrast, **Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd.1.17 (D)** was probably produced for a religious house.<sup>33</sup> This is another large format (440 x 305mm) parchment book designed for consultation at a lectern. It comprises three parts: parts one and two treat British and eastern history in Latin while part three contains miscellaneous materials in Middle English, including *Mandeville's Travels* and *Piers Plowman* alongside the *Seven Sages*. Dialect analysis suggests that the scribe of the Middle English texts was trained in the North of England. Working backwards from what is known of the early modern ownership of the book, Ralph Hanna suggests that CUL Dd.1.17 was copied by a monk attached to Evesham Abbey who was on secondment at the abbey's cell at Penwortham in Lancashire when he copied the book for his mother house.<sup>34</sup>

The two manuscripts remaining to be treated have both been claimed as early examples of the commonplace book. Written on paper in a reasonably large format (280 x 195mm), **London, British Library, MS Egerton 1995 (E)** presents the Middle English *Seven Sages* followed by a miscellaneous collection of texts including a children's courtesy book, lists of hunting terms, medical advice, a list of institutions in the city of London, and three historical texts: the *Siege of Rouen*, Lydgate's list of kings after the Conquest, and William Gregory's London chronicle.<sup>35</sup> Egerton was written in the hand of a single scribe (except for marginalia) in a secretary script influenced by anglicana (that includes anglicana two-compartment *a*). The style of handwriting, neat ruling, even margins, single-column layout, decorative rubrication, and use of guide letters and catchwords together indicate a well-trained, skilled, and experienced scribe.<sup>36</sup> The contents and visual features suggest that Egerton was professionally produced to order. We do not know the name of the scribe or of the original owner, and if there was an original binding then it is now lost.<sup>37</sup> The choice of texts implicates a Londoner of middling social level, probably a merchant, whose interests ranged from those of the "rising London businessman" to those of a "literary hobbyist" who might want to read a poem like the *Seven Sages*.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, **Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354 (B)** can be more securely located in London's mercantile community.<sup>39</sup> The manuscript is of paper and has a "holster book" format, being much taller than it is wide (290 x 110mm); it is a kind of book that could be sold blank and pre-bound for the recording of accounts. The scribe of Balliol 354, who was most likely identical with its early owner, Richard Hill, was by his own account a London grocer; he seems to have written the book over an extended period (1503–1536).<sup>40</sup> His tastes are similar to the commissioner of Egerton 1995, extending from historical materials with a London focus to more practical and literary texts. Alongside its copy of the Middle English *Seven Sages*, Balliol

<sup>32</sup> For an edition of the text from Rawlinson Poet. 175, see *Three Purgatory Poems*, ed. Foster, pp. 27–107.

<sup>33</sup> For a description, see Whitelock, pp. xx–xxxiii.

<sup>34</sup> See Hanna, "Cambridge, University Library MS Dd.1.17."

<sup>35</sup> For a description, see Parker, *The Commonplace Book*, pp. 17–36.

<sup>36</sup> Further description of the decoration in Egerton 1995 is provided in the Textual Notes.

<sup>37</sup> Egerton was rebound in the nineteenth century in red leather with the crest and motto of Lord Charlemont, the owner of the manuscript until it was purchased by the British Museum in 1865. See *John Page's Siege of Rouen*, ed. Bellis, pp. xlv–xlvii.

<sup>38</sup> Parker, *The Commonplace Book*, p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> For a facsimile, see *Digital Bodleian*, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>. For a description, see Parker, *The Commonplace Book*, pp. 37–88.

<sup>40</sup> See Collier, "Richard Hill"; Gillespie, "Balliol MS 354"; and Thompson, "Texts and the City."

354 compiles extracts from John Gower's *Confessio amantis* and a well-known group of Middle English lyrics.<sup>41</sup> While both Egerton 1995 and Balliol 354 have selections of items that seem to respond primarily to personal tastes, the similarity between these books — they also share the *Siege of Rouen*, for example — suggests that they might equally manifest a shared set of predilections and concerns that defined the merchant community in late-medieval London.<sup>42</sup>

As the foregoing analysis indicates, the Middle English *Seven Sages* reached a broad constituency of readers. In terms of rank and class, readers and owners ranged from among the highest levels of the social elite (if we accept that someone like Philippa of Hainaut was the patron of Auchinleck) to the more middling secular readerships and households implicated by CUL Ff.2.38 and Arundel 140 and the mercantile readers of Egerton 1995 and Balliol 345. CUL Dd.1.17 demonstrates that, in at least one instance, the poem was also copied for an audience of professional religious. In terms of their location, readers of the Middle English *Seven Sages* could be found in or around towns from London to Leicester in the midlands and Ripon in the north. The dates of the surviving manuscripts show that the poem was being read at these locations from the early fourteenth into the sixteenth centuries.

Further evidence for the reception of the Middle English *Seven Sages* can be gleaned from the texts with which it was compiled, which implicate audiences interested in penitential as well as romance literature. The format and appearance of the manuscripts are also telling. The varying sizes of the books could foster a range of reading modes with the larger books inviting more studious reading, or perhaps oral performance, and the smaller, less pretentious ones supporting private reading. Some of the manuscripts were clearly designed to be seen and shared, such as the Auchinleck Manuscript with its many illustrations, whereas others such as Balliol 354 might have been more personal productions.

All of this makes patent the successful implantation of the Middle English *Seven Sages* in an impressive variety of late-medieval reading contexts. As was pointed out above, there were probably other manuscripts of the poem circulating in the Middle Ages that are now lost.<sup>43</sup> If these codices had survived, we would have been able to extend our reception history further still. To this material evidence of the work's transmission we can add the evidence of later authors. Gower appears to have known a version of the *Seven Sages*, and Chaucer may have done so too.<sup>44</sup>

## THE AUCHINLECK SEVEN SAGES OF ROME

Even within their dialect groupings, the eight texts of the *Seven Sages* differ quite broadly from one another and from the French prose text **A\*** that Campbell identified as their source.<sup>45</sup> These differences make each copy of the poem a rewarding object of study. Our decision to edit Auchinleck for this METS edition is in

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<sup>41</sup> For a partial transcription of Balliol 354, see *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems*, ed. Dyboski.

<sup>42</sup> See Lindenbaum, "London Texts," pp. 307–08. For an edition of the *Siege of Rome* from Egerton 1995, see *John Page's The Siege of Rouen*, ed. Bellis.

<sup>43</sup> The notice of a "book of vij Sagys" delivered to Walter Paston in the Paston Letters may refer to one such lost copy. See *Paston Letters and Papers*, ed. Davis, 1.576. We are grateful to Diane Watt for sharing this reference with us. See further Watt, *God's Own Gentlewoman*, p. 191.

<sup>44</sup> See the headnotes to *senescalvus*, *Virgilius*, and *avis* in the Explanatory Notes.

<sup>45</sup> Variance is less pronounced between the two northern version texts, **C** and **R**, which Campbell argues were copied from the same source (pp. lxxi–lxxiii). Variance between the texts of the southern version is more pronounced and is recorded in the on-page notes to Brunner's edition and discussed in our Explanatory Notes.

some ways traditional. **A** is the earliest surviving text of the poem and, as such, was chosen by Karl Brunner for his edition of the southern version. While it is not without its idiosyncrasies, which include a tendency to abbreviate materials found at greater length elsewhere, Campbell argues that the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* best preserves the language and wording of the parent translation from which all the Middle English texts derive.<sup>46</sup> Where the Auchinleck text of the poem is deficient due to damage to the manuscript, we supply the text from the next closest manuscript of the southern version having these passages, MS Egerton 1995 (**E**).

**A** gives us a distinct variety of Middle English from in or around London ca. 1300; a similar variety of the language was used in three other Auchinleck texts: the romances *Kyng Alisaunder*, *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, and *King Richard*. These works show authors making intelligent use of French and Latin as well as English linguistic material. While some commentators have argued that they were written by the same person, others suggest that they were composed by different writers participating in a shared literary idiom that was cultivated in the capital around the turn of the fourteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Either way, the author of the parent translation of the Middle English *Seven Sages* remains anonymous. All that we can say about them with any confidence is that they deserve special praise amongst the early translators of French romance for their rendering of the French prose text **A\*** into octosyllabic rhyming couplets in Middle English. Whoever this redactor was, they affected a comprehensive re-envisioning of their source that fully exploited the creative potential inherent in earlier Middle English.<sup>48</sup>

Notwithstanding the seniority and linguistic interest of **A**, we should admit that our choice of base text also reflects our longer-standing interest in the Auchinleck Manuscript. Indeed, it was our work on this book that initially brought us to the *Seven Sages*. Alison Wiggins is part of the team behind the online facsimile and edition of the Auchinleck Manuscript that is hosted by the National Library of Scotland (<https://auchinleck.nls.uk>). Her subsequent work on the book includes studies of its language and methods of production as well as of the manuscript's central figure, Guy of Warwick.<sup>49</sup> Rory Critten has focused on Auchinleck style and the affordances of the French-infused Middle English in which its texts are written; by emphasizing the book's French debts, he has sought to complicate inherited descriptions of Auchinleck that profile its anglophone and anglophile credentials.<sup>50</sup> We hope that this edition of the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* will encourage new work not only on the poem, by re-presenting its earliest extant copy, but also on the manuscript that contains it.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Campbell, pp. xliii–xliv.

<sup>47</sup> See *Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. Smithers, 2:40–55, arguing for the common authorship of these works; and compare *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, ed. Macrae-Gibson, 2:65–75.

<sup>48</sup> On the creative work of the Middle English translator, see further Critten, “The Affordances.”

<sup>49</sup> See Wiggins, “Are Auchinleck Manuscripts Scribes 1 and 6 the Same Scribe?,” “Guy of Warwick in Warwick,” and “Imagining the Compiler.” On Guy of Warwick, see *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field; and *The Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*, ed. Wiggins.

<sup>50</sup> See Critten, “The Affordances,” “The Exploitation of French-English Lexical Transfer”; and Critten, Picca, and Gay-Crosier, “French Lexis in the Auchinleck Manuscript.” On the anglophone and anglophile credentials of Auchinleck, see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 108–41.

<sup>51</sup> Several other Auchinleck texts are also available in METS editions for research and teaching. As well as Wiggins's edition of the *Stanzaic Guy* (above), see the *King of Tars*, ed. Chandler; *Sir Owain*, in *Three Purgatory Poems*, ed. Foster; *Amis and Amiloun*, in *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Foster; *Sir Degaré*, *Sir Orfeo*, and *Lay le Freine*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. Laskaya and Salisbury; *Floris and Blancheflour*, in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. Kooper; *Bevis of Hampton*, in *Four Romances of England*, ed. Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury; *Roland and Vernagu*

SCHOLARSHIP ON THE *SEVEN SAGES OF ROME*

The popularity of the *Seven Sages* in the Middle Ages contrasts with its neglect in modern criticism, including criticism produced as part of a reawakening of interest in the *Seven Sages* more broadly. Two journals — *Narrative Culture* and *Das Mittelalter* — devote recent special issues to the *Seven Sages*, but neither features an article considering the work's Middle English versions.<sup>52</sup> This neglect ought probably to be attributed to the perception among Middle English scholars that the poem's moralizations are not only distasteful but also definitive. A surface reading of the collection sees the sages' stories about the untrustworthiness of women exemplified in the empress's reprehensible behavior, which justifies her final punishment.<sup>53</sup> This view of the work is only lightly modified in a more recent attempt to re-present the Middle English *Seven Sages* as medieval children's literature.<sup>54</sup>

Standing against these readings of the poem is the evidence that we have surveyed regarding its reception. As we have seen, book historians propose that the Auchinleck Manuscript was produced for a female patron, and the compilation of the poem alongside texts like the *Prick of Conscience*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Mandeville's Travels* suggests that the audiences for whom it was copied could be expected to interact intellectually and emotionally with the materials they read. What then might the attraction of the work have been if it was not the misogyny that is so flagrant in plot summaries of the kind with which this Introduction opened?

At present, the best guides to the appeal of the Middle English *Seven Sages* are the scholars working on the French versions of the poem. Among the useful concepts introduced by these writers is the reading practice that Mary B. Speer calls "specular identification," whereby readers of the inset tales are implicitly invited to consider the different ways in which the actors in these tales might reflect the characters in the frame narrative.<sup>55</sup> Also illuminating is Yasmina Foehr-Janssens's comparison between the Freudian dream and the inset tales, which in their presentation of players and motives condense the complex ethical and emotional engagements of the characters in the frame.<sup>56</sup> Speer and Foehr-Janssens's critical approaches help us to see beyond the judicial rhetoric of the frame narrative, in which the empress and the sages use tales to sway the emperor. Their insights encourage us to read the inset tales not as a confirmation of their stated purposes but as a commentary on them. In so doing, Speer and Foehr-Janssens make accessible the full ethical and psychological intelligence that animates the poem.

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and *Otuel A Knight*, in *The Roland and Otuel Romances*, ed. Melick, Fein, and Raybin; *Sir Tristrem*, in *Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem*, ed. Lupack; and *The Simonie*, in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. Dean. Horn Childe and *Maiden Rimnild*, ed. Ford is forthcoming.

<sup>52</sup> See "The 'Seven Sages of Rome' as a Global Narrative Tradition," ed. Bildhauer, Eming, and Schmidt; and "Shades Of Misogyny," ed. Reynders and Sleiderink.

<sup>53</sup> For a reading of the poem along these lines, see Lumiansky, "Thematic Antifeminism."

<sup>54</sup> See Clifton, "*The Seven Sages of Rome*." More nuanced readings of the Middle English poem are offered by Allen, "Episodes"; Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, pp. 132–37; Ho, "Framed Progeny"; Jaunzems, "Structure and Meaning"; and Steel, *How Not to Make a Human*, pp. 23–30, and "Ridiculous Mourning." With the exception of Jaunzems, none of these writers takes the *Seven Sages* as their primary topic.

<sup>55</sup> See Speer, "Specularity in a Formulaic Frame Romance."

<sup>56</sup> See Foehr-Janssens, "La parole condensée."

This argument can be illustrated by means of an example. As a test case, we take the first of the sages' tales, *canis*, the tale of the dog.<sup>57</sup> This is a tale that is central to both Speer's and Foehr-Janssens's analyses of the *Seven Sages*. At the same time as we aim to highlight the emotional and intellectual complexities that result from the tale's embedding in the frame narrative of the *Seven Sages*, we also propose to demonstrate the benefits of comparative analysis, which can clarify the particular concerns animating the Middle English versions of the poem. As *canis* is one of the four tales that the *Seven Sages* carries over from the *Book of Sindbad* — the others are *senescalcus*, *aper*, and *avis*; the tales of the steward, the boar, and the bird — the archive for this story is especially rich.

#### A TEST CASE: CANIS

The first of the sages' tales narrates the unhappy fate of a pet who saves his master's baby from an attack by a snake while the baby is left unattended. Rather than being rewarded for its service, the dog is killed by its master on his return home. As it is told in the Auchinleck text (701–836), this outcome is blamed on the baby's nurses and the knight's wife. Returning home before the parents and, seeing the house covered in blood, the nurses assume that the dog has killed the baby, who is nowhere to be found: in the fight with the snake, its cradle has been overturned. Fleeing the house, the nurses encounter the knight's wife, to whom they tell their story, with the result that the wife demands that her husband kill the dog. The knight agrees to his wife's request, and, when he realizes his error, he departs barefoot into exile, declaring that his example should warn other men against believing their wives. The sage telling the tale doubles down on the knight's moral (837–42). If the emperor acquiesces to his wife's ultimatum and kills his son, then a similar fate should befall the emperor as befell the knight on account of his canicide.

For the sage who tells *canis*, the relationship between the frame narrative and the inset tale is clear. The knight stands in for the emperor, the faithful dog is his son, and the knight's wife is the empress. The killing of the dog thus mirrors the killing of Florentine, which the sages hope to avoid. This interpretation of the tale persuades the emperor, who agrees to postpone his son's judgement (843–46). But the interpretation of *canis* is not so straightforward for readers outside the narrative frame. To begin with, there are more players in the tale than in the frame.<sup>58</sup> The son in the frame has a possible double in the baby as well as the dog, and it may be that this doubling reflects the emperor's mixed feelings about his own progeny: he nurtures his son but he also resents him insofar as his son's accession can only be accomplished at the cost of his own demise.<sup>59</sup> The empress also has a second potential representative in the tale: the snake who attempts to kill the baby. But the snake might also represent the father. The gendering of the snake in the Auchinleck manuscript is equivocal; it is referred to by both masculine and feminine pronouns, so the creature might be read as a reflection of underlying filicidal urges within the father.<sup>60</sup>

This is not to say that the sage's story is poorly chosen. In the fortunate discovery of the unharmed baby at the tale's close, *canis* holds out the possibility of a happy ending for the emperor.<sup>61</sup> But the significance of the tale in the context of the *Seven Sages* frame exceeds that attributed to it by its teller. In particular,

<sup>57</sup> The practice of giving Latin names to the inset tales can be traced back to Goedeke, "*Liber de septem sapientibus*." Like Karl Goedeke and the continental scholars who followed him, we refrain from capitalizing these titles.

<sup>58</sup> Discussing the version of *canis* in **K**, on this point, see Speer, "Specularity in a Formulaic Frame Romance."

<sup>59</sup> Discussing the version of *canis* in **K**, on this point, see Foehr-Janssens, "Le chien, la femme et le petit enfant."

<sup>60</sup> See further the Explanatory Note for line 735.

<sup>61</sup> Discussing the version of *canis* in **K**, on this point, see Foehr-Janssens, "Quand les bêtes se taisent."

the inset story affords new insights into the psychology of the emperor and the emotional experience of succession, an idea that is of central importance in the poem.<sup>62</sup>

The tale of the dog is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages* as well as the *Dolopathos* and all the versions of the *Book of Sindbad* except **SindA1001** and **SindP3**.<sup>63</sup> It also has a life outside the *Sindbad* and *Seven Sages* traditions.<sup>64</sup> Its history is revealing. In the earlier versions of the tale compiled in the *Book of Sindbad*, the story is told as a warning against hasty action; there it is the father who discovers the messy scene at home, draws the conclusion that the dog has killed the child, and kills the animal without any further prompting. The Middle English versions all agree with **A\***, their source, in making women responsible for the dog's murder, but the northern and southern versions lay greater emphasis on this point than does the French text. These versions record the wife's ultimatum to her husband (795–96); moralize generally on the perils of believing women (812–14); blame the wife for the dog's death (820–22); and show the knight presenting his self-exile as a lesson to other men to ignore their wives' counsel (823–26).<sup>65</sup> Thus the misogyny already inherent in **A\*** is enhanced in the two main Middle English versions. How is this development to be interpreted?

### MISOGYNY IN THE *SEVEN SAGES OF ROME*

The antifeminist rhetoric of the *Seven Sages* — which, as we have just seen, is amplified in some Middle English versions of the poem — is an aspect of the text that twenty-first-century readers will most likely find off-putting. But the warnings of hasty judgment that animate *canis* should give us pause when interpreting the poem's misogyny. Like the bloodied dog who greets his master in the inset tale, the self-mutilated empress who appears before her husband at the opening of the poem is a sign requiring careful consideration, notwithstanding the reading of her actions that we are given in the narrative frame. To begin with, we should recognize that the opening scene in which the empress accuses her stepson of an attempted rape is an iteration of a trope familiar to medieval readers.

When the *Seven Sages* shows the empress falsely accusing her stepson of an attempted rape, the text reiterates a motif that was best known in the medieval west in the form that it assumes in the biblical story of Potiphar's wife. In Genesis 39, Joseph catches the eye of the wife of his master, Potiphar, who is a eunuch. Potiphar's wife repeatedly asks Joseph to lie with her but Joseph refuses. One day, finding Joseph alone, the wife corners him and insists that he should sleep with her, with the result that Joseph flees. Seeing herself so slighted, and in danger of being discovered, the wife claims that Joseph has attempted to rape her; as proof she offers a piece of clothing that Joseph has left behind. Joseph is then thrown into prison, where he meets the butler and baker whose dreams he successfully interprets in Genesis 40.

The Potiphar's wife motif was popular in both antiquity and the Middle Ages; it survives in eastern as well as European renditions.<sup>66</sup> Recent scholarship focuses on the motif's inversion of the most common situation of attempted rape by presenting the victim as a man, not a woman, and by giving the accusing woman the social power necessary to exact vengeance over her supposed rapist; the popularity of the motif into modernity has been found to reflect both men's fears about the ease with which legally binding rape

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<sup>62</sup> Discussing the development of this theme in the Middle English *Seven Sages*, see further Allen, "Episodes."

<sup>63</sup> For details, see the headnote to *canis* in the Explanatory Notes.

<sup>64</sup> See Blackburn, "The Brahmin and the Mongoose"; and Eichel-Lojkine, "*Canis* dans tous ses états."

<sup>65</sup> See the Explanatory Notes for details on these lines.

<sup>66</sup> See Faverty, "The Story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife"; and *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, ed. Yohannan.

accusations might be formulated and their guilt about their treatment of women.<sup>67</sup> But the motif is open to a broad variety of interpretations. Thus, contemporary Bible scholars argue for readings of Genesis 39 that notice the text's depiction of Potiphar as an insufficient husband and the role that God's providence — as opposed to Joseph's virtue — plays in the successful resolution of the story.<sup>68</sup> In the Middle Ages too the motif might invite a variety of readings. In Marie de France's *Lanval*, for example, a poem that features a remarkably passive male lead, Guinevere's propositioning of the hero is one of a series of gender inversions. In *Lanval*, it might be argued, the conventions of rape culture are made freshly available for analysis thanks to their cross-gendered representation.<sup>69</sup>

We propose that, like *Lanval*, the *Seven Sages* invites a reflective reading of the Potiphar's wife motif. The *Seven Sages* is a text that repeatedly displays the opportunistic redeployment of pre-existing tales in order to score a rhetorical point. The sages tell tales that they interpret for the emperor as warnings of the dangers of hasty action or the wiles of women, while the empress presents her stories as evidence for the unreliability of advisors and the usurping desires of princes. Neither teller captures the full potential of their stories and the same doubtful attitude that the poem cultivates towards these narrators can also be extended to the narrator of the frame. Here we follow the model advanced by Bettina Bildhauer, who argues that the rampant misogyny of the monastic *Dolopathos* narrator should warn readers against uncritically accepting his account of the empress's assault on the prince.<sup>70</sup> After Bildhauer, we might read the Middle English *Seven Sages* with its own fortified misogyny as a poem that fosters awareness of the antifeminism not only of its own frame but also of the cultures that perpetuate the Potiphar's wife motif.<sup>71</sup>

Support for this argument can be found in medieval literary theory describing the function of *exempla*, or short narrative examples. Writers on this topic emphasized the intellectual and emotional training that the use of fiction in moral education might facilitate; in so doing, they dwelt on the potential of individual examples to generate multiple, potentially contradictory readings, especially where they were embedded in bigger narrative contexts.<sup>72</sup> The stories that the sages tell in the *Seven Sages* exemplify this quality insofar as several of them seem likely to engender sympathy for the women whom they depict. This is the case, for instance, of the stories featuring unhappy, cooped up wives, including *puteus*, the tale of the well; *tentamina*, the tale of the tests; and *inclusa*, the tale of the recluse.<sup>73</sup> It is also the case that the sages' own behavior undermines their credibility, for example in the rather ungainly competition with which the text opens in which the sages vie for the right to instruct Florentine.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> See Vines, "The Many Wives of Potiphar." For a more sympathetic reading of the portrayal of men as the victim-survivors of sexual violence in the *Seven Sages* and its co-texts in the Auchinleck Manuscript, see now too Bonsall and Piercy, "Comparative Approaches to Men's Experiences of Sexual Coercion."

<sup>68</sup> See Kalmanofsky, *The Power of Equivocation*, pp. 15–35.

<sup>69</sup> See Harper, "Teaching the Potiphar's Wife Motif." For a bilingual edition of *Lanval*, see *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. and trans. Waters, pp. 162–95. On the variety of uses to which the Potiphar's wife motif might be put by medieval writers, see further Foehr-Janssens, "La femme de Putiphar."

<sup>70</sup> See Bildhauer, "Silencing a Woman's Accusation of Attempted Rape," and, discussing a German version of the text, "Every Narrator is Biased."

<sup>71</sup> For an application of Bildhauer's insights to a reading of the Middle Scots text of the *Seven Sages* (**Hs**), see Flynn, "A 'Wyfis Sawe.'"

<sup>72</sup> On medieval theories of the *exemplum*, see Allen, *False Fables*, pp. 1–26.

<sup>73</sup> See the headnotes to these tales in the Explanatory Notes.

<sup>74</sup> See the headnote to the Prologue in the Explanatory Notes.

## INTRODUCTION

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The empress is similarly discredited in the occasionally odd morals that she appends to her stories. In *gaza*, for example, the empress objects not that the son in the tale decapitates his father in order to prevent the father's identification as a thief but rather that the son throws his father's head into a privy instead of choosing a more suitable place for its burial (1339–50).<sup>75</sup> Our point is thus not that the collection is really a pro-woman manifesto but that all of its positive assertions are made doubtful by the fictions that its speakers engage. We view the *Seven Sages* as an instantiation of medieval misogyny that is polyvocal insofar as it contains within it the possibility of its own undoing.<sup>76</sup>

The essential slipperiness of the collection's tales is illustrated by the variety that characterizes their moralization, which we detail in the Explanatory Notes. In the most extreme cases, the tales told switch tellers over the course of the work's transmission. The redactor of the **H**-text saw the potential of *inclusa* to speak for the empress and gave the tale to her, for example. Conversely, the empress gets two tales in the *Seven Sages* that elsewhere were told by her opponents. In the *Book of Sindbad*, a version of *senescalcus* is told by one of the sultan's advisors; and in the *Dolopathos*, *gaza* is told by one of the wise men pleading for the prince.<sup>77</sup> Table 5 shows the movement of *inclusa* (in bold) from the sages to the empress; it is also intended as a finding aid for readers working across the three main branches of the *Seven Sages*, which have the collection's tales in different orders.

TABLE 5: TALES AND THEIR TELLERS IN THREE BRANCHES OF THE SEVEN SAGES

| TALES AND TELLERS | K                     | A                     | H                                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Empress        | <i>arbor</i>          | <i>arbor</i>          | <i>arbor</i>                         |
| 2. Sage           | <i>canis</i>          | <i>canis</i>          | <i>canis</i>                         |
| 3. Empress        | <i>senescalcus</i>    | <i>aper</i>           | <i>aper</i>                          |
| 4. Sage           | <i>medicus</i>        | <i>medicus</i>        | <i>puteus</i>                        |
| 5. Empress        | <i>aper</i>           | <i>gaza</i>           | <i>gaza</i>                          |
| 6. Sage           | <i>puteus</i>         | <i>puteus</i>         | <i>avis</i>                          |
| 7. Empress        | <i>Roma</i>           | <i>senescalcus</i>    | <i>sapientes</i>                     |
| 8. Sage           | <i>tentamina</i>      | <i>tentamina</i>      | <i>tentamina</i>                     |
| 9. Empress        | <i>gaza</i>           | <i>Virgilius</i>      | <i>Virgilius</i>                     |
| 10. Sage          | <i>avis</i>           | <i>avis</i>           | <i>medicus</i>                       |
| 11. Empress       | <i>sapientes</i>      | <i>sapientes</i>      | <i>senescalcus</i> + <i>Roma</i> (1) |
| 12. Sage          | <i>vidua</i>          | <i>vidua</i>          | <i>amatores</i>                      |
| 13. Empress       | <i>Virgilius</i>      | <i>Roma</i>           | <b><i>inclusa</i></b>                |
| 14. Sage          | <b><i>inclusa</i></b> | <b><i>inclusa</i></b> | <i>vidua</i>                         |
| 15. Prince        | <i>vaticinium</i>     | <i>vaticinium</i>     | <i>vaticinium</i> + <i>amici</i>     |

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<sup>75</sup> See the headnote to *gaza* in the Explanatory Notes.

<sup>76</sup> On the supposed anti-feminism of the *Seven Sages*, with reference to the complexity of its morals and the mixed audiences that it met, see further Lundt, "The Seven Wise Masters as a Resource," and Critten, "Hating Women."

<sup>77</sup> See the headnotes to *inclusa*, *senescalcus*, and *gaza* in the Explanatory Notes.

## NOTES ON THE TABLE:

- (1) The redactor of the **H**-text makes some substantial changes to the conclusion of the work, combining *senescalcus* with *Roma*, giving *inclusa* to the empress, and adding one tale not found elsewhere: *amatores*, in which a husband and wife conspire to defraud and murder three suitors of the wife and have the wife's brother dispose of the bodies. The **H**-text also pads out its rendition of *vaticinium* with *amici*, a version of the *Amis and Amiloun* story. On these alterations, see the headnotes to *senescalcus*, *Roma*, *inclusa*, and *vaticinium*. On *amatores* and *amici*, see Foehr-Janssens, *L'Histoire des sept sages*, pp. 35–37 and 41–47.

## CONCLUSIONS

The reading of the *Seven Sages* that we propose is diametrically opposed to that advanced by George Kane, who praised the work for its “skilful manipulation of material [...] so that it shall all make one single point.” For Kane, this point was that evil unchecked will triumph:

Wrong triumphs over obtuseness or complacency, and the consequences of that obtuseness or complacency are generally so final and overwhelming that they condemn it more than any formal reproof could have done. So morality is saved, and meanwhile there is opportunity for an extended display of knavery which is both praiseworthy, in view of the end which it serves, and at the same time exciting and interesting in the way that evil is — however deplorably — more exciting and interesting than good.<sup>78</sup>

We commend Kane for being one of the few writers to include the *Seven Sages* in a survey of Middle English literature, and we appreciate his sensitivity to the work's capacity to entertain, but we contest the idea that its morality is so straightforward and, more fundamentally, we reject the idea that the poem might be designed to make only one point.

This Introduction has focused on the psychological acuity of the Middle English *Seven Sages*. Here is a text which, in *canis*, can depict the mixed feelings that parents might have regarding their children. We have also shown the varying perspectives on women's experiences and their representation that the poem fosters as well as the multiplicity of interpretations that its inset tales invite. Beyond these considerations, the *Seven Sages* taps into concerns that are at the forefront of scholarly minds in the mid 2020s. The text's rendition of a simulated sexual assault makes it a valuable point of reference for the discussions of rape and consent in medieval contexts that have been held in the wake of pioneering archival work on the Chaucer-Champaigne rape case. The broad transmission and reception history of the poem also constitutes a useful test case for proponents of a Global Middle Ages who seek to illuminate lines of contact between western Europe and the Near East. We hope that this edition will inspire a new generation of students and scholars to take up the Middle English *Seven Sages of Rome* with these — and many other — points in mind.

<sup>78</sup> Kane, *Middle English Literature*, pp. 60–61.



## HOW WE MADE THIS EDITION

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In 2001, Alison Wiggins completed a semi-diplomatic transcription of the *Seven Sages of Rome*. This transcription of the poem was incorporated into the 2003 digital facsimile edition of the Auchinleck Manuscript that Wiggins produced collaboratively with David Burnley and the National Library of Scotland. While the Burnley-Wiggins website continues to be used widely by Auchinleck scholars, it presents its individual texts with minimal apparatus. In response to burgeoning interest in the *Seven Sages*, the current edition aims to make the text more broadly accessible and to prompt wider discussion of its Middle English versions. We hope to engage a wide range of student and scholarly readers from across disciplinary fields who will have varying familiarity with Middle English and the literary tradition to which the *Seven Sages* belongs. To this end, we have repunctuated Wiggins's base transcription, regularized features of spelling, emended textual lacunae, added glosses, and produced a critical apparatus of Textual Notes, Explanatory Notes, and commentaries.<sup>1</sup> We start this account of our editorial procedure and policy details by affording special attention to the scribe of our base text, Auchinleck Scribe 3. Recent work on this scribe's practices has shaped our editorial approach.

### AUCHINLECK SCRIBE 3 AND THE AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT

Auchinleck Scribe 3, the copyist of the *Seven Sages*, is one of six scribes who contributed to the production of the Auchinleck Manuscript (A).<sup>2</sup> Auchinleck Scribe 3 holds an important place in scholarly understanding of the development of Middle English. His language has been mapped to London and has, along with the language of Auchinleck Scribe 1, been described as representative of a distinct stage in the development of London English.<sup>3</sup> He writes in a cursive bookhand that has been adduced as an early and idiosyncratic example of *anglicana formata* (the more formal version of *anglicana*).<sup>4</sup> He can be associated with a community of polyglot scribes employed for their skills by the higher echelons of London society.

Scribe 3 copied almost the entirety of what is now the third section of the book, Booklet 3, including *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Pater Noster*, *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, *Sir Degare*, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, and *Floris and Blancheflur*; Booklet 3 is completed by the addition of *The Sayings of the Four Philosophers* and *The Battle Abbey Roll*, which were copied by Scribes 2 and 4. It has been suggested that Scribe 3 copied his texts with minimal oversight from Auchinleck Scribe 1, who is usually credited with

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<sup>1</sup> We found two errors in the Burnley-Wiggins edition, which we have corrected: A2032 “held” for “beld” and A2054 “what” for “whan.”

<sup>2</sup> On the production of the Auchinleck Manuscript, see Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript,” and Wiggins, “Are Auchinleck Scribes 1 and 6 the Same Scribe?”

<sup>3</sup> See McIntosh et al., *eLALME*, profile LP6500 (for Auchinleck Scribe 3). The development of the London English dialect and of Scribe 3's language as representative of “Type II” London English is discussed in Samuels, “Some Applications,” pp. 87–88.

<sup>4</sup> Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands*, p. xvii.

organizing the production of the codex, and we know that **A** was probably kept unbound as a set of soft-cover booklets for some time.<sup>5</sup> These factors encourage a view of Booklet 3 as a reading unit in and of itself, so that we can imagine **A**'s text of the *Seven Sages* being encountered in the immediate context of Booklet 3 as well as in the larger anthology that the Auchinleck Manuscript constitutes.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest work on Scribe 3 was less appreciative of his role in the production of the Auchinleck Manuscript and, in particular, puzzled over the language in which he writes. For example, Brunner incorrectly interpreted features of Scribe 3's spelling system as mistakes and hypothesised that he must "obviously" have been "a French Norman" who was unused to writing Middle English.<sup>7</sup> More recently, access to digital resources including corpora of Middle English texts and the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* have allowed for systematic reassessments of Scribe 3's language.<sup>8</sup> From these studies there emerges the profile of a well-trained scribe who was competent at copying across languages. His spelling system was not odd or anomalous but reflects the spectrum of Middle English variation as a non-standard language and is comparable with other Middle English scribes. His use of yogh (ȝ, ȝ) and thorn (þ, ð) is systematic and controlled. Indeed, his efficient use of yogh for a range of defined functions shows him to be meticulous. Scribe 3's precise handling of the full range of lexical and syntactic forms found in the *Seven Sages* secures the reliability of his copy.

In the places where Auchinleck Scribe 3's copy of the Middle English *Seven Sages* is deficient, we turn to the copy made by the scribe of **E**, a London manuscript produced towards the end of the fifteenth century. The language of the scribe of **E** has been mapped to Surrey.<sup>9</sup> In this part of our edition, we describe how we turned the Middle English scripts of scribes **A** and **E** into the printed text presented in this edition.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

Readers interested in observing Scribe 3's practices and in comparing them with those of the scribe of **E** and the edited text are invited to consult the transcriptions compiled in Appendix 1. For the purposes of this edition, we have adapted Scribe 3's text for the benefit of modern readers of Middle English. Many of the changes that we make conform with the METS editorial policy.<sup>10</sup> The following account incorporates METS conventions; documents how they apply to this edition; and records further editorial decisions.

### *Emendation*

Emendations have been incorporated into the text silently and are recorded in the Textual Notes. They include (i) corrections made by the scribes of **A** and **E** as part of their copying process, such as crossings out or letters inserted above the line; and (ii) our editorial changes to identifiable errors to provide a text that is clearer for today's readers. We have decided not to emend the text in cases where:

- We regard a form to be part of the spelling repertoire of the scribe, rather than an error in need of emendation. These include regular use by Scribe 3 of **A** of <ht> in words such as <soht, wroht, loht,

<sup>5</sup> See Runde, "Scribe 3's Literary Project," and Connolly and Edwards, "Evidence for the History," p. 303.

<sup>6</sup> For a reading of Booklet 3 as a miniature anthology, see Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, pp. 105–54.

<sup>7</sup> Brunner, p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> See Clark, "The Myth of 'the Anglo-Norman Scribe'"; Laing, "Confusion Wrs Confounded"; and Runde, "Reexamining Orthographic Practice."

<sup>9</sup> See McIntosh et al., *eLALME*, profile LP5630 (for the scribe of **E**).

<sup>10</sup> See the METS Style and Formatting Guide, at <https://metseditions.org/style-guide/overview>.

goht>, where <th> may otherwise be expected. We also retain <ihc> as a legitimate spelling form for the first-person singular pronoun (262; emended by Brunner to “ich”).

- Forms used by the scribe of **E** vary from those of Scribe 3 of **A**. These forms include proper names in the inset tale *Roma*, which is incomplete in **A** and therefore continued with text supplied from **E**. In **A** the disguised sage in *Roma* is named <Gemes>, whereas in **E** he is named <Iunys>, and we preserve this distinction. Examples from the **A** and **E** texts of *Roma* are included in the text samples presented in Appendix 1.

### *Lineation*

The base text **A** (fols. 85r–99v) is defective due to folios having been cut out. Fol. 84, which would have held the start of the *Seven Sages*, is now only a stub featuring initial letters, the text having been cut away with a blade at an early stage in the manuscript’s history; and, at the end of **A**, a gathering is missing that would have contained around 1200 lines. The missing portions of the poem are supplied from **E**. The numbering of lines runs as follows: **E**1–**E**103 (from **E**); 120–2770 (from **A**, with 903–07 supplied from **E**); and **E**2786–**E**3580 (from **E**). The lineation runs from **E**103 to the next line **A**120, and from **A**2770 to the next line **E**2786. This non-consecutive numbering reflects the slightly different lengths of the **A** and **E** texts and is aligned with existing editions (Brunner, Burnley-Wiggins). We preferred this solution to the imposition of a new lineation system, or of double or multiple lineations.

### *Layout*

The layout of this edition includes editorially imposed spatial breaks that serve two purposes. First, they represent visually demarcated points in the manuscripts: both **A** and **E** feature enlarged decorated capital letters throughout; our text does not distinguish these letters (e.g., by bolding) but we precede them with a line break. The one paragraph in **A** (a blue paragraph at 655) is not transcribed but is indicated by a space above the line that it opens. Both the enlarged capitals and the paragraph are described in the Textual Notes. Second, the spatial breaks indicate the poem’s narrative structure. Spatial breaks are added where a new inset tale begins and spatial breaks are added before the start of a new day in the tale-telling contest. In **A**, the start of a new inset tale usually coincides with an enlarged capital, but the start of a new day is not visually marked. The division of the poem into days as well as the demarcation of its various sections and tales is our own; we give these divisions in square brackets.

### *Abbreviations*

Both scribes abbreviate lightly and conventionally. We silently expand all abbreviations. For example, elaborated <p> is expanded as “per,” “pre,” or “par” according to context as in “precious” and “emperour,” and a macron above a vowel is taken to represent a nasal as in “him” and “hem” (regularly), “contrarious” (1084), and “garnement” (2765). Otiose strokes through the ascenders of certain letter clusters such as <ght> are not transcribed. Where an ampersand is used by Scribe 3 of **A**, we render it as “and.” The scribe of **E** uses <w> with superscript <t> (w<sup>t</sup>), here rendered as “with;” occasionally he uses thorn with a superscript <u> (þ<sup>u</sup>), which we render “thou.”

### Spelling

The spelling of this edition largely follows the manuscripts. However, there are the following modernizations and regularizations:

- The obsolete characters yogh (ȝ, ȝ) and thorn (þ, ð) are replaced with their modern equivalents, as is described below.
- The letters *ff/F*, *i/j*, and *u/v* have been regularized to align with Present Day English spelling conventions, for example manuscript <haue, vnto, seruyse, saue> have been transcribed as “have,” “unto,” “servyse,” “save.”
- For the purpose of disambiguation, *of/off*, *to/too/two*, and *the/thee* (the definite article and the second-person pronoun) have been regularized to align with Present Day English spelling conventions.
- For words ending in single <e>, where the vowel is long with full syllabic value, it is marked with an acute accent. This affects many words of French origin, for example “prevyté.” In some cases, the rhyme requires a pronunciation not usually found in French (such as the example in the Explanatory Note to lines 2363–64, discussing “queinté”).

### Thorn

We replace thorn by “th.” While the scribes of **E** and **A** have different practices in their use of thorn, for both scribes it stands for [θ] or [ð]. Thorn is used in **E** typically only for conventional fixed abbreviations, such as <þ>, rendered here as “thou.” In contrast, thorn is used very regularly by the scribe of **A** in the word-initial or word-medial position, for example, <þe> rendered here as “the,” <broþer> as “brother.” Where the scribe of **A** uses double thorn, it is rendered “th,” for example, <seþþe> as “sethe.”

### Yogh

The scribe of **E** does not use yogh (with one exception, <zare>, which we transcribe “yare” at E3018). By contrast, Scribe 3 of **A** uses yogh often and to represent a range of different sounds. According to Scribe 3’s consistent spelling system, the word position of yogh determines the sound that it represents. While Scribe 3 is not anomalous in this respect, his usage of yogh has a wider range of functions than is often found in Middle English. Thus, for the benefit of readers of this edition, we have modernized the spelling by replacement of yogh with a range of characters. We replace yogh variously by *g*, *y*, *gh*, *w*, *s*, *sh*, *th*, *z*, or by omission, as follows:

- In the initial or medial position, before a vowel, yogh has been replaced with either *g* or *y*. For example <aȝen, ȝiue, ȝate, ȝer, ȝouȝe, ȝisterdai, eȝen> are rendered “agen,” “give,” “gate,” “yer,” “youth,” “yisterdai,” “eyen.” Yogh may stand for the sounds [g] or [j] here.
- In the medial position before <t>, yogh has been replaced with *gh*. For example <nȝt, mȝt, lȝt, bouȝte, souȝte, þouȝte, eiȝte> are rendered “night,” “might,” “light,” “bought,” “sought,” “thought,” “eight.” Yogh may stand for the sounds [ʌ] or [x] here.
- Where yogh represents a vowel, usually in the terminal position or mid-word, following <ou, w, g, gh, þ>, it has either been omitted or replaced with <w, gh>. For example <feghȝting, degȝȝe, seghȝ/seȝgh/seȝ, heȝȝ, sloughȝ, thourgȝ, thouȝ> are rendered “feghting,” “deghe,” “segh,” “hegh,” “slough,” “thourgh,” “though.” The combination <þȝ> is rendered <gh>, for example, <iseþȝ> as “isegh.”

- In the initial position, yogh can stand for [ʃ], in which case it has been replaced with <s> or <sh>. For example <ʒhe, ʒe> are rendered “she,” “she.”
- In the terminal position, yogh can stand for [θ] or [ð], in which case it has been replaced by <th>. For example <wiʒ, worʒ, makeʒ, bisschadeweʒ> are rendered “with,” “worth,” “maketh,” “bisschadeweth.”
- In the terminal position, in certain French words and phrases, yogh stands for [s] or [z] and has been replaced with <z>. For example <saunʒ fail, fiʒ a puteyn, faʒoun> are rendered “saunz fail,” “fiz a puteyn,” “fazoun.”

### *Pronouns and yogh*

As a result of Scribe 3's use of yogh, his spelling system includes instances where a single written form is shared by pronouns with different grammatical functions. Thus, Scribe 3's form <ʒe> can function as either the third-person singular feminine pronoun, or a second-person pronoun, depending on the context of use. Similarly, Scribe 3's written form <ʒhe> can function either as the masculine or feminine third-person singular pronoun, or as a second-person pronoun. To aid readers, we render Scribe 3's pronominal form <ʒe> as either “she” or “ye,” depending on the context, and we render Scribe 3's pronominal form <ʒhe> variously as “he,” “she,” or “ye.” This merging of written forms does not occur throughout the text. Scribe 3 uses more than one spelling form for each pronoun. So, for example, he often uses <sche-> forms for Present Day English *she* (e.g., <sche, ssche, scho, sscho> and once <hi>), and <he> for Present Day English *he*.

### *Numbers*

Arabic and Roman numbers are spelled out in the Middle English equivalent following the scribes' conventions.

### *Capitalization*

The first letter of the first word of every verse line is capitalized. Elsewhere, modern grammatical conventions are followed, so the first-person singular pronoun is capitalized — manuscript <i> is rendered “I” — and capitals are used for the initial letter of new sentences, for proper names (“Florentin,” “Houngerye”), for names of languages (“Freinch,” “Latin”), and for the deity, “God” or “Gode.” This modification also serves to disambiguate from “god” or “gode” (*good*).

### *Punctuation*

Both scribes punctuate but have a limited range of marks, as is typical of Middle English. A's Scribe 3 punctuates minimally, occasionally using a virgule </> to mark a rhetorical pause mid line, as in <ʒan wil ich ʒhe said / and tok a ston>, or to mark the end of a verse line; and using punctus elevatus to mark exclamatory function, as in <allas · allas · > (fol. 99ra, 2636), and against either side of an exclamation as in <· O · > and <· A · > (as illustrated in Appendix 1, Text Sample 2).<sup>11</sup> The scribe of E often uses a virgule </> and occasionally a curled horizontal line <~> to mark the end of verse lines. These punctuation marks from the original manuscripts are not transcribed. In the process of preparing this edition, we repunctuated the

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<sup>11</sup> We thank Graham Williams for discussion of Auchinleck Scribe 3's punctuation, on which see his chapter “‘Lo!’ Exclamative Punctuation in Middle English Manuscripts.”

Burnley-Wiggins transcription with a view to assisting readers to understand the text's grammatical structure, bearing in mind that Middle English conceptions of the sentence differed from those of the present day. Exclamation marks are used for interjections, exclamations, or imperatives, such as "Lo!," "A!," "fi! fi!," "Herkenythe . . . !" Double quotation marks are used to indicate direct speech; single quotation marks are used only within double quotation marks to mark direct speech quoted there. In a departure from Present Day English standard written usage, possession is not indicated by use of an apostrophe, for example, "the childes tale," "stepmoderes tale," "wives rede."

#### *Word division*

We largely regularize word division to align with Present Day English conventions. Examples that appear regularly throughout include the manuscript forms <for soht, for ziue, hem selve, him self, in dede, in to, to night, there of, there fore, ther while, whar bi>, which we regularize as "forsoht," "forgive," "himself," "himself," "indede," "into," "tonight," "thereof," "therefore," "therwhile," "wharbi." Further examples are listed in the Textual Notes, such as where we have emended the manuscript forms <redman, souke zing, bistore, so do miȝte> to appear as "red man," "soukeying," "bi store," "sodomighte." Where the first-person pronoun is attached to the following verb, a space is added, so that manuscript <ido> is transcribed "I do."

We hyphenate compounds where a hyphen is needed for clarification or to align with Present Day English usage. For example "hond-habbing," "fot-hot," "als-so tit," "to-done," "anon-ryghtys." The prefixes <a-, i-, y-, on-, to-, for-> are presented with no space and no hyphen as in "tofore," "tocragged," "ofsend," and "iwis." For metrical reasons, where it is important not to lose a syllable, we retain the separated genitive where it occasionally appears, as in "the emperoure ys masse." We retain elided forms of the definite article as they appear in the manuscript, as in "themperour."

#### *Italics*

Italics are not used by the scribes. The only time we render text in italics is to indicate the name of a book or work, for example "*Catonne*" and "*Donet*." While some editors use italics to mark code-switching out of the matrix language, we do not italicize French- and Latin-derived words and phrases in this way. This decision reflects our conviction that it is not always easy in a text of this date to determine where English ends and the other languages begin. Where a whole phrase appears that is not in Middle English, it is glossed in full (e.g., "Deu vous doint bonjour," glossed as *God give you good day*).

#### FURTHER EDITORIAL APPARATUS

In accordance with METS practice, we provide glosses and a detailed commentary on the poem and its relationship to the *Seven Sages* tradition in the Explanatory Notes.

#### *Glosses*

Words or phrases that we consider difficult for today's readers are glossed alongside the text in the margin or, for longer phrases, in a footnote. There are five main criteria upon which a gloss has been judged necessary:

- Words that are obsolete or archaic in Present Day English. For example, "Lo" (*look, hey, see*), "hoore" (*gray, gray-haired*), "lemman" (*lover, beloved, sweetheart*), "soht" (*truth*).

## HOW WE MADE THIS EDITION

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- Phrases that code-switch into French or words that would now be regarded as French. For example, “par amour” (*for love’s sake*), “par nostre fai” (*by our faith*), “saunz faile” (*without fail*), “bois” (*forest*).
- Words that have changed their meaning or connotations in Present Day English. For example, “selli” (*sorry*), “nice” (*foolish*).
- Words that are the same or very similar in Present Day English, but where the Middle English spelling makes them hard to recognize or ambiguous for today’s readers. For example, “habben” (*have*), “sone” (*son*), “schild” (*child*), “yif” (*if or give*), “sschal” (*shall*).
- Phrases, proverbs, or metaphors that are now obsolete or obscure, or where the syntax may be challenging for today’s readers. For example, “So the ax pelt in the helve” (*like the axe blade set in the handle of the axe*).

Frequently occurring hard words are typically only glossed on their first three or four occurrences. For ease and enjoyment of reading, we suggest learning by heart the frequently occurring Middle English words that we list in Appendix 2.

### *Explanatory Notes*

For the Prologue and Conclusion, and for each inset tale, the Explanatory Notes include (i) an introductory summary of thematic interpretations and rhetorical uses of the tale; (ii) an overview of the main plot variations across the different versions of the *Seven Sages*, and (iii) suggested further reading. The plot of the poem and its inset narratives is recounted in Appendix 3.

In the Explanatory Notes, following each introduction we give notes keyed to the text that comment on and highlight features including the following:

- Cultural and historical references, such as historical persons and places, literary citations, and mythic figures.
- Relevant historical contexts, such as potential readerships.
- Points of language, which include editorial cruxes that need more explanation or clarification, and notable switches in style or tone.
- Formulaic language and its inversions, such as conventions from the genre of Middle English romance, well-known motifs, proverbs, and aphoristic language.
- Differences between the Middle English *Seven Sages* in **A** and other versions of the text in Middle English, French, Welsh, and Scots.
- Differences between the Middle English *Seven Sages* in **A** and the *Book of Sindbad* where the texts share materials.





## THE MIDDLE ENGLISH SEVEN SAGES OF ROME

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*This boke ys callyd the Seven Sages of Rome*

### [PROLOGUE]

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                         |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| fol. 3r | Herkenythe lordynges curteys and hende<br>Howe thys gentylle geste shalle ende.<br>Sum tyme there was an emperoure<br>That ladde hys lyfe with moche honowre;                             | <i>Hear lords courteous; noble<br/>noble poem<br/>Once<br/>splendor</i>                                 |
| E5      | Hys name was Dioclician,<br>And was a wonder riche man,<br>And was emperoure of Rome,<br>A nobylle man and a wyse of dome.<br>He hadde a emporas to wyfe,                                 | <i>[he] was an extraordinarily<br/>a [man] wise of judgment<br/>an empress as a wife</i>                |
| E10     | Men wyste non fayrer on lyve.<br>A sone they hadde hym bytwyne,<br>Noo fayrer chylde ne myght bene.<br>But soone aftyr thenne<br>The emporas dyde and went henne.                         | <i>People knew; alive<br/>son; between them<br/>There might be no fairer child<br/>died; hence</i>      |
| E15     | The chylde wax to seven yere olde,<br>Wyse of speche ande dedys bolde,<br>Florentyne hys name was.<br>Herkenythe nowe a wonder cas!<br>Hys fadyr was olde and ganne to hoore,             | <i>grew<br/>bold [in] deeds<br/>Hear; extraordinary thing<br/>grow gray-haired</i>                      |
| E20     | His sone thoo he sette to lore,<br>And lette byfore hym com sone<br>The seven sagys that were yn Rome. <sup>1</sup><br>To hem he thought his sone take<br>Forto knowe the letters blacke, | <i>son then; put to learning<br/>them; intended; son to entrust<br/>i.e., in order to learn to read</i> |
| E25     | For they were wysyst men leryde<br>That were amonge alle mydylenthe.<br>The emperoure sayde anon<br>To the maysterys everychone:                                                          | <i>[the] wisest men of learning<br/>in all the earth<br/>right away<br/>masters every one</i>           |

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<sup>1</sup> Lines E21–22: *And had the seven sages that were in Rome come before him immediately*

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E30            | <p>“Whiche of you wille take my sone<br/>To teche hym wysdome as ye cone?”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>son<br/>can</p>                                                                                                                   |
| E35<br>fol. 3v | <p>Bancillas thoo spake byfore,<br/>The eldyeste man with lockys hoore,<br/>And sayde: “Certys, take me thy sone,<br/>And moche thonke I wylle thee cone,”<sup>2</sup><br/>And I wylle teche thee alle the lawys<br/>That I canne and my felowys.<br/>That dar I, syre, take yn honde<br/>In seven yere, I understonde.”</p>                                                                           | <p>then; first<br/>gray<br/>Certainly; entrust to<br/>[him] for you<br/>I and my fellows know<br/>dare; take in hand (undertake)</p> |
| E40            | <p>Sone in a while aftyr that<br/>A mayster spake of sympylle state,<br/>Nothyr the moste, nothyr the leste,<br/>But as hym semyd aldyr beste.<br/>Anxulles was hys ryght name,<br/>A better clerke was non of fame.</p>                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Then<br/>bearing<br/>Neither greatest nor the least<br/>it seemed to him the best of all</p>                                      |
| E45            | <p>“Syr,” he sayde to the emperoure,<br/>“Take me thy sone, peramoure,<br/>And as y am a trewe man,<br/>I shalle teche hym that I canne,<br/>And that my felowys canne alleso,<br/>In sex yere withowtyn anny moo.”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>No clerk had a better reputation<br/>Entrust to; if it please you<br/>what; know<br/>what; also<br/>six years and no longer</p>   |
| E55            | <p>The thridde mayster was a lyght man<br/>With lovesum lere as whytte as swanne.<br/>Hys here was cryspe and noo thyng rous,<br/>His name was callyd Lentyllous.<br/>He sayde anon to the kyng:<br/>“Take sone thyne into my kepyng<br/>And I wylle swere thee an othe:<br/>That I can and my felowys bothe<br/>Uppon payne of lemys and lyfe,<br/>I shalle teche hym in yerys five.”<sup>3</sup></p> | <p>third; slight<br/>beautiful cheeks<br/>hair; curly; not at all red<br/>right away<br/>Entrust your son<br/>oath</p>               |
| E60            | <p>The fourth mayster a red man was,<br/>Men hym callyd Malquydras.<br/>He was but of fifyten yere olde,<br/>He was a wysse man and a bolde.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>ruddy man (see note)</p>                                                                                                          |
| E65            | <p>“Syr,” he sayde, “nowe herkenythe unto me,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>wise<br/>listen</p>                                                                                                               |

<sup>2</sup> I will be most grateful to you for it

<sup>3</sup> Lines E58–60: I shall teach him in five years what both I and my fellows know, on pain of limbs and life (i.e., on pain of mutilation and death)

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | My felowys wyt ys nott in me,<br>Nothyr of hyr wyt in noo wyse<br>I wylle not make noo marchantyse. <sup>4</sup><br>But take me thy sone, syr emperoure,<br>E70 And I shalle hym teche in yerys four<br>fol. 4r Al that I canne of clergye,<br>Of mone and sterre and of the skye.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | intelligence<br><br><br>entrust to<br>years<br>All the learning that I know<br>About [the] moon; stars                                                                                                                                                                      |
| E75  | The fifte mayster was wyse of dome,<br>Hys name was callyd Catonne of Rome.<br>He made <i>Catonne</i> , iwys,<br>That many a chylde of-leryde ys.<br>And “syr,” he sayde unto the kynge,<br>“Take thy sone unto my techynge.<br>I wylle that he be nought betaughte.<br>E80 Thy sonys wyt ne knowe I noughte,<br>Nothyr of hys age, nothyr of hys blode,<br>But, syr, I shalle teche hym goode,<br>Also moche thoroughe Goddys sonde<br>As he may welle understonde<br>E85 And as hys wit wylle hym helpe —<br>Othyrwyse wylle I not yelpe —<br>So that by the ende of seven yere<br>No chylde noowhere shalle be hys pere.” | judgment<br>Cato<br>the Distichs (see note); certainly<br>From which many a child is taught<br><br>Entrust<br>given away<br>intelligence I do not know<br>Neither; nor<br>well<br>As much by God’s dispensation<br><br>intelligence<br>Of nothing else will I boast<br>peer |
| E90  | The sexte mayster spake thoo anon,<br>The fayryste man of everychon.<br>Gessee was hys name hote,<br>A comely man fro toppe to foote.<br>“Syr,” he sayde to the kynge,<br>“Take me thy sone so yonge.<br>E95 I shalle teche hym in yerys thre<br>Al that I canne whythe herte free,<br>And so ye shulle, syr, for hys lore bolde,<br>Evrymore to me beholde.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | sixth; then right away<br>of all<br>called<br>handsome<br><br>Entrust to<br><br>with a glad heart<br>his great learning<br>Always be beholden to me                                                                                                                         |
| E100 | The sevende mayster hette Maxious,<br>A ryght wyse man and a vertuous.<br>Al his lyf with moche honowre<br>He hadde servyde the emperoure.<br>“Syr,” he sayde, “in alle wyse,<br>fol. 85ra For the mede of mi servise,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | seventh; was called<br><br><br><br>ways<br>As a reward for; (see t-note)                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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<sup>4</sup> Lines E67–68: *Nor do I wish to trade on their intelligence in any way*

|      |                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                 |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A121 | Tac me thi sone to loke and lore —<br>Of mi servise kep I nammore — <sup>5</sup><br>And I thee wille thonke conne,<br>And al the clergie under sonne            | <i>will be grateful to you for it<br/>all the learning under the sun</i>                                        |
| 125  | Ich wille into his bodi dight,<br>Bothe bi dai and bi night.”                                                                                                   | <i>I; put</i>                                                                                                   |
|      | Dioclician the maistres herde,<br>He strok his berd and schok his yerde,<br>And on hem made milde chere,<br>And spak that hi alle mighte ihere:                 | <i>masters<br/>stroked; shook; scepter<br/>made a mild expression<br/>they; hear</i>                            |
| 130  | “Thonke I you kan, gode lordingges,<br>Of youre gentil answerungges.<br>I kan you thonke of youre speche,<br>That ye desire mi sone to teche.                   | <i>I am grateful to you; lords<br/>For; courteous replies<br/>I am grateful for<br/>[in which you say] That</i> |
| 135  | Youre compaignie is fair and gent,<br>Nel ich hit departe, verraiment.” <sup>6</sup><br>He tok his sone bi the hond anon<br>And bitaughte him to hem everichon. | <i>pleasant<br/>right away<br/>entrusted; them all</i>                                                          |
| 140  | Thai underfengen him with cher blithe<br>And thonged him a thousand sithe.<br>The seven wise with gret glorie<br>That child ladde to consistorie,               | <i>received; happily<br/>thanked (the emperor); times<br/>the senate chamber</i>                                |
|      | That is a stede withinne Rome<br>Ther men maketh wise dome.<br>This seven wise men in boke<br>Here conseil there togider toke <sup>7</sup>                      | <i>place<br/>Where; judgments<br/>These; men wise in book-learning</i>                                          |
| 145  | That he scholde nowt in Rome bilave,<br>For burgeis, maiden, other knave<br>Mighte him in som riot sette,<br>That al his lore he scholde lette.                 | <i>remain<br/>burgess; commoner<br/>set him on the wrong track</i>                                              |
| 150  | Ther thai toke togideres alle<br>Thai wolde make a riche halle<br>Withouten Rome in on verger<br>A mile thennes bi o river —                                    | <i>So that; learning; lose<br/>There; decided together<br/>Outside; in an orchard<br/>from there by a river</i> |
| 155  | Tiber hit hatte withouten dout —<br>A mile long al about. <sup>8</sup><br>Alle tres therinne were<br>That ani frut an erthe bere.                               | <i>it was called; doubt<br/>trees<br/>fruit; on earth bear</i>                                                  |

<sup>5</sup> Lines A121–22: *Entrust your son to me to look after and teach — / I desire nothing more in return for my service —*

<sup>6</sup> *I do not wish to take my leave from it, truly*

<sup>7</sup> *Took their counsel together (i.e., decided)*

<sup>8</sup> *[An orchard] A mile in all directions*

|          |                                               |                                           |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|          | Amideward thai founden a space,               | <i>In the middle</i>                      |
| 160      | An evene and a grene place.                   |                                           |
|          | Therinne thai set an halle anon               | <i>put</i>                                |
|          | Bothe of lim and of ston.                     | <i>mortar</i>                             |
|          | Quaire hit was with chaumbres sevene,         | <i>Square-shaped it; seven rooms</i>      |
| fol.85rb | Was non fairer into hevene.                   | <i>even in heaven</i>                     |
| 165      | The halle was a midewerd,                     | <i>in the middle</i>                      |
|          | The fairest of this midelerd.                 | <i>on this earth</i>                      |
|          | Therinne was paint of <i>Donet</i> thre pars, | <i>three parts of Donet (see note)</i>    |
|          | And eke alle the seven ars.                   | <i>also; arts</i>                         |
|          | The firste so was grammarie,                  | <i>grammar</i>                            |
| 170      | Musike and astronomie,                        | <i>[then] Music</i>                       |
|          | Geometrie and ars metrike,                    | <i>arithmetic</i>                         |
|          | Rettorike and ek fisike.                      | <i>Rhetoric; also medicine (see note)</i> |
|          | The segh was in the halle                     | <i>throne</i>                             |
|          | The ars to bihelden alle.                     | <i>arts</i>                               |
| 175      | Whan o maister him let another him tok.       | <i>one; left</i>                          |
|          | He was ever upon his bok,                     | <i>at his books</i>                       |
|          | And to his lore tok gret kepe,                | <i>of his learning; care</i>              |
|          | But whan he ete other he slepe.               | <i>Except; or</i>                         |
|          | The ferthe yer, hit was no dout,              | <i>fourth year, it; doubt</i>             |
| 180      | With his maister he gan to despout.           | <i>dispute (see note)</i>                 |
|          | The fifte yer he gan argument                 | <i>make arguments</i>                     |
|          | Of the sterre and of the firmament.           | <i>About the stars; heavens</i>           |
|          | Thei wolde prove in the sexte yer             | <i>test; sixth year</i>                   |
|          | Yif he ware wis and wer.                      | <i>If; prudent</i>                        |
| 185      | Leves thai tok sextene                        | <i>Leaves; sixteen</i>                    |
|          | Of ivy that were grene.                       |                                           |
|          | Under ech stapel of his bed                   | <i>leg</i>                                |
|          | That he niste four thai hid.                  | <i>Without him knowing</i>                |
|          | The child yede to bedde anight                | <i>went; at night</i>                     |
| 190      | And ros arliche amorewen, aflight.            | <i>early the next day, in faith</i>       |
|          | Hise maistres him bfore stode,                | <i>stood before him</i>                   |
|          | Open hefd, withouten hode.                    | <i>Heads uncovered</i>                    |
|          | The child lokede here and tar,                | <i>there</i>                              |
|          | Up and doun and everi whar.                   |                                           |
| 195      | Hise maistres askede wat him was.             | <i>what was wrong</i>                     |
|          | “Par fai,” he seide, “a ferli cas.            | <i>By faith; wonderful thing</i>          |
|          | Other ich am of wine dronke,                  | <i>Either I</i>                           |
|          | Other the firmament is isonke,                | <i>Or; sky has sunk</i>                   |
|          | Other wexen is the grounde                    | <i>Or has grown</i>                       |
| 200      | The thiknes of four leves rounde.             |                                           |
|          | So muche tonight heyer I lai,                 | <i>higher</i>                             |
|          | Certes, thanne yisterdai.”                    | <i>Certainly</i>                          |

|           |                                           |                                       |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|           | The maistres tho wel understode           | <i>then</i>                           |
|           | He coude inow of alle gode.               | <i>enough</i>                         |
| 205       | The sevend yer so tok he on,              | <i>seventh year; undertook</i>        |
|           | He passede his maistres everichon.        | <i>[that] He surpassed; every one</i> |
|           | Togider thai made gret solas,             | <i>rejoiced greatly</i>               |
| fol. 85va | Ac sone hem fil a ferli cas. <sup>9</sup> |                                       |
|           | Dioclician that was in Rome,              |                                       |
| 210       | A riche man and wis of dome,              | <i>judgment</i>                       |
|           | Hise barons comen to him on a dai,        | <i>came; one day</i>                  |
|           | And: "Sire, par nostre fai,               | <i>And [said] Lord, by our faith</i>  |
|           | Ye libbeth an a lenge lif.                | <i>You are living a long life</i>     |
|           | Ye scholde take a gentil wif              | <i>noble</i>                          |
| 215       | That you might som solas do               | <i>to you; happiness</i>              |
|           | And bigeten children mo.                  | <i>beget; more</i>                    |
|           | Inow ye habben of werldes won             | <i>Enough; earthly possessions</i>    |
|           | To make hem riche everichon."             | <i>them; every one</i>                |
|           | Themperour was wel ipaied                 | <i>The emperor; pleased</i>           |
| 220       | With that the barons had seid.            | <i>what</i>                           |
|           | Sone he let him purvai                    | <i>Immediately; had procured</i>      |
|           | An emperice of gret noblai.               | <i>nobility</i>                       |
|           | He went himself and sent his sond         | <i>envoys</i>                         |
|           | Widewhar into fele lond                   | <i>Far and wide; many lands</i>       |
| 225       | Fort that thai ani founde                 | <i>So that they might find</i>        |
|           | A dammeisele of gret mounde.              | <i>damsel (young woman); nobility</i> |
|           | Thai brouwte here tofore themperour.      | <i>her before the emperor</i>         |
|           | He segh sche was of feir colour;          | <i>saw; complexion</i>                |
|           | He wot sche was of hegh parage.           | <i>knew; high rank</i>                |
| 230       | Anon thai asked the mariage.              | <i>requested</i>                      |
|           | Thai weren iwedded bi commun dome         | <i>to general approval</i>            |
|           | Anon in the gise of Rome,                 | <i>manner</i>                         |
|           | And lovede hem thourg alle thing.         | <i>each other by all means</i>        |
|           | Herkneth nou a selli tiding!              | <i>Hear now about a sorry event</i>   |
| 235       | Thing ihid ne thing istole                |                                       |
|           | Ne mai nowt longe be forhole.             |                                       |
|           | Ne thing mai forhole be                   |                                       |
|           | But Godes owen priveté. <sup>10</sup>     |                                       |
|           | Som squier or som serjant nice            | <i>squire; foolish servant</i>        |
| 240       | Had itold themperice                      | <i>told the empress</i>               |
|           | Al of themperoures sone,                  | <i>All about the emperor's</i>        |

<sup>9</sup> But before long a wonderful thing befell them

<sup>10</sup> Lines 235–38: A hidden or a stolen thing / May not long be kept secret. / Nor may anything be kept secret / Except God's own mystery

|           |                                                   |                                           |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|           | Hou he with the maistres wone.                    | <i>How; lived</i>                         |
|           | And hire schildre scolde be bastards,             | <i>her children should be</i>             |
|           | And he schal have al the wardes                   |                                           |
| 245       | Under hest and under hond                         |                                           |
|           | Of thempire and al the lond. <sup>11</sup>        |                                           |
|           | Than couthe sche bothe qued and god <sup>12</sup> |                                           |
|           | And sone sche gan to pekke mod,                   | <i>immediately; become incensed</i>       |
|           | And thoughte, so stepmoder doth,                  | <i>plotted, as a stepmother does</i>      |
| 250       | Into falsenesse to torne soth,                    | <i>To turn truth into falseness</i>       |
|           | And brew swich a beverage                         | <i>[to] brew such</i>                     |
| fol. 85vb | That scholde Florentin bicache.                   | <i>trap</i>                               |
|           | Ac mani weneth other to herte                     | <i>But; think they are harming others</i> |
|           | And on hemselfe falleth al the smerte.            | <i>themselves; pain</i>                   |
| 255       | Themperour and his wif,                           |                                           |
|           | That he lovede als his lif,                       | <i>as much as</i>                         |
|           | In chaumbre togidere thai sete.                   | <i>their private quarters; sat</i>        |
|           | Gladliche thai dronke and ete.                    |                                           |
|           | “Sire,” she saide, “gentil emperour,              | <i>noble</i>                              |
| 260       | I thee love with fin amour                        | <i>a perfect love</i>                     |
|           | And thou nowt me, sikerli.                        | <i>to be sure</i>                         |
|           | Sire, ihc wil telle thee whi.                     | <i>I</i>                                  |
|           | Seve yer hit is that thou me nome                 | <i>Seven years it; since; took</i>        |
|           | And made me emperice of Rome,                     |                                           |
| 265       | Thi make at bord and at bedde,                    | <i>mate; table</i>                        |
|           | And o thing thou hast fram me hedde:              | <i>one; hidden</i>                        |
|           | Thou hast a sone to scole itaught.                | <i>put to school</i>                      |
|           | Lat me him se; warn me him naught. <sup>13</sup>  |                                           |
|           | Hit is thi sone and thin air,                     | <i>your heir</i>                          |
| 270       | A wis child and a fair.                           |                                           |
|           | Thi most time thou hast ben kyng, <sup>14</sup>   |                                           |
|           | Thou drawest fast to thin ending.                 |                                           |
|           | Fond we, sire, in joie libbe,                     | <i>Let us try; to live</i>                |
|           | And have joie of oure sibbe.                      | <i>family</i>                             |
| 275       | For thi sone I tel mine                           | <i>count as</i>                           |
|           | Else wel als tou dost thine.                      | <i>you</i>                                |
|           | Paraventure hit mai falle so                      | <i>By chance; befall</i>                  |
|           | That never eft ne tit us mo.                      | <i>again; another comes to us</i>         |
|           | Yif thou me lovest ani wight,                     | <i>If; even a bit</i>                     |

<sup>11</sup> Lines 244–46: *And he (i.e., Florentine) should have all the possessions of the empire and all the land under his control*

<sup>12</sup> *Then she knew both bad and good (i.e., the whole story)*

<sup>13</sup> *Let me see him; do not keep him from me*

<sup>14</sup> *The greatest part of your reign is behind you*

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 280              | Let me of him han a sight.”<br>“Certes, dame,” seide themperour,<br>“Hit ne schal nowt be long sojour.<br>Tomorewe ar undertide of dai<br>Thou schalt him sen, par ma fai.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | have<br>Certainly<br>a long wait<br>before midday<br>see, by my faith                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 285              | And sche seide with chere blithe:<br>“Graunt merci, sire, a thousand sithe.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | a happy expression<br>Many thanks; times                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 290              | Amorewe themperour gan rise<br>And clothed him in riche gise.<br>Messagers he clepede to<br>And quik thai com toforn him bo.<br>He scharged hem with his message<br>And bad hem grete the seven sage.<br>“And seieth hem, with wordes bonair,<br>Mi sone that thai atire fair,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | The next day; got up<br>himself in a rich fashion<br>Messengers; summoned<br>came before him both<br>charged them<br>them; sages<br>instruct them; courteous<br>to dress my son finely                                                                                                                                                          |
| 295<br>fol. 86ra | And brenge him hom in faire manere,<br>For ich wil quik of him here,<br>Hou he had sped this seve yer.<br>Me thinketh longe that ner er.” <sup>15</sup><br>The messagers anon forht sprong —<br>I not bi waie yif thai song — <sup>16</sup><br>Til thai come to that inne<br>Ther the maistres woned inne.<br>And as we finden writen in bok,<br>Aither other be the hond tok,<br>And in thai wente right evene,<br>And founde the maistres alle sevene<br>Disputend in hire Latyn<br>With that child Florentyn.<br>The messagers on knes hem sette<br>And the seven wise thai grette<br>In themperours bihelve,<br>And the child be himselve,<br>And seide that emperour het<br>His sone that thai bringge him sket<br>To Rome toun to his presens. <sup>17</sup><br>“Your travail and youre despens<br>He wil aquite for ech a yer,<br>After that yhe worthi wer.” | bring; fine<br>I; at once; hear<br>How; fared these seven years<br>hurried forth<br>came; place<br>Where; lived<br>Each took the other in hand<br>immediately<br>Disputing; their<br>knelt<br>greeted<br>On; behalf<br>in particular [they greeted]<br>[the] emperor commanded<br>work; expenses<br>repay; each year<br>According to your merit |

<sup>15</sup> It seems to me that he hasn't been here for a long time

<sup>16</sup> I don't know if they sang on the way

<sup>17</sup> Lines 314–15: That they bring his son swiftly into his presence in the town of Rome

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 320       | The messagers were welcome,<br>And bi the hond quik ynome,<br>And at the mete tales hem telde,<br>What the sonne gan to helde.<br>Hout wente the maistres sevene<br>And bihelden up toward hevene.             | <i>made welcome<br/>hand; taken<br/>at table; [they] told them<br/>Which; observed<br/>Out<br/>looked</i>                           |
| 325       | Thai seghe the constillacioun;<br>The wisest in that so was Katoun.<br>He gan to loke in the mone<br>And seide that him thoughte sone.<br>“Lordinges,” he saide, “for Godes sond,<br>To mi telling understand. | <i>saw; constellations<br/>in that [art]; Cato<br/>moon<br/>what he was thinking<br/>Lords; for God’s message<br/>pay attention</i> |
| 330       | Themperour to ous had sent<br>To brenge him his sone gent.<br>Yif we him bring biforn our lord,<br>He sterveth ate ferste word                                                                                 | <i>us<br/>noble<br/>If; before<br/>will die; the first</i>                                                                          |
| 335       | That he schal in court speke.<br>Thanne he wil of ous be wreke,<br>To drawe ous other to hongy sone. <sup>18</sup><br>This I se wel in the mone.”                                                              | <i>at court<br/>take vengeance on us<br/>see; moon</i>                                                                              |
| fol. 86rb | The other saide withouten oth<br>That Catoun hem saide soht.                                                                                                                                                   | <i>others; assuredly<br/>told them the truth</i>                                                                                    |
| 341       | Schild Florentin was lered in boke<br>And in a ster he gan to loke<br>Whiche that sat next the mone,<br>And saide that him thoughte sone —                                                                     | <i>Child; taught in book learning<br/>star; looked<br/>next to<br/>what he was thinking</i>                                         |
| 345       | That he wist thourgh alle thing<br>Of that sterre the toknyng.<br>Thanne saide the maistres to Florentin:<br>“What sextou, leve child, tharin?”                                                                | <i>knew completely<br/>star; meaning<br/>do you see, dear<br/>Masters; live</i>                                                     |
| 350       | He seide: “Maister, I schal wel liven.<br>Yif I mai this daies seven<br>Kepe me fram answering,<br>I mai live to god ending,<br>And savve me to warisoun,<br>And you fram destruccioun.”                       | <i>If; for the next seven days<br/>Refrain<br/>good<br/>save myself as a reward</i>                                                 |
| 355       | The maistres han wel devise<br>The childe tale was god and wise.<br>Than seide maister Bancillas:<br>“Her is now a ferli cas.<br>Counseil we al her upon                                                       | <i>determined<br/>claim; good<br/>Here; wonderful thing<br/>Let us all take counsel upon it</i>                                     |

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<sup>18</sup> And have us drawn or hang us immediately

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                              |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 360       | Hou that we mai best don.”<br>Than saide the schild: “saunz fail,<br>Ich you right wil counseil.<br>This seven daies I nel nowt speke,<br>Nowt o word of mi mowht breke.                                          | How; do<br>child; without fail<br>I; correctly<br>These; will not<br>Not one; from my mouth utter            |
| 365       | And ye beth maistres gode and wise,<br>In al this werld of mest prise.<br>Litel ye conne, par ma fai,<br>But echon of yo mai save me a dai.<br>The aighteden dai ich me selve,                                    | are<br>most renown<br>know [it], by my faith<br>each one of you; [for] a day<br>eighth; I myself [will save] |
| 370       | So the ax pelt in the helve<br>That schal hewe the wai atwo<br>That had wrount me this wo.” <sup>19</sup><br>Than saide maister Bancillas:<br>“So God me helpe and Seint Nicholas,                                |                                                                                                              |
| 375       | I schal thee waranti o dai.”<br>“And I,” quath Catoun, “par ma fai,<br>Schal thee warant another also.”<br>Alle the maistres speken tho;<br>Thai wald with wit and resoun                                         | guarantee<br>said Cato, by my faith<br>then<br>would; intelligence                                           |
| 380       | Save the child fram destruccioun,<br>Fram schame and fram vilani.<br>“Maistres,” he saide, “graunt merci.<br>Certes, hit bihoveth so,                                                                             | many thanks<br>Certainly; will be necessary                                                                  |
| fol. 86va | For I sschal tholi mochel wo,                                                                                                                                                                                     | suffer much woe                                                                                              |
| 385       | Gret despit and strong turment,<br>But ye be queinte of argument.”<br>With this word thai ben alle<br>Departed and comen to halle,                                                                                | malice; harsh<br>Unless; clever<br>came                                                                      |
| 390       | And maked at ese the messagers<br>With god semblant and glade chers.<br>And whan hit com to time of night,<br>To riche bed thai were idight,                                                                      | entertained<br>courteousness; glad countenances<br>came<br>beds; directed                                    |
| 395       | And Florentin the schild also<br>To his bed he gan to go,<br>And thought al night her and tar,<br>Hou that he might be wis and war<br>To overcome the emperice,<br>That he nere nowt iholden nice.” <sup>20</sup> | child<br>went<br>[he] thought; here and there<br>How; prudent                                                |

<sup>19</sup> Lines 370–72: *Like the axe blade set in the handle of the axe / That will cut the person in two / Who has made all this hardship for me (i.e., I will deliver the fatal blow after you have prepared the instrument for me; see note)*

<sup>20</sup> *So that he should not be held a fool*

[DAY 1]

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 400       | The night passeth, the dai comen is,<br>The seven maistres arisen, iwis.<br>The maistres and the messagers<br>Habbeth greithed here destrers<br>And that schild wel fair idight,<br>And went hem forht anonright.          | <i>assuredly</i><br><i>prepared their riding horses</i><br><i>kitted out finely</i><br><i>they went forth right away</i>                     |
| 405       | Thai dede hem out of that gardin<br>That is icleped the bois of Seint Martin<br>And here way toke to Rome.<br>The maistres here wai agen nome.<br>Tiding had themperour                                                    | <i>went</i><br><i>called; forest</i><br><i>took their way</i><br><i>took their way [home] again</i><br><i>News</i>                           |
| 410       | His sone com with gret honour.<br>Anon he let a stede dight<br>And rod him agen with mani a knight.<br>Whan he him segh than was he blithe<br>And kest him wel mani a sithe.                                               | <i>had come; splendor</i><br><i>had a horse prepared</i><br><i>rode towards him</i><br><i>saw; glad</i><br><i>kissed; a great many times</i> |
| 415       | Knight and erl and mani baroun<br>Kiste the emperours soun<br>And ladde him with gret noblais<br>To themperour palais.<br>The emperice him wil honour,<br>Do him sende into hire bour.                                     | <i>son</i><br><i>pomp</i><br><i>the emperor's palace</i><br><i>[and] Has him sent; chambers</i><br><i>She led [him] from room to room</i>    |
| 420       | Scho ladde fram bour to bour<br>And dede here mene make retour.<br>She sschette the dore and set him on benche.<br>Wil ye nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?                                                                  | <i>dismissed her attendants</i><br><i>shut; sat</i><br><i>now hear; deception</i><br><i>clever</i>                                           |
| 425       | The emperice was queinte indede,<br>And in hire wrenche and in hire falshede.<br>She and the schild alone wer than;<br>Was with hem non other man.                                                                         | <i>both in; and in her deceitfulness</i><br><i>[there] Was with them no one else</i><br><i>sat herself close</i>                             |
| fol. 86vb | Be his side she set hire fast,<br>On him sche gan her egghen kast,<br>And saide: "Mi leve suete grom,<br>Swithe welcome be thou hom.<br>I have icast to thee mi love<br>Of al worhtlich thing above.                       | <i>eyes</i><br><i>dear sweet boy</i><br><i>Very; at home</i><br><i>set on you</i><br><i>above all worthy things</i>                          |
| 430       | Thi louerd the emperour is old;<br>Of kinde, of bodi he is cold.<br>I swere, bi sonne and bi mone,<br>With me ne hadde he never to done.<br>But for ich herde telle of thi pris,<br>That thou were hende, gentil, and wis, | <i>lord</i><br><i>temperament</i><br><i>He never had to do with me</i><br><i>because; renown</i><br><i>noble, courteous</i>                  |
| 435       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                              |
| 440       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                              |

|     |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                              |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     | For to have with thee acord,<br>Ich am iwedded to thi lord.                                                                                        | <i>To be allied with you</i>                                                                 |
|     | Kes me, lemman, and love me,<br>And I thi soget wil ibe,                                                                                           | <i>Kiss; lover<br/>subject; be</i>                                                           |
| 445 | So God me helpe, for He hit wot:<br>To thee ich have ikept mi maidenhod.”                                                                          | <i>knows<br/>For you</i>                                                                     |
|     | Sche kest here armes aboute his swere,<br>Ac he made lourand chere                                                                                 | <i>threw; neck<br/>But; scowled</i>                                                          |
|     | And drowgh awai with al his might;<br>He wold his lord don non unright.                                                                            | <i>drew<br/>do no wrong</i>                                                                  |
| 450 | Whan the emperice that understod,<br>Al achaunged was hire blod,<br>And saide to him: “Sweting fre<br>Whi nel tou nowt speke with me?”             | <i>changed; her blood (attitude)<br/>[she] said; Kind darling<br/>will you not</i>           |
| 455 | For no thing that sche mightte do<br>O word nolde he speken her to.                                                                                | <i>He would not speak one word</i>                                                           |
|     | Than the emperice wex wroth.<br>Sche tar hire her and ek here cloth,<br>Here kirtel, here pilche of ermine.                                        | <i>grew angry<br/>tore her hair; also her clothing<br/>Her cloak; pelisse</i>                |
| 460 | Here keuerchefs of silk, here smok o line,<br>Al togidere with bothe fest,<br>Sche torent binethen here brest.                                     | <i>headdress; shift of linen<br/>Completely; fists<br/>tore apart beneath</i>                |
|     | With bothe honden here yaulew here<br>Out of the tresses sche hit tere,<br>And ssche tocragged hire visage,<br>And gradde “Harow!” with gret rage. | <i>hands; her blond hair<br/>tore<br/>scratched her face to pieces<br/>cried out “Help!”</i> |
| 465 | In halle was themperour.<br>“Who had thee don this desonur?”<br>“Bot this devel that her is,<br>Hadde me ner ihonisscht, iwis. <sup>21</sup>       |                                                                                              |
| 470 | Hadde ich ben a while stille,<br>fol. 87ra With me he hadde don his wille.                                                                         |                                                                                              |
|     | And but ye hadde the rather icome,<br>Par force he hadde me forht inome.                                                                           | <i>If you hadn’t come sooner<br/>By force; abducted</i>                                      |
| 475 | Lo hou he had me torent,<br>Mi bodi and mi face isschent!<br>He ne was nevere of thi blod;<br>Lat him binde, for he is wod.                        | <i>Look how; torn to pieces<br/>destroyed<br/>was not ever<br/>Have him bound; is mad</i>    |
|     | A fend he is in kinde of man.<br>480 Binde him, sire, and lede han,<br>For wod of wit I schal be,                                                  | <i>fiend; likeness<br/>lead him hence<br/>mad in mind I shall be</i>                         |

<sup>21</sup> Lines 469–70: *This devil here would almost have dishonored me, assuredly*

|           |                                        |                                           |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|           | Yif ich lengere on him see."           | <i>longer; look</i>                       |
|           | "He sschal abigge," saide themperour,  | <i>pay for it</i>                         |
|           | And cleped forht a turmentour.         | <i>called forth; torturer</i>             |
| 485       | Quik he het his sone take,             | <i>commanded; to be taken</i>             |
|           | And spoili him of clothes nake,        | <i>stripped; naked</i>                    |
|           | And beten him with scourges stronge,   | <i>whipped</i>                            |
|           | And afterward him heghe anhonge.       | <i>hanged on high</i>                     |
|           | "Bletheliche," the boies quathe,       | <i>Gladly; rogues said</i>                |
| 490       | And tok the schild swithe rathe,       | <i>at once</i>                            |
|           | And ladde him forht thourgh the halle  | <i>forth</i>                              |
|           | Among therles and barons alle.         | <i>the earls</i>                          |
|           | Evele thai gonnen him bisen.           | <i>Fouly; treated him</i>                 |
|           | Gentil ronnen hem bitwen               | <i>Noblemen ran between them</i>          |
| 495       | And asked anon of this cas.            | <i>about; situation</i>                   |
|           | Thai saide here lordes heste hit was.  | <i>(the rogues) said; command</i>         |
|           | Anon thai ronnen into the bour         | <i>(the nobles) ran; private quarters</i> |
|           | Biforn here lord the emperour          | <i>their</i>                              |
|           | And blamed him he dede that dede       | <i>for doing that deed</i>                |
| 500       | Withouten counseil and rede,           | <i>advice</i>                             |
|           | And bad him that thilke sorewe         | <i>asked; that sorry business</i>         |
|           | Most be respit til amorewe.            | <i>Might be postponed; the next day</i>   |
|           | "And thanne save him other slen,       | <i>slay [him]</i>                         |
|           | Bi conseil of thi gentil men."         | <i>According to; noblemen</i>             |
| 505       | The emperour than spared his sone      |                                           |
|           | And het him caste in his prisone.      | <i>commanded; to be cast</i>              |
|           | The emperice was fol wroth,            | <i>most angry</i>                         |
|           | That the child was spared, forsoht,    | <i>truthfully</i>                         |
|           | And wel mochel hit here traid.         | <i>a great deal; vexed her</i>            |
| 510       | Sche thought wel more thanne she said. |                                           |
|           | An even late the emperour              | <i>In the evening</i>                     |
|           | Was browt to bedde with honor.         | <i>brought</i>                            |
|           | The emperice his worhtli fere          | <i>worthy companion</i>                   |
|           | To him cam with lourand chere          | <i>making a scowl</i>                     |
| 515       | And the emperour asked why             |                                           |
| fol. 87rb | She made semblant so sori.             | <i>She looked so upset</i>                |
|           | "O sire," she saide, "no wonder nis,   | <i>it's no wonder</i>                     |
|           | For now to londe icomen is             | <i>has come</i>                           |
|           | He that schal, in thin eld age,        | <i>old</i>                                |
| 520       | Binime thee thin heritage."            | <i>Take from you; inheritance</i>         |
|           | "Pais, dame, who sschal that be?"      | <i>Peace</i>                              |
|           | "Thin howen sone, I segge thee."       | <i>own; tell</i>                          |
|           | "Min owen sone? Dame, nay!             |                                           |
|           | Ne schalt tou nevere se that dai       | <i>you; see</i>                           |
| 525       | That he schal have ani might           |                                           |

|     |                                                  |                                       |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|     | Me for to don unright.”                          | <i>to do me wrong</i>                 |
|     | “Pais, sire, what halt hit heled? <sup>22</sup>  |                                       |
|     | Today tho hast him fram deth ispeled.            | <i>you; saved</i>                     |
|     | Ase wel mot hit like thee                        |                                       |
| 530 | Als dede the pinnote tre                         |                                       |
|     | Of his ympe that he forht browte.” <sup>23</sup> |                                       |
|     | The emperour lai and more thoughte,              | <i>asked her in a gracious manner</i> |
|     | And bad hire with semblaunt fre                  | <i>To tell; same</i>                  |
|     | Tellen him of that ilche tre,                    |                                       |
| 535 | And of the ympe al the cas.                      | <i>shoot; story</i>                   |

[TALE 1: ARBOR, THE TREE. THE EMPRESS]

|           |                                           |                                      |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|           | “Whilom a riche burgeis was,              | <i>Once; burgess (citizen)</i>       |
|           | And woned her in Rome toun,               | <i>Who lived here; town</i>          |
|           | A riche man of gret renoun.               |                                      |
|           | He hadde bihinden his paleys              | <i>behind; palace</i>                |
| 540       | A fair gardin of noblays                  | <i>fine quality</i>                  |
|           | Ful of appel tres and of pirie;           | <i>pear trees</i>                    |
|           | Foules songe therinne murie.              | <i>Birds; merrily</i>                |
|           | Amideward that gardyn fre                 | <i>In the middle [of]; excellent</i> |
|           | So wax a pinnote tre                      | <i>There grew; pine tree</i>         |
| 545       | That hadde fair bowes and frut;           | <i>boughs</i>                        |
|           | Therunder was al his dedut.               | <i>Under it; delight</i>             |
|           | He made therunder a grene bench           | <i>turf-covered mound</i>            |
|           | And drank therunder mani a sscench.       | <i>draught</i>                       |
|           | Certes therinne was al his plaiyng        | <i>Certainly; amusement</i>          |
| 550       | In time of solas and his resting.         | <i>pleasure</i>                      |
|           | So bifel upon a dai,                      | <i>It so befell</i>                  |
|           | The burgeis fram home tok his wai.        | <i>[that] The burgess</i>            |
|           | He boughte marchaundise and his chaffare  | <i>wares</i>                         |
|           | And bileved oute al a yare. <sup>24</sup> |                                      |
| 555       | Also sone so he mighte,                   | <i>As soon as</i>                    |
|           | Homward he gan him dighte.                | <i>set out</i>                       |
|           | Whan he was light at his in,              | <i>had alighted; home</i>            |
|           | Quik he wente to his gardin,              | <i>Immediately</i>                   |
|           | His fair tre for to sen.                  | <i>see</i>                           |
| fol. 87va | Thanne segh he wexe a litel stren,        | <i>saw; growing; shoot</i>           |

<sup>22</sup> Peace, lord, what is keeping it hidden? (i.e., why can't you see the truth?)

<sup>23</sup> Lines 529–31: May you be as pleased / As was the pine tree / Of his shoot that he grew

<sup>24</sup> And departed for a whole year

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                     |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 561 | A yong ympe ut of his rote;<br>Fair hit him thougghte and swote.<br>Ac that ympe that so sprong,<br>Hit was sschort and nothing long.                                               | shoot out; its<br>seemed to him; beautiful<br>But<br>short                                          |
| 565 | The burgeis cleped his gardiner:<br>'Lo!' he saide, 'Lo, me her!<br>Seste thou this ympe of gret mounde?<br>Kanst thou me telle, gode bounde,<br>Whi hit is so schort wering?'      | called over<br>Hey; Get over here<br>Do you see; most excellent shoot<br>Can; man<br>stays so short |
| 570 | 'Ya, sire,' he saide, 'be hevene king,<br>The grete bough that over him is<br>So him bisschadeweth, iwis,<br>That hit mai have no thedom.'<br>'Steghe up,' he saide, 'mi gode grom, | the king of heaven<br><br>puts in the shade, assuredly<br>may not thrive<br>Get up [there]; boy     |
| 575 | And hak awai the grete bough,<br>That hit ne do min ympe no wough.<br>The gardiner, as his louerd het,<br>Hew awai the bough al swet,<br>And asked yif hit was wel ido.             | So that; harm<br>lord commanded<br>Cut; so beautiful<br>done                                        |
| 580 | Another he bad him kit therto:<br>'Than mai, withouten letting,<br>Min himpe jolifliche spring.'<br>Nou ben hise bowes awai isschore,<br>And mochel of his beauté forlore.          | cut as well<br>hinderance<br>shoot grow vigorously<br>Now; boughs shorn away<br>much; its; lost     |
| 585 | The ympe had roum and wexeth fast;<br>The olde tre his vertu gan acast.<br>For no wonder hit nis:<br>Of the maister rote hit is<br>Out ispronge and out isshet.                     | grows<br>vigor; shed<br>it's no wonder<br>main root<br>sprung and shot                              |
| 590 | And his bowes awai iket,<br>Tharfore that olde tre les his pride<br>And asered bi that o side. <sup>25</sup><br>The gode burgeis on a dai<br>His ympe thrivinge he sai,             | <br><br><br>saw his shoot thriving                                                                  |
| 595 | Fair iwoxe and fair isprad,<br>But the olde tre was al abrad.<br>He clepid his gardener tho<br>And asked whi the olde tre verd so.<br>He answerede, als he wel couthe,              | Beautifully grown; spread out<br>gangly<br>called over; then<br>faired<br>could                     |
| 600 | 'Sikerliche, ich telle thee nouthe:<br>The yonge impe that wide springes<br>Had large roum in alle thingges,                                                                        | To be sure, I'll tell you right now<br>grows broadly                                                |

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<sup>25</sup> Lines 590–92: *And with its boughs cut away, / The old tree lost its magnificence / and dried up on one side*

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| fol. 87vb | And for the elde tre is so ihewed,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>older; cut back</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 605       | Hit is so wikked and so sschrewed.<br>The burgeis seide: 'Sethe the elde<br>Biginneth so to unbelde,<br>Hewe him to the grounde doun right.<br>Lat the yonge tre atire, aflight.'<br>Thous was the olde tre doun ithrawe<br>And the yonge tre forht idrawe.<br>Gode sire, gent and fre,<br>That olde tre bitokneth thee.<br>The yonge bitokneth thi sone wode<br>That is ispronge out of thi blode.<br>He sschal be sone forht idrawe<br>And maister, and thou his knaue.<br>Hit wil wel sone ben ido,<br>But thou take kep therto.<br>And but thou do, thou ne hast no might.<br>That I biseke to oure Dright<br>That als hit mote fare bi thee,<br>As dede bi the pinnote tre." | <i>wretched; cursed</i><br><i>Since; older one</i><br><i>become weak</i><br><i>right down to the ground</i><br><i>be prepared; in faith</i><br><i>Thus; thrown</i><br><i>fostered</i><br><i>noble; gracious</i><br><i>stands for you</i><br><i>deranged</i><br><i>sprung; blood</i><br><i>shall; fostered</i><br><i>[made] master; servant (see note)</i><br><i>be done</i><br><i>Unless; attend to it</i><br><i>unless; you will have no power</i><br><i>So I beg our Lord</i><br><i>That it may go with you</i><br><i>As it did with</i> |
| 610       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 615       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 620       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 625       | "Certes dame, thou seist for nowt.<br>I ne sschal nevere so ben bicaught.<br>Ich thee bihote, sikerliche.<br>He schal tomorewe erliche<br>To deth be don, and that is right."<br>And thous passede the ferste night.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>you're speaking for no reason</i><br><i>taken advantage of</i><br><i>promise, to be sure</i><br><i>early tomorrow</i><br><i>put to death</i><br><i>thus passed; first</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| [DAY 2]   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 630       | Amorewe aros the emperour<br>And mani baroun of gret honur.<br>Men undede the gates of the paleis;<br>In com goende mani burgeis.<br>Sone was fild paleys and tour;<br>In com goind themperour.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>The next morning</i><br><i>opened; palace</i><br><i>came walking</i><br><i>filled palace; tower</i><br><i>came walking</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 635       | "Goht," he seith, "to the prisone,<br>And fechcheth forht mine sone,<br>And quik that he ware anhonge<br>On heghe galewes and on stronge."<br>The boies yede anon doun<br>And fesched the child out of prisoun,<br>And ladde him forht thour the halle<br>Among the erles and barouns alle.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Go</i><br><i>fetch out</i><br><i>make about it quickly; hanged</i><br><i>high and sturdy gallows</i><br><i>rogues went straight</i><br><i>fetches</i><br><i>led; through</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 640       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | For that schild that naked was<br>Mani bede themperice evel gras. <sup>26</sup>                                                                                                                                                               | <i>child</i>                                                                                                                                                   |
| 645       | Than com ridend Bancillas,<br>The childes firste maister he was,<br>And seghe his deciple harde bistad;                                                                                                                                       | <i>came riding [in]</i><br><br><i>saw; in trouble</i>                                                                                                          |
| fol. 88ra | Therfore he was in herte unglad.<br>He rod to themperours halle,                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                |
| 650       | And lighte and passede the knightes alle,<br>And fint sone themperour,<br>And: "Sire," saide, "Deu vous doint bonjour."<br>Themperour saide: "God thee defende,<br>Fram god dai and fram god ende."                                           | <i>alighted; passed through</i><br><i>found</i><br><i>[he] said; God give you good day</i><br><i>keep you</i><br><i>(see note)</i>                             |
| 655       | Than seide maister Bancillas:<br>"Whi artou wroht, and for what cas<br>Wiltou sle thin owen child?<br>Ne were thou wone be god and mild?" <sup>27</sup>                                                                                       | <i>are you angry; reason</i><br><i>Do you want to slay</i>                                                                                                     |
| 660       | "Hit nis no wonder," saide themperour,<br>"Thou sschalt ben anhonged, thou losenjour.<br>For to thee and thine fere<br>I bitok mi sone to lere,<br>For to han itaught him god,<br>And ye han imad him wod.                                    | <i>It's no wonder</i><br><i>hanged; rascal</i><br><i>companions</i><br><i>entrusted; teach</i><br><i>To have taught him well</i><br><i>have made; deranged</i> |
| 665       | Mi wif he wolde have forleyn;<br>Hit nis no wonder though I have trayn.<br>He schal therfore ben islawe,<br>And afterward al todrawe."                                                                                                        | <i>raped</i><br><i>if I am aggrieved</i><br><i>be slain</i><br><i>drawn to pieces</i>                                                                          |
| 670       | Than seide maister Bancillas:<br>"Sire, that were now a sori cas.<br>Thei he had iwraththed your wif,<br>Yit had he nowt agelt his lif." <sup>28</sup><br>Savve youre grace, wene ich hit nowt,<br>Hit evere com in his thout." <sup>29</sup> | <i>would be a wretched thing</i>                                                                                                                               |
| 675       | Themperour saide: "I fond hire torent,<br>Hire her and hire face ischent,<br>And who is founde hond-habbing,<br>Hit nis non nede of witnessing." <sup>30</sup>                                                                                | <i>in tattered clothes</i><br><i>Her hair; disfigured</i>                                                                                                      |

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<sup>26</sup> Many wished misfortune upon the empress

<sup>27</sup> Didn't you use to be good and merciful?

<sup>28</sup> Lines 671–72: Even if he had angered your wife, / Still he would not have deserved to lose his life

<sup>29</sup> Lines 673–74: With all due respect, I don't think / It ever came into his mind [to act so]

<sup>30</sup> Lines 677–78: And when somone is caught red-handed, / There is no need for witnesses

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 680       | Saide Bancillas: "Hit nis non hale<br>To leve stepmoderes tale.<br>Yif thou him slest bi hire purchas,<br>On thee falle swich a cas<br>As fel upon a gentil knight<br>And of his graihond that was so wight."                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>not wholesome<br/>believe; tales<br/>by her contrivance<br/>May such a fate befall you</i>                                                                                                 |
| 685       | "O maister, for Godes mounde,<br>Hou bifel the knight of his grehonde?"<br>"Therwhile, sire, that I tolde this tale,<br>Thi sone mighte tholie dethes bale;<br>Thanne were mi tale forlore.<br>Ac ofsende thi sone therfore,<br>And yif him respit of his bale,<br>And thou sschalt here a foul fair tale."<br>Themperour saide: "Respit I graunt.<br>Fech him hider a serjaunt." | <i>on; greyhound; brave<br/>in God's name<br/>What befell; regarding<br/>While<br/>suffer; torment<br/>for nothing<br/>summon<br/>give; respite from; torment<br/>hear; terrifyingly good</i> |
| 690       | Quik ran the messenger.<br>With god semblant and glade cher,<br>He louted his maister that com him bi<br>As he was lad to prisoun sti. <sup>31</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>Let a sergeant fetch him hither<br/>courteousness; expression</i>                                                                                                                          |
| fol. 88rb | "Maister," seide themperour, "tel this cas."<br>"Bletheliche," saide sire Bancillas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>story<br/>Gladly</i>                                                                                                                                                                       |

[TALE 2: CANIS, THE DOG. FIRST SAGE, BANCILLAS]

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 705 | "Sire, whilom was in this cité,<br>In a dai of the Trineté,<br>A swithe noble strong burdis<br>Of men that were of noble pris.<br>In a mede was this turney,<br>Of men that were of gret noblai.<br>The knyght in the mede hadde o maner,<br>Al biclosed with o river,<br>Of chaumbres and of heghe halle,<br>Of old werk, forcrased alle.<br>The knight hadde a fair leuedi,<br>A wel fair child sche hadde him bi.<br>Hit hadde of thre norices keping;<br>The ferste gaf hit soukeying;<br>That other norice him scholde bathe<br>Whan hit was time, late and rathe; | <i>once [there] was<br/>On a Trinity Sunday<br/>very; spirited joust<br/>fame<br/>meadow; tournament<br/>nobility<br/>a manor house<br/>Completely surrounded by a<br/>With; high<br/>fallen to ruins<br/>lady<br/>very; by him<br/>Three nursemaids looked after it<br/>suckled him<br/>late and early</i> |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<sup>31</sup> Lines 697–98: *He (Florentine) bowed to his master when he went past him / As he was led to his prison cell*

|           |                                                      |                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|           | The thridde norice him sscholde wassche.             |                                    |
|           | The child was keped tendre and nessche.              | <i>kept; soft</i>                  |
|           | The knight hadde a graihond,                         | <i>greyhound</i>                   |
| 720       | Ther nas no better in lond ifound.                   | <i>wasn't any better</i>           |
|           | Alle the bestes that ran to                          | <i>[it] ran after</i>              |
|           | He tok, bothe hert and ro.                           | <i>caught; hart; roe</i>           |
|           | He was so hende and wel itaught,                     | <i>noble; well behaved</i>         |
|           | He nolde give him for non aught. <sup>32</sup>       |                                    |
| 725       | The knight was lopen on his stede                    | <i>had leapt; horse</i>            |
|           | And armed wel in iren wede —                         | <i>steel armor</i>                 |
|           | The sscheld aboute his nekk, the spere on his hond — | <i>[with] The shield; spear in</i> |
|           | And burdised with the knightes of the lond.          | <i>[he] jousted</i>                |
|           | The leuedi stod in pointt tournis                    | <i>on the drawbridge</i>           |
| 730       | For to bihelde the burdis.                           | <i>To watch; joust</i>             |
|           | The norice went out of the halle                     | <i>nurses</i>                      |
|           | And set the cradel under the walle.                  | <i>put; wall</i>                   |
|           | Mani stede ther ran and lep,                         | <i>Many a horse; leapt</i>         |
|           | To hem men toke gode kep.                            | <i>People watched them eagerly</i> |
| 735       | An addre was norissched in the wal                   | <i>snake dwelled in</i>            |
| fol. 88va | And herde the riding and the noise al,               | <i>heard</i>                       |
|           | And pelt out here heued to se that wonder,           | <i>poked; her head; see</i>        |
|           | And segh that schild ligge therunder.                | <i>saw; lying below</i>            |
|           | He crep to grounde quik anon                         | <i>slithered; at once</i>          |
| 740       | In the cradel the child to slon.                     | <i>slay</i>                        |
|           | The graihond segh the adder red,                     | <i>saw; copper</i>                 |
|           | Grislich, rough, strong, and qued.                   | <i>Horrible; wicked</i>            |
|           | Anon he gan hire to asail                            | <i>attacked her</i>                |
|           | And hente here in his mouth saun fail.               | <i>seized her; without fail</i>    |
| 745       | The adder so the grehound stang                      | <i>bit</i>                         |
|           | And he feled the bite so strang.                     | <i>felt; painful</i>               |
|           | Anon he let the adder gon,                           | <i>go</i>                          |
|           | Upon the cradel he fleigh anon,                      | <i>(the snake) flew</i>            |
|           | And was aboute the child to sting,                   | <i>bite</i>                        |
| 750       | And the greihond com yerne flingging,                | <i>at once dashing eagerly</i>     |
|           | And hente the adder in strong ger,                   | <i>seized; strongly</i>            |
|           | And flapped here al aboute his er.                   | <i>dashed her; ears</i>            |
|           | Bitwene the adder and the grehound                   |                                    |
|           | The cradel turnd up so down on ground —              |                                    |
| 755       | Up so down in hire feghting —                        |                                    |
|           | That the child lai diueling. <sup>33</sup>           |                                    |

<sup>32</sup> He (the knight) would not give him away for anything

<sup>33</sup> Lines 753–56: [what with the fighting] Between the snake and the greyhound / The cradle [ended up] turned upside down on the ground — / [turned] Upside down in their fighting — / So that the child lay sprawled [underneath it]

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | The stapeles hit up held al quert,<br>That the child nas nowt ihert.<br>Thaddre so the greihoun bot,<br>760 Bi the side, God hit wot.<br>He cried and on the cradel lep<br>And bledde theron a wel gret hep.<br>And whan the smert was al igon,<br>To that addre he sterte anon,<br>765 And bi the bodi he him hent,<br>And al to peces here torent.<br>The grehound wolde nowt sessed be<br>Til that adder ware toren of thre,<br>And al the place therabout,<br>770 Was wel blodi, withouten doute.<br>The burdis toyed, the folk gan hom tee,<br>And the norices alle thre<br>The cradel and the child thai found<br>Up so down upon the ground;<br>775 The greihound criede for his smert.<br>The norice was sori in hert<br>And ech of hem understode<br>That the greihond was wod<br>And hadde that faire child islawe.<br>fol. 88vb<br>781 Awai thai gonne fle and drawe,<br>Als hit were wode wimmen.<br>The leuedi com hom agen<br>And asked hem what hem was.<br>Anon thai telde here al the cas.<br>785 Thai lowen on that greihond hende;<br>Hit was pit , so God mamende. | <i>frame held it up intact<br/>So that; was not hurt<br/>The snake; bit<br/>In; knows<br/>(The greyhound); leapt<br/>a great deal<br/>pain had passed<br/>lurched<br/>seized<br/>tore her into little pieces<br/>would not rest<br/>torn into three pieces<br/>covered in blood<br/>joust ended; returned home<br/>on account of his pain<br/>nurses were<br/>thought<br/>rabid<br/>slain<br/>did flee and go<br/>As if they were mad<br/>lady; home again<br/>them what the matter was<br/>told her; story<br/>slandered; noble<br/>piteous, so help me God<br/>lady<br/>In a swoon; fell; assuredly<br/>from the joust<br/>asked them what the matter was<br/>said; want to die<br/>will not ever eat bread (see note)<br/>slain<br/>unless; will slay<br/>surrender<br/>enraged; marched<br/>standing up and wagging its tail<br/>drew; without fail</i> |
|  | The leuedi, when sche herde this,<br>Aswone sche fil adoun, iwis.<br>The knight com fram the justing fare,<br>790 Anon asked hem what hem ware.<br>'Sire,' quadth she, 'ich wille bi ded,<br>I nelle never ete bred,<br>For thi greihond that is so wilde<br>Hath islawe oure faire childe,<br>795 And but ye willen him slen anon,<br>Right now ich wille mi lif forgon.'<br>The knight for rage into halle set,<br>His hende graihond ther he met,<br>That him welcomed with fot and tail.<br>800 The knight drowth his swerd, saunz fail,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|           |                                                  |                                          |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|           | The graihond on the rigge he hit,                | <i>back</i>                              |
|           | Into the grounde he him slit.                    | <i>Down to the ground; cut</i>           |
|           | The greihound is ded, the knight forth goth      |                                          |
|           | Into his halle, grim and wroth.                  | <i>fierce; angry</i>                     |
| 805       | Of the adder he fond mani tronsoun               | <i>pieces</i>                            |
|           | And the cradel up so down.                       | <i>upside down</i>                       |
|           | He turneth the cradel and fint the child quik,   | <i>found; alive</i>                      |
|           | Hol and sond, and hath ferlich.                  | <i>Whole; sound; [he] marveled</i>       |
|           | He segh the adder the graihound slowth:          | <i>saw [that]; slew</i>                  |
| 810       | He hadde slawen his greihond with wouth.         | <i>slain; wrongly</i>                    |
|           | He cride and made mochel sorewe:                 | <i>great sorrow</i>                      |
|           | ‘Ne be that man nevere iborewe,                  | <i>Let that man never find shelter</i>   |
|           | But in evel water adreint,                       | <i>be downed</i>                         |
|           | That ever leve wimmanes pleint.’                 | <i>believes; accusations</i>             |
| 815       | Eft he maketh a gret cri,                        | <i>Again</i>                             |
|           | And he clepeth the leuedi,                       | <i>summons; lady</i>                     |
|           | And on the knightes and sweines also,            | <i>squires</i>                           |
|           | And pleined him of his mochel wo,                | <i>complained about; great suffering</i> |
|           | And sschewede his child hol and sound,           | <i>showed; whole</i>                     |
| 820       | And slawen was his gode graihond,                | <i>slain</i>                             |
|           | For his prouesse and his god dede,               | <i>prowess; good deed</i>                |
|           | Al for his fole wives rede.                      | <i>on account; foolish; advice</i>       |
|           | ‘O grehound,’ he seide, ‘wight and strong,       | <i>brave</i>                             |
| fol. 89ra | I schal mi selve abigge that wrong,              | <i>atone for</i>                         |
| 825       | And tache other knightes, saun fail,             | <i>teach; without fail</i>               |
|           | To leve here leuedis conseil.’                   | <i>disregard their ladies’ counsel</i>   |
|           | He set him down in that thrawe,                  | <i>then</i>                              |
|           | Als quik he dede his sschon ofdrawe,             | <i>And immediately took of his shoes</i> |
|           | And karf hise vaumpes fot-hot,                   | <i>cut off; stockings hot-footedly</i>   |
| 830       | And wente him forht al barfot,                   | <i>barefoot (a sign of penance)</i>      |
|           | Withouten leve of wif and child,                 | <i>[taking] leave</i>                    |
|           | And wente into a forest wild,                    |                                          |
|           | Into desert fram alle men,                       | <i>[a place] deserted by; people</i>     |
|           | Wolde he never come agen.                        | <i>Never planning to return</i>          |
| 835       | He tholede mani a biter stounde                  | <i>suffered; moment</i>                  |
|           | For the wrong of his greihonde.                  | <i>wrong he did to</i>                   |
|           | So falle on thee, sire emperour,                 |                                          |
|           | Swich arm and sschame and desonur, <sup>34</sup> |                                          |
|           | Yif thou do thi sone unright,                    | <i>treat your son unjustly</i>           |
| 840       | Als to the greihound dede the knight.            | <i>As</i>                                |
|           | Thourgh the conseil of hiis wif                  |                                          |
|           | He slough his greihond nowt geltif.”             | <i>slew; unguilty</i>                    |

<sup>34</sup> Lines 837–38: *Thus may such loss and wretchedness and dishonor befall you, lord emperor*

|     |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                           |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     | "O maister, bi Peter that ich haue sought,<br>So schal hit bifalle nowt.                                        | <i>whom I have sought</i>                                                                 |
| 845 | Nou bi God that I schal serve<br>Todai more ne schal he sterve."                                                | <i>Now<br/>he shall not die</i>                                                           |
|     | The court wente, the maister tok leve,<br>Hit gan sone to wexen eve.                                            | <i>took [his] leave<br/>become evening</i>                                                |
|     | Themperour com to chaumbre anon,<br>Themperice him loured upon.                                                 | <i>bedroom<br/>scowled at him</i>                                                         |
| 850 | Themperour saide: "Dame, artou wroth?"<br>"Ye, sire," she saide, "forsoht."<br>"Tel me now, sweting fre."       | <i>are you angry<br/>indeed<br/>Tell me [about it]; kind darling</i>                      |
|     | "Thou wost wel, so mot ich se,<br>For I thee warni of thine fon,<br>And thou ne kanst me thank non.             | <i>know well; I must say<br/>warn about; enemies<br/>show me no gratitude</i>             |
| 855 | Thou clepest thi sone, he is the devel;<br>He sschal thee do wel mochel ivel.<br>But thou me of him wil awreke, | <i>[he whom] You call your son<br/>great evil<br/>If you don't avenge me on him</i>       |
| 860 | Al folk mot hit wite and speke.<br>He mot thee bringge to swich ending<br>Als hadde the bor for his cracheing." | <i>Everyone will know about it<br/>will bring you to such an end<br/>boar; scratching</i> |
|     | "The bor, dame, tel that me,<br>Whi for cracheing deied he?"                                                    | <i>did he die</i>                                                                         |
| 865 | "Sire nou thou wilt wite that cas,<br>Ich wille thee telle hou hit was."                                        | <i>now you will know the story</i>                                                        |

[TALE 3: APER, THE BOAR. THE EMPRESS]

|           |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                              |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| fol. 89rb | "Sire," quath the leuedi, "here bi west<br>Ther was a fair riche forest.<br>A bor was norisscht tharinne,                                 | <i>said; out west<br/>supplied with nourishment</i>                          |
| 870       | Fram a pig to a swine.<br>Of the bor was swich los<br>To gon therinne ech man agros;<br>Ne dorst ther come knight ne swein. <sup>35</sup> | <i>piglet<br/>such terrible report<br/>[that] To go; everyone was afraid</i> |
|           | In the forest was a plein<br>And in the pleyn a tre of hawes<br>That ripe were be tho dawes.                                              | <i>clearing<br/>hawthorn berries<br/>at that time</i>                        |
| 875       | The bor hem gan ful sone asmelle;<br>Ech dai he het therof his felle.<br>In that forest woned an herd                                     | <i>smelled them<br/>Every day; ate; fill<br/>lived; herdsman</i>             |
| 880       | That of bestes lokend and sterde.                                                                                                         | <i>looked after; guided</i>                                                  |

<sup>35</sup> Neither knight nor squire dared to go in there

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | O best him was araught,<br>Widewar he hit hadde isought.<br>Be the hawe tre he gan come<br>And thoughte to have therof some.                                                                                  | One beast; stolen<br>Everywhere; sought<br>hawthorn tree<br>intended                                                 |
| 885       | Ful he gaderede his barm —<br>Yet ne thought he of non harm —<br>In his other lappe he gaderede some.<br>The felle bor bicam to come.                                                                         | gathered; sleeve<br>Thinking nothing of it then<br>sleeve; some [more]<br>evil; began to approach                    |
| 890       | The herde him segh and was ofdrad,<br>He dorst nowt fle, he was so mad. <sup>36</sup><br>Up to the hawe tre he stegh.<br>The bor him com swithe negh<br>And he ne findeth hawe non<br>As he was iwont to don. | saw; afraid<br><br>climbed<br>very near<br>no hawthorn fruit<br>used to do                                           |
| 895       | He loked up and segh the herd,<br>He criede and makede rewli rerd.<br>He wette his tossches and his fet, <sup>37</sup><br>The erthe with his snowte he bet.                                                   | saw<br>a terrifying roar<br><br>snout; beat                                                                          |
| 900       | Thourh the mouht the fom was wight,<br>The tussches in the tre he smit.<br>The tre aresede as hit wold falle.<br>The herde was sori adrad withalle<br>And nyste what was beste to doo.                        | foam; white<br>tusk; struck<br>trembled as if it would<br>awfully frightened to be sure<br>didn't know; (see t-note) |
| E905      | Hys honde he putt his lappe too<br>And caste the bore of the hawyn.<br>The boore thereof faste gan gnawyn<br>And ete hys wombe fulle withalle,<br>And he gan sone on knes to falle.                           | into his sleeve<br>some of the hawthorn fruits<br>gnawed<br>belly; to be sure                                        |
| A910      | Tho isegh the herd man<br>That the bor falle bigan,<br>He kest the bor down hawes anowe<br>And com himself down bi a bowe.                                                                                    | When; saw<br>to fall<br>aplenty<br>on a branch                                                                       |
| 915       | With the left hond he heng,<br>And with the right hond on the bor he feng.<br>He clew the bor on the rigge<br>And he bigan adoun to ligge.                                                                    | hand; hung<br>caught the boar<br>scratched; back<br>he (the boar) began; lie                                         |
| fol. 89va | He clewe him eft upon the wombe,<br>He fil adoun als a lombe.<br>He lek his eghen and gan to slape.                                                                                                           | again; belly<br>fell down like a lamb<br>closed; eyes; sleep                                                         |
| 920       | The knif drough the herde knape —<br>Out he drough, scharp an long —                                                                                                                                          | took out; boy herdsman<br>drew [it]; and                                                                             |

<sup>36</sup> He (the herdsman) dared not flee, he (the boar) was so mad

<sup>37</sup> He scraped the ground with his tusks and his hooves

|     |                                           |                                   |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|     | The bor to the herte he stong.            | <i>struck</i>                     |
|     | The herd thous with his long knif         | <i>thus</i>                       |
|     | Biraft the bor of his lif.                | <i>Took from</i>                  |
| 925 | He went him forth and let him ligge.      | <i>lying</i>                      |
|     | Lo, sire emperour, I thee sigge,          | <i>See; say</i>                   |
|     | Thou art the bor, thi maister thee clawes | <i>scratches</i>                  |
|     | With fals resoun and wikkede sawes,       | <i>wicked tales</i>               |
|     | And on thee he whetteth his teth.         | <i>is sharpening</i>              |
| 930 | Til thai thee bringge to thi deth,        |                                   |
|     | With clawing thai sculle thee desceive,   | <i>shall</i>                      |
|     | Til thai thee sle with dethes glaive."    | <i>blade</i>                      |
|     | "Certes, dame, I sigge no.                | <i>say no</i>                     |
|     | Hit schal nevere bifalle so.              | <i>never befall</i>               |
| 935 | Forsothe he sschal tomorewe dai,          | <i>In truth; die</i>              |
|     | Withouten ani more derai."                | <i>confusion</i>                  |
|     | And sche saide ones other twiis:          | <i>once or twice</i>              |
|     | "Gentil sire, graunt mercys.              | <i>many thanks</i>                |
|     | God yif thee therto strengthe and might   | <i>give</i>                       |
| 940 | To dethe him do er hit be night."         | <i>To put him to death before</i> |

[DAY 3]

|           |                                     |                                  |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|           | The night passedede, the dai com,   |                                  |
|           | The heghe emperour of Rom           | <i>high</i>                      |
|           | Went adoun of his tour,             | <i>down from; tower</i>          |
|           | With herte wroth and gret irour.    | <i>angry; ire</i>                |
| 945       | Men unlek gate and halle dore,      | <i>People unlocked</i>           |
|           | Barouns entrede in a store,         | <i>abundance</i>                 |
|           | Sone was fild paleys and tour,      | <i>filled palace; tower</i>      |
|           | In com gon themperour.              |                                  |
|           | Biforen hem alle, in grete traye,   | <i>agitation</i>                 |
| 950       | He het mani a wikke boie            | <i>summoned; wicked rogue</i>    |
|           | His son lede toward the hanging;    | <i>to lead</i>                   |
|           | Hit was ido withouten letting.      | <i>done; delay</i>               |
|           | And right amideward the pres        | <i>Then; through; crowd</i>      |
|           | Com ride maister Ancilles,          | <i>Came riding</i>               |
| 955       | That the childes other maister was, |                                  |
|           | And isegh that ferli cas.           | <i>saw; terrible thing</i>       |
|           | Toward the halle he gan drive,      | <i>ride</i>                      |
|           | And highede thider fast and blive,  | <i>hurried there; vigorously</i> |
|           | And fond sone that emperour,        | <i>met</i>                       |
| 960       | And gret him sone with honor.       | <i>greeted</i>                   |
| fol. 89vb | Themperour sikerliche               | <i>to be sure</i>                |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | On him loked litherliche,<br>And to the maister he saide thore:<br>"Maugre have thou for thi lore.<br>965 Thou hast iserved wikked mede,<br>Thou schalt hit have, so Crist me spede."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <i>Looked at him fiercely<br/>then<br/>Shame on you; teaching<br/>deserved; reward<br/>God help me</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|  | Than saide maister Ancilles:<br>"For Godes love, sire, hold thi pes.<br>Wiltou sle thin owen sone?<br>970 To ben milde hit was thi wone."<br>"Hit nis no wonder," saide themperour,<br>"Thou schalt ben anhonged, thou vile losenjour.<br>Ich tok thee mi sone to lore<br>For to teche him wisdom more<br>975 And ye han him bitreid.<br>His speche is loren, ich am desmaid;<br>Mi wif he wolde have forht itake.<br>To deth," he seide, "he schal ben don with wrake."<br>Than seide the maister: "Hit is non hale<br>980 To leve stepmoderes tale,<br>For here bolt is sone ischote,<br>More to harm than to note.<br>Yif thou him sle bi hire purchas,<br>On thee falle swich a cas<br>985 Als fil on Ypocras, the gode clerk,<br>That slow his neveu with fals werk."<br>"Maister," he saide, "tel me that cas<br>Of the scoler and of Ypocras."<br>Ancilles said als-so tit:<br>990 "Thi sone todai mak thou quit,<br>Til tomorewe hit be dailight,<br>And I thee schal telle anonright,<br>With gret felonie and with wouh<br>Hou Ypocras his neven slow."<br>995 "I schal him respite," saide themperour,<br>And het anon, withouten sojour<br>Men scholde agen fechche his sone<br>And caste him into presone.<br>The child was brout into the toun<br>1000 With a fair processoun<br>And into presoun pilt he was.<br>Nou ginneth the tale of Ypocras. | <i>peace<br/>Do you want to slay<br/>merciful; custom<br/>It's no wonder<br/>hanged; traitor<br/>gave; teach<br/>To teach<br/>have betrayed him<br/>lost; dismayed<br/>would have abducted<br/>put; misery<br/>unwholesome<br/>believe; tales<br/>her arrow is soon shot (see note)<br/>benefit<br/>slay him by her contrivance<br/>May such a fate befall you<br/>As befell; good<br/>Who slew his nephew wickedly<br/>story<br/>student<br/>right away<br/>free<br/><br/>right away<br/>injustice<br/>nephew slew<br/>grant a stay<br/>ordered; delay<br/>People; fetch back<br/>prison<br/>brought; town<br/><br/>thrown<br/>begins</i> |

[TALE 4: *MEDICUS*, THE DOCTOR. SECOND SAGE, ANCILLES]

|           |                                                                    |                                          |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|           | "Sire Ypocras was maister here,<br>Of lechecraft was non his pere. | <i>medicine; peer</i>                    |
| fol. 90ra | He hadde with him his neveu,                                       | <i>nephew</i>                            |
| 1006      | That schild lere of his vertu.                                     | <i>learned; expertise</i>                |
|           | He segh the child so queinte of lore,                              | <i>saw; wise in learning</i>             |
|           | He wolde techen him nammore.                                       | <i>[that] He would teach; no more</i>    |
|           | He thoughte wel, at a score,                                       | <i>by the time he was twenty</i>         |
| 1010      | He sscholde passi him bifore.                                      | <i>should surpass</i>                    |
|           | The child aparceived wel this                                      | <i>understood</i>                        |
|           | And held hit in his herte, iwis.                                   | <i>assuredly</i>                         |
|           | His emes werk he gan asprie                                        | <i>uncle's; observed covertly</i>        |
|           | Til he couthe al his maistrie.                                     | <i>Until; knew; skill</i>                |
| 1015      | Tho Ypocras wel he fond                                            | <i>Then; discovered</i>                  |
|           | Bi craft of the childes hond                                       | <i>By [observing] the skill</i>          |
|           | That he couthe al his mastrie                                      | <i>expertise</i>                         |
|           | And brast negh for onde and vie.                                   | <i>almost exploded with malice; envy</i> |
|           | So bifel upon a time a thing:                                      |                                          |
| 1020      | Of Hongrie the riche king                                          | <i>Hungary</i>                           |
|           | Hadde swich a sone gent.                                           | <i>a certain</i>                         |
|           | To Ypocras anon he sent                                            |                                          |
|           | That he scholde come his sone to hale                              | <i>heal</i>                              |
|           | And habbe gold ful a male.                                         | <i>a bag full of gold</i>                |
| 1025      | Ypocras wende ne might                                             | <i>could not go</i>                      |
|           | But cleped his neveu anonright                                     | <i>summoned; right away</i>              |
|           | And bad him wenden to that lond,                                   | <i>asked him to go</i>                   |
|           | And that schild take an hond.                                      | <i>to take in hand (treat)</i>           |
|           | And whan he hadde so ido,                                          | <i>done</i>                              |
| 1030      | He scholde agen comen him to.                                      | <i>come back to him</i>                  |
|           | The schild was set on a palefrai                                   | <i>palfrey</i>                           |
|           | And forht he tok the righte way.                                   | <i>nearest</i>                           |
|           | And whan he com to that lond                                       |                                          |
|           | The king him tok bi the hond                                       | <i>took</i>                              |
| 1035      | And ladde him to his sike childe.                                  | <i>led</i>                               |
|           | Now Crist of hevene be ous milde!                                  | <i>to us</i>                             |
|           | The yonge man segh the childes peyne                               | <i>saw; pain</i>                         |
|           | And tasted his senewe and his veyne.                               | <i>tested; sinews; veins</i>             |
|           | He taketh an urinal for to sen,                                    |                                          |
| 1040      | He ne segh nowt of the kyng, but of the quen. <sup>38</sup>        |                                          |
|           | And of the child, God hit wite,                                    | <i>God knows</i>                         |

<sup>38</sup> Lines 1039–40: *Upon taking a urinal to inspect, / He saw nothing of the king but [only] of the queen*

|           |                                              |                                           |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|           | He segh hit was amis bigete. <sup>39</sup>   |                                           |
|           | He gan the leuedi aside drawe.               | <i>drew aside</i>                         |
|           | 'Dame,' he saide, 'be aknawe                 | <i>is it known</i>                        |
| 1045      | What man had bigete this child?'             | <i>begotten</i>                           |
|           | 'What,' she saide, 'artou wild?              | <i>are you</i>                            |
|           | Who sschulde him bigete but the kyng?'       | <i>beget</i>                              |
|           | 'Dame,' he saide, 'that is soht no thing.    | <i>not at all true</i>                    |
| fol. 90rb | Hit nas nevere of kinges stren.'             | <i>was never; lineage</i>                 |
| 1050      | 'Let,' she saide, 'swich wordes ben          | <i>Stop it; with such words</i>           |
|           | Other I schal do bete thee so                | <i>Or I shall have you beaten so</i>      |
|           | That tho schalt nevere ride ne go.'          | <i>you; nor walk [again]</i>              |
|           | 'Dame,' he saide, 'bi swiche tale            | <i>with such a tale</i>                   |
|           | Thi sone schal nevere more ben hale.         | <i>be well</i>                            |
| 1055      | Ac tel me, dame, al the cas,                 | <i>the whole story</i>                    |
|           | Hou the child bigeten was.'                  | <i>was conceived</i>                      |
|           | 'Belami,' she saide, 'so.'                   | <i>Rascal; as I said</i>                  |
|           | 'Par fai, dame,' he saide, 'no,'             | <i>In faith</i>                           |
|           | And schok his heued upon the quen.           | <i>shook; at</i>                          |
| 1060      | 'Dame,' he saide, 'thai yhe wille me slen,   | <i>even if you should slay me</i>         |
|           | I ne mai do thi sone no bot,                 | <i>make for your son; remedy</i>          |
|           | But yif I wite the sothe rot                 | <i>Unless; know; true root</i>            |
|           | Of what man hit was bigete.'                 | <i>was conceived</i>                      |
|           | 'Maister,' she saide, 'that mai no man wite. | <i>know</i>                               |
| 1065      | Yif mi conseil were unhele,                  | <i>secret; revealed</i>                   |
|           | Ich were islawe, bi righte skele.'           | <i>would be slain; rightly</i>            |
|           | 'Dame,' he seide, 'so mot ich thee,          | <i>as I may prosper, i.e., on my life</i> |
|           | I nelle nevere biwraie thee.'                | <i>I will never betray</i>                |
|           | 'O meister,' she seide, 'so hit bifel:       | <i>it happened like this</i>              |
| 1070      | This enderdai in on Averil,                  | <i>A while ago; one April</i>             |
|           | Therl of Naverne com to this thede,          | <i>The earl; Navarre; place</i>           |
|           | Wel atired in riche wede,                    | <i>attired; clothing</i>                  |
|           | With mi louerd for to plai,                  | <i>lord; have amusement</i>               |
|           | And so he dede mani a dai.                   | <i>did</i>                                |
| 1075      | That ich erl I gan to love                   | <i>same</i>                               |
|           | Al erthliche thing above,                    | <i>Above all earthly things</i>           |
|           | And so, par gret druri,                      | <i>in the course of love</i>              |
|           | I let that erl ligge me bi,                  | <i>lie</i>                                |
|           | And thous hit was on me bigete.              | <i>thus</i>                               |
| 1080      | A, leve maister, let no man wite.'           | <i>dear; know</i>                         |
|           | 'Nai, dame, forsothe, iwis,                  | <i>in truth</i>                           |
|           | But for he was bigeten amis,                 | <i>because; misbegotten</i>               |
|           | Hit mot bothe drink and ete                  | <i>He (the child) must</i>                |

<sup>39</sup> He saw it was begotten amiss (i.e., a bastard)

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1085      | Contrarius drink, contrarius mete:<br>Beves flesch, and drinke the brotht!<br>He gaf the child anon therof;<br>The child warisscht fair and wel.<br>The kyng gaf him mani a juel<br>To the leche, of silver and goold, | <i>Opposing types of drink and food</i><br><i>Cow's meat</i><br><i>gave; of that [preparation]</i><br><i>regained his health</i><br><i>gave; jewel</i><br><i>doctor</i>                      |
| 1090      | Als mochel als he nime wold.<br>He wente hom with that eighte<br>And Ypocras, anonright,                                                                                                                               | <i>As much as he would take</i><br><i>those possessions</i><br><i>right away</i>                                                                                                             |
| fol. 90va | He asked yif that the schild was sound.<br>'Ye sire,' he saide, 'bi Seint Simond.'                                                                                                                                     | <i>well</i><br><i>Yes</i>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1095      | He asked: 'what was his medicine?'<br>'Bef and broth gode and fine.'<br>'What than was he an avetrol?'<br>'Thou seist soht, sire, be mi pol.'                                                                          | <i>Beef</i><br><i>bastard</i><br><i>say correctly; head</i>                                                                                                                                  |
| 1100      | Quath Ypocras: 'Bi the gode dome,<br>Thou art bicomme al to wis a grome.'<br>Ther he thoughte, agen resoun,<br>To don him strong tresoun.                                                                              | <i>Said; your</i><br><i>have become; wise; boy</i><br><i>plotted, against</i><br><i>a terrible wrong</i>                                                                                     |
| 1105      | So bifel upon a dai,<br>He and his neveu yede to plai<br>In a fair grene gardin,<br>Therin wex mani an herbe fin.<br>On thei seggen in the grounde<br>That was an herbe of gret mounde.                                | <i>went; amuse themselves</i><br><i>grew; plant</i><br><i>One; saw</i><br><i>value</i>                                                                                                       |
| 1110      | He tok and schewid hit Ypocras<br>And he saide a better ther nas<br>For he wald his neveu bikeche.<br>The child stoupede swich on to reche,<br>Therwhile Ypocras with a knif<br>Binom that schild his swete lif,       | <i>(the nephew) took; showed</i><br><i>(Ypocras) said; was none better</i><br><i>wanted; to deceive</i><br><i>stooped; such a one (plant); pick</i><br><i>Upon which</i><br><i>Took from</i> |
| 1115      | And let him birie sikerliche,<br>Als he were storven sodainliche.<br>And sone therafter swithe yerne<br>He let alle hise bokes berne.<br>Ac God almighti, hevene kyng,<br>He oversegh alle thing.                      | <i>had him buried secretly</i><br><i>As if he had died suddenly</i><br><i>very eagerly</i><br><i>had; burnt (see note)</i><br><i>the king of heaven</i>                                      |
| 1120      | He sent Ypocras for his tresoun<br>Sone therafter the menesoun.<br>Wel wist Ypocras for his qued<br>That he scholde sone be ded.                                                                                       | <i>sees</i><br><i>dysentery</i><br><i>knew; because of his wickedness</i>                                                                                                                    |
| 1125      | For al that hever he mighte do<br>His menesoun might nowt staunche tho.<br>He let ofsende, moche and lite,                                                                                                             | <i>ever</i><br><i>[he] might not stop then</i><br><i>had summoned, great and small</i>                                                                                                       |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | Hise neyebours him to visite,<br>And tolde al right anon                                                                                                                                     | <i>right away</i>                                                                                                                    |
| 1130      | Hou his deth was comen him on,<br>With gret right and nowt with wough,<br>For his neveu that he slowgh.<br>An empti tonne he let fet<br>And of water of a pet                                | <i>had come to him</i><br><i>not with wrong</i><br><i>On account of; slew</i><br><i>barrel; had fetched</i><br><i>well</i>           |
| 1135      | He let hit fille to the mouthe,<br>For he walde hise werkes were couthe.<br>The tresoun he gan hem alle reherse.                                                                             | <i>had it filled; brim</i><br><i>he wanted his deeds to be known</i><br><i>relate</i>                                                |
| fol. 90vb | In a thousand stede he let the tonne perce<br>And tho he hadde mad holes so fele,                                                                                                            | <i>places; had; pierced</i><br><i>although; many</i>                                                                                 |
| 1140      | In ech he pelt a dosele<br>And smerede the holes al aboute,<br>And everich doseil he braid oute.<br>No drope of water ut com than,<br>Mervaille hadde mani a man.                            | <i>put; plug</i><br><i>greased</i><br><i>every plug; drew out</i><br><i>out</i><br><i>Many people marveled</i>                       |
| 1145      | 'Lo!' he saide, 'water hi can stop,<br>That hit ne mai nowt bi bores drop,<br>Ac I ne mai nowt stop mi menesoun<br>And that is al for mi tresoun,<br>With gret right and nowt with wough,    | <i>I</i><br><i>So that; holes</i><br><i>on account of</i><br><i>wrong</i>                                                            |
| 1150      | For mi neveu that I slow.<br>Ich him slow sikerliche,<br>For he was wiser man than iche.<br>Ich ne no man under sonne<br>Me gif help nou ne conne,                                           | <i>slew</i><br><i>I</i><br><i>I nor</i><br><i>could give me help now</i>                                                             |
| 1155      | But mi neveu alive ware.<br>Right is that ich hennes fare.'<br>Lo!' saide the maister, "hou Ypocras<br>Destrued his lif and solas.<br>Sire emperour, tak hede and loke:                      | <i>Except; if he were alive</i><br><i>It's right; travel hence</i><br><i>Look</i><br><i>Destroyed; joy</i><br><i>take heed; look</i> |
| 1160      | He slow his neveu and brent his boke,<br>Might hit him ani thing profite?"<br>"Nai," saide themperour, "moche ne lite."<br>"No," saide the maister, "verraiment.<br>I biseke God omnipotent, | <i>slew; burnt</i><br><i>Did he profit in any way</i><br><i>No; neither a lot nor a bit</i><br><i>indeed</i><br><i>beg</i>           |
| 1165      | That yif thou do thi sone to ded<br>And hise maistres, be thi wives red,<br>That on thee falle swich a cas,<br>As dede on maister Ypocras."                                                  | <i>put your son to death</i><br><i>according to; advice</i><br><i>might fall; fate</i><br><i>did</i>                                 |
| 1170      | The maister had so isped,<br>Themperour sone was his frend.<br>The maister was owai inome;                                                                                                   | <i>succeeded</i><br><i>[that] the emperor</i><br><i>led away</i>                                                                     |

|           |                                             |                                          |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|           | Temperour was to chaumbre icome.            | <i>came to his bedroom</i>               |
|           | Ther he fond his emperice                   | <i>Where</i>                             |
|           | With lourand chere and with nice            | <i>frowning; foolishly</i>               |
| 1175      | Hond wringing, and loude koupe,             | <i>Wringing her hands; crying loudly</i> |
|           | And here visage al biwope.                  | <i>her face; in tears</i>                |
|           | “Dame,” he saide, “pluk up thi cher,        | <i>cheer up</i>                          |
|           | Other tel me whi thou makest swich cher.”   | <i>Or; such a face</i>                   |
|           | “Sire,” she saide, “hit is wonder non.      | <i>it's no wonder</i>                    |
| 1180      | Hi se thi honour al igon;                   | <i>I see; gone</i>                       |
|           | I se the wede waxe over the corn.           | <i>weeds choking out</i>                 |
|           | Allas! alas! that I was boren               | <i>born</i>                              |
| fol. 91ra | And that I schal this dai ise               | <i>see</i>                               |
|           | That we sschulle departed be.”              | <i>separated</i>                         |
| 1185      | “What, dame, is hit comen therto,           | <i>has it come to this</i>               |
|           | We sscholle be departed so?”                | <i>[that] We</i>                         |
|           | “Ye, sire, bi Adam and bi Eve,              |                                          |
|           | For thou nelt nowt me ileve                 | <i>you will not believe me</i>           |
|           | Of him that thou clepest thi sone.          | <i>Regarding; call</i>                   |
| 1190      | Certes he had the develes wone.             | <i>good luck</i>                         |
|           | He thee procureth night and dai             | <i>procures for you</i>                  |
|           | Al the sschame that he mai.                 |                                          |
|           | Thine barouns and thine gentil men,         |                                          |
|           | Alle thai holden thee agen.                 | <i>hold against you</i>                  |
| 1195      | Thai sschal wel sone for nithe an hete      | <i>on account of envy and hate</i>       |
|           | Put thee out of thi kinges sete             |                                          |
|           | And sette him stede inne thine;             | <i>in your place</i>                     |
|           | That ware mi deth and mi pine.              | <i>death of me; pain</i>                 |
|           | Ich hadde levere to ben anhonge             | <i>rather be hanged</i>                  |
| 1200      | Than that I scholde live so longe.”         |                                          |
|           | A! Hou wimmen conne hit make,               | <i>dissemble</i>                         |
|           | Whan thai wil ani man lake.                 | <i>trick</i>                             |
|           | “Ac, sire, yif hit falle so                 |                                          |
|           | That thempire is dight him to,              | <i>destined to him</i>                   |
| 1205      | On thee falle swich a cas                   | <i>May such a fate befall you</i>        |
|           | As dede on him that his heued was           | <i>whose head</i>                        |
|           | Of his sone icast in a gong                 | <i>By; thrown; privy</i>                 |
|           | With felonie and with wrong.”               | <i>Feloniously</i>                       |
|           | “O dame, who might that be                  |                                          |
| 1210      | Wolde do his fader swich vilté?             | <i>[who] Would commit; an insult</i>     |
|           | Tel hit me, for God above.”                 |                                          |
|           | “Lat be, sire, for mi love,                 | <i>Be still</i>                          |
|           | Thou ne lovest nowt of mi telling;          | <i>don't like any of my tales</i>        |
|           | Hit schal thee rewe, bi hevene kyng.”       | <i>You'll regret it; king of heaven</i>  |
| 1215      | “Yis, dame,” he saide, “lat here thee speke | <i>speak here</i>                        |

And ich wil sone thee awreke. avenge  
 Sei on, dame." And ssche bigan  
 To tellen als a fals wimman. as

[TALE 5: GAZA, THE TREASURE. THE EMPRESS]

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1220      | "An emperour was in thes toun,<br>A riche man of gret renoun,<br>Octovien was his name,<br>Wide sprong his riche fame.<br>Gold and silver to wille he wan <sup>40</sup><br>And more he hadde than ani man. | this town<br><br><br><br><br><br>traveled; impressive                                              |
| 1225      | He made Cressent, that riche tour,<br>Therinne he pult his tresor.<br>Seve wise men ther were in Rome,                                                                                                     | tower<br>Wherein; placed<br>Seven                                                                  |
| fol. 91rb | The five out of londe he nome<br>And the twaie left at home                                                                                                                                                | took [with him]<br>two; left                                                                       |
| 1230      | To kepe Rome with rightful dome.<br>That on was bothe curteis an hende, <sup>41</sup><br>Lef to give and lef to spende;<br>And that other lef to pinche,<br>Bothe he was scars and chinche.                | look after; impartial justice<br><br><br>Eager<br>scrimp<br>stingy; miserly                        |
| 1235      | And als we finden writen in boke,<br>Themperour him taught his tresor to loke,<br>And he hit kept bi al his might,<br>Bothe bi daies an bi night.<br>For the wrecche man, saun fail,                       | gave; look after<br>as well as he could<br><br><br><br>wretched; without doubt                     |
| 1240      | Wende the erthe sscholde him fail.<br>The large wise wiste wel<br>Of this tresor eche a del.<br>He saide to his sone: "Tak a pike,<br>Tonight thou schalt with me strike.'                                 | Thought; fall in on [otherwise]<br>generous sage knew<br>All about this treasure<br>pickaxe<br>dig |
| 1245      | 'Whider?' seide his sone.<br>'Therof have thou nothing to done.<br>Arise up quik and with me go,<br>And do als tou sest me do.'                                                                            | Where to<br>That's none of your concern<br>Get up<br>as you see                                    |
| 1250      | Forth thai went withoute sojour<br>To Cressent that riche tour.<br>An hole thai bregen al with ginne<br>And bothe thai wenten therinne,                                                                    | delay<br>excellent<br>broke open; cleverly                                                         |

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<sup>40</sup> He acquired as much gold and silver as he desired

<sup>41</sup> One of them was both courteous and refined

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | And token tresor, I you swere,<br>Als the moche als thai might bere,<br>1255 And beren hit hom wel on hast,<br>And maden hem large whiles hit last.<br>Amorewe aros that sinatour,<br>And sithen tobregen his louerdes tour,<br>And beren was awai that tresour;<br>1260 Therfore he made gret dolour.<br>He ne made no pleint to no man,<br>But stopped the hole anon agen,<br>For he thouwte wel that hit left,<br>Wolde come agen eft.<br>1265 For thief of steling wil nowt blinne,<br>Til he honge bi the chinne.<br>Nigh evene bi the hole,<br>Ther the catel was istole,<br>The wise man dede make a dich<br>1270 Ful of lim and of pich,<br>That yif he agen wald come,<br>That the trattur sscholde bi nome.<br>fol. 91va The stolen catel ispended is,<br>The wise bicometh a fol, iwis. | <i>As much as; bear<br/>bore; home; hastily<br/>spent liberally; whilst<br/>arose (the stingy sage)<br/>since; [was] breeched; lord's<br/>borne<br/>grieved profoundly<br/>complained to no one<br/>again<br/>thought; whoever left it<br/>Would; back again<br/>a thief won't stop stealing<br/>Until he's hanging by his chin<br/>Close by<br/>Where; treasure had been stolen<br/>had a ditch dug<br/>bitumen; pitch<br/>So that; would come back<br/>Then; traitor; caught<br/>The stolen treasure being spent<br/>wiseman; fool</i> |
| 1275 | He tok his sone, agen he went<br>To that tour that hight Cressent.<br>An hole thay broken al bi store,<br>The fader lep in bifore,<br>Into the limed diche.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>(the spendthrift sage); took; back<br/>is called<br/>broke open; boldly<br/>leapt<br/>slime-filled</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1280 | Loude he gan to crie and skriche<br>And saide: 'Sone, com her thou nowt,<br>For ich ham nomen and bicaught.'<br>'Hou so, fader? Ich wil fechche help.'<br>'Nai, sone, mak therof no yelp.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>screech<br/>don't come in here<br/>am taken; trapped<br/>fetch<br/>keep it quiet</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1285 | Her ne geth help ne red, <sup>42</sup><br>For sikerliche ich am ded.'<br>'A, leve fader, what sschal I do?'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>dear</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|      | 'Sone, with thin hond thi swerd tak to<br>And hastiliche gird off min heued.'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>pull out your sword<br/>quickly cut off; head</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1290 | 'Nai arst mi lif scholde me bi bireved,<br>Ar ich mi fader scholde sle.'<br>'Sikerliche, sone, hit mot so be,<br>Other ich and tou and alle mine                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>first; taken from me<br/>Before; would slay<br/>it must be so<br/>Or; you</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

<sup>42</sup> Neither help nor advice is any use in this case

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1295      | Beth ischent withouten fine.<br>Bettere hit is that ich on passe,<br>Than al mi ken, more and lasse.<br>Smit off min heued with thi sword;<br>Schalt tou never here therof no word.<br>Hit ginneth to dawe, highe thee henne. | <i>Will be killed; well and truly<br/>pass on (die)<br/>kindred, greater and lesser<br/>Strike; head<br/>You'll never hear a word about it<br/>dawn; get away from here quickly</i> |
| 1300      | Forgive I thee al that sinne.<br>His fader heued he smot off thare<br>And awai with him hit bare.<br>Ac he ne wiste for non nede<br>Whar he mighte hit best ihede.                                                            | <i>father's head<br/>bore<br/>he was completely at a loss as to<br/>Where; hide</i>                                                                                                 |
| 1305      | But als he com bi a gong<br>Amidde the pit he hit slong<br>And wente hom and made wo,<br>His brethren and his sustren also.<br>Amorewe aros that sinatour,                                                                    | <i>when; privy<br/>Into; slung<br/>grieved<br/>brothers; sisters<br/>arose (the stingy sage)</i>                                                                                    |
| 1310      | And segh tobroken his louerdess tour,<br>And segh ther stonde an heuedles man —<br>Knowe him nowt he ne can.<br>He loked bifore and bihinde,<br>Knowleching ne couthe he finde.                                               | <i>saw; broken into; lord's<br/>saw; headless<br/>He cannot recognize him<br/>Familiar feature</i>                                                                                  |
| 1315      | He let him drawe out of the pit<br>And his fet faste iknit<br>With traies an two stronge hors,                                                                                                                                | <i>had him drawn<br/>feet strongly bound<br/>with ropes [tied] to; horses</i>                                                                                                       |
| fol. 91vb | And hete to Rome drawn his cors,<br>And yif ani weped other cride,                                                                                                                                                            | <i>ordered; his body be drawn<br/>wept or</i>                                                                                                                                       |
| 1320      | He het him nime that ilche tide. <sup>43</sup><br>'Quicliche breng him me bifore,<br>For of that kyn he was ibore.'<br>The heuedles bodi also skete<br>Was idrawe thourgh everi strete.                                       | <i>Quickly bring<br/>family; born<br/>swiftly<br/>drawn; street</i>                                                                                                                 |
| 1325      | Fort he come agen the paleis<br>That aughte the ded burgeis.<br>There was cri and wail a wo,<br>Of brother and of suster also.                                                                                                | <i>Until; before<br/>belonged to<br/>lamentation</i>                                                                                                                                |
| 1330      | The sone that wiste of al that dede<br>Stirt him in in gret drede.<br>He braid out his knif on hegh<br>And smot himselve thourghhout the thegh.<br>The kinges serjaunt faste hide<br>To nime that folk that faste cride.      | <i>knew the plan<br/>Leapt up; dread<br/>took up<br/>struck; thigh<br/>hurried over<br/>arrest; ardently</i>                                                                        |

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<sup>43</sup> He ordered that person be arrested at that time

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1335      | Thai sschewed iwonded here brother,<br>Thai seide thai wepte for non other.<br>Thai seggen alle the wonded man<br>And leved hem wel and went ogan.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>showed their wounded</i><br><br><i>saw; wounded</i><br><i>believed them; away</i>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1340      | Lo, sire, swich a foul wille,<br>Agen resoun and right skille.<br>Was nowt the boi of wit bireved<br>Whan he tok his fader heued,<br>In a vil gonge slong hit inne?<br>He might han don a better ginne,<br>Ibiried hit ower preveliche.”<br>“Thou saist soth, dame, sikerliche,<br>An unkynde boi hit was.”<br>“Ya! On thi heued falle that cas! <sup>44</sup> | <i>See; terrible disposition</i><br><i>Against; thinking</i><br><i>churl robbed of his wits</i><br><i>head</i><br><i>[and] Slung it in a horrid privy</i><br><i>behaved more cleverly</i><br><i>Buried; somewhere privately</i><br><i>the truth</i><br><i>unnatural rogue</i> |
| 1345      | “Thou saist soth, dame, sikerliche,<br>An unkynde boi hit was.”<br>“Ya! On thi heued falle that cas! <sup>44</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 1350      | Thi sone, the devel him mote anhonge,<br>But he cast thin heued in a gonge.”<br><br>“Dame, I schal yeme me fram care,<br>Certes tomorewe he sschal forht fare.”<br>“Sire, I leve thee nowt, sikerliche.”<br>“Yis, dame, hardiliche.”                                                                                                                           | <i>may the devil hang him</i><br><i>If he doesn't throw</i><br><br><i>protect myself; trouble</i><br><i>go forth (be killed)</i><br><i>believe</i><br><i>certainly</i>                                                                                                        |
| 1355      | “Graunt merci,” she saide, “sire gent”<br>And kist him to acordement,<br>And let here word swithe sone,<br>And yede to bedde mididone.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Many thanks; noble lord</i><br><i>by way of reconciliation</i><br><i>fell silent</i><br><i>went; thereupon</i>                                                                                                                                                             |
| [DAY 4]   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 1360      | Dioclician themperour,<br>Amorewe wente out of his tour<br>And let ofsende his gentil knave —<br>No man ne most him save —                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>sent for; boy</i><br><i>No one might save him</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| fol. 92ra | And het him lede forht sikerlik,<br>And bidelve him also quik                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>ordered him be led</i><br><i>be buried</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1365      | That he never, for no thing,<br>Herde of him more tiding. <sup>45</sup><br>He was forht lad with boies felle.<br>The burgeis and the dammeisele,<br>Thai gunne arere swich a cri                                                                                                                                                                               | <br><br><i>by wicked rogues</i><br><i>burgesses; young women</i><br><i>raise up</i>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1370      | That hit schillede into the ski,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>resounded</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

<sup>44</sup> Yes indeed! May the same fate befall your own head!

<sup>45</sup> Lines 1365–66: So that never, under no circumstances, / He might hear further tidings of him

|      |                                                                                  |                                                                    |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | And saide: "Wailawai! Whi with wronge<br>Schal themperours sone ben anhonge?"    | <i>[they] said; Alas; unjustly<br/>be hanged</i>                   |
|      | Than com ridende Lentilioun,<br>A wis maister and of fair fazoun.                | <i>came riding<br/>fair of face</i>                                |
| 1375 | The childes thridde maister hadde iben,<br>For reuthe he ne might him nowt isen. | <i>[he] had been<br/>pity; could not look at him</i>               |
|      | And themperour wel sone he fond,<br>He gret him faire, ich understand.           | <i>met<br/>greeted; courteously</i>                                |
| 1380 | Themperour saide: "So God me spede,<br>Traitor, thee sschal be quit thi mede.    | <i>God help me<br/>you shall get your reward</i>                   |
|      | For mi sones mislerning<br>Yhe sschulle habbe evel ending."                      | <i>miseducation<br/>You; have</i>                                  |
|      | "O sire emperour of pris,<br>In dedes thou sscholdest be war and wis.            | <i>renown<br/>prudent</i>                                          |
| 1385 | Yif thou wilt thi sone sschende<br>Withouten assent of barouns hende,            | <i>kill</i>                                                        |
|      | And dost us qued for oure godnesse,<br>On thee falle swich a destresse           | <i>wrong; [in reward] for<br/>Let such distress befall you</i>     |
| 1390 | So dede on the riche gome<br>That with his wif was overcome."                    | <i>As did; man<br/>Who by</i>                                      |
|      | "O tel me, maister, hou ani wimman<br>Mighte bigile ani man?"                    | <i>beguile</i>                                                     |
|      | "Blethelich, sire, so God me amende,<br>Yif thou wilt thi sone ofsende.          | <i>Gladly; so help me God<br/>send for</i>                         |
| 1395 | For yif he were therwiles islawe,<br>For nowt I telde thee mi tale."             | <i>in the meantime; slain<br/>should have told you</i>             |
|      | The riche emperour also sket<br>His sone agen fechche he het.                    | <i>quickly</i>                                                     |
|      | The child was don the presoun in,<br>The maister his tale he gan agin.           | <i>commanded his son to be fetched<br/>put in prison<br/>begin</i> |

[TALE 6: PUTEUS, THE WELL. THIRD SAGE, LENTILIOUN]

|           |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                    |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | "Ther was a burgeis in this toun,<br>A riche man of gret renoun,<br>That wolde spouse no neyhebour's schild,<br>But wente fram hom as a moppe wild. | <i>would marry<br/>fool</i>                                        |
| 1405      | He let his negheboures child for o vice<br>And wente fram hem als moppe and nice,                                                                   | <i>turned down; out of vice<br/>them; like a fool and an idiot</i> |
| fol. 92rb | And browghte hom a dammaisele,<br>Was ful of vices swithe fele.                                                                                     | <i>young woman<br/>[who] Was; a great many</i>                     |
|           | He segh hire fair and avenaunt<br>And with here fader made covenant                                                                                 | <i>saw her; seemly<br/>her; an agreement</i>                       |
| 1410      | For to habben hire to wive                                                                                                                          | <i>have her as his wife</i>                                        |

|           |                                                        |                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|           | And evere more to righte live;                         | correctly                      |
|           | He spoused hire and ladde hire hom.                    | married her; led her           |
|           | Hire forme lemman hire after com,                      | Her former lover               |
| 1415      | That hire served mani a stounde,                       | served; many a time            |
|           | Whan on slepe was the husbounde.                       | asleep                         |
|           | Than was the lawe in Rome toun                         |                                |
|           | That whether lord or garsoun,                          | boy                            |
|           | That after corfu bi founde rominde,                    | Whoever; curfew; roaming       |
| 1420      | Faste men scholden hem nimen and binde                 | them take; bind                |
|           | And kepen him til the sonne uprising,                  | dawn                           |
|           | And than bifore the folk him bring                     |                                |
|           | And thourgh the toun him villiche drive.               | shamefully                     |
|           | The burgeis aparseived of his wive                     | noticed regarding              |
| 1425      | Fele nightes was gon him fram,                         | [that] Many; [she] was         |
|           | And in the dawiyng agen she cam.                       | at dawn; back                  |
|           | He saide nowt wel longe while                          | nothing for a long time        |
|           | But ever he souchede him of gile. <sup>46</sup>        |                                |
|           | O night he him ase dronke made                         | One; pretended to be drunk     |
| 1430      | And yede to bedde blithe and glade,                    | went; joyful                   |
|           | And lai stille als he slepe sone.                      | as if he were asleep           |
|           | Sche stal awai mididone                                | immediately                    |
|           | And wente to here lotebi,                              | her lover                      |
|           | And he hit aparseived sikerli,                         | (the husband) saw it           |
| 1435      | And went him out and segh and herd                     | saw                            |
|           | Al togider hou sche misferd,                           | Completely; misbehaved         |
|           | And wente him in out of the strete                     | came back in from              |
|           | And schet the dore swithe skete,                       | shut; door very quickly        |
|           | And spak out ate windowe                               |                                |
| 1440      | And saide: 'Dame, God give thee howe,                  | grief                          |
|           | This thou ne might forsake for non nede. <sup>47</sup> |                                |
|           | Ich have inome thee in this dede                       | caught you                     |
|           | With thi lechour, with him thou go,                    | fornicator                     |
|           | Of thee ne kep I nevere mo.'                           | For; I'll care never more      |
| 1445      | 'A, lat me in, sire, par amour,                        | for love's sake                |
|           | Men sschal sone ringe corfour.'                        | ring the curfew                |
|           | 'Nai, dame, ich thee forsake,                          |                                |
|           | In the foli thou worst itake.                          | In your folly; were caught out |
|           | Al thi ken schal witen and sen,                        | kindred; know; see             |
| 1450      | What mester womman thou havest iben.'                  | kind of woman; been            |
| fol. 92va | 'Nai, God almighti that isschilde,                     | God; forbid                    |
|           | Ich wille bcome wod and wilde.                         | mad                            |

<sup>46</sup> But all the time he suspected her of deceit

<sup>47</sup> You can't get out of this however hard you try

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                               |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1455 | But thou me in lete, ich wille telle,<br>Ich wille me drenchen in the welle.<br>'Drenche thi selve other anhonge,<br>For here thou havest lived too longe.<br>She tok up a gret ston<br>And wente to the welle anon,<br>And saide after a wommannes wrenche: | Unless; I guarantee<br>drown myself<br>or hang<br><br>stone<br>with her womanly deceitfulness |
| 1460 | 'Her now, sire, I schal me adrenche.'<br>She let the ston falle in the welle<br>And sterte under the dore wel snelle.<br>The seli man bigan to grede:<br>'Allas! wat sschal me to rede?'                                                                     | Here; drown myself<br><br>ran; quickly<br>foolish; cry<br>what shall I do?                    |
| 1465 | Anonrightes he wente him owte<br>And soughte his wif in the welle about,<br>And swithe loude he bigan to crie,<br>And she stert in wel an highe,<br>And sschitte the dore swithe fast,                                                                       | Straight away<br><br>ran in; in haste<br>shut                                                 |
| 1470 | And he gan up his heued cast.<br>'What,' he saide, 'who is thare?'<br>'Ich,' she saide, 'God give thee kare.<br>Is hit nou time, bi thi snoute,<br>For to ben thous longe theroute?'                                                                         | threw up his head<br><br>sorrow<br>snout                                                      |
| 1475 | 'A, dame,' he saide, 'ich was asschreint.<br>Ich wende thou haddest ben adreint.<br>Lat me in, dame, par amour,<br>Men sschal sone ringe corfour.'<br>'The devel honge me thanne bi the toth,' <sup>48</sup>                                                 | worried<br>I thought; drowned<br>for love's sake<br>ring the curfew                           |
| 1480 | The waites sscholle wel se the soth<br>That thou art an hold lechour<br>And comest hom after corfour.<br>Thou schalt suffre kare and howe<br>And drinke that thou hast ibrowe.'                                                                              | watchmen; see; truth<br>old fornicator<br><br>sorrow; grief<br>what; brewed                   |
| 1485 | With that the waites come ride<br>And hi herden hou thai gon schide<br>And corfour belle ringge gan.<br>Inomen was that seli man<br>And never of him no qued ne herde —                                                                                      | watchmen came riding<br>they; quarreled<br><br>Arrested; foolish                              |
| 1490 | Thai wist ful wel hou hit ferde. <sup>49</sup><br>Thai beden his wif, as she was hende,<br>Leten him in ar corfu ende.<br>She answered as malicious:                                                                                                         | asked; gracious<br>To let; before<br>as a malicious woman                                     |

<sup>48</sup> May the devil hang me by the tooth if I do

<sup>49</sup> Lines 1489–90: And they had never heard anything bad about him — / They knew full well what the story was

|           |                                                |                                           |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|           | 'He cometh nou fram the hore hous.             | <i>whore</i>                              |
| fol. 92vb | Thous he is wonet me to serve.                 | <i>This is how he serves me</i>           |
| 1496      | On evele dethe mot he sterve.                  | <i>An; may; die</i>                       |
|           | Ich have ihid his schame er this,              | <i>hidden; before</i>                     |
|           | I nel nammore nou, iwis.'                      | <i>won't anymore</i>                      |
|           | Corfour belle no lenger rong,                  |                                           |
| 1500      | The burgeis was lad forht with wrong.          | <i>unjustly</i>                           |
|           | What helpeth hit lenger tale?                  | <i>would help; a longer</i>               |
|           | That night he sat wel sore akale               | <i>sorely chilled</i>                     |
|           | And his wif lai warme abedde,                  |                                           |
|           | And solas of hire lemman fredde.               | <i>pleasure; enjoyed</i>                  |
| 1505      | Amorewe the burgeis was forth ifet             | <i>fetched</i>                            |
|           | And his honden biforen him knet,               | <i>bound</i>                              |
|           | And thourgh the toun he was ilad,              | <i>led</i>                                |
|           | Lohtliche driven and bigrad                    | <i>With dishonor; berated</i>             |
|           | Ase a thef. This meschaunce,                   | <i>mishap</i>                             |
| 1510      | Gelteles he suffred, this penaunce.            | <i>Guiltless</i>                          |
|           | Sire, couthe this woman of gile?"              | <i>was this woman expert in guile</i>     |
|           | "Ya, sche was a traitour vile                  |                                           |
|           | And wel werse than an hound."                  |                                           |
|           | "Sire, mo swiche ther beth ifound              | <i>more such are to be found</i>          |
| 1515      | And thi self had on swich.                     | <i>one such</i>                           |
|           | She wil thee traie sikerlich                   | <i>betray</i>                             |
|           | Yif thou dost after her red,                   | <i>follow her advice</i>                  |
|           | That thou dost thi sone to ded.                | <i>should put your son to death</i>       |
|           | That chaunce falle the iliche                  | <i>May that fate befall you similarly</i> |
| 1520      | That bifel the burgeis riche."                 |                                           |
|           | "Par fai, maister, that ware God right,        | <i>may God prevent it</i>                 |
|           | I nel nowt do bi here tonight."                | <i>I'll not follow her advice</i>         |
|           | The child bileft stille in prisoun;            | <i>remained</i>                           |
|           | The maister went out of the toun               |                                           |
| 1525      | And hadde mani a blessing                      |                                           |
|           | For his disciple delivering.                   | <i>For delivering his disciple</i>        |
|           | Whan men leke windowe and gate,                | <i>locked</i>                             |
|           | Themperour com to chaumbre late.               | <i>bedroom</i>                            |
|           | Themperice bigan to loure                      | <i>scowl</i>                              |
| 1530      | Lohtliche on themperoure.                      | <i>Terribly at</i>                        |
|           | "Dame," he saide, "what hailleth thee          |                                           |
|           | Swich semblaunt for to make me?" <sup>50</sup> |                                           |
|           | "Yit sschal hit falle ous so bitwene —         | <i>It shall yet work out for us</i>       |
|           | That mani a man hit sschal hit sene —          | <i>see</i>                                |

<sup>50</sup> Lines 1531–32: *What's bothering you so / That you're giving me such a look?*

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                            |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1535              | As bitwene the leuedi and the stiward<br>And the king in o foreward.”<br>“What forward was that? Telle hit me<br>As thou wilt to me lef be.”                                                                                                    | steward<br>a contract<br><br>If; dear                                                      |
| fol. 93ra<br>1540 | “Nai, sire,” she saide, “hit his nowt worth,<br>Mi tale ne mot nowt forth.<br>Telle ich thee ensauple never so god, <sup>51</sup><br>Thou me haldest of wit wod.<br>Therfore ich wille holde me stille<br>And suffri wel that man thee spille.” | it's not worth it<br>must not [go] forth<br><br>mad of mind<br>keep quiet<br>you be killed |
| 1545              | “Nai, dame, lat here thee speke<br>And ich thee wille ful wel awreke,<br>So ich hit finde profitable<br>And soth, I seie, withouten fable.”                                                                                                     | avenge<br>Provided<br>truly                                                                |

[TALE 7: SENESCALCUS, THE STEWARD. THE EMPRESS]

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                          |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1550 | “Nou ben sene, sire, and ihere.<br>A king was whilom of gret powere,<br>Al Poile and Calabre lond —<br>Al he held hit in his hond.<br>Wimmen he lovede swithe lite<br>And usede sinne sodomighte. <sup>52</sup> | [it will] be seen; heard<br>formerly<br>Apulia; Calabria<br><br>little<br>(see t-note)   |
| 1555 | So long he pleiede with yong man,<br>A swele in his membres cam than.<br>The skin might hit nowt helde,<br>Ne he ne mighte himselve welde;<br>He fil sik in Godes wreche.                                       | men<br>swelling<br>hold<br>carry<br>retribution                                          |
| 1560 | He let ofsenden him a leche;<br>In urine he segh he mighte libbe.<br>He laide a plastre under his ribbe,<br>Barli bred he et for gode,<br>And barli water that was isode,                                       | had summoned to him; doctor<br>(the doctor) saw; live<br>poultice<br>took as nourishment |
| 1565 | Til he hadde of his membres bote.<br>Than saide the leche: ‘Ar ye mote<br>Have womman to pleie aright<br>Yif ye wil be hol, aplight.’<br>‘I schal wel,’ and cleped his stiward,                                 | for; a cure<br>First you must<br>indeed<br>healed, in faith<br>[he] called; steward      |
| 1570 | And he com als a leopard.<br>‘Lo me her, sire, what wil ye?’                                                                                                                                                    | like (see note)<br>Look, I'm here; do you want                                           |

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<sup>51</sup> No matter how good a tale I tell you

<sup>52</sup> And regularly committed sodomitical sin

|           |                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | 'But a lemman fech thou me<br>That I might tonight with hire plai.'                                                                                                    | <i>Only that you fetch me a lover<br/>So that; her</i>         |
|           | 'I ne wot non, sire, in this contrai                                                                                                                                   | <i>know of none</i>                                            |
| 1575      | That be thi bodi ligge dar,<br>For thi los is boren so far,<br>That thine membres ben toswolle.'                                                                       | <i>dare lie<br/>reputation; borne<br/>all swollen</i>          |
|           | 'Bihote hem pans an handfolle;<br>Bihot twenti mark som leuedi                                                                                                         | <i>Promise them pence<br/>Promise twenty marks to any lady</i> |
| 1580      | O night for to ligge me bi.'                                                                                                                                           | <i>For one; lie</i>                                            |
|           | Thanne thout that stiward coveitous:<br>'That silver schal bileve with ous.'                                                                                           | <i>thought; avaricious<br/>remain; us</i>                      |
| fol. 93rb | To his wif he went anon<br>And saide sche most on his arnede gon.                                                                                                      | <i>errand go</i>                                               |
| 1585      | 'Bletheliche, sire, ac whiderward?'<br>'To the king,' saide the stiward.<br>'Thou schalt plaie with him in derk<br>And winne ous gode twenti mark.'                    | <i>Gladly; where to<br/><br/>us</i>                            |
|           | 'A, sire,' sche saide, 'fi! fi!<br>Hit is foul man to ligen bi<br>And that wot everich womman wel.'                                                                    | <i>[a] terrible man to lie with<br/>knows every</i>            |
| 1590      | 'Thou schalt, bi Seint Michel.<br>Who that selver winne nelle,<br>Lese he mot with right skille.                                                                       | <i>doesn't want to win<br/>Must lose [it]; rightfully</i>      |
| 1595      | Thou sschalt ous the penies winne,<br>Other I thee sschal drive out of min inne.<br>O nedes he sschal that nedes mot. <sup>53</sup>                                    | <i>for us<br/>Or; house</i>                                    |
|           | Hit nis nowt mi wille, God hit wot.<br>But hit is skil, right and lawe,                                                                                                | <i>isn't; God knows<br/>fitting; lawful</i>                    |
| 1600      | To do bi me as bi thin awe. <sup>54</sup><br>To the kinges chaumbre he went again<br>And drof out bothe knight and swayn,<br>Blewe out the torches and let in his wif. | <i>drove; attendants</i>                                       |
|           | To the king sche wente bilif.                                                                                                                                          | <i>quickly</i>                                                 |
| 1605      | The fals stiward to bedde went,<br>The king the leuedi in armes hent.<br>What helpeth hit ani more seid? <sup>55</sup>                                                 | <i>took in [his] arms</i>                                      |
|           | That night he was ful wel apaid.<br>The wrecche stiward ne might nowt slape,                                                                                           | <i>satisfied<br/>wretched; might not sleep</i>                 |
| 1610      | Ac in the moreweinge he gan uprape.<br>To the kingges chaumbre he went saun fail.                                                                                      | <i>hasten out of bed<br/>without fail</i>                      |

<sup>53</sup> Needs must that needs shall (i.e., it is unavoidable)

<sup>54</sup> To do what I say according to the respect that you owe me

<sup>55</sup> What good would it do to say any further?

|           |                                                           |                                    |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|           | The king that night hadde ben in travail —                | <i>been at work</i>                |
|           | In trewe love witouten arm —                              | <i>wrong</i>                       |
|           | And slep in the leuedis arm.                              | <i>slept; arms</i>                 |
| 1615      | The stiward made moche sorewe                             |                                    |
|           | Til hit were halfwai midmorewe.                           | <i>halfway through the morning</i> |
|           | He held himself mochel wrechche,                          | <i>wretched</i>                    |
|           | Thous the king bigan to wechche,                          | <i>So; [he] began to rouse</i>     |
|           | And saide: 'Sire, up, up, hit is dai.                     | <i>[the steward]; get up</i>       |
| 1620      | Lat that leuedi wende awai.'                              | <i>Let; leave</i>                  |
|           | The king saide: 'I ne have no rape,                       | <i>hurry</i>                       |
|           | For me lest yit ful wel slape                             | <i>I still desire to sleep</i>     |
|           | And pleie twies and ones                                  | <i>once or twice</i>               |
|           | For to hele mine bones.'                                  | <i>heal</i>                        |
| 1625      | 'Nai, sire, hit is mi leuedi                              |                                    |
|           | That al night hath laien thee bi.'                        | <i>lay by you</i>                  |
| fol. 93va | 'Belamy,' he saide, 'is hit thi wif?'                     | <i>Rascal</i>                      |
|           | 'Yea, sire,' he saide, 'be mi lif.'                       |                                    |
|           | 'O traitour, fiz a puteyn!                                | <i>son of a whore</i>              |
| 1630      | Whi had thi wif bi me lain?'                              | <i>Why did your wife lie by me</i> |
|           | 'Sire, for the winning of thi moné.'                      | <i>to win; money</i>               |
|           | 'Therfore,' he saide, 'yvel mote thou the.' <sup>56</sup> |                                    |
|           | Thou hast bitraid thi wif and me,                         |                                    |
|           | Dwelle thou wil ich arisen be, <sup>57</sup>              |                                    |
| 1635      | I schal thi vile false cors                               | <i>body</i>                        |
|           | Do todrawe with wilde hors.                               | <i>have drawn by; horses</i>       |
|           | Out of mi lond I rede thou flee                           | <i>advise</i>                      |
|           | That I thee never eft isee.                               | <i>see again</i>                   |
|           | For abide thou min uprist,                                | <i>if you wait until I'm risen</i> |
| 1640      | Thou be honged, bi Jhesu Crist.'                          | <i>You'll be</i>                   |
|           | Sire, thous the stiward les his wif                       | <i>lost</i>                        |
|           | And fley awai with mochel strif.                          | <i>fled; suffering</i>             |
|           | Iwis, he was al forlore,                                  | <i>completely ruined</i>           |
|           | He com agein nevere more.                                 |                                    |
| 1645      | The king aros whan him list                               | <i>arose; he desired</i>           |
|           | And kep the leuedi with the best,                         | <i>kept; in the best manner</i>    |
|           | And held hire two yer other thre,                         | <i>kept her; or three</i>          |
|           | And sithen gaf hire, with riche fe,                       | <i>then gave her; property</i>     |
|           | To a riche erl of that lond.                              |                                    |
| 1650      | Sche was nowt bicaught, ich understand.                   | <i>got the better of</i>           |
|           | Sire, and so wil hit fare bi you                          |                                    |

<sup>56</sup> 'Therefore,' he said, 'may you prosper badly (i.e., you deserve the worst)'

<sup>57</sup> If you stay the time it takes me to get up

|                   |                                                     |                                           |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1655              | Whan ye han loren youre vertu.                      | <i>have lost; power</i>                   |
|                   | Out of londe thou best idrive,                      | <i>will be driven</i>                     |
|                   | Schal ich thee nevere ise whil I live.              | <i>I'll never see you [again]</i>         |
|                   | No forse on me. After an emperour                   | <i>It's nothing to me</i>                 |
|                   | Mai me wedde a vavasour.                            | <i>a minor noble may wed me</i>           |
| 1660              | I mai live a wel god lif                            |                                           |
|                   | Thai I be nowt an emperours wif.                    | <i>Even if</i>                            |
|                   | Ac falle chaunce ase hard                           | <i>may as hard a fate befall [you]</i>    |
|                   | As dede the covaitous stiward                       |                                           |
|                   | That solde his wif for moné,                        |                                           |
| 1665              | But thou do als I rede thee."                       | <i>Unless; advise</i>                     |
|                   | "Par fai, dame, that is skil,                       | <i>In faith; makes sense</i>              |
|                   | I wil do bi thee, yif God wil."                     | <i>follow you</i>                         |
|                   | "Sire," she saide, "withouten fail,                 |                                           |
|                   | Thou dost bi a god conseil."                        | <i>You're following a good counsellor</i> |
| [DAY 5]           |                                                     |                                           |
| 1670<br>fol. 93vb | Morewe cam, as yhe mowe here,                       | <i>The next day; you may hear</i>         |
|                   | Themperour aros with foule chere.                   | <i>in a terrible mood</i>                 |
|                   | Into his palais he wente yare                       | <i>at once</i>                            |
|                   | And his barouns he fond thare.                      | <i>met</i>                                |
|                   | Biforen hem alle in grete traye                     | <i>them; vexation</i>                     |
| 1675              | He het mani a wikke boye                            | <i>commanded</i>                          |
|                   | His sone toward the dethe bringge.                  | <i>To take his son to his death</i>       |
|                   | Hit was ido withouten letting;                      | <i>done; hesitation</i>                   |
|                   | Toward deth he was ibroun.                          | <i>brought</i>                            |
|                   | Mani a man hit ofthout.                             | <i>grieved at it</i>                      |
| 1680              | Thourgh Rome stretes, wide and side,                | <i>Rome's; far and wide</i>               |
|                   | The ferthe maister ther com ride.                   | <i>fourth; came riding</i>                |
|                   | Malquidras was his name,                            |                                           |
|                   | In his herte was no game.                           | <i>levity</i>                             |
|                   | His disciple louted him to,                         | <i>bowed</i>                              |
| 1685              | The maistres hert brast negh for wo.                | <i>almost burst for sorrow</i>            |
|                   | He went into the halle flet,                        | <i>onto the hall floor</i>                |
|                   | Themperour wel faire he gret.                       | <i>greeted</i>                            |
|                   | Themperour him missaide than.                       | <i>insulted</i>                           |
|                   | "Merci, sire," saide the wise man,                  | <i>Pardon</i>                             |
|                   | "Sire, what have we thee misgelt?                   | <i>how have we wronged you</i>            |
|                   | Oure gode dede schal ben ivel igelt?" <sup>58</sup> |                                           |

<sup>58</sup> Shall our good deed be counted a bad one?

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1690              | <p>“Sire,” quath themperour, “be min hed,<br/> Worthi art to suffri ded,<br/> For to thee and thine fere<br/> I bitok mi sone to lere,<br/> For to han itaught him god,<br/> And ye han imade him wod.</p> | <p><i>[you] are; suffer death<br/> companions<br/> entrusted; teach<br/> have taught; well<br/> mad</i></p>       |
| 1695              | <p>Mi wif he wolde have forlai,<br/> Therfore ye sschulle al dai.”<br/> “O, sire emperour of pris,<br/> In dedes thou sscholdest ben war and wis.<br/> Yif thou wilt thi sone slo</p>                      | <p><i>raped<br/> all die<br/> renown<br/> prudent<br/> slay</i></p>                                               |
| 1700              | <p>Withouten assent of barons mo,<br/> And for oure godnesse do us qued,<br/> Swich a cas fal on thin heued<br/> As hadde the olde wise of his wive,<br/> Er thou parte out of this live.”</p>             | <p><i>more of your barons<br/> treat us badly<br/> May such a fate; head<br/> wise [man]<br/> depart from</i></p> |
| 1705              | <p>“O maister that was wel isaid.<br/> Hou was that olde man itraid?”<br/> “He was nowt bitraid, for he wis was.”<br/> “A! leve maister, tel me the cas.”</p>                                              | <p><i>betrayed<br/> dear; story</i></p>                                                                           |
| 1710              | <p>“Bletheliche, withouten strif,<br/> So thou respite thi sones lif<br/> Til to morewe that hit be dai,<br/> Than I thee schal the tale sai.”<br/> Themperour Dioclician</p>                              | <p><i>Gladly; without hesitation<br/> Provided; reprieve<br/> tell</i></p>                                        |
| fol. 94ra<br>1716 | <p>His sone agen hight fechche than<br/> And into presoun he was icast.<br/> The maister ginneth his tale in hast.</p>                                                                                     | <p><i>Ordered his son fetched back<br/> thrown</i></p>                                                            |

[TALE 8: TENTAMINA, THE TESTS. FOURTH SAGE, MALQUIDRAS]

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                           |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1720 | <p>“Whilom was a man old and wis<br/> And hadde inow of worldes pris.<br/> In his youthe, in middel of his live,<br/> He hadde iwedded two jolif wives.<br/> He livede and bothe hem overbod<br/> And was longe in his wideuhod.<br/> He livede so longe that he hor was<br/> And hadde of womman no solas.</p> | <p><i>Formerly [there] was<br/> Who; enough; wealth<br/> pretty<br/> outlived both of them<br/> widowhood<br/> gray<br/> pleasure<br/> attendants</i></p> |
| 1725 | <p>His serjauntz ofte to him come<br/> And of alangenes him undernome,<br/> And bad him take a wif jolif<br/> To solace with his olde lif.<br/> Bi her rede he tok a yong womman —</p>                                                                                                                          | <p><i>for unsociability; reproved<br/> cheer up<br/> On their advice</i></p>                                                                              |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1730      | Ase wone is of old man<br>Yong womman for to spouse,<br>And thanne be wraw and gelouse.<br>Litel thai mai do, withouten gabbe,<br>That yong womman wolde habbe.                                           | <i>Is the habit<br/>marry<br/>bad-tempered; jealous<br/>it's no lie<br/>would keep</i>                                                |
| 1735      | Also ferde that olde wise:<br>He dede his wif wel smal servise.<br>The yonge wif, upon a dai,<br>Com to chirche, par ma fai,<br>And fond hire moder thare,                                                | <i>In this way fared; wise man<br/>served his wife very poorly</i>                                                                    |
| 1740      | And tolde hire al of here kare,<br>And saide: 'Moder, I tholie a cas:<br>Mi louerd doth me no solas.<br>Ich moste have som other love.'<br>'Nai, dowter, for God above.                                   | <i>met; mother<br/>sorrow<br/>am suffering; situation<br/>pleasure</i>                                                                |
| 1745      | Old men ben felle and queinte<br>And wikkede wrenches conne ateinte.<br>Misdo nowt, doughter, but do bi rede. <sup>59</sup><br>'Lat ben, moder, for hit is nede.'<br>'Doughter, thi louerd hath o gardin, | <i>daughter<br/>are deceitful; crafty<br/>tricks; know how to find out</i>                                                            |
| 1750      | A wel fair ympe is tharin.<br>A fair herber hit overspredeth,<br>Al his solas therinne he ledeth.<br>Nou ne bereth hit lef non.<br>And whan thi louerd is out igon,                                       | <i>Give over; something needs doing<br/>a<br/>shoot<br/>arbor; covers<br/>pleasure; takes<br/>it bears no leaves<br/>has gone out</i> |
| 1755      | Doughter, tak thi gardiner,<br>And lat it hewe to the fer.<br>And yif he saith to thee ani resoun,<br>Answer him with this enchesoun:                                                                     | <i>summon<br/>have it cut for the fire<br/>comment<br/>reason</i>                                                                     |
| fol. 94rb | That thou dest, hit is for the nones                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>did; expressly</i>                                                                                                                 |
| 1760      | To warme bi his colde bones.'<br>'Dame,' she saide, 'hit sschal ben don.'<br>Hom sche wente swithe anon<br>And, al maugre the gardiner,<br>The ympe was hewe to the fer.                                  | <i>be done</i>                                                                                                                        |
| 1765      | The gode burgeis was hom icome<br>And goth to his gardin, as was his wone,<br>And fond his ympe up ihewe.<br>'O,' thoughte he, 'her was a sscherewe.'<br>She saide sche dede hit for non arm              | <i>despite [objections from]<br/>cut for the fire</i>                                                                                 |
| 1770      | But for he sscholde his bones warm.<br>He hit tok on ivel strong                                                                                                                                          | <i>goes; habit<br/>cut down<br/>here; shrew<br/>did; harm<br/>took it hard</i>                                                        |

<sup>59</sup> Don't make a mistake, daughter, but follow good advice

|           |                                                 |                                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|           | But he ne monede hit nowt long.                 | <i>mourned</i>                         |
|           | He wentte to bedde and tok solas;               | <i>took comfort</i>                    |
|           | That night never the better hir nas.            | <i>she was</i>                         |
| 1775      | The yonge wif another dai                       |                                        |
|           | To chirche tok the righte wai                   | <i>quickest</i>                        |
|           | And fond eft hire moder thare,                  | <i>again</i>                           |
|           | And of blisse sche was al bare,                 | <i>bereft</i>                          |
|           | For neither be night no be dai                  |                                        |
| 1780      | Hire louerd nolde with hire plai. <sup>60</sup> |                                        |
|           | ‘Ich mot lovie,’ she saide, ‘dame.’             | <i>must love</i>                       |
|           | ‘O doughter, hit were gret sschame              | <i>shame</i>                           |
|           | Yif thou sscholdest thi gode kende              | <i>nature</i>                          |
|           | Thourgh dede of vilainie sschende.              | <i>deed; ruin</i>                      |
| 1785      | For yif thou dost a folie,                      | <i>foolish thing</i>                   |
|           | Thi louerd hit wile sone aspie                  | <i>spot</i>                            |
|           | And he him wolde fellich awreke.                | <i>will foully avenge himself</i>      |
|           | Herkne doughter what I schal speke:             | <i>Listen</i>                          |
|           | A grai bichche thi louerd ginneth lovie         | <i>bitch; loves</i>                    |
| 1790      | Over alle other bestes above.                   | <i>beasts</i>                          |
|           | And whan ye sit bi the glede,                   | <i>One day; fireside</i>               |
|           | And the bichche lith in thi grede,              | <i>bitch lies; lap</i>                 |
|           | Mak thee wroth and draw thi knif,               | <i>Pretend to be angry</i>             |
|           | And binim the bichche here lif.                 | <i>deprive; of her</i>                 |
| 1795      | And loke thou be therafter queynt,              | <i>clever</i>                          |
|           | And were thee with a wives pleint.’             | <i>protect yourself; complaint</i>     |
|           | The yonge saide hit sscholde be so.             | <i>young [one]</i>                     |
|           | Hom ssche gan hire wai to go.                   | <i>her way</i>                         |
|           | Was hit nowt longe afterward                    | <i>It was not</i>                      |
| 1800      | The yonge leuedi and hire lord                  | <i>[when] The young lady</i>           |
|           | Sete an even bi the fer;                        | <i>Sat in the evening</i>              |
|           | Biforen hem stod here squier.                   | <i>them; their</i>                     |
| fol. 94va | She hadde on a pilche of pris                   | <i>fur pelisse; great value</i>        |
|           | And a chaisel theron, iwis.                     | <i>overgarment of fine linen</i>       |
| 1805      | The bichche lai in hire barm,                   | <i>lap</i>                             |
|           | Sche plaide and hit dede here harm.             | <i>did her</i>                         |
|           | Sche drow a knif and smot,                      | <i>struck</i>                          |
|           | The bichche daide, God hit wot,                 | <i>died; God knows</i>                 |
|           | And pilche and cheisel al biblesd.              | <i>[were all] covered in blood</i>     |
| 1810      | The lord ros and yede to bed.                   | <i>arose; went</i>                     |
|           | For al hire wrenche and al here ginne,          | <i>her trickery; her cleverness</i>    |
|           | The more love sche ne might awinne.             | <i>She might not win any more love</i> |
|           | The thridde time to scherche sche went          | <i>church</i>                          |

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<sup>60</sup> Would her lord play (have sex) with her

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                  |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1815      | And hire moder ther sche fint,<br>And saide: 'Dame, for al thi lore,<br>I finde love never the more.<br>Moder, ich mot lovie algať.<br>'Doughter, ich rede that thou lat.<br>Ac, tel me, doughter, for God above, | her; met<br>teaching<br>I'm no closer to finding love<br>must love nevertheless<br>advise; cease |
| 1820      | What man hastou ment to love?'<br>'Dame,' she saide, 'the prest, bi skil.'<br>'Nai, doughter, yif God wil,<br>While thou might have squier or knight.'<br>'Nai, moder, mi trewthe I plight:                       | were you intending<br>priest, by rights                                                          |
| 1825      | I nelle come in no knightes bedde.<br>He hit wile make wide ikedde,<br>And I thee saie, sikerliche,<br>The prest I mai love priveliche.'                                                                          | promised<br>will not go to any<br>will make it widely known                                      |
| 1830      | 'Nai, doughter, her a queinte ginne,<br>Thi louerd des love hou schalt winne:<br>Thi louerd schal sone make a fest<br>Of riche men and honest.<br>Thou schalt be bisaie that ilke dai.                            | privately<br>hear; clever trick<br>how [you] shall<br>feast                                      |
| 1835      | Honge at thi gerdel mani a kai<br>And sette thee haiest ate bord<br>In a chaier agen thi lord.<br>Thi kai in the cloth make thou fast; <sup>61</sup><br>After, stirt up an hast.                                  | busy; same<br>belt; key<br>sit yourself at the top of the table<br>facing                        |
| 1840      | Thai thou felle coppe other cloth,<br>Go forth and strif nowt therof,<br>And than thou schalt sone ise<br>What therof wil be.'                                                                                    | jump up<br>Though; take down cup or<br>pay no heed to that<br>see                                |
| 1845      | The yonge wif to hire moder said:<br>'Hit sschal be don, bi Marie maid,<br>And wite I sschal, moder, bi than,<br>Yif he wil plaie, that olde man.'                                                                | the Virgin Mary<br>know; from that                                                               |
| fol. 94vb | Wel sone thereafter, sikerli,<br>The olde knight and te leuedi<br>A wel fair feste thai made thare                                                                                                                | the                                                                                              |
| 1850      | Of frendes that hem leve ware.<br>Sire, what helpeth hit longe tale? <sup>62</sup><br>The wif servede of bred and ale,<br>And after set hire adoun sone.<br>The kai made moche to-done,                           | to them were dear<br>key; to-do                                                                  |

<sup>61</sup> Tie your keys up tight in the tablecloth

<sup>62</sup> Lord, what is the point of a longer tale?

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1855              | For sche feld bothe cloth and cop.<br>Natheles thai ware gadered up.<br>Swithe sore sche him atraid,<br>Certes he was wel ivel ipaid.<br>Whanne the gestes weren at ais,                                                                                                                      | <i>took down; cup<br/>Nevertheless; gathered<br/>Greatly; annoyed<br/>displeased<br/>guests; at ease (i.e., after dinner)</i> |
| 1860              | Thai wenten hom fram his paleis.<br>Morewe com — ac now ihere! —<br>The louerd let make a gret fere<br>And let ofsende a neyghebour,<br>Ich understonde, a god barbour,                                                                                                                       | <i>The next day; listen to this!<br/>fire<br/>sent for<br/>barber</i>                                                         |
| 1865              | And fet his wif forth fot-hot<br>And hire misdedes hire atwot,<br>And saide he moste chasti hire ginne,<br>For ivel blod was hire withinne.<br>Hit moste be quik ilaten out,                                                                                                                  | <i>fetches; hot-footedly<br/>exposed her misdeeds to her<br/>chastise her for her trickery<br/>let</i>                        |
| 1870              | That ssche ne helde hire nowt so stout. <sup>63</sup><br>Wer here lef, were hire loth,<br>Of hire he spoiled everich cloth. <sup>64</sup><br>Tho hire kertel was off idrawe<br>Tho wende ssche wel to ben islawe, <sup>65</sup>                                                               | <i>Whether she liked it or not<br/>When; tunic; taken off</i>                                                                 |
| 1875              | And saide she sscholde die also swithe,<br>For she never lat blod in hire live;<br>Therof ne stod him non owe.<br>He rent hir smok to the elbowe<br>And sithen set hire on a stol,                                                                                                            | <i>would die right there<br/>had never let; life<br/>Of that he had no fear<br/>tore; smock</i>                               |
| 1880              | For he ne wolde nowt ssche were a fol,<br>And gan to smiten hire on the veyn,<br>And sche bledde with gret meyn<br>Grete disschfolles two.<br>Als swithe here arm was staunched tho,<br>He dede that other arm forht drawe. <sup>66</sup><br>Than wende sscho wel to ben islawe <sup>67</sup> | <i>he didn't want her to be a fool<br/>strike; vein<br/>much moaning<br/>Two big dishfuls</i>                                 |
| 1885              | And loude ssche gan to wepe and crie.<br>'Hit helpeth thee nowt, be Seinte Marie.'<br>The barbour in the veyne hire smot,<br>Sche bledde wel til ssche was hot                                                                                                                                | <i>There's no point; by<br/>struck her</i>                                                                                    |
| 1890<br>fol. 95ra | The thridde disscful upright;<br>Anon she les colour and might.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>dishful; up to the brim<br/>lost; vigor</i>                                                                                |

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<sup>63</sup> So that she should not behave so obstinately

<sup>64</sup> He stripped every piece of clothing from her

<sup>65</sup> Then she thought she was going to be slain

<sup>66</sup> Lines 1884–85: No sooner was her arm bandaged up, / Than he drew her other arm out

<sup>67</sup> Then she thought she was going to be slain

|      |                                                                                                                                                       |                                      |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|      | The lounder hit segh and dede hire staunche                                                                                                           | <i>had her bandaged up</i>           |
|      | And in a bed he dede here launche,                                                                                                                    | <i>throw</i>                         |
| 1895 | And saide: 'Thries thou breddest wod,<br>Therfore thou bleddest thre disschfoul of blod.                                                              | <i>Three times; raved</i>            |
|      | And yif thou bredest wod ani more,<br>Yit I sschal dubble thi sore.'                                                                                  | <i>double; torment</i>               |
|      | Sche wende to deghe, sche was agast,                                                                                                                  | <i>thought she was going to die</i>  |
| 1900 | And sent after here moder on hast.<br>Hire moder com and sche saide:<br>'A, mercy, moder, for Mari maide,<br>I schal deghe, nou red me red.'          | <i>the Virgin Mary</i>               |
|      | 'Doughter, what schal that ised?<br>Thou most me telle what is this.'                                                                                 | <i>die; advise me</i>                |
| 1905 | 'Mi lounder me hath negh slawen, iwis.<br>For mine thre unwrast dede<br>Thre disschfol of blod he let me blede,<br>That I ne mai live, bi Godes ore.' | <i>what does this mean</i>           |
|      | 'Doughter, lest thee love more?'                                                                                                                      | <i>almost slain</i>                  |
|      | 'Nai, moder, bi God almight,<br>I nelle neither lovie clerk ne knight.'                                                                               | <i>three wicked deeds</i>            |
| 1910 | 'No, doughter, I seide ful wel<br>That olde men beth queynte and fel.                                                                                 | <i>So that I may not live; mercy</i> |
|      | Thai conne more qued bithenche<br>Than thou kanst do with ani wrenche.                                                                                | <i>do you still want to love</i>     |
| 1915 | Hold thee to thine hosebounde<br>And thou sschalt have al the mounde.'                                                                                | <i>almighty</i>                      |
|      | Lo sire," quad Malquidras,<br>"Ne was this a wonder cas?                                                                                              | <i>will love neither; nor</i>        |
|      | Thries misdede this womman bald<br>And thre vengauces he hire yald.                                                                                   | <i>crafty; mean</i>                  |
|      | Therfore sche hadde elles idon,<br>That had ben werst of everichon. <sup>68</sup>                                                                     | <i>evil; think up</i>                |
| 1920 | The prest hi kaste hire love to,<br>That noman might have undo. <sup>69</sup>                                                                         | <i>trick</i>                         |
|      | So fareth the quen with hire resoun,<br>With hire lesinges and fals tresoun,                                                                          | <i>world</i>                         |
| 1925 | Thi sone to deth for to bring.                                                                                                                        | <i>See</i>                           |
|      | Ac yif thou levest hire lesing<br>Than thee falle a werse aprise                                                                                      | <i>Wasn't this a wonderful story</i> |
| 1930 | As dede to that elde wise."                                                                                                                           | <i>bold</i>                          |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>gave her for it</i>               |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>behaves; queen; arguments</i>     |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>lies</i>                          |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>believe her lying</i>             |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>may a worse lesson befall you</i> |
|      |                                                                                                                                                       | <i>old wise man</i>                  |

<sup>68</sup> Lines 1923–24: *And so if she had done otherwise, / That would have been worst of all (i.e., if she had taken a lover, her treatment would have been harsher still)*

<sup>69</sup> Lines 1925–26: *If she had set her love on the priest, / No one could have undone that*

|                   |                                                                                           |                                              |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| fol. 95rb<br>1936 | “Par fai, maister, that ware lawe,<br>To dai ne schal he nowt be slawe.”                  | low<br>not be slain                          |
|                   | The maister out of toune rit,<br>The child bileft in prisoun pit.                         | rides<br>remained; dungeon                   |
|                   | The dai is gon and comen the night,<br>Themperour wente to chaumbre, aplight.             | in faith<br>met                              |
|                   | His emperice ther he fond,<br>Sore wepe and wrong hire hond.                              | [she] Loudly wept; wrang; hands              |
| 1940              | “Ma dame,” saide themperour,<br>Whi makest thou swich scher and foul lour?” <sup>70</sup> |                                              |
|                   | “Sire, no wonder though ich am wroth,<br>Thou dost thing that me is loht.                 | it’s no wonder if; angry<br>is hateful to me |
|                   | Thou levest tales of losengrie,<br>Of falsnesse and of trecherie.                         | believe; deceit                              |
|                   | So dede Cressus the riche man:<br>Gold and silver to wille he wan                         | as much as he wanted<br>deceit; trickery     |
| 1950              | Bi losengerie and bi engin,<br>Ac hit turned him to evel fin.”                            | resulted for him in an; end                  |
|                   | “Ma dame,” he saide “tel that me,<br>Of sire Cressus, hou ended he?”                      |                                              |
|                   | “Bletheliche, sire, so mot ich thee,<br>So that ye wil the better be.                     | so may I thrive                              |

[TALE 9: VIRGILIUS, VIRGIL. THE EMPRESS]

|      |                                                                           |                                             |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1955 | Virgil was whilom a clerk<br>That coude of nigramancie werk.              | formerly<br>knew how to perform black magic |
|      | He made a fair conjuring<br>Amideward Rome cheping                        | spell<br>In the middle; market              |
|      | That no man quenche ne might<br>With no water, I you plight.              | put out<br>promise                          |
|      | Alle the poure men of the lond<br>Warmed hem therbi, fot and hond,        | poor<br>themselves at it                    |
| 1960 | And made here mete bi that fir;<br>That was a thing of gret matir.        | cooked their food; fire<br>matter           |
|      | And ther bside on a donjoun<br>He kest a man of cler latoun               | castle<br>put; shining metal                |
|      | And in his hond an arblast heldand,<br>And therinne a quarel taisand,     | holding a crossbow<br>aiming a bolt         |
|      | And in his foreheued was writen with blac<br>Lettres that this word spak: | on; forehead<br>these words                 |

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<sup>70</sup> Why are you behaving so and frowning foully?

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | 'Yif me smiteth ani man,<br>I sschete him anon ogan.'                                                                                                                                    | strikes<br>will shoot; back                                                                        |
|           | So hit bifel on a dai<br>A Lumbard com with gret noblai                                                                                                                                  | Lombard; pomp                                                                                      |
| 1975      | And seth the merveile, saunz dout,<br>And saide to the folk about:<br>'Wil ye that I smite this man<br>To loke what he do can?'                                                          | sees; without doubt<br>Do you want me to strike<br>see                                             |
| fol. 95va | And thai saide 'ya' and he him smette.                                                                                                                                                   | yes; struck                                                                                        |
| 1980      | The ymage in the fir sschette;<br>The fir aqueinte for evere mo.<br>Sire, was this wel ido?"                                                                                             | statue; into the fire shot<br>was put out<br>done                                                  |
|           | "Nai, dame," he saide, "bi hevene king,<br>That was no rightwis doing."                                                                                                                  | the king of heaven<br>virtuous                                                                     |
| 1985      | "No sire," she saide, "withouten fail.<br>Ac Virgil dede yit more mervail.<br>Upon the est gate of the toun<br>He made a man of fin latoun<br>And in his hond of gold a bal.             | marvellously<br>east<br>superior metal<br>golden ball                                              |
| 1990      | Upon the gate on the west wal<br>Virgil kest an ymage other<br>Right als hit were his owen brother,<br>That al the folk of Rome said<br>With that bal togider thai plaid.                | put; statue<br>as if<br>So that                                                                    |
| 1995      | That on hit hente, that other hit threw,<br>Mani a man the sothe iknew.<br>Amideward the cité on a stage<br>Virgil made another ymage<br>That held a mirour in his hond                  | One of them; caught<br>platform<br>statue                                                          |
| 2000      | And oversegh al that lond.<br>Who wolde pes, who wolde bataille<br>Quik he warned the toun, saunz faile,<br>Aboute Rome seven jurneys. <sup>71</sup><br>Thous he warned, night and dais, | [it] surveyed<br>watched                                                                           |
| 2005      | And tho that were rebel ifounde,<br>The Romains gadered hem in a stounde.<br>Thai wente thider quik anon<br>And destrued here fon.                                                       | those; found to be rebels<br>gathered them up immediately<br>out there<br>destroyed; their enemies |
| 2010      | The kyng of Poile hadde gret envie<br>That the Romyans made swich maistrie<br>For he ne mighte for non nede                                                                              | Apulia<br>were so masterful<br>could not; for anything                                             |

<sup>71</sup> Lines: 2001–03: *Of who wanted peace or war / Immediately he warned the town, without fail, / [his field of vision extending] About Rome for the distance that it would take seven days to travel*

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | Agen Rome in batail spede,<br>That he ne was ever more biwraid,<br>Overcomen, venkud, and bitraid.                                                                                                                                       | <i>prosper</i><br><i>Without always being betrayed</i><br><i>vanquished; betrayed</i>                                                                                   |
| 2015      | Upon a dai he send his sond<br>After alle the wise men of his lond,<br>And tolde hem alle his grevaunce,<br>And saide he wolde hegliche avaunce<br>Who might that ymage fel adoun:                                                       | <i>sent summons</i><br><br><i>them</i><br><i>richly reward</i>                                                                                                          |
| 2020      | He wolde him yif his warisoun.<br>Twei clerkes, brether, that were in Rome<br>That maistri on honde thai nome,<br>And the king hem made seur<br>Of warisoun and gret honeur.                                                             | <i>Whoever; statue cast down</i><br><i>would; give; recompense</i><br><i>brothers</i><br><i>work; in hand; took</i><br><i>made pledges to them</i><br><i>recompense</i> |
| fol. 95vb | Thai dede the king fille twei forcers<br>Of riche gold and of clers<br>And dede hit lade with priveté<br>Into Rome that riche cité.                                                                                                      | <i>had; two strongboxes</i><br><i>sparkling things</i><br><i>had them taken secretly</i>                                                                                |
| 2030      | That o forcer thai dolven nowt late<br>In Rome ate est gate<br>Under the ymage that the bal held.<br>This was a dede queinte and beld.<br>That other forcer ful of gold<br>Thai bidolven in the mold                                     | <i>One strongbox; buried; quickly</i><br><br><br><br><br><i>clever; bold</i>                                                                                            |
| 2035      | Under the west gate that noman wist —<br>This was a dede of queint list.<br>Amorewen thai sschewed hem in Rome<br>And biforn Sire Cressus come,<br>And said: 'Al hail, sir emperour,<br>It falleth to thee tol of tresour. <sup>72</sup> | <i>buried; earth</i><br><i>without anyone knowing</i><br><i>deed; clever cunning</i><br><i>appeared</i>                                                                 |
| 2040      | We conne to do thee understonde<br>Of hid tresor in thi londe.<br>Yif thou wilt half parte with ous,<br>Thou sschalt hit have, Sire Cressus.'                                                                                            | <i>are able to inform you</i><br><i>hidden</i><br><i>share; us</i>                                                                                                      |
| 2045      | Themperour saide: 'That I not.<br>Ich have forlorn that everi grot,<br>And therfore frendes I graunt you<br>That ye mai finde with youre vertu<br>The halvendel in alle thingge.                                                         | <i>I know nothing about that</i><br><i>lost every penny</i><br><br><i>Of whatever; intelligence</i><br><i>half-part; of everything</i>                                  |
| 2050      | Go we aboute the findinge.'<br>'Nai, certes,' saide the elder brother,<br>'Arst we mote don another.                                                                                                                                     | <i>Let us go</i><br><br><i>First; must do something else</i>                                                                                                            |

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<sup>72</sup> A windfall of treasure falls to you

|           |                                                                            |                                         |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|           | Ich mot mete a sweven tonight,                                             | <i>must dream a dream</i>               |
|           | And tomorewen, whan hit is light,                                          | <i>when</i>                             |
| 2055      | Sire, thou sschalt have thine wille.<br>Thous thai were that night stille. |                                         |
|           | Sone amorewe with god entent                                               | <i>good intentions</i>                  |
|           | Sire Cressus to the est gate went.                                         |                                         |
|           | The clerkes dolven in the mold                                             | <i>dug; earth</i>                       |
| 2060      | And fond a forcer ful of gold,                                             | <i>found</i>                            |
|           | And gaf hit up to themperour,                                              | <i>gave</i>                             |
|           | And he hit feng with gret honur.                                           | <i>received</i>                         |
|           | Amorewe the yonger saide wel even:                                         | <i>younger [brother]; in fact</i>       |
|           | 'Sire tonight me mette a sweven:                                           | <i>I dreamt; dream</i>                  |
| 2065      | A richcher forcer than that                                                | <i>more impressive</i>                  |
|           | We sschulle finde ate west gate.'                                          |                                         |
| fol. 96ra | Quik wente thider themperour                                               | <i>over there</i>                       |
|           | And hise barouns of gret honur,                                            |                                         |
|           | And ther thai dolven in the gronde,                                        | <i>dug</i>                              |
| 2070      | A riche forcer ther thai founde                                            |                                         |
|           | Ful of red gold igrave,                                                    | <i>pure, engraved gold</i>              |
|           | And up to themperour thai hit gave.                                        |                                         |
|           | Themperour held hem so wise,                                               | <i>them</i>                             |
|           | In al the werld was hire pris. <sup>73</sup>                               |                                         |
| 2075      | Than swor the eldere: 'Bi blod and bones,                                  | <i>older [brother]</i>                  |
|           | Have ich tonight imet ones,                                                | <i>If I dream but once</i>              |
|           | I schal thee finde tresor, I telle,                                        |                                         |
|           | Is non richer fram hennes to helle.'                                       | <i>here to hell</i>                     |
|           | Thai yede to bedde and risen amorewe,                                      | <i>went</i>                             |
| 2080      | Themperour to mochel sorewe.                                               | <i>much to the emperor's misfortune</i> |
|           | Than saide the elder to themperour:                                        |                                         |
|           | 'Under the ymage that halt the mirour                                      | <i>holds</i>                            |
|           | In al Poile ne Romanye                                                     | <i>Apulia; Roman Empire</i>             |
|           | Ne is so mochel tresorie.                                                  | <i>treasure</i>                         |
| 2085      | Moste we delve therunder,                                                  | <i>If we may dig</i>                    |
|           | Thou sscholdest habbe gold a wonder.'                                      | <i>wonderful amounts of gold</i>        |
|           | 'Nai,' quath themperour, 'for eghte non                                    | <i>no wealth whatsoever</i>             |
|           | That ymage wolde ich misdoun.'                                             | <i>would I cause harm</i>               |
|           | Than seide the yonger to themperour:                                       |                                         |
| 2090      | 'Ther is al Virgiles tresour.                                              |                                         |
|           | We sschulle the ymage so undersette                                        | <i>support</i>                          |
|           | That we ne sschal hit no thing lette,                                      | <i>damage</i>                           |
|           | And whan we han the gold in the gronde,                                    | <i>have</i>                             |
|           | We sscholle hit make as we hit founde,                                     |                                         |

<sup>73</sup> [and thought that] They were worth the world

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2095              | For we beth mazouns queinte of cast.<br>Than saide Cressus: 'Goh't an hast.'<br>Thai bigonne hire werk saunz dout<br>And sette postes al about,<br>And bigan to mini under.               | <i>masons; skilful</i><br><i>Go quickly</i><br><i>without fear</i>                                                       |
| 2100              | Herkneth now a selkouth wonder!<br>Thai torent ston fram ston,<br>The fondement tobrast anon.<br>Al dai thai mined down right<br>Til hit come to the night.                               | <i>mine</i><br><i>marvellous</i><br><i>tore</i><br><i>foundation burst apart</i>                                         |
| 2105              | On the morewe thai saide to Cressus stille:<br>'Of gold thou sschalt have thi wille.'<br>Themperour wente to his palais,<br>Clerkes also and mani burgeis —<br>Ech man wente to his inne. | <i>as much as you want</i><br><i>resting place</i>                                                                       |
| 2110<br>fol. 96rb | The clerkes thoughte another ginne.<br>Whanne ech man slepen, grete and smale,<br>The clerkes to the stage stale<br>And bet a fir strong and sterk.<br>The fir flegth up into the werk    | <i>trick</i><br><i>everyone slept</i><br><i>went to the platform</i><br><i>whipped up a fire; intense</i><br><i>flew</i> |
| 2115              | And falsed the siment and the ston.<br>The ymage overthrew anon.<br>And tho the clerkes seghen this,<br>Awai thai flowen, forsothe, iwis.<br>Amorewe themperour aros,                     | <i>broke down; cement</i><br><i>fell down</i><br><i>when; saw</i><br><i>fled</i><br><i>arose</i>                         |
| 2120              | Of this dede him sore agros.<br>In his herte was kare and howe,<br>Awai he wolde han iflowe.<br>The smale and the poeple of Rome<br>To sire Cressus thai nome sone                        | <i>he was terribly frightened</i><br><i>worry; fear</i><br><i>would have fled</i><br><i>commoners</i><br><i>seized</i>   |
| 2125              | And tolde him for coveitise<br>He hadde iloren Romes prise.<br>Thai ladde forth in that stounde<br>And to a table fast him bounde,<br>And red gold quik thai melte,                       | <i>covetousness</i><br><i>lost; prize possession</i><br><i>led [him]; at that time</i><br><i>pure gold; melted</i>       |
| 2130              | And nose and mouht ful thai helte<br>And eren and eyen also,<br>Therwhiles a drope wolde in go,<br>And seide: 'Sire, for Godes love,<br>Thou hast mad thral that was above. <sup>74</sup> | <i>mouth; poured</i><br><i>ears</i><br><i>For as long as a drop would fit</i>                                            |
| 2135              | Nou artou ful, nou make thee heit!<br>Nou wiltou nammore coveit.'                                                                                                                         | <i>you are full; gee up (see note)</i><br><i>you will no more covet</i>                                                  |

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<sup>74</sup> You have made thralls of those who had the advantage

|           |                                                 |                                        |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|           | Nou is he ded with mochel schame.”              |                                        |
|           | “O, thou seist soth,” he saide, “dame.”         |                                        |
|           | “Ya, sire, for his lesingges                    | <i>lies</i>                            |
| 2140      | That he leved twaie false gadelinges            | <i>believed; [of the] two; rascals</i> |
|           | He turned to wel ivel fin.                      | <i>had a terrible ending</i>           |
|           | Sire, swich sschal be ending thin.”             |                                        |
|           | “Nai, dame,” he saide, “yif God wile.”          |                                        |
|           | “Yis, sire,” sche saide, “bi right skile,       | <i>indeed</i>                          |
| 2145      | For thou levest wel flaterie                    | <i>believe</i>                         |
|           | That the maistres conne to thee lie.            | <i>tell you in their lies</i>          |
|           | And desire to make thin air                     | <i>(the masters) desire; heir</i>      |
|           | He that sschal thee schende vair                | <i>destroy truly</i>                   |
|           | For he is the fendes chike;                     | <i>devil's offspring</i>               |
| 2150      | Therwhiles he liveth thou mai sike.”            | <i>While; sicken</i>                   |
|           | “Dame, I sschal kepe me fram kare.              | <i>save myself from sorrow</i>         |
|           | Right tomorewe he sschal forthfare.”            | <i>go forth (be killed)</i>            |
|           | “Sire,” sche saide, “bi Seint Michel,           |                                        |
|           | Thanne dost thou wisliche and wel.”             | <i>wisely</i>                          |
| [DAY 6]   |                                                 |                                        |
| fol. 96va | Morewe com, as ye mowe here,                    | <i>may hear</i>                        |
| 2156      | Themperour aros with wroth chere,               | <i>in an angry mood</i>                |
|           | And to his paleys he gan wende.                 | <i>went</i>                            |
|           | Right bforen his barouns hende                  |                                        |
|           | He let brenge forht his owen sone,              | <i>had brough forth</i>                |
| 2160      | And whan he com out of prisoun,                 |                                        |
|           | Amideward Rome toun                             | <i>Through</i>                         |
|           | Than com riden maister Catoun.                  | <i>riding</i>                          |
|           | The folk of Rome on him gan crie                | <i>cried</i>                           |
|           | And saide: “Catoun, kithe thi maistrie,         | <i>show; skill</i>                     |
| 2165      | Help thi disciple in this nede.”                | <i>dire situation</i>                  |
|           | Catoun light adoun of his stede                 | <i>alighted from; steed</i>            |
|           | And grette themperour on his kne,               | <i>greeted</i>                         |
|           | And unethe he wold him se,                      |                                        |
|           | He seide to him: “Maister Catoun, <sup>75</sup> |                                        |
| 2170      | Thou hast me don wel gret traisoun              | <i>treason</i>                         |
|           | For to thee and thine fere                      | <i>companions</i>                      |
|           | I bitok mi sone to lere.                        | <i>entrusted; for teaching</i>         |
|           | Ye taughte him to nimen forth min emperice.”    | <i>abduct</i>                          |
|           | “Sire,” quath Catoun, “swich wordes beth nice.” | <i>foolish</i>                         |

<sup>75</sup> Lines 2168–69: *Scarcely had he seen him / Before he said to him: “Master Cato”*

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                       |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2175 | “And his speche is forlore.”<br>“Nai, sire, and he finde youre grace bifore.<br>Thi wif wolde he forlain have nowt,<br>Yif thou hit levest, thou art bicought.<br>Ac yif thou do thi sone duresse, | <i>he can't speak<br/>provided he finds your grace<br/>he would not have raped<br/>believe; deceived<br/>cause your son to suffer</i> |
| 2180 | On thee falle swich a destresse<br>And swich a maner vileynie<br>As hadde the burgeis for his pie.”<br>“O maister,” he saide, “what, what?<br>I thee praie, tel me that.”                          | <i>May such distress befall you<br/>such villainy<br/>magpie</i>                                                                      |
| 2185 | “Sire,” he saide, “what helpeth hit mi sawe,<br>Yif thi sone therwhiles beth islawe? <sup>76</sup><br>Ac let him fechche quik again<br>And I thee sschal mi tale sain.”                            | <i>what use is my story<br/>have him fetched alive<br/>tell</i>                                                                       |
| 2190 | The emperour of Rome, Dioclician,<br>His sone he het fechche anon.<br>Nou everich man that loveth his hale,<br>Lestne wel Catones tale!                                                            | <i>commanded to be fetched<br/>well-being<br/>Listen well to</i>                                                                      |

[TALE 10: AVIS, THE BIRD. FIFTH SAGE, CATOUN]

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   | “A burgeis was in Rome toun,<br>A riche man of gret renoun.                                                                                                                                                   | <i>burgess (citizen); [there] was</i>                                                             |
| 2195              | Marchaunt he was of gret avoir<br>And had a wif was queint and fair.<br>But sche was fikel under hir lok<br>And hadde a parti of Eve smok. <sup>77</sup>                                                      | <i>wealth<br/>clever<br/>fickle within her own chamber</i>                                        |
| fol. 96vb<br>2200 | And manie ben yit of hire kinne<br>That ben al bilapped therinne.<br>The burgeis hadde a pie in his halle<br>That couthe telle tales alle<br>Apertlich, in Freinch langage,<br>And heng in a fair cage,       | <i>[there] are; her kindred<br/>wrapped up in it<br/>magpie<br/>Clearly; French<br/>[it] hung</i> |
| 2205              | And seth lemmans comen and gon,<br>And teld hire louerd sone anon.<br>And for that the pie hadde isaid<br>The wif was ofte ivel ipaid;<br>And the burgeis lovede his pie,<br>For he wiste he couthe nowt lie. | <i>sees lovers<br/>told<br/>Because of what<br/>poorly satisfied (i.e., dissatisfied)</i>         |

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<sup>76</sup> If your son is slain in the meantime?

<sup>77</sup> And had a part of Eve's smock (i.e., was cut of Eve's cloth)

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | So hit bifil upon a dai,<br>The burgeis fram home tok his wai<br>And wente aboute his marchaundise.<br>The wif waited anon hire prise                                                                          | <i>left home<br/>business<br/>opportunity<br/>for her lover</i>                                                            |
| 2215      | And sente here copiner fore,<br>And whanne he com to the halle dore,<br>He ne dorste nowt in hie<br>For the wreiiing of the pie.<br>The wif him bi the hond hent,<br>And into chaumbre anon thai went.         | <i>didn't dare hurry in<br/>Because of the accusations<br/>took him by the hand</i>                                        |
| 2220      | The pie bigan to grede anon:<br>'Ya, now mi louerd is out igon,<br>Thou comest hider for no gode.<br>I schal you wraie, bi the rode.'                                                                          | <i>croak<br/>has gone out<br/>here</i>                                                                                     |
| 2225      | The wif thought schent she was.<br>A wrenche she thoughte nathelas<br>And clepede a maide to make here bed,<br>And after, bi hir bother red,<br>A laddre thai sette the halle to,<br>And undede a tile or two. | <i>reveal your secret; cross<br/>ruined<br/>trick<br/>called; her<br/>their joint contrivance<br/>set against the hall</i> |
| 2230      | Over the pie thai gan handel<br>A cler bacyn and a candel.<br>A pot ful of water cler<br>Thai sschadde upon the pies swer.                                                                                     | <i>loosened<br/>manipulate<br/>shining basin</i>                                                                           |
| 2235      | With bacyn beting and kandel light<br>Thai bobbed the pie bi night,<br>And water on him gan schenche —<br>This was on of wommannes wrenche.<br>Tho the dai dawen gan,<br>Awai stal the yonge man.              | <i>poured; neck<br/>the banging of the basin<br/>tricked<br/>poured<br/>one; tricks<br/>When; day dawned<br/>stole</i>     |
| 2240      | Men unlek dore and windowe;<br>The pie him sschok with mochel howe,<br>For ssche was fain that hit was dai.<br>The copiner was went his wai.                                                                   | <i>Folk unlocked<br/>shook himself; distress<br/>glad<br/>lover</i>                                                        |
| fol. 97ra | The gode burgeis was hom icome;<br>Into the halle the wai he nome.<br>The pie saide: 'Bi God almight,<br>The copiner was her tonight<br>And hath idon thee mochel sschame,                                     | <i>arrived<br/>took the way<br/>almighty<br/>here</i>                                                                      |
| 2245      | Imad an hore of oure dame.<br>And yit hit had ben tonight<br>Gret rain and thonder bright.<br>Sehthen ich was brid in mi nest<br>I ne hadde nevere so ivel rest.'                                              | <i>Made a whore<br/>also<br/>Since</i>                                                                                     |
| 2250      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                            |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2255      | The wif hath the tale iherd<br>And thoughte wel to ben amered,<br>And saide: 'Sire thou hast outrage<br>To leve a pie in a kage.<br>Tonight was the weder fair and cler                                                 | heard<br>be ruined<br>you'd be mad<br>believe<br>weather                                                             |
| 2260      | And the firmament wel fair,<br>And sche saith hit hath ben thonder.<br>Sche hath ilowe mani a wonder.<br>But ich be awreke of here swithe,<br>Ne schal I never ben womman blithe.'                                      | sky<br>it thundered<br>blurted out<br>If I don't get my revenge soon<br>happy                                        |
| 2265      | The godeman askede his neghebours<br>Of that night and of the ours<br>And thai saide that al that night<br>Was the weder cler and bright.<br>The burgeis saide the pie                                                  | hour by hour                                                                                                         |
| 2270      | Ne scholde him nammore lie.<br>Nammo wordes he thar spak,<br>But also swithe his nekke tobrak.<br>And whanne he seth his pie ded<br>For sorewe coude he no red.                                                         | would lie to him no more<br>spoke then<br>there and then; broke<br>For his regret he found no remedy                 |
| 2275      | He segh hir wete and his cage;<br>He thoughte of gile and of outrage. <sup>78</sup><br>He wente him out, the ladder he segh,<br>And up to the halle rof he stegh.<br>The pot with the water he fond —                   | saw<br>roof; climbed                                                                                                 |
| 2280      | That he brak with his hond —<br>And manie other trecherie<br>That was idon to his pie.<br>He went him down, withouten oth,<br>In his herte grim and wroth.                                                              | broke<br>assuredly<br>fierce; angry                                                                                  |
| 2285      | And with a god staf ful sket<br>His wif ate dore he bet                                                                                                                                                                 | good staff; immediately<br>at his wife's door; beat                                                                  |
| fol. 97rb | And bad hir go that ilche dai<br>On alder twenti devel wai. <sup>79</sup>                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                      |
| 2290      | Lo sire," he seide, "for a foles red<br>The pie that saide soht was ded.<br>Hadde he taken god conseil,<br>His pie hadde ben hol and hail.<br>And also fareth thin emperice<br>Thourgh here resoun sscherewed and nice. | Look; because of a fool's advice<br>told the truth<br>(the burgess) taken good counsel<br>safe and sound<br>operates |
| 2295      | Sche goth aboute, dai and night,                                                                                                                                                                                        | her discourse; shrewd; cunning                                                                                       |

<sup>78</sup> And thought about [the possibility of] trickery and wicked deeds

<sup>79</sup> Lines 2287–88: And told her that same day / To go the way of the twenty devils (i.e., he cursed her to hell)

|      |                                            |                                         |
|------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|      | Thi sone to dethe for to dight.            | <i>condemn to death</i>                 |
|      | And he be ded, verraiment,                 | <i>If he were dead, truly</i>           |
|      | Ne worth ther non amendement.              | <i>there would be; remedy</i>           |
|      | Bi here rede ne do thou nout,              | <i>According to her advice</i>          |
| 2300 | Yif thou do, thou art bicought.            | <i>deceived</i>                         |
|      | Al the werld thee sschal despise           |                                         |
|      | Yif thou do bi here and lete the wise."    | <i>act following her; leave</i>         |
|      | Anon themperour saide than:                |                                         |
|      | "Catoun, bi him that made man,             |                                         |
| 2305 | Don ich wille after thi sawe;              | <i>according to your teaching</i>       |
|      | Todai ne sschal he nowt be slawe."         | <i>not be slain</i>                     |
|      | The schild bileft in prisoun.              | <i>remained</i>                         |
|      | Upon his palefrai lep Catoun               | <i>leapt</i>                            |
|      | And hadde mani a blessing                  |                                         |
| 2310 | For his disciples delivering.              | <i>On account of</i>                    |
|      | The night is comen, the dai is gon,        |                                         |
|      | Themperour wente to chaumbre anon.         |                                         |
|      | His quen thanne agen him nam               | <i>came up to him</i>                   |
|      | With semblant ase a wroth wimman.          | <i>With the face of an angry woman</i>  |
| 2315 | "Dame," he saide, "pluk up thi cher,       | <i>mood</i>                             |
|      | Other tel me whi thou makest swich cher."  | <i>Or; why you're pulling that face</i> |
|      | "Hit nis no wonder, sire, bi hevene,       | <i>It's no wonder</i>                   |
|      | Thee sschulle sschende thi maistres sevene | <i>must destroy</i>                     |
|      | That maketh thee to love thi fo,           | <i>enemy</i>                            |
| 2320 | Forthi ich wille nou fram thee go.         | <i>That's why I want to leave you</i>   |
|      | Ac yif thou dost more bi hire leving,      | <i>continue to follow their opinion</i> |
|      | Falle on thee ase dede on Herowde the king | <i>May the [same fate] befall</i>       |
|      | That les his sight in wonder wise;         | <i>lost; in a marvellous way</i>        |
|      | Therfore thou might sore agrise."          | <i>At that; take terrible fright</i>    |
| 2325 | "Dame," he saide, "on ech manere,          | <i>absolutely</i>                       |
|      | That ilche tale ich moste here."           | <i>same; must I hear</i>                |
|      | "Bletheliche sire, so mot ich thee,        | <i>as I thrive, i.e., on my life</i>    |
|      | So that yhe wolde the better be.           | <i>you will become better</i>           |

[TALE 11: VII SAPIENTES, THE SEVEN WISE MEN. THE EMPRESS]

|           |                                   |                                |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|           | An emperour was in Rome,          |                                |
| 2330      | The richest man of Cristendome.   |                                |
| fol. 97va | Herowdes was his righte name,     | <i>Herod</i>                   |
|           | Wide isprongge his riche fame.    | <i>traveled; impressive</i>    |
|           | He hadde with him seven wise,     | <i>wise men</i>                |
|           | Als ye han, of grete prise.       | <i>As you have; reputation</i> |
| 2335      | Al that themperour dede or thout, | <i>did; thought</i>            |

|           |                                        |                                           |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|           | Bi here conseil al he hit wrout.       | <i>According to their advice; did</i>     |
|           | So her was arered in this toun,        | <i>here; established</i>                  |
|           | Bi here rede and bi hire costom,       | <i>their advice; their</i>                |
|           | That who that mette a sweven anight,   | <i>whoever dreamt a dream at night</i>    |
| 2340      | He scholde come amorewe, aplight,      |                                           |
|           | And brenge a besaund to offring,       | <i>bezant (gold coin); as an offering</i> |
|           | And of his sweven have undoing.        | <i>the interpretation</i>                 |
|           | So longe thai used this errour         | <i>followed this erroneous procedure</i>  |
|           | Thai were richcher than themperour.    | <i>[that] They</i>                        |
| 2345      | So hit bifel upon a dai,               |                                           |
|           | Als he went upon his plai,             | <i>he (the emperor) went</i>              |
|           | And whan he com to Rome gate,          | <i>the gates of Rome</i>                  |
|           | And wolde wenden out therate,          | <i>wanted to leave there</i>              |
|           | He bicam blind so ston.                | <i>as blind as a stone</i>                |
| 2350      | His maistres he ofsente anon,          | <i>summoned</i>                           |
|           | And asked whi he might nowt se         |                                           |
|           | Whan he sscholde out of Rome te.       | <i>wanted to leave</i>                    |
|           | Thai asked respit a fourten night,     | <i>for a fortnight's respite</i>          |
|           | Bi than thai trowede that thai might   | <i>believed</i>                           |
| 2355      | In hire bokes finde resoun             | <i>their; an explanation</i>              |
|           | And answeren him with right enchesoun. | <i>correct answer</i>                     |
|           | Respit thai hadde of themperour.       |                                           |
|           | He wente him hom to his tour           |                                           |
|           | And the maistres hom went,             |                                           |
| 2360      | And hire bokes went and trent,         | <i>their; searched back and forth</i>     |
|           | Ac thai ne couthe nowt ifinde          | <i>find out</i>                           |
|           | Whi themperour was blinde.             |                                           |
|           | Thai soughte conseil fer and negh      | <i>far and near</i>                       |
|           | Ase man that is queinté.               | <i>wise (see note)</i>                    |
| 2365      | So on a dai after than                 | <i>that</i>                               |
|           | Thai mette with an hold man            | <i>old</i>                                |
|           | And tolde him al hire conseil,         | <i>their case</i>                         |
|           | And he answered saunz fail:            |                                           |
|           | 'In al the werld nis man liviind       | <i>[there] is no man living</i>           |
| 2370      | That couthe you that sothe find,       |                                           |
|           | But yif hit ware child on              | <i>Unless it were a child</i>             |
|           | That never hadde fader non.            |                                           |
|           | For he can telle sothes alle           |                                           |
|           | That ben don in bour and halle.        | <i>chamber and the hall</i>               |
| fol. 97vb | Yif yhe that schild finde mowe         | <i>you; may</i>                           |
| 2376      | He schal you telle, ich wille avowe.'  | <i>swear</i>                              |
|           | The maistres wolde no leng abide,      | <i>longer wait</i>                        |
|           | To seche the schild thai gonne ride.   | <i>seek out</i>                           |
|           | On a dai thai com ther Merlin pleid    | <i>where</i>                              |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2380      | And on of his felawes him traid,<br>And he was wroth, and maked a res,<br>And cleped him sschrewe faderles,<br>And saide he was of the fendes kinde,<br>Hise felawes ever misdoinde.   | <i>one; annoyed</i><br><i>[the fellow] was angry; insult</i><br><i>called; a fatherless shrew</i><br><i>of the devil's kindred</i><br><i>always mistreating his fellows</i> |
| 2385      | 'Datheit have thou,' quath child Merlin,<br>'Al to loude thou spak thi Latin.<br>Seve maistres I se her come,<br>That han me sought al fram Rome.<br>Thai han with me mochel to done,  | <i>Curses</i><br><i>too; (see note)</i><br><i>Seven; see here</i><br><i>all the way</i>                                                                                     |
| 2390      | Ich wil hem helpe swithe sone.'<br>With that com a man of that lond<br>And brought a besaund in his hond<br>To whom that Merlin saide thous:<br>'Man, thou art ful merveilous.         | <i>help them</i>                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2395      | Thou woldest have undoing<br>Of thi tonichtes meting;<br>Forthi thou woldest that o besaund offer. <sup>80</sup><br>Bere hit hom into thi coffer<br>And I sschal telle and nowt ne lie | <i>thus</i><br><i>most strange</i><br><i>want the interpretation</i><br><i>your dream last night</i>                                                                        |
| 2400      | What thi meting signefie.<br>Thou mettest tonight in thi donghel<br>Sprong a water out of a wel<br>That was of swithe god savour,<br>And servede thee and thi neyghebour.              | <i>Take</i><br><i>dream signifies</i><br><i>dunghill</i><br><i>Sprang; jet; fountain</i><br><i>pleasant flavor</i><br><i>served</i>                                         |
| 2405      | I wil thee saie the sothe word:<br>The welle bitokneth a gold hord.<br>Go delve anon in thi donghel,<br>Thou sschalt hit finde swithe snel.'<br>Thanne he dalf therinne anon,          | <i>interpretation</i><br><i>betokens; hoard</i><br><i>dig</i><br><i>quickly</i><br><i>dug</i>                                                                               |
| 2410      | And fond of gold ful god won.<br>He gaf the maistres of the gold,<br>Ase moche ase thai nime wold<br>And also his neghebour:<br>He made him riche of that tresour.                     | <i>great plenty</i><br><i>gave</i><br><i>wanted to take</i>                                                                                                                 |
| 2415      | But Merlin saide, bi hevene king,<br>He wolde therof no thing.                                                                                                                         | <i>the king of heaven</i>                                                                                                                                                   |
| fol. 98ra | The maistres out of toune nome<br>And ladden Merlyn toward Rome,<br>And asked him with milde mouthe                                                                                    | <i>took [their way]</i><br><i>led</i><br><i>humbly</i>                                                                                                                      |
| 2420      | Yif he the sothe telle couthe                                                                                                                                                          | <i>could</i>                                                                                                                                                                |

<sup>80</sup> *That's why you're offering that bezant*

|           |                                              |                                            |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
|           | Whi themperour might nowt se                 | <i>Why; see</i>                            |
|           | Whanne he sscholde out of Rome te.           | <i>wanted to leave Rome</i>                |
|           | 'Ya,' saide Merlin, 'sikerli,                | <i>Yes</i>                                 |
|           | Ich kan telle him ful wel whi.'              | <i>very well</i>                           |
| 2425      | The maistres were glad of this               |                                            |
|           | And to Rome thai went, iwis.                 |                                            |
|           | The dai was comen that hem was set,          | <i>was appointed to them</i>               |
|           | Anon with themperour thai met                |                                            |
|           | And saide: 'The dai is comen of answeriing.' |                                            |
| 2430      | Quath Herowdes: 'That is soth thing.         |                                            |
|           | Tel me hastilich and sket                    | <i>swiftly</i>                             |
|           | Thing that yhe me bihet.'                    | <i>What you promised me</i>                |
|           | 'Lo, sire, we han a schild ibrowt            | <i>Look; brought</i>                       |
|           | That schal thee telle al thi thowt.          | <i>thought</i>                             |
| 2435      | Lo her, sire, a litel page                   | <i>here; boy</i>                           |
|           | That schal sai thee thi corage.'             | <i>tell you your desire</i>                |
|           | Quath themperour: 'Of lime and lond,         | <i>risking mutilation and loss of land</i> |
|           | Wil ye his tale take an hond?'               | <i>vouch for his interpretation</i>        |
|           | 'Ya, on al that we have or have mowe,        | <i>may have</i>                            |
| 2440      | The childes tale we wil avowe.'              | <i>vouch for</i>                           |
|           | 'Tel me,' he saide, 'child Merlin.'          |                                            |
|           | 'Sir, lad me arst to chaumbre thin.'         | <i>lead; first</i>                         |
|           | Themperour him ladde anon                    |                                            |
|           | Into his chaumbre of lim and ston,           | <i>stone masonry</i>                       |
| 2445      | And whanne thai were therinne ischet,        | <i>shut up in there</i>                    |
|           | Merlin his tonge with wit whet,              | <i>whet his tongue with wit</i>            |
|           | And spak to themperour:                      |                                            |
|           | 'Thou hast,' he saith, 'her in thi bour,     | <i>here; chamber</i>                       |
|           | Fer under thi bed adoun,                     | <i>Far</i>                                 |
| 2450      | A gret boiland cauderoun                     | <i>boiling cauldron</i>                    |
|           | With seven walmes boiland.                   | <i>bubbles boiling</i>                     |
|           | The walmes han thee abland                   | <i>blinded</i>                             |
|           | And therwhiles thai boilland be,             | <i>while</i>                               |
|           | Sire, thou ne schalt never ise,              | <i>see</i>                                 |
| 2455      | And yif thai mai ben queint aright,          | <i>extinguished</i>                        |
|           | Thou might wel have thi sight.'              |                                            |
|           | Themperour had wonder of this                |                                            |
|           | And let remue his bed, iwis,                 | <i>had removed</i>                         |
|           | And tok ten men other twelve,                |                                            |
| 2460      | And het hem in the grounde delve.            | <i>commanded them; to dig</i>              |
|           | Thai deden ase here louerd hem het           | <i>did; commanded</i>                      |
|           | And dolven alle there ful sket.              | <i>dug</i>                                 |
| fol. 98rb | Thai ne hadde dolven but a stounde           | <i>only</i>                                |
|           | That the caundroun was ifounde               | <i>When</i>                                |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2465      | That hadde right walmes seven.<br>Tho was ileved the schildes steven.                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>indeed</i><br><i>Then; believed; exposition</i>                                                                                                            |
| 2470      | Quad themperour: 'Forsothe iwis,<br>Bi thee I wil don after this.<br>Ac telle me, child, som resouns:<br>What bitokneth this boilouns?'<br>'Sire, do out thi folk ichon,<br>And ich wil thee telle swithe anon.'<br>Themperour anonright<br>Drof out bothe clerk and knight. | <i>I will follow you</i><br><i>explanations</i><br><i>do these bubbles betoken</i><br><i>send out all your people</i><br><br><i>Drove</i>                     |
| 2475      | Thanne beginneth the child Merlin<br>To telle themperour swich Latin:<br>'Sire,' he said, 'bi God in heven,<br>Thise boilouns that boilen seven<br>Bitoknen thine seven wise                                                                                                 | <i>as follows</i><br><br><i>seven boiling bubbles</i><br><i>wise men</i>                                                                                      |
| 2480      | That han iwrowt agen the assise.<br>Thai han arrered custumes newe<br>That thee mai wel sore rewe.<br>Be hit other clerk or knight,<br>And him mete a swevene anight,                                                                                                        | <i>worked against tradition</i><br><i>established</i><br><i>you may very sorely regret</i><br><i>[every man] Whether</i><br><i>If he has a dream at night</i> |
| 2485      | He cometh amorewe, ich understonde,<br>And brengeth a besaund in his honde<br>And to the maistres hire swevene telle.<br>Thai hit undo after her wille —<br>Thai resounde ase hem liketh,                                                                                    | <i>tells their dream</i><br><i>interpret; according to their desire</i><br><i>as pleases them</i>                                                             |
| 2490      | Thous thai mani man biswiketh.<br>And for that ilche senne, I finde<br>That thou art bicom blinde.'<br>'Nou tel me child thin entent,<br>What mai me to amendement?'                                                                                                         | <i>many a man; deceive</i><br><i>same sin</i><br><br><i>opinion</i><br><i>How can I make amends</i>                                                           |
| 2495      | 'Leve sire, for mi love,<br>Bi on of hem mi tale prove.<br>Leve sire, taketh themprise,<br>And taketh the eldest of the wise.<br>Lat smite atwo his nekke bon:                                                                                                               | <i>Dear</i><br><i>On one; them; test</i><br><i>tackle the task</i><br><i>wise men</i><br><i>Have his neck bone struck in two</i>                              |
| 2500      | The grettest walm schal quenche anon.'<br>Themperour dede be the schildes lore,<br>The eldest maister was slein therfore.<br>His heued was into the caundroun cast,<br>The greste walm queynte on hast.                                                                      | <i>be extinguished</i><br><i>according to; teaching</i><br><br><i>head; thrown</i><br><i>was extinguished</i>                                                 |
| 2505      | Tho themperour wiste this,<br>He let sle alle sevene, iwis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>knew</i><br><i>had slain</i>                                                                                                                               |
| fol. 98va | The water bicom faire and lithe,<br>Themperour therof was blithe.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <i>calm</i><br><i>glad</i>                                                                                                                                    |

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                          |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2510 | Anon he wichss therof his hond,<br>And overseth al the lond.<br>And sire, so fare maistres thine;<br>Thai schul thee bringe to mochele pine:<br>Thai han so iblent thee<br>That thou might nowt that sothe ise. | <i>washed; his hands</i><br><i>governs</i><br><br><i>great suffering</i><br><i>blinded</i><br><i>see</i> |
| 2515 | Ac yif thou dost more bi here rede,<br>To swiche blendnesse mote thai thee lede<br>As hadde Herowdes the king,<br>That was negh browt to ivel ending."                                                          | <i>their advice</i><br><i>may they lead you</i><br><br><i>almost</i>                                     |

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                        |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2520 | "Nai, dame," he saide, "thou art wilde;<br>Fram swiche schame God me schilde.<br>Fro hem I schal me ful wel kepe,<br>Of hem ne give I nowt an hepe."<br>"Sire," sche saide, "thou hast god right.<br>Thai ben about, dai and night,<br>Thee to bigile and bitraie." | <i>keep me</i><br><i>Against them; protect</i><br><i>For them I don't care one bit</i> |
| 2525 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                        |

[DAY 7]

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | Cokkes crewe and hit was daie.<br>Themperour aros anon<br>And wente to his halle of ston,<br>And ase themperour, verraiment,<br>Hadde given his sone juggement,<br>The sexte maister com into the halle,<br>And hendeliche he grette hem alle,<br>And saide: "Sire, thou art wel nice<br>To leve so mochel thin emperice.                                  | <i>Cocks crowed</i><br><br><br><i>when; truly</i><br><i>son's</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2530 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2535 | Whanne thou levest hire so<br>That thou wilt thi sone slo,<br>Thanne mot hit so fare bi thee<br>As bi a sschereve of this countré,<br>That hirt his wif with a knif<br>In the wombe; she les hire lif."<br>Quath themperour: "In alle maner,<br>That ilche tale ich moste her."<br>"Leve sire, what helpeth mi tale,<br>Yif thi sone tholieth dethes bale? | <i>courteously; greeted</i><br><i>foolish</i><br><i>believe</i><br><i>believe her</i><br><i>slay</i><br><i>may</i><br><i>sheriff</i><br><i>hurt</i><br><i>belly; lost</i><br><i>By all means</i><br><i>same; must hear</i><br><i>Dear; what use is my tale</i><br><i>suffers death's torment</i> |
| 2540 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2545 | Yif him todai longes rest<br>Ich schal thee telle a newe gest.<br>Swich a tale I thee telle can<br>Ne schaltou never leve wimman."                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Give; the length of today</i><br><i>I; story</i><br><br><i>That you shall never believe</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|           |                                 |                                    |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|           | Themperour hete him let         | <i>commanded it granted to him</i> |
| 2550      | And his sone agen fet.          | <i>fetchd</i>                      |
| fol. 98vb | The child was pult in presoun;  | <i>thrown</i>                      |
|           | The maister ginneth his resoun. | <i>discourse</i>                   |

[TALE 12: VIDUA, THE WIDOW. SIXTH SAGE, GESSE]

|      |                                         |                                     |
|------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|      | "Sire," he saide, "thou might me leve.  | <i>you may well believe me</i>      |
|      | Hit was a knight, a riche sscherreve,   | <i>There was; sheriff</i>           |
| 2555 | And had a yong jolif wif                | <i>[he] had; pretty</i>             |
|      | That he lovede hire has his lif,        | <i>as [much as]</i>                 |
|      | And ssche him, bi understanding,        | <i>she</i>                          |
|      | Lovede him wel in alle thing.           |                                     |
|      | So on a dai him and his wif             | <i>to him</i>                       |
| 2560 | Was igoven a newe knif —                | <i>given; knife</i>                 |
|      | Fair hit was and of egge scharp —       | <i>sharp of blade</i>               |
|      | And thai on gamen gonne carp.           | <i>began to mess around</i>         |
|      | The knight his wif in the wombe carf;   | <i>cut in the belly</i>             |
|      | For doel therof amorewe starf.          | <i>grief; [he] died</i>             |
| 2565 | He dede gret foli, cert,                | <i>did; foolishness, certainly</i>  |
|      | Or too tendre was his hert.             |                                     |
|      | Sone amorewe erliche                    | <i>early</i>                        |
|      | He was biwaked richeliche <sup>81</sup> |                                     |
|      | And wel faire browt on erthe            | <i>[he was] buried most finely</i>  |
| 2570 | After that he was werthe.               | <i>According to what</i>            |
|      | The leuedi saide for no wenne           | <i>nothing in the world</i>         |
|      | Sche ne wolde never wende thenne        | <i>would; go from there</i>         |
|      | But as hir louerd for hir daide         | <i>died</i>                         |
|      | Sche wolde be ded and bi him laide.     | <i>laid</i>                         |
| 2575 | Here frendes seghen al that cas         | <i>saw; business</i>                |
|      | And comen to hire to make solas         | <i>her; cheer her up</i>            |
|      | And saiden: 'Dame gent and fre,         | <i>noble; gracious</i>              |
|      | Of thiselve have pité,                  |                                     |
|      | For thou art fair and yong, saunz fail, |                                     |
| 2580 | And maist the werld mochel avail.       | <i>may be much use in the world</i> |
|      | Some knight thee wedde of noblai        | <i>may wed you; high rank</i>       |
|      | And have with him moche to plai,        | <i>[you may] have; merriment</i>    |
|      | Gode children bigeten and faire.        | <i>[and] Good children beget</i>    |
|      | Gentil dame, debonaire,                 | <i>mild</i>                         |
| 2585 | Lete awai thi mourning,                 | <i>Leave</i>                        |
|      | And tak thee to som conforting.'        | <i>find some comfort</i>            |

<sup>81</sup> *An impressive wake was held for him*

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | 'That wil I do for no wele<br>Ac die ich wille on his beriele,'<br>She saide, 'Allas and wailawo!'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>for nothing in the world<br/>tomb</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2590 | Nel ich hennes nevere go,<br>Ne confort take never mo.'<br>Here frendes were sori tho.<br>A logge thai made upon his grave<br>For sche wolde ther bilave,<br>And maked hire a ful fair fer,<br>2596 And fond hire that night stover,<br>And left here alone,<br>And sche made reuli mone.<br>That ich dai thai were inome<br>2600 The thre theves, bi commun dome.<br>The thre theves were knightes<br>That were ihonged anonrightes<br>For thai hadde the countré anuwed<br>And with robberie destrwed;<br>2605 Anhonged thai were alle thre.<br>A knight of the countré held his fe<br>For to loke the thre knighttes<br>Upon the galewes thre nightes.<br>He com to the galewes armed wel<br>2610 Bothe in iren and in stel<br>For to make the ferst night ward.<br>The weder was cold and froward.<br>He was forcold and lokede aboute<br>And was war withouten doute<br>2615 Of the fir in the chirchewawe<br>And thiderward he gan to drawe<br>For to have som warmyng,<br>And fond the leuedi doel makyng,<br>And bad she sscholde late him in.<br>2620 She saide she nolde, bi Seint Johain.<br>'A yis,' he seide, 'leve dame,<br>I nelle thee do harm ne sschame.'<br>He swor as he was gentil knight.<br>Sche let him in anonright.<br>2625 He sat and warmed him bi the fer,<br>He biheld the leuedis cher<br>And segh swich semblant she made<br>And saide: 'Dame, thou art a gade,<br>That thou mournest for the ded<br>2630 That mai thee do nother god ne qued. | <i>I will never go from here<br/>Nor ever more take comfort<br/>Her; then<br/>hut<br/>remain<br/>[they] made for her; very fine fire<br/>for her; supplies<br/>her<br/>complained piteously<br/>same; arrested<br/>thieves; to general approval<br/>hanged<br/>disturbed<br/>ruined<br/>knight; estate<br/>In return for watching over<br/>gallows; for three nights<br/>iron; steel<br/>the first night's watch<br/>inclement<br/>chilled<br/>noticed<br/>fire; churchyard<br/>in that direction; draw<br/>grieving<br/>asked her to let him in<br/>she wouldn't; Saint John<br/>yes; dear<br/>will do you neither<br/>expression<br/>saw; her demeanor<br/>fool<br/>neither good nor bad</i> |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   | Confort thi self, pluk up thin herte,<br>Swich mourning than wil thee smerte.<br>Of this mourning thou hast unright;<br>Thou scholdest lovye som gentil knight                                                                          | <i>is going to cause you pain<br/>You are wrong to mourn so<br/>love</i>                                                                          |
| 2635              | That that thee might do sum solas. <sup>82</sup><br>And sche saide: 'Allas! alas!<br>He was so smal and so gent,<br>I ne mai love non other, verraiment.'                                                                               | <i>slender; beautiful<br/>may love none other; truly</i>                                                                                          |
| fol. 99rb<br>2640 | Ne hadde he seten ther but a while<br>He thoughte men mighte don him gile. <sup>83</sup><br>He priked to the galewes with his fole<br>And fond that a thef was istole.<br>Tho was him wo, veraiment:<br>He scholde lese his avauncement | <i>rode; little horse<br/>had been stolen<br/>Then he was sorry<br/>well-being</i>                                                                |
| 2645              | But he mighte finde the thridde,<br>The thef that heng the twaie amide.<br>He thought that wimmen couthe red<br>To help men at her ned.<br>She ne was nowt fer, but somdel negh,<br>He telde hire the sorewe that he dreggh             | <i>Unless; third<br/>in the middle of the other two<br/>were good at giving advice<br/>their need<br/>far; somewhat near<br/>sorrow; suffered</i> |
| 2650              | And bisoughte hire of god conseiling<br>For that he was in gret mourning.<br>She saide: 'Sire, ich wille helpe thee,<br>So that thou wille spousi me.'                                                                                  | <i>asked her for good counsel<br/>Because</i>                                                                                                     |
| 2655              | 'Yis, dame,' he saide, 'precieuse.<br>Yif thou me helpe, ich wille thee spouse.'<br>She let here sorewe awai gon<br>And saide: 'Help, lemman, anon,<br>Help delf up mi lord that was,                                                   | <i>As long as; marry<br/>her sorrow<br/>sweetheart<br/>dig; former lord</i>                                                                       |
| 2660              | He schal us helpen in this cas,<br>And honge we him in his entaile.'<br>Here red was don, saunz faille.<br>Hit ne mai nowt ben forhole:<br>Thai baren him forth for him was stole. <sup>84</sup>                                        | <i>predicament<br/>imitation [of the missing thief]<br/>Her advice<br/>kept secret</i>                                                            |
| 2665              | Thanne saide the knight to the leuedi:<br>'Who mai this knight hongy?<br>I thee segge, bi hevene king,<br>I nolde him honge for no thing.<br>For yif ich hadde ihonged a knight,                                                        | <i>will; hang<br/>tell<br/>wouldn't<br/>had hanged</i>                                                                                            |

<sup>82</sup> So that that might give you some comfort

<sup>83</sup> Lines 2639–40: He had been sitting there but a short moment / When he feared that someone might try to play a trick on him

<sup>84</sup> They presented him as a replacement for the one who had been stolen

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                              |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2670      | I schol be coward icleped with right.<br>'Sire,' she saide, 'ich wil fol fawe<br>Heghe him honge and updrawe.'<br>The leuedi dede in wode gere<br>A rop aboute hire lordes swere,                                                 | <i>should; called rightly<br/>most gladly<br/>High; hoist up<br/>put frantically<br/>rope; her; neck</i>     |
| 2675      | And drow him up and heng him fast.<br>The knight of hire dedes was agast,<br>And saide: 'Dame, be gode mounde,<br>The stolen knight hadde a wonde<br>In his heued that was biknawe                                                | <i>hoisted; securely<br/>was astonished by her deeds<br/>by all the world<br/>wound<br/>head; recognized</i> |
| 2680      | Wharbi him knewe heghe and lowe.<br>And but thi louerd swich on have,<br>I thee sai, so God me save,                                                                                                                              | <i>high and low<br/>unless; one<br/>tell</i>                                                                 |
| fol. 99va | Sone withinne litel while<br>Worht iparceived oure gile.'                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>shortly<br/>Our guile will be perceived</i>                                                               |
| 2685      | 'Sire,' sche saide, 'tak thi swerd<br>And in the heued smit mi louerd.<br>Thanne schal hit ben non understanding<br>But it was he that er thar hing.' <sup>85</sup>                                                               | <i>sword<br/>head; strike</i>                                                                                |
| 2690      | 'Nai, dame, for moche ne lite,<br>The dede knight wolde I nowt smite.'<br>'No, sire,' sche saide, 'thi swerd me reche<br>And ich him schal, with min hond, teche<br>Hou Godes grame com to tounne<br>Right amideward his croune.' | <i>a lot or a little<br/>dead; strike<br/>give me<br/>show<br/>anger</i>                                     |
| 2695      | The leuedi tok and smot with mayn<br>Al amideward the brayn.<br>Thanne the knight wel understod<br>That fals and fikel was hire blod,<br>And saide: 'Yit unliche he beth.                                                         | <i>vigor<br/>Right in the middle of; skull</i>                                                               |
| 2700      | Broken were his fore teth.'<br>'Sire,' sche saide, 'smit hem out.'<br>'Nai, dame,' he saide, 'withouten dout.'<br>'Than wil ich,' she saide, and tok a ston<br>And smot hem out everichon.                                        | <i>Still he doesn't look like him<br/>front teeth<br/>strike them</i>                                        |
| 2705      | Whan this dede was ido<br>The leuedi saide the knight to:<br>'Sire, now ich have iwonne thi love.'<br>'Nai, dame,' he saide, 'bi God above,<br>For gold no silver, lond ne house,                                                 | <i>struck them all out<br/>deed; done</i>                                                                    |
| 2710      | Thi false bodi ne wolde I spouse.<br>For also woldestou serve me                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>won<br/>person; I would not marry<br/>in the same way would you</i>                                       |

<sup>85</sup> Lines 2687–88: *Then no one will think anything / Other than that it is he who formerly hung there*

|           |                                        |                                       |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|           | Hase thou hast don thi lounder so fre. | As                                    |
|           | Thou hast itawt me a newe ran          | <i>taught; tune</i>                   |
|           | That I schal never leve wimman.        | <i>So that; believe</i>               |
| 2715      | For there thai make semblant fairest,  | <i>when they seem fairest</i>         |
|           | Thai wil bigile thee altherformest.    | <i>best of all</i>                    |
|           | Sire, and on thee falle swich a strif  | <i>let such trouble befall you</i>    |
|           | Als dede the sscherreve of his wif     | As                                    |
|           | Yif thou for thin emperice wild        |                                       |
| 2720      | Wolle sle thin owen child.             |                                       |
|           | Ac, sire, abid til another morewe,     | <i>wait until tomorrow</i>            |
|           | On hire sschal falle alle the sorewe.  | <i>[and] On her</i>                   |
|           | And whanne thou herest thi sone speke, | <i>hear</i>                           |
|           | Rightfulliche thou him awreke.”        | <i>Rightfully avenge him</i>          |
| 2725      | Themperour saide: “So ich schal.”      |                                       |
|           | And thanne departed the curt al,       | <i>court</i>                          |
| fol. 99vb | Some to castel, and some to tour,      |                                       |
|           | Themperour wente to his bour.          | <i>quarters</i>                       |
|           | Themperice made semblant ille          | <i>looked angry</i>                   |
| 2730      | For sche ne hadde nowt hire wille.     |                                       |
|           | His owen men nathelas                  | <i>nevertheless</i>                   |
|           | Made wel god solas.                    | <i>Were rejoicing</i>                 |
|           | Themperour was browt abedde,           | <i>brought to bed</i>                 |
|           | With riche baudekines ispredde.        | <i>spread with rich cloths</i>        |
| 2735      | Themperice him com to,                 |                                       |
|           | Als sche was ar iwont to do:           | <i>used to do</i>                     |
|           | “Sire, hastou owt herd the geste       | <i>have you heard the tale at all</i> |
|           | Whi men made folen feste?”             | <i>[about] Why; a feast for fools</i> |
|           | “Nai, dame,” he saide, “gent and fre,  |                                       |
| 2740      | I thee prairie thanne telle hit me.”   |                                       |

[TALE 13: ROMA, ROME. THE EMPRESS]

|      |                                       |                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|      | “Sire,” she saide, “withouten dout,   |                                       |
|      | Whilom was Rome bilayn about,         | <i>besieged</i>                       |
|      | With seven soudans biset,             | <i>By; sultans; surrounded</i>        |
|      | Wal and gate and castelet,            | <i>turret</i>                         |
| 2745 | The honor of Rome for to abate,       | <i>diminish</i>                       |
|      | And for to strwe Seinte Petres sate,  | <i>destroy; Saint Peter’s see</i>     |
|      | That is to seie, Cristendom to felle, | <i>cast down</i>                      |
|      | And Cristen men to aquelle.           | <i>put to death</i>                   |
|      | The folk hem ful wel held,            | <i>acquitted themselves very well</i> |
| 2750 | Wise of speche, of dede beld.         | <i>bold of deed</i>                   |
|      | ‘To seven wise men toke we this toun, | <i>entrusted</i>                      |
|      | To kep hit fram destructioun.’        |                                       |

|          |                                          |                                         |
|----------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|          | Bi his rede hit was itake                | <i>this decree; entrusted</i>           |
|          | To seven wise men to biwake.             | <i>keep watch over</i>                  |
| 2755     | A moneth thai kept hit,                  | <i>month</i>                            |
|          | Ase we findeth in the writ.              | <i>records</i>                          |
|          | Whan hit com to the moneth ende,         | <i>month's</i>                          |
|          | Thai ne might hit no lenger defende,     |                                         |
|          | But ase thai dede a fair queintise —     | <i>Except by means of; trick</i>        |
| 2760     | Herkneth now in what wise!               | <i>way</i>                              |
|          | A man ther was, so seith the rime,       | <i>goes the tale</i>                    |
|          | That hit Gemes in that time.             | <i>was called</i>                       |
|          | He was on of the seven wise,             | <i>one</i>                              |
|          | Ther he dede a fair queintise.           |                                         |
| 2765     | He let him make a garnement,             | <i>had a garment made for himself</i>   |
|          | Ase blak ase ani arnement,               | <i>ink</i>                              |
|          | And heng theron squirrel tail,           | <i>hang; tails</i>                      |
|          | A thousand and mo, withouten fail.       |                                         |
|          | A viser yit he made more,                | <i>made moreover</i>                    |
| A2770    | Two faces bihinde and two bifore,        | <i>[with] Two faces; (see t-note)</i>   |
| fol. 43r | And two nosys in eyther halfe,           | <i>in both halves</i>                   |
| E2787    | More horrybeler thenne any calfe,        | <i>horrible; calf</i>                   |
|          | And the tonge also there on rede,        | <i>[painted] red</i>                    |
|          | As evyr was a brennynge lede.            | <i>burning lead</i>                     |
| E2790    | He sent to the soudans, samfayle,        | <i>sent [word]; without fail</i>        |
|          | He shulde be redy to byde batayle,       | <i>[that] He was ready to fight</i>     |
|          | And they answeyrd alle in haste          |                                         |
|          | They shulde ben redy leste and moste.    | <i>the least and the best</i>           |
|          | A morowe come thys Junyus                | <i>(see note)</i>                       |
| E2795    | And stode in a toure that het Crassus —  | <i>was called</i>                       |
|          | The hyst toure that was ovyr the walle — |                                         |
|          | That men myght see hym ovyr alle.        | <i>So that</i>                          |
|          | Than hadde he made a woundyr merroure    | <i>wonderful mirror</i>                 |
|          | And bare with hym into the toure,        | <i>carried [it] with him</i>            |
| E2800    | And uppon hys hede dede that vysoure,    | <i>put; mask</i>                        |
|          | And lokyd apon the merroure clere,       | <i>looked into</i>                      |
|          | And two swerdys he ganne owte brayde,    | <i>swords; draw</i>                     |
|          | And skyrmyde faste and on layde,         | <i>fenced; attacked</i>                 |
|          | And made more noyse and boste            |                                         |
| E2805    | Thenne wolde a kyng and hys hoste.       | <i>army</i>                             |
| fol. 43v | The Saresonys behelde hyt,               | <i>Saracens (see note)</i>              |
|          | They were ny woode and owte of wyt.      | <i>almost went mad; lost their wits</i> |
|          | The myrrowre grete noyse made,           |                                         |
|          | That alle they were in grete drade.      | <i>So that; dread</i>                   |
| E2810    | The gatys of Rome were uppe caste        | <i>thrown up</i>                        |
|          | And they went owte faste,                |                                         |

|          |                                              |                                    |
|----------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|          | And emperoure and hys men                    | [the] emperor                      |
|          | Slayne of them by nine or ten,               | Killed them in nines and tens      |
|          | And thys Junyus in his wyse,                 | manner                             |
| E2815    | Savyde Rome with hys quentyse.               | trick                              |
|          | In a monythe that comythe in the yere,       | month; year                        |
|          | That men calle hit Janyuer,                  | January                            |
|          | The fyrste day thereof, iwys,                |                                    |
|          | Junyus wrotte that ylke prys.                | wrought; same achievement          |
| E2820    | And thus shulle the seven wyse               | shall                              |
|          | Dyssayve thee thorowe hyr quentyse.          | Deceive; through; their cleverness |
|          | Ye shalle be fayne, or ye sterve,            | glad; die                          |
|          | Oppon youre kneys them to serve,             | knees                              |
|          | For in ham certeys ys alle youre tryste,     | them; certainly; trust             |
| E2825    | Ye wene eche of hem be as Cryste."           | believe; like Christ               |
|          | Whenne the emperoure hyrde hir speke         | heard                              |
|          | "Dame," he sayde, "wylle ben awreke."        | [you] will be avenged              |
|          | And sayde hys sone shulde be slawe,          | slain                              |
|          | And hys maysters ihange an drawe.            | hanged and drawn                   |
| E2830    | Anon commaundyd hym forthe brynge            |                                    |
|          | And sle hym withowte lettyng.                | delay                              |
|          | And they lad hym thorowe the toune,          | As they led                        |
|          | There come hys mayster Maxencyon             |                                    |
|          | And say that chylde to dethe warde.          | saw; on the way to his death       |
| E2835    | He gretyd the emperoure with wordys harde:   | greeted                            |
|          | "Syr," he sayde, "withowtyn fabyll,          | fable                              |
|          | Youre herte ys nothyng sadde ne stabylle.    | sober; steady                      |
|          | Nowe thou wylte thy sone slene               | desire; to slay                    |
|          | And othyr whyle hym drawe and fleen,         | flay                               |
| E2840    | Anothyr whyle thou wylt hym save:            | At other times                     |
|          | Thys ys the maner alle of a knave.           | rogue                              |
|          | And yf he mote tyl tomorowe lyfe,            | Provided he may                    |
| fol. 44r | For alle thys worlde thou noldyste hym gyfe. | you would not relinquish him       |
|          | Ye beleve too moche youre wyfes tale,        | tales                              |
| E2845    | That bryngythe you in moche bale,            | trouble                            |
|          | And yf thou done aftyr hyr rede,             | do according to her advice         |
|          | Thy fayr sone moste be dede.                 | must be dead                       |
|          | Ryght so mot hit fare by thee                | may it fare                        |
|          | As fylle by an erle of farre contré."        | befell; far-away                   |
| E2850    | "Nowe, mayster," quothe the emperoure,       |                                    |
|          | "Telle me that tale for thy honoure."        |                                    |
|          | "Yes," quothe the mayster, "welle fayne.     | most gladly                        |
|          | Thenne save thy sone certayne,               |                                    |
|          | And tylle tomorowe gyf hym respyte:          |                                    |
| E2855    | Thenne wylle he hym selfe aquyte.            | acquit himself                     |

|       |                                         |                                       |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|       | Thanne shalt thou the sothe isee,       | <i>see</i>                            |
|       | Ho hathe the wronge, thy wyf or he,     | <i>Who</i>                            |
|       | For tomorowe he shalle speke            |                                       |
|       | And ryght fully thanne be awreke."      | <i>avenged</i>                        |
| E2860 | "I graunt welle," quothe the emperoure, |                                       |
|       | "By Jhesu Cryste oure savyoure.         |                                       |
|       | And whether of whom hathe the wronge,   | <i>whoever of them</i>                |
|       | He shalle in dethe dy stronge.          | <i>die a terrible death</i>           |
|       | Nowe, mayster, bothe curteys and fre,   | <i>courteous; gracious</i>            |
| E2865 | Of that erlle thou telle me."           |                                       |
|       | Nowe thynkythe the mayster for certayne | <i>plans</i>                          |
|       | To quyt the emperice tale agayne.       | <i>repay the empress for her tale</i> |
|       | And hys ensampylle fayre he spake,      | <i>exemplum; fairly</i>               |
|       | And put the blame apon hyr backe.       | <i>upon her</i>                       |

[TALE 14: *INCLUSA*, THE RECLUSE. SEVENTH SAGE, MAXENCYON]

|          |                                              |                               |
|----------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| E2870    | "Sir," he sayde, "I wylle not lye,           | <i>lie</i>                    |
|          | In the Kyngdome of Houngerye                 | <i>Hungary</i>                |
|          | There was a woundyr doughty knyght,          | <i>wonderfully</i>            |
|          | And dremyde a dreme uppon a nyght            | <i>[he] dreamed</i>           |
|          | That he lovyd a lady fre                     | <i>gracious</i>               |
| E2875    | But he ne wyste in what contré.              | <i>didn't know</i>            |
|          | But welle he wyste yf he myght               | <i>knew</i>                   |
|          | Uppon hyr have any syght                     | <i>Catch a glimpse of her</i> |
|          | Of hyr he shulde have knowynge               | <i>recognize</i>              |
| fol. 44v | And that thorowe hys nyghtys dremynge.       | <i>thanks to</i>              |
| E2880    | And ryght so, syr, that lady free,           | <i>In just the same way</i>   |
|          | Suche a dremyng dremyde she                  | <i>dream</i>                  |
|          | That a knyght she had in honde,              |                               |
|          | But she ne wyste in what londe               | <i>didn't know</i>            |
|          | Ne in what contré was hys dwellynge;         |                               |
| E2885    | For hym she made grete mornynge.             | <i>mourning</i>               |
|          | The knyght wente withowtyn lette             | <i>delay</i>                  |
|          | To seche the lady that he ofmette.           | <i>look for; dreamt of</i>    |
|          | He ne wyste where to fynde that lady schene, | <i>didn't know; beautiful</i> |
|          | Therefore the more was alle hys tene.        | <i>increased; pain</i>        |
| E2890    | Hys waye he rode monythys thre,              | <i>for three months</i>       |
|          | No tydyng yet of hyr hyrde he.               | <i>heard</i>                  |
|          | So far hathe the knyghte hys way inome,      | <i>taken</i>                  |
|          | That into Poyle he ys icome.                 | <i>Apulia</i>                 |
|          | There besyde a castelle he fonde             | <i>met</i>                    |
| E2895    | An erle hit was, I undyrstonde.              | <i>It belonged to an earl</i> |
|          | The erle hathe a gentyl wyfe                 |                               |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                       |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | That he lovyd as hys lyfe,<br>And for gelous he lette hyr be sett<br>In a toure welle faste ishytte.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>Out of jealousy; had; put<br/>tightly shut</i>                                     |
| E2900    | She come not owt day ne nyght<br>To play hyr with swayne ne knyght.<br>Anothyr erle agayn hym tho<br>Warred and dyd hym moche woo,<br>And thoughte to dystrye alle hys londe,<br>And thought to halde hit in hys honde.<br>And soo there come rydyng thys knyght<br>That had sought the lady bryghte.<br>He lokyd uppe into the toure<br>And say that lady as whyte as flowre, | <i>squire<br/>then<br/>Was waging war<br/>destroy</i>                                 |
| E2905    | And anon as he hyr say<br>He began to syng and make play,<br>And whenne she hyrde hym syng there,<br>Unnethe she myght forbere<br>That she ne hadde callyd hym thore.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>saw<br/>As soon as; saw<br/>make music<br/>heard</i>                               |
| fol. 45r | In hyr herte she began to seke sore:<br>Sho wolde have callyd hym anon,<br>But for hyr lorde she dryst not don,<br>That sate bynethe sykerly<br>Undyr the toure to make hym mery.                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>She could scarcely refrain<br/>From calling out to him then<br/>sigh in agony</i>  |
| E2916    | The knyght come forthe withowtyn lette,<br>The erle in kneys he grette,<br>And sayde: 'Syr, I am a knyght<br>That in many contreys I was holde wyght.<br>But there I dar not com nowe                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>She would<br/>on account of; didn't dare<br/>[her lord] Who<br/>making merry</i>   |
| E2920    | For a knyghte that I there slowe,<br>And, syr, yf thy wylle be,<br>Here I wylle abyde with thee.'<br>'Welcome,' sayde the erle tho,<br>'I have nede of thee and of mo,<br>For many enemys I have withowte<br>That dystryethe my londe aboute.'                                                                                                                                 | <i>stepped forward; delay<br/>on his knees; greeted<br/>held to be brave<br/>dare</i> |
| E2925    | So that with the erle dwellyd that knyght<br>And wan hys londe ayenne in fyght,<br>And slayne hys enemys in fyghtyng.<br>The erle lovyd hym ovyr alle thyng<br>And toke hym hys goodys into hys hande,<br>And made hym stywarde ovyr alle hys lande.<br>So oppon a day with moche honoure<br>The knyghte come playnge by the toure                                             | <i>On account of; slew<br/>if you so wish<br/>stay<br/>then<br/>more</i>              |
| E2930    | That the lady was yn idone.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>are destroying</i>                                                                 |
| E2935    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>won back his land; battle<br/>slew</i>                                             |
| E2940    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>entrusted<br/>steward<br/>splendor<br/>was amusing himself<br/>had been put in</i> |

|          |                                                     |                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|          | Sho lokyd owte and saye hym sone                    | <i>saw</i>                        |
|          | And toke a letter iwretyn fulle ryghte,             | <i>written very properly</i>      |
|          | And caste hit downe before the knyght.              |                                   |
|          | The knyght toke the letter anon                     |                                   |
| E2945    | And undyde hit and lokyd there on.                  |                                   |
|          | He hadde wonderer whoo hit threwe                   | <i>wondered who had thrown it</i> |
|          | But thereby the lady he knewe,                      |                                   |
|          | And that he shulde with hyr play                    |                                   |
|          | For any thyng that any man couthe say.              |                                   |
| fol. 45v | The knyght thoughte hym fulle stylle                | <i>to himself quietly</i>         |
| E2951    | Howe he myght have hyr at wylle,                    | <i>as he wished</i>               |
|          | And to the erle he went fulle evenne,               | <i>directly</i>                   |
|          | And prayde hym to gyf hym levenne                   | <i>leave</i>                      |
|          | To make a chambyr byfore the toure                  |                                   |
| E2955    | ‘That may ben for my honoure.’                      |                                   |
|          | The erle thoughte non evyl thon                     | <i>suspected nothing then</i>     |
|          | And grauntyd the knyght to done son.                |                                   |
|          | The knyght toke workemen anon                       |                                   |
|          | And made a chambyr of lyme and ston.                | <i>stone masonry</i>              |
| E2960    | Thenne thought he uppon sum quent gynne,            | <i>clever trick</i>               |
|          | Howe he myght to that lady wynne.                   |                                   |
|          | Thenne was there a mason fre,                       |                                   |
|          | The slyeste man that myght be.                      | <i>sliest</i>                     |
|          | The knyght aftyr the mason sent                     |                                   |
| E2965    | And sayde to hym al hys entent:                     | <i>plan</i>                       |
|          | ‘May I telle thee of my prevyté?’                   | <i>secret</i>                     |
|          | ‘Ye, syr,’ sayde the mason fre,                     |                                   |
|          | ‘Boldely, syr, your wylle ysayne                    | <i>say what you wish</i>          |
|          | And I shalle you nevyr bewreyne.’                   | <i>betray</i>                     |
| E2970    | The knyght sayde: ‘Sythe hit ys so,                 | <i>Since</i>                      |
|          | I wylle thee telle what thou moste doo.             | <i>must</i>                       |
|          | For in thys toure there ys a lady                   |                                   |
|          | That I have lovyd fulle hertely,                    |                                   |
|          | And in that toure thou moste make                   |                                   |
| E2975    | An hoole for that ladys sake,                       | <i>hole</i>                       |
|          | That I may loude and stylle                         | <i>So that; whenever I want</i>   |
|          | Gon to hyr and doo my wylle.’                       | <i>Go</i>                         |
|          | The mason sayde hit shulde ben done                 |                                   |
|          | And a prevy hoole he made sone.                     | <i>secret hole</i>                |
| E2980    | Whenne he hadde done hys quentyse,                  | <i>executed his trick</i>         |
|          | Fulle evylle he quyttyde hys servyse. <sup>86</sup> |                                   |
|          | The knyght hym slowe there, certayne,               | <i>slew</i>                       |

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<sup>86</sup> He (the knight) rewarded his (the mason’s) service most evilly

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                         |
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|          | For he schulde hym not bewrayne.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>So; betray</i>                                                                       |
| E2985    | And whenne he hadde don so sykerly<br>He went uppe to that fayre lady.                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                         |
| fol. 46r | Whenne sche hym sawe she made blys<br>And kyste many sythys, iwys,<br>And wyste that hit was that gentyl knyght<br>Of whom hyr dremyng was anyght.                                                                                               | <i>made merry<br/>kissed; times<br/>at night</i>                                        |
| E2990    | ‘Syr,’ she sayde, ‘welcome ye be,’<br>And so tyl hyr answeyde he,<br>And sayde: ‘Lemman lady,<br>God thee save allemyghty.’<br>He toke hyr in hys armys two                                                                                      | <i>to<br/>Lady lover<br/>God almighty save you</i>                                      |
| E2995    | And dyd with hyr that he wolde do.<br>Whenne he hadde done hys lykyng<br>The lady toke hym hyr golde rynge<br>For he schulde thyngke hyr uppon.<br>He toke hys leve and went anon                                                                | <i>had his pleasure<br/>gave him<br/>So that; think<br/>leave</i>                       |
| E3000    | And wente as he cam certayne,<br>And stoppyd the hole faste agayne,<br>And to hys lorde he went yare,<br>Ryght as no thyng amys were.<br>Thenne wasche they and went to mete                                                                     | <i>stopped up; securely<br/>quickly<br/>Completely as if; amiss<br/>washed; dinner</i>  |
| E3005    | And as they togedyr sete<br>The erle sawe hys golde rynge there<br>And hadde grete wondyr howe hit were,<br>For the erle hadde for grete love<br>That golde ryng to hys wyf yove.                                                                | <i>sat<br/>should be</i>                                                                |
| E3010    | The erle was curteys and welle ithaught<br>And to the knyght sayde ryght naught.<br>But whenne the erle hadde etyn anon,<br>Towarde hys towre he gan gone<br>To wyt where the ryng was.                                                          | <i>given<br/>courteous; behaved<br/>nothing</i>                                         |
| E3015    | The knyght was ware of that cas<br>And wente thedyr byfore certayne<br>And toke the lady the rynge agayne.<br>The erle com to hyr wel yare<br>And axyde of hyr howe she dyd fare.                                                                | <i>find out<br/>aware; business<br/>got there before<br/>gave<br/>quickly<br/>asked</i> |
| E3020    | The lady answeyrd hyr lorde thenne:<br>‘Ishytt I am fro alle men,<br>Comforte of man have I no dele.<br>Howe shalle I thanne fare wele?’<br>‘Lemman,’ sayde the erle tho,<br>‘Wher haste thou my golde ryng do?’<br>Tho answeyde that lady sone: | <i>Shut away; from<br/>in no part<br/> Lover; then<br/>put<br/>Then</i>                 |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                          |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | 'What have ye there with to done?<br>Hyt ys not away, I say, trewly,<br>Lo, here hit ys alrede.'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>What do you want with it<br/>It hasn't gone anywhere<br/>Look</i>                                     |
| E3030    | And shewyde hym the ryng samfayle,<br>The erle hadde thereof grete mervayle,<br>For lyke hit was that golde ryng<br>That the knyght hathe, withowte lesynge.<br>The erle dwellyd wythe hyr al nyghte                                                                                                                                                      | <i>[she] showed; without fail<br/>marveled greatly at it<br/>without lying (assuredly)</i>               |
| E3035    | For joye of the rynges syght,<br>And for alle that, withowtyn lye,<br>Blereyd were bothe hys yee. <sup>87</sup><br>A morowe he ros fulle erly<br>And lefte a bedde that fayre lady.                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>On account of<br/>lie<br/>in bed</i>                                                                  |
| E3040    | He sent aftyr that knyght preste<br>To hunt with hym in the foreste.<br>'Nay, certeyns,' sayde the knyghte tho,<br>'I may not nowe with you go,<br>For me ys brought a newe thyng,<br>That ys goode to my lykyng,<br>For my frendys have won my pes<br>In my contray, withowtyn les —<br>Al with ryght and not with woo —<br>For a knyght that I dyd slo. | <i>immediately<br/>then<br/>piece of news<br/>peace (i.e., forgiveness)<br/>lying<br/>wrong<br/>slay</i> |
| E3045    | Myne owne lemman hathe me sought<br>And tydyng therof to me ibrought.<br>Therefor, syr, tomorowe at mete<br>I pray you, syr, with me to ete<br>And comferte hyr as can ye.'                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>sought me out<br/>dinner<br/>entertain</i>                                                            |
| E3055    | 'Gladdely,' quothe the erle so fre,<br>'I wylle hyr chere and eke solas,<br>Al that I may er that sho pas,<br>And to thy lemman thys same day<br>I come to solas hyr that I may.' <sup>88</sup>                                                                                                                                                           | <i>entertain; amuse<br/>before she goes on</i>                                                           |
| fol. 47r |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                          |
| E3060    | And whenne thee lykythe, sende aftyr me:<br>Anon I wol come to thee.<br>And whyle the erle in the woode was<br>For to hunt and have solas,<br>The knyght hys owne howse gan dyght<br>With ryche clothys imade aryght,<br>And aftyr that he gan to gon<br>To that lady hym sylfe alone,                                                                    | <i>whenever you want<br/>enjoy himself<br/>prepare<br/>well made</i>                                     |

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<sup>87</sup> Both his eyes were bleared (i.e., he was fooled)

<sup>88</sup> I will come to amuse her in whatever way I can

|                   |                                           |                                 |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| E3070             | And brought hyr into hys hous             |                                 |
|                   | As thoughe hit were hys owne spouse,      | she                             |
|                   | And made hyr done off hyr robe anon       | take off                        |
|                   | That she had tho hyr uppon,               | then                            |
|                   | And dyd on a robe of countray —           | put on a dress from his country |
| E3075             | Suche another they nevyr say,             | saw                             |
|                   | There was no man farre ne ny              | far or near                     |
|                   | That evyr aftyr that robe sey —           | saw                             |
|                   | And hyr fyngers he dyd uppon              | Upon her fingers he put         |
|                   | Ryche golde ryngys ful many on.           |                                 |
| E3080             | Hyr hede he dyght fulle gaylyche          | head; decked out handsomely     |
|                   | With kerchyffes and with garlondys ryche. | veils; garlands                 |
|                   | At shorte wordys, withowtyn mo,           | Briefly                         |
|                   | The knyght dygysyd hyr so                 | disguised                       |
|                   | That hyr lorde ne non othyr wyght         | nor any other person            |
| E3085             | Ne shulde knowe hyr aryght.               | recognize her properly          |
|                   | Sone aftyr thys fro huntynge come         | from                            |
|                   | The erle and hys mayny home.              | retinue [back] home             |
|                   | The knyght hadde alle redy dyght          | made everything ready           |
|                   | Mete and drynke inowe, iplyght.           | Food; enough                    |
| E3090             | He fet the erle to hys hous thanne        | fetched                         |
|                   | And made hym wasche with hys lemman,      | lover                           |
|                   | And aftyrwarde togedyr hem set,           | sat them together               |
|                   | And made hys owne wyf hys met.            | table companion                 |
|                   | The erle hyr comfortyd and welle wende he | he thought                      |
| fol. 47v<br>E3096 | Hyt hadde ben a lady of farre contré,     | from a far away country         |
|                   | And alle the whyle that he by hyr was,    |                                 |
|                   | Ofte he lokyd in hyr face,                |                                 |
|                   | And moche woundyr evyr hadde he           |                                 |
|                   | What fayre lady hyt myght be,             |                                 |
| E3100             | For she was moche lyke hys wyf            |                                 |
|                   | That he lovyd as hys owne lyf.            |                                 |
|                   | And that lady nevyrthelas                 | nevertheless                    |
|                   | Made the erle grete solas,                | Entertained well                |
|                   | And bade hym ete and be glad,             |                                 |
| E3105             | And evyr he sat as he were mad,           | like a madman                   |
|                   | And thoughte hys toure was so stronge     |                                 |
|                   | That no man myght done hym wronge,        | do                              |
|                   | Ne come to hys wyf at morne ne eve        | Nor come; morning or evening    |
|                   | Withowte hys love and hys leve,           | permission                      |
| E3110             | And thought in herte fulle prevylyche     | secretly                        |
|                   | That meny woman ys othyr lyche,           | many women are like each other  |
|                   | Al as was thys golde ryng so fre          | Just like the gold ring         |
|                   | That he had iwent that hys hit had be:    | thought was his                 |

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                   |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | Amasyd he was of hys lady yonge                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>Amazed; by</i>                                                 |
|          | As he was of that golde ryng.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <i>by</i>                                                         |
| E3115    | The knyght comfortyd the erle so fre<br>And bade hym ete and mery be.<br>Thenne sayde the erle: 'Knyght, for thy curtesy,<br>Of whennys ys thys fayre lady?'<br>Thenne sayde the knyght with wordys fre:<br>'Hyt ys a lady of my contré. | <i>i.e., if I may be so bold<br/>From where<br/>She</i>           |
| E3120    | She ys my lemman, withowte lesynge,<br>She hathe me brought good tydynge<br>And that I may wende hyr whythe<br>Into my contray in pes and grethe.                                                                                        | <i>assuredly<br/>And [tells] that; return with her<br/>safety</i> |
| E3125    | Therefore, syr, I wyl home gone<br>To vysyte my frendys everychon.'<br>Whenne they hadde etyn and made them glad,<br>The erle in thought semyd mad<br>Tylle that he in hys towre were                                                    | <i>all my friends<br/>tower</i>                                   |
| fol. 48r | To speke with that lady dere,                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                   |
| E3131    | For lyke sho was that lady<br>That sate hym by.<br>Anon as the erle was iwent                                                                                                                                                            | <i>she<br/>As soon as; had gone</i>                               |
|          | The knyght toke the lady gent<br>And dyd on hir robe agayne                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>put on</i>                                                     |
| E3135    | And lad hyr into the toure certayne.<br>Unnethe the knyght was agon,<br>That the erle cam in anon,<br>And there he founde hys lady<br>In hyr chambyr alle redy.                                                                          | <i>led<br/>Scarcely had the knight gone<br/>When</i>              |
| E3140    | Certes, thenne was he gladde<br>And sone aftyr he was alle madde,<br>For lyke hyr was that lady<br>That at the mete sate hym by.<br>With hys wyfe he was al nyght                                                                        | <i>completely dumbfounded</i>                                     |
| E3145    | And dyde unto hyr as was ryght.<br>So dyde he aftyr nevyr mo<br>And sone aftyr hit fyller so:<br>The knyght hyrede hym a shype yare<br>And shypmen that were thare,                                                                      | <i>befell<br/>hired; quickly</i>                                  |
| E3150    | And lete hys armure thereyn bere,<br>Al hys harnysse and hys gere.<br>A morne ros the erle fro that lady swete,<br>And allone in bedde hyr lete,<br>And to chyrche he gan fare                                                           | <i>had his armor carried into it<br/>harnesses; gear<br/>left</i> |
| E3155    | For to hyre hys masse there.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>went<br/>In order to hear</i>                                  |

|          |                                              |                            |
|----------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|          | And sone aftyr that anon                     |                            |
|          | The knyght into the toure gan gon            | went                       |
|          | And brought the lady adowne fulle sone       |                            |
|          | Into hys hous as he was wone,                | as was his habit           |
| E3160    | And appareyld hyr fayre iwys                 | dressed; beautifully       |
|          | With clothys aftyr hyr devyse,               | according to her desire    |
|          | And went anon unto hys lorde,                |                            |
|          | And bade hym with mylde worde,               | meek words                 |
|          | And bade hym by hys leve                     | permission                 |
| fol. 48v | To hefe hys lemman to ben wyve.              | have; as his wife          |
| E3166    | Syr, that same fayre lady                    |                            |
|          | That at the mete sat hym by                  | meal                       |
|          | He was in wylle to wedde hyr thanne          | He wanted to wed           |
|          | That longe had ben hys lemman.               |                            |
| E3170    | 'Certeys,' quothe the erle, 'hit ys my wylle | wish                       |
|          | Alle that you ax to fullefylle.'             | ask; fulfill               |
|          | And aftyr that anon-ryghtys                  |                            |
|          | Aftyr hyr went two gentylle knyghtys         |                            |
|          | And fette that lady to chyrche sone,         | fetched                    |
| E3175    | As he was wonnte to done.                    | used to do                 |
|          | The erle toke the lady blyf                  | gladly                     |
|          | And gaf the knyght to hys wyf.               | gave; as his wife          |
|          | The preste was there alle redy               | priest                     |
|          | And spousyd the knyght and the lady.         |                            |
| E3180    | And whenne the mas was idone,                | mass                       |
|          | The knyght name the lady anone               | took                       |
|          | And lad hyr with grete solas                 | merry-making               |
|          | To havyn there the shyppe was.               | port                       |
|          | Anon as they come thare,                     | As soon as                 |
| E3185    | They fonde the shyppe al yare.               | ready                      |
|          | The erle anon toke by the honde              |                            |
|          | Hys wyf that stode uppon the stronde,        | shore                      |
|          | And bade the knyghte shulde hyr take         |                            |
|          | Forto ben hys worldely make.                 | worldly mate               |
| E3190    | The knyght of the erle toke the lady         | from                       |
|          | And sayde: 'My lorde, graunt mercy.'         | many thanks                |
|          | The maryner hys shyppe gan loke              | master of the ship; secure |
|          | And at the erle there leve they toke,        | from; their leave          |
|          | And sayld forthe in hyr way.                 | on their way               |
| E3195    | The erle hys wyf laste ther say,             | for the last time; saw     |
|          | And worthy he ys to lesse hys play           | joy                        |
|          | That fro hym gevythe hyt away,               | gives                      |
| fol. 49r | As the erle gaf hys wyf;                     | gave                       |
|          | Therefore he lad in sorowe hys lyf.          | led                        |

THE MIDDLE ENGLISH SEVEN SAGES OF ROME

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|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                           |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E3200    | Whanne the knyght was thys gon,<br>The erle wente home anon<br>And went into hys toure fulle ryght<br>Forto sene hys lady bryght,<br>And whenne he was in the toure an hy,                        | <i>thus</i><br><br><i>directly</i><br><i>see</i><br><i>high up</i>                        |
| E3205    | Al aboute he caste hys ye,<br>And whanne he sawe not hys lady,<br>He made sorowe inowe certaynely.<br>He began to make reuly mon,<br>For sorowe he ne wyste what to done.                         | <i>cast his eyes</i><br><br><i>enough</i><br><i>terrible moan</i><br><i>didn't know</i>   |
| E3210    | To be ware too late he beganne,<br>Therefore hym scornyd meny a man.”<br>Tho sayde the mayster that tolde thys:<br>“Syr emperoure,” quothe he iwys,<br>“For ye farythe as dyd he:                 | <i>vigilant</i><br><br><br><i>Then</i>                                                    |
| E3215    | Whenne thy wyfe spekythe to thee,<br>Ye levythe hyr bothe day and nyght,<br>Yee, more thenne youre owne syght.<br>And I telle in goode fay,<br>Ye shalle knowe tomorowe day                       | <i>you do</i><br><i>speaks</i><br><i>believe her</i><br><i>Yes indeed</i><br><i>faith</i> |
| E3220    | Ho ys gylty in thys stryffe,<br>Thy sone othyr thy owne wyf.”<br>“That lykethe me,” quothe the emperoure,<br>“By Godde that ys my savyoure,<br>And whenne I wote hoo hathe the wronge             | <i>Who; disagreement</i><br><i>or</i><br><i>pleases me</i>                                |
| E3225    | He shalle dy in dethe fulle stronge.<br>If he shalle speke than am I fayne,<br>Thys day shalle not my sone be slayne,”<br>“And tomorowe, syr, he shalle telle<br>Why thy wyffe wolde hym quelle.” | <i>know who</i><br><i>a terrible death</i><br><i>glad</i>                                 |
| E3230    | “That wolde I see,” quothe the emperoure,<br>“Levyr then al the worldys tresoure.”                                                                                                                | <i>kill</i>                                                                               |
| fol. 49v | The day passyd, the nyght came,<br>And every man hys wey name,<br>The emperice made sorowe and wo                                                                                                 | <i>More dearly</i><br><br><i>took his way</i>                                             |
| E3235    | For the chylde shulde speke so.                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                           |

[DAY 8]

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| E3240 | Amorowe aros the emperoure<br>And went to chyrche with honour,<br>And went to chyrche to hire masse<br>With hys lordys bothe more and lesse.<br>Alle the lordys of that contré, | <i>in splendor</i><br><i>hear</i><br><i>greater and lesser</i> |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|

|          |                                                   |                                     |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|          | Of lordys and ladys grete plenté,                 | <i>plenty</i>                       |
|          | Come to chyrche that same day                     |                                     |
|          | To hyre what the chylde wolde saye.               | <i>hear</i>                         |
|          | Alle that myght thedyr areche                     | <i>reach there</i>                  |
| E3245    | Come to hyre the chyllys speche.                  | <i>hear</i>                         |
|          | And hys maysters everychon                        | <i>each one</i>                     |
|          | Come thedyr alle at one,                          | <i>there; together</i>              |
|          | And aftyr the emperoure ys masse                  | <i>emperor's mass</i>               |
|          | The chylde was dyght with grete rychesse          | <i>dressed</i>                      |
| E3250    | And two of the maysters yare                      | <i>quickly</i>                      |
|          | Fette forthe the chylde there,                    | <i>Fetchd; then</i>                 |
|          | And was set alle in a fayre plas                  | <i>[he] was set; place</i>          |
|          | Ryght before the fadyrs face.                     |                                     |
|          | He prayde to God whythe good wylle                |                                     |
| E3255    | That the pepylle moste ben styлле.                | <i>might be still</i>               |
|          | Thenne stode the chylde uppe anon                 |                                     |
|          | Byfore hem everychon                              | <i>them all</i>                     |
|          | And sayde to hys fadyr fulle reuly:               | <i>piteously</i>                    |
|          | "For Goddys love, syr, marcy.                     | <i>mercy</i>                        |
| E3260    | Syr, thou myght wete, yf thou wylte,              | <i>may know; wish</i>               |
|          | With wronge ye wolde have me spylte.              | <i>would have killed me</i>         |
|          | I shalle you telle withowtyn lacke                | <i>truly</i>                        |
|          | Why that I noo rather spake:                      | <i>sooner</i>                       |
|          | For I and my maysters alle                        |                                     |
| E3265    | Sawe in the mone what shulde falle                | <i>moon; befall</i>                 |
| fol. 50r | And yf I hadde erste ispoke.                      | <i>if; sooner</i>                   |
|          | In grete sorowe I hadde ben loke,                 | <i>caught</i>                       |
|          | And my masters everychon                          | <i>all</i>                          |
|          | For me to dethe shulde have ben don.              | <i>would have been put to death</i> |
| E3270    | But, syr, woundyr I have of thee                  | <i>I am surprised by you</i>        |
|          | That thou woldyst serve soo me                    | <i>wanted to treat me similarly</i> |
|          | As dyde a man of wyckyde blode                    | <i>wicked blood</i>                 |
|          | That caste hys sone into the salte flode          | <i>salty sea</i>                    |
|          | For that he sayde that he shulde be               | <i>Because</i>                      |
| E3275    | A ryccher man than evyr was he."                  | <i>ever he was</i>                  |
|          | The emperoure sayde: "My sone so dyre,            | <i>dear</i>                         |
|          | Nowe wolde I thys tale hyre,                      | <i>hear</i>                         |
|          | And thy tale telle me anon                        |                                     |
|          | As alle the maysters have don.                    |                                     |
| E3280    | Eche hathe tolde hys tale for thee,               |                                     |
|          | For thou shuldyste isavyd be."                    | <i>So that you should be saved</i>  |
|          | "Certeys," quothe the chylde, "I shalle fullefyll | <i>comply</i>                       |
|          | And telle my tale at youre wylle.                 | <i>as you wish</i>                  |

[TALE 15: VATICINIUM, THE PROPHECY. THE PRINCE]

|          |                                          |                              |
|----------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| E3285    | Sir, sum tyme in Rome cytté              | once                         |
|          | Was a man of grete posté                 | [there] Was; power           |
|          | That hadde a sone wyse and bolde,        |                              |
|          | Of fiffen wynter he was olde.            |                              |
| E3290    | And apon a day hys fadyr and he          |                              |
|          | Saylyd togedyr in the see;               | Were sailing; sea            |
|          | Towarde an yle they wolde wynde          | island; go                   |
|          | And ryght uppon hyr shippys ende         | their                        |
| E3295    | Lyght two ravenys and made a crye.       | Alighted; ravens             |
|          | The goode man hadde wondyr sykerly.      | was amazed                   |
|          | Thenne sayde the fadyr to the sone:      |                              |
|          | ‘What may be thys moche mone,            | racket                       |
| E3300    | That thys ravenys dothe thys crye?       | these ravens; thus           |
|          | I ne wot what hyt may sygnyfye.’         | don’t know                   |
|          | ‘No fadyr,’ sayde the chylde, iwys,      |                              |
|          | ‘I wotte what hyr cryynge ys.            | know                         |
| fol. 50v | For they say thus in hyr stevyn          | language                     |
|          | That thoroughe the myght of God of hevyn | through                      |
|          | I shalle so ryche a man be,              | such a rich man              |
|          | That with youre yeen ye shalle se.       | eyes                         |
| E3305    | The whylys my hondys waschyn bene,       | While may hands are washed   |
|          | Ye shalle be fayne to holde the bason,   | glad; basin                  |
|          | And my modyr, withowtyn fayle,           |                              |
|          | Shalle serve me of the towele.’          | hand me the towel            |
| E3310    | For thes wordys the fadyr was wrothe     | angry                        |
|          | And hys sone was hym lothe.              | hateful to him               |
|          | ‘Sone,’ he sayde, ‘what? Shalte thou     | how                          |
|          | Be ryccher man then I am now?            |                              |
| E3315    | Nay, certys, that shalle not be,’        |                              |
|          | And caste hys sone into the see.         |                              |
|          | Whenne the chylde was in the see flode,  | sea                          |
|          | He cryde to God with mylde mode.         | humble heart                 |
| E3320    | God hyrde that chylde and gaf hym grace, | heard; gave                  |
|          | He come to londe in a fayre place,       |                              |
|          | Uppon a fayre roche of stone.            |                              |
|          | Four dayes mete ete he non,              | food; ate                    |
| E3325    | Mete ne drynke ne othyr thyng,           |                              |
|          | But foullys he hyrde mery synge.         | birds; heard singing merrily |
|          | The foullys sayde in hir songe:          |                              |
|          | ‘Chylde, thynke thee not too longe,      | do not wonder                |
| E3325    | But Jhesu Cryste hathe hyrde the bone    | Because; heard your prayer   |
|          | And wolle thee helpe fulle welle sone.’  |                              |

|          |                                             |                                  |
|----------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|          | Sone aftyr by that place so wylde           |                                  |
|          | Came a fyscher and saw the chylde,          | <i>fisherman</i>                 |
|          | And saye the chylde, God hit wote.          | <i>saw; knows</i>                |
|          | Anon he toke hym into hys bote              | <i>boat</i>                      |
| E3330    | And ledde hym thens thirty myle             | <i>thirty miles from there</i>   |
|          | Unto a castelle, a welle stronge pyle,      | <i>fortress</i>                  |
|          | And solde the chylde there so snelle        | <i>sold</i>                      |
|          | To the constabylle of the castelle.         | <i>constable</i>                 |
| fol. 51r | For hym he gaf twenti pounde                | <i>gave</i>                      |
| E3335    | Of goode mony, hoole and sounde.            | <i>whole</i>                     |
|          | The constabylle lovyd welle that chylde     |                                  |
|          | For hit was bothe meke and mylde.           | <i>he; meek</i>                  |
|          | And in that contré there was a kynge        |                                  |
|          | That makyd mykylle mornynge                 | <i>mourned greatly</i>           |
| E3340    | For the ravenys cryde on hym ay,            | <i>were always crying on him</i> |
|          | Whether he went by nyght or day.            |                                  |
|          | For moche woundyr hadde the kyng            | <i>the king wondered greatly</i> |
|          | What myght betokeny hyr cryyng,             | <i>their</i>                     |
|          | And apon a day he sente hys sonde           | <i>envoys</i>                    |
| E3345    | Aftyr the wysyste man of hys londe          | <i>wisest</i>                    |
|          | To wyt of hym trewly                        | <i>know from him</i>             |
|          | What betokenythe the ravenys cry.           | <i>betokens</i>                  |
|          | The chylde bethought hym anon               | <i>resolved</i>                  |
|          | To the kyngys corte for to gon              | <i>court</i>                     |
| E3350    | Sum maner goode there to lere               | <i>to teach</i>                  |
|          | And the kyngys wylle to hyre.               | <i>hear</i>                      |
|          | Whenne the lordys were icome everychone,    | <i>had come each one</i>         |
|          | The kynge stode hym up anon.                | <i>stood</i>                     |
|          | 'Lordyngys,' he sayde, 'I shalle telle you, |                                  |
| E3355    | If any of you can telle me nowe,            | <i>these</i>                     |
|          | Why thys ravenys cry on me —                |                                  |
|          | Nyght and day where ever I be —             |                                  |
|          | If any of you can telle me blythe,          | <i>at once</i>                   |
|          | My doughter he shalle have to wyfe,         | <i>as a wife</i>                 |
| E3360    | And halfe my londe by my day,               | <i>in my lifetime</i>            |
|          | And afterwarde alle, par ma fay.'           | <i>by my faith</i>               |
|          | The kyng hadde sayde hys wylle,             | <i>[after] The king</i>          |
|          | Alle the lordys stodyn fulle style.         | <i>stood</i>                     |
|          | There was no man, withowte lesynge,         | <i>assuredly</i>                 |
| E3365    | That couthe thereof telle the kynge.        | <i>could</i>                     |
|          | But the chylde couthe fulle welle           |                                  |
|          | And bade the constabil of the castelle      |                                  |
|          | Gone ax the kynge anon ryght,               | <i>ask</i>                       |
| fol. 51v | If he wolde holde that he hyghte.           | <i>would keep; promised</i>      |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                              |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E3370             | And he wolde telle in alle thyng<br>What betokenythe the ravenys cryyng.<br>Tho sayde the kynge: 'By Goddys ore,<br>I wylle holde, and moche more<br>He shalle have ho telle hit me                 | would<br>Then; mercy<br>whoever tells me                                                     |
| E3375             | What the ravenys cryyng be.'<br>And with that worde the chylde up stode<br>Among hem alle with mylde mode<br>And sayde: 'Lordyngys everychone,<br>See ye the ravyn that stont alone,                | means<br>mild countenance<br>all<br>stands                                                   |
| E3380             | That makythe so moche mornyng and sorowe<br>Bothe in eve and in morowe?<br>Tylle I hit to thee, syr kyng,<br>That ys the famal, withowte lesyng.<br>And also, syr, there stondythe twyne            | mourning<br>I tell you<br>female, assuredly<br>two                                           |
| E3385             | Bothe togedyr, as I you seyne.<br>Ye seythe welle, syrys, everychone,<br>The more crythe the lasse apone. <sup>89</sup><br>The grete ravyn that before ys, iwys,<br>Yonde female alone was make ys. | say<br>sirs; all<br>his mate                                                                 |
| E3390             | She dwellyde with hym thirty yere,<br>The female that stondythe alone here,<br>And that grete ravyn blacke<br>Yonde female alone hadde forsake,<br>For hit was tho a dyre yere,                     | dwelled with him for thirty years<br>That; abandoned<br>then; bad                            |
| E3395             | And scars of vytayle and of stouyre.<br>The grete ravyn the femalle forsoke<br>And the lytylle ravyn to make hyr toke,<br>And in hys cryyng he saythe, per fay,<br>He wylle nevyr latte hyr away    | scarce; food; provisions<br>abandoned<br>took her as his mate<br>in faith<br>never leave her |
| E3400             | Tylle the dome be gyf of thee<br>Hos make that she shalle be.<br>Whenne they hadde hyrde youre wylle,<br>That ye have sayde thorowe skylle,<br>Whyche of hem hyr shalle have,                       | judgment; given by you<br>Whose mate<br>have<br>reason<br>them                               |
| fol. 52r<br>E3405 | He wylle nomore after thee crave,<br>Ne nevyr more uppon thee crye,<br>But in hyr wey they wylle flye.'<br>The kyng thorowe the baronys wylle<br>Gaf the dome thorowe goode skylle                  | question you<br>on their way<br>with; consent<br>Gave; reason                                |
| E3410             | That she shulde ben hys fere<br>That kepte hyr in the dyre yere,                                                                                                                                    | she should be the mate of the one<br>Who kept her; bad year                                  |

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<sup>89</sup> The bigger one cries on the smaller one

|          |                                                  |                                         |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|          | And sayde he shulde hyr forgo                    | <i>he should forgo her</i>              |
|          | That wolde not kepe hyr in hyr wo                | <i>Who would not keep her; misery</i>   |
|          | Whanne the derthe was harde and felle,           | <i>famine; cruel</i>                    |
| E3415    | For he ne rought, forsothe to telle,             | <i>didn't care</i>                      |
|          | To what dethe she hadde ben brought,             | <i>death; might have suffered</i>       |
|          | And therefore now he gete hyr nought.            | <i>should not get her</i>               |
|          | Whanne the ylder ravyn of the two                | <i>older</i>                            |
|          | Herde the dome igyf was soo,                     | <i>judgment; given</i>                  |
| E3420    | He made suche a crye anon,                       |                                         |
|          | That they woundyrde everychone,                  | <i>all marveled</i>                     |
|          | And made sorowe, and fly away,                   | <i>[the older raven] Sorrowed; flew</i> |
|          | That nevyr men of hym say.                       | <i>So that; saw</i>                     |
|          | That othyr ravyne toke the femele                | <i>raven</i>                            |
| E3425    | And evyr aftyr they ferde wele.                  | <i>fared</i>                            |
|          | Whenne the kyng sawe alle thys,                  |                                         |
|          | He gaf the chylde ys doughter, iwys,             | <i>gave; his</i>                        |
|          | And halfe hys kyngdome by hys day,               | <i>in his lifetime</i>                  |
|          | And alle aftyr hym the sothe to say.             |                                         |
| E3430    | Alle the lordys hym love began,                  |                                         |
|          | For he was so wyse a man.                        |                                         |
|          | In shorte tyme, withowte lesynge,                |                                         |
|          | The chylde hym selfe was made kyng,              |                                         |
|          | And the fadyr that hym begate                    | <i>begat</i>                            |
| E3435    | Ne hys modyr wyste not of thate,                 | <i>Nor his mother knew; that</i>        |
|          | But, as we fynde in gestys iwryte,               | <i>written in stories</i>               |
|          | Into suche povert they were ismete,              | <i>poverty; thrown</i>                  |
|          | For shame they fledde bothe frame home           | <i>[that] For shame; from</i>           |
|          | And into that contrey they come,                 |                                         |
| fol. 52v | There hyr sone was lorde and kyng,               | <i>Where their</i>                      |
| E3441    | And there they made hyr dwellynge.               | <i>their</i>                            |
|          | And soo the kyng lay there bysyde                | <i>had his dwelling</i>                 |
|          | And wyste hit in a lytylle tyde,                 | <i>knew; shortly</i>                    |
|          | And uppon a day he callyd hym to                 |                                         |
| E3445    | Two servantys, and bade them go,                 |                                         |
|          | And bade hem inquire aftyr a man                 | <i>them</i>                             |
|          | That late was come into cuntré thanne            | <i>lately; then</i>                     |
|          | From hys cuntreie newe there to wone,            | <i>newly; live</i>                      |
|          | That hytte Barnarde norysshe sone: <sup>90</sup> |                                         |
| E3450    | 'I wylle tomorne dyne with hym there.'           | <i>dine</i>                             |
|          | The servantys wente bothe ifere                  | <i>together</i>                         |
|          | And aftyr withynne a lytylle stonde              | <i>short while</i>                      |
|          | The goode man there they fonde,                  |                                         |

<sup>90</sup> *Who was called Barnarde the nurse's son*

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E3455    | And gretyn hym with chere gladde,<br>And tolde hym as the kyng hym bade.<br>'Leve syres,' answeyde he,<br>'The kyng ys welcome to me<br>And in hert I am welle sory,<br>For I am noo thyng redy                                                                                                                          | <i>greeted; good cheer</i><br><br><i>Dear</i><br><br><i>not at all ready</i>                                                                                                         |
| E3460    | To welcome my lorde the kynge<br>For I am not at my lykyng.<br>But suche goode as I have<br>Hyt ys redy to hym, God me save.'                                                                                                                                                                                            | <br><i>as I would be</i><br><br><i>for him</i>                                                                                                                                       |
| E3465    | Amorowe the kyng thedyr came,<br>And with hys fadyr hys in he name.<br>He and hys baronys everychone<br>Wente to mete with hym anon.<br>Thenne brought hys fadyr a bason<br>Of metelle bothe goode and fyne,                                                                                                             | <i>there</i><br><i>lodging; took</i><br><i>all</i><br><i>meet</i><br><i>basin</i><br><i>metal</i>                                                                                    |
| E3470    | And hys modyr a fayre towayle,<br>And wolde have servyd hym, samfayle,<br>Fulle mekely at hys waschyng.<br>But that wolde not suffer the kynge,<br>And bade a servande take the towelle thare                                                                                                                            | <i>And; towel</i><br><i>without doubt</i><br><br><i>allow</i>                                                                                                                        |
| fol. 53r | Of the modyr that hym bare,<br>And sayde: 'Fadyr nowe falle hit ys<br>That I tolde you sum tyme, iwys,<br>Whenne ye me caste into the see,<br>For I sayde that I shulde be                                                                                                                                               | <i>[he] bade a servant to take; then</i><br><i>From; who had borne him</i><br><i>it has come to pass</i><br><i>What; once</i><br><i>threw</i>                                        |
| E3476    | A ryccher man than evyr ye were:<br>I am your sone byfore you here.'<br>Whenne hys fadyr hyrde thys<br>He was fulle sore adrad, iwys,<br>For to have bene sone aslawe                                                                                                                                                    | <br><i>heard</i><br><i>terribly afraid</i><br><i>of being slain</i>                                                                                                                  |
| E3480    | Or ellys hangyde or drawe.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>Or hanged or drawn</i>                                                                                                                                                            |
| E3485    | "Sir," sayde the chylde of mykylle honour<br>To hys fadyr the emperoure,<br>"Thus me thynkythe, fadyr, by Goddys tre,<br>That ye wolde thys fare by me,<br>And also lytylle gylte have I<br>As hadde the chylde, certainly,<br>That was for hys sothe sawe<br>Caste into the seys wawe.<br>So caste ye me thorowe treson | <i>great</i><br><br><i>it seems to me; cross</i><br><i>wanted to do thus with me</i><br><i>little guilt</i><br><br><i>words</i><br><i>waves of the sea</i><br><i>through treason</i> |
| E3490    | With moche wo in youre preson<br>For my goodenys and my wysdome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>misery</i><br><i>goodness</i>                                                                                                                                                     |
| E3495    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|          |                                        |                                       |
|----------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|          | Whenne that I fro schole come.         | <i>from school</i>                    |
|          | But thoughe I come to grete honoure,   | <i>And yet I will come</i>            |
|          | Thenne ye ben my fadyr, emperoure.     | <i>Because</i>                        |
| E3500    | Wene ye that ye wolde me greve?        | <i>Were you planning to harm me</i>   |
|          | Nay, fadyr, ye may me leve,            | <i>believe me</i>                     |
|          | Hangyd rathyr shulde I be              | <i>I would rather be hanged</i>       |
|          | Ere I dede suche shame to thee.        | <i>Before I did such shame to you</i> |
|          | But certys, fadyr, whenne I home come, |                                       |
| E3505    | Youre wyf into hyr boure nome          | <i>took [me]</i>                      |
|          | And bade I shulde lyen hyr by,         | <i>lie</i>                            |
|          | And for I nolde, certaynly,            | <i>would not</i>                      |
|          | She rente hyr clothys alle bydene      | <i>tore; to pieces</i>                |
| fol. 53v | For encheson that I shulde wene        | <i>For the reason; think</i>          |
| E3510    | That I hadde hyr inforsyd soo.         | <i>forced (see note)</i>              |
|          | But certeys er I hadde soo do,         | <i>before</i>                         |
|          | Rathyr my dethe I wolde thole          | <i>I would have suffered</i>          |
|          | And to have ben brent alle to cole."   | <i>burnt entirely to charcoal</i>     |

[CONCLUSION]

|       |                                                |                               |
|-------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|       | "Dame," quothe the emperoure at o brayde,      | <i>at once</i>                |
| E3515 | "Ys hit sothe that my sone hathe sayde?"       |                               |
|       | "Ye, syr," she sayde, iwys,                    |                               |
|       | "Youre sone saythe noo thyng amys;             | <i>amiss</i>                  |
|       | For certeys, syr, done youre lykyng:           | <i>do as you wish</i>         |
|       | On me he saythe noo lesynge,                   |                               |
| E3520 | For I me drad," sayde she,                     | <i>I feared</i>               |
|       | "That he shulde dystrye me                     | <i>destroy</i>                |
|       | Whenne that he to age come,                    | <i>When he came of age</i>    |
|       | And take fro me the emperice of Rome;          | <i>empire</i>                 |
|       | Therefore hit was alle in my thought           | <i>intention</i>              |
| E3525 | Hym to dethe have ibrought."                   |                               |
|       | "Dame," quothe the emperoure, "by Synt Martyn, |                               |
|       | And siche maner dethe shalle be thyn.          | <i>such a manner of death</i> |
|       | That ordeynyste for my chylde,                 | <i>What [you] ordained</i>    |
|       | Thou shalte have, be Mary mylde.               |                               |
| E3530 | And for thou haste opou hym lowen,             | <i>lied</i>                   |
|       | Thou shalt drynke as thou haste browyn."       | <i>brewed</i>                 |
|       | Hys lordys he callyd to hym everychon          | <i>every one</i>              |
|       | An they come to hym anon.                      | <i>And</i>                    |
|       | "Lordelyngys," he sayde, "I commaunde you      |                               |
| E3535 | A grete fyre that ye lete make now             | <i>have made</i>              |

|          |                                                    |                                      |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|          | To brenne thereyn thys womman soo felle.           | <i>so wicked</i>                     |
|          | For certys, she hathe hyt deservyd welle           |                                      |
|          | Sythe she ordaynyd syche treson                    | <i>Since</i>                         |
|          | To sle my sone agayne reson.”                      |                                      |
| E3540    | Anon they ordaynyd a fyre fulle bryght             | <i>made ready</i>                    |
|          | That was bothe huge ande grete to hys syght,       |                                      |
| fol. 54r | And bonde the ladys hondys fulle harde,            | <i>in the middle</i>                 |
|          | And thenne cast ynne the emperyce in the mydwarde; | <i>thus; burnt</i>                   |
| E3545    | And thys was the emperice ibrent,                  | <i>[she] well worthy</i>             |
|          | As welle worthy was by juggement.                  | <i>their</i>                         |
|          | And clerkys tellyd in hyr wretynge:                | <i>falseness</i>                     |
|          | Of falssenys comythe evylle endynge.               |                                      |
|          | Ande the chylde after levyde fulle long            | <i>lived</i>                         |
|          | And lovyd evyr trougthe, and hatyd wronge,         | <i>truth; hated</i>                  |
| E3550    | And alle hys lyf tyme with moche honoure           | <i>lifetime</i>                      |
|          | He kepte hys fadyr the emperoure.                  | <i>guarded</i>                       |
|          | And whenne that hys fadyr dede was,                | <i>dead</i>                          |
|          | He lete make a nobylle plas,                       | <i>had made; place</i>               |
|          | And a fayre abbeye he lete begynne,                | <i>be founded</i>                    |
| E3555    | And seven schore monkys brought thereyn,           | <i>seven score monks (i.e., 140)</i> |
|          | And evyr more to rede and synge                    | <i>read</i>                          |
|          | For hys fadyr, withowte lesynge.                   |                                      |
|          | And tho was the chylde made emperoure              | <i>then</i>                          |
|          | And kept hys londe with grete honoure.             |                                      |
| E3560    | Of al knyghtys he bare the prys                    | <i>he gained preeminence</i>         |
|          | And among alle men moste wys,                      | <i>[he was] most wise</i>            |
|          | And moste he lovyde stedefastenys,                 | <i>fidelity</i>                      |
|          | In worde and dede, more and les,                   |                                      |
|          | And therefore God gaffe hym goode lyf,             | <i>gave</i>                          |
| E3565    | And brought hym fayre owte of stryf.               | <i>justly; difficulties</i>          |
|          | Nowe have ye hyrde every man                       | <i>heard</i>                         |
|          | Of the Emperoure Deoclycyan                        |                                      |
|          | And allso of hys fals wyfe,                        |                                      |
|          | And howe the chylde come owte of stryffe,          |                                      |
| E3570    | And of the maysters ye have hyrde —                | <i>heard</i>                         |
|          | The wysyste men of alle myddelle hyrthe —          | <i>middle earth</i>                  |
|          | Howe they savyde the chylde so yonge               | <i>saved</i>                         |
|          | Thorowe hyr wysdome and hyr connyng.               |                                      |
|          | And nowe ben dede the maysters seven.              |                                      |
| E3575    | Jhesu, that ys kyng of hevyn,                      |                                      |
|          | Graunte us er we hens wende                        | <i>before we go from here</i>        |
| fol. 54v | Houselle and shryfte and goode ende,               | <i>Holy Communion; confession</i>    |
|          | The blysse of hevyn above,                         |                                      |
|          | Jhesu for hys modyr love.                          | <i>the love he bore his mother</i>   |

E3580

Amen

*Expliciunt septem sapientes.*

*Here end the Seven Sages*



## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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As well as elucidating cultural references and points of language, these notes aim to highlight some of the differences between the Middle English *Seven Sages* in **A** and the other versions of the *Seven Sages* materials in English and in other languages. Our focus falls most intensively on the other Middle English texts: **Ar**, **B**, **C**, **D**, **E**, **F**, **R**. We cite these texts as they appear either as the base texts or in lists of variants in the editions by Brunner, Campbell, and Whitelock (in the case of **Ar**, **B**, and **E** we give line numbers only where Brunner edits these texts in parallel; otherwise variants in these three witnesses can be traced in Brunner by Auchinleck line number). We also regularly consider the French prose text from which the Middle English texts derive, **A\***, as well as a Welsh **A**-text (**Aw**), the French verse text (**K**), and an English (**He**) and a Scots (**Hs**) version of the **H**-text. We give selected variants from **L** and **M**, whose closest relationship is with **A\***; from **D\***, whose closest relation is **K**; and from **S**. Where they share material with the *Seven Sages*, we refer to the *Dolopathos* (**Do**) and to the extant texts of the *Book of Sindbad* that we have been able to consult in translation (**SindA101**, **SindA1001**, **SindSyr**, **SindGr**, **SindSp**, **SindHeb**, **SindP1**, **SindP2**, **SindP3**). Our notes relating **A** to other renditions of the *Seven Sages* are intended to demonstrate the variety with which these materials have been handled; they do not pretend to offer an exhaustive account of the variety that characterizes the *Seven Sages* tradition. We hope that readers of this edition will be encouraged to embark on their own comparative studies.

### PROLOGUE

The first five hundred lines of the *Seven Sages* establish the context in which the ensuing story-telling contest will be conducted. The empress will tell tales designed to incite her husband to execute his son, to which the sages will respond with tales aiming to assuage or redirect the imperial ire. The poem's audience is made privy to the fallacious nature of the empress's claim that the prince tried to rape her. Here we see her attempting to seduce the young prince and, when she fails, fabricating evidence of an attack (419–82). A limited perspective on the empress's motivation is afforded by a passage in which we see her being goaded into action by one of her husband's courtiers (239–46). The silence of the prince in the face of the empress's accusations is more thoroughly explained. He has seen in the stars that his survival will require him to remain dumb for the first seven days after his return to his father's court (323–86). The prince's taciturnity stokes tension in anticipation of the eighth day, when he will speak in his own defense; at the same time, it necessitates the intervention of the sages on the prince's behalf in the intervening period.

The setting of the action at Rome is emphasized. We find ourselves at the court of the emperor Diocletian (**E3**–8), in the company of the famous Roman pedagogue Cato (**E73**–88), and in a hall that is constructed on the banks of the river Tiber (151–56). This location provides uncertain grounds for the ensuing trial. The poem delights in clerical wisdom and pedagogic theory where it depicts the construction of the ideal school and the year-by-year progress of a model student (151–208). But the dignity of the sages is undermined by the ungainly competition in which they bid to become the prince's tutor (**E27**–**A126**), by a potential flaw in their curriculum (see the Explanatory Note to lines 168–82, below), and by the odd test

that they set to measure the effectiveness of their instruction (183–204). The barons advising Diocletian are likewise tricky figures. If they are correct to caution against hasty action in the face of the empress's accusations (494–504), it is nevertheless these same men who insist that the widowed emperor should remarry (211–33). This decision is at the root of the dynastic struggle that ensues.

The prince's silence at his father's court is open to a variety of interpretations. It recalls the monastic vow of silence, a connection that is made patent in the *Dolopathos*, whose Cistercian author, Johannes de Alta Silva, has the frame narrative end with the conversion of the prince and his people to Christianity (**Do**, pp. 81–96). The prince's taciturnity might also be seen to embody his rejection of courtly sociability in favor of the life of the mind into which the sages have inducted him. In this case, the restoration of the prince's speech can be seen to coincide with the attainment of his readiness to rule. Psychoanalytic readings point out that the breaking of the incest taboo that the empress attempts coincides with the silence of its victim. In this regard, the *Seven Sages* contrasts with another text in its orbit, the *Life of Secundus*, in which the mutism of the hero follows, rather than precedes, an incestuous encounter.

Special attention is given to the empress's simulation of an attempted rape in the Introduction. This and much else in the frame of the *Seven Sages* is taken over from the *Book of Sindbad*. There the story concerns a prince who is long wished for by his father, the king, but who is slow to learn until he reaches the threshold of adulthood. When his tutor, Sindbad, is finally successful, he is commanded to return the prince to court so that his progress can be checked. Sindbad sees in the stars that danger will result if the prince speaks and he accordingly instructs him to remain silent for seven days. At court, the prince is given to one of his father's concubines, who promises to break his silence, and who proposes to the prince in private that together they seize power. Outraged, the prince forgets Sindbad's interdiction and reprimands the concubine, who proceeds to simulate a rape. The king is furious and commands his son's execution, but this vengeance is delayed by a storytelling competition. The father's counsellors tell tales about the dangers of hasty action and the wiles of wicked women while the concubine tells tales about unreliable sons and counsellors.

This is the outline of a narrative shared by the extant texts of the *Book of Sindbad*. Some versions have dedicatory material allowing for their more precise situation and sketching out a genealogy of the text (**SindGr**, pp. 2–5; **SindSp**, p. 15; **SindP1**, pp. 15–28; **SindP2**, pp. 5–8). Other variants concern the name of the tutor, who is also called Sindban (**SindSyr**), Syntipas (**SindGr**), Sindibad (**SindSp**), or Sendeban (**SindHeb**); the location of the action, which can be set in Persia (**SindGr**, pp. 2–5), Judea (**SindSp**, p. 15), or India (**SindHeb**, pp. 44–45; **SindP1**, p. 27; **SindP2**, p. 7; **SindP3**, p. 56); and the treatment of the prince's vow of silence: sometimes the prince does not break his vow (**SindHeb**, pp. 82–85; **SindP3**, p. 58) and in one instance he breaks it to ask how his father might be killed (**SindP2**, p. 25). In some versions the storytelling begins before the accusation of the concubine (**SindA101**, **SindP1**, **SindP2**) and sometimes there is a competition between the sages before the prince is given or returned to Sindbad for instruction (**SindA101**, pp. 216–21; **SindHeb**, pp. 62–71; **SindSp**, pp. 17–18). Only the version of the prologue in **SindA1001** differs broadly from the summary just given. There the boy is not slow to learn; Sindbad tells the king about the necessity of the prince's silence; and the prince is sent to a pavilion to be entertained by his father's slave girls for seven days. There, one of the slaves importunes the prince, which prompts his reprimand and her simulation of a rape (**SindA1001**, 2:546–47).

When the *Book of Sindbad* travels westward, its preliminary materials undergo a series of alterations. Most significantly, the eastern locations of the story are effaced in favor of Rome, Constantinople (in **K** and **D\***), or Sicily (in **Do**). Where eastern elements are included — such as the name Malquydras, which is given to one of the sages (see the Explanatory Note to lines **E61**–**62**, below) — these have been drawn

from a repertoire of medieval European stereotypes and re-imposed on a thoroughly westernized text. The organization and *dramatis personae* of the trial are also altered. With one exception (**SindP3**), in the *Book of Sindbad*, the tales told by the king's counsellors precede the tales told by his concubine and the counsellors tell two tales each, whereas the concubine tells just one. In the *Seven Sages*, the concubine is replaced by the emperor's second wife; both parties tell one tale per exchange; and the empress speaks first. It might be debated whether this alteration works for or against the accusing woman, who is rendered at once more aggressive and more powerful in the *Seven Sages*. In **SindP3** and the *Dolopathos*, the frame narrative undergoes a different set of adaptations. There the seven tales are all told by wise men counselling the prosecution of the empress; in these versions, the empress has no tales of her own.

The frame narrative is constructed differently across the extant versions of the *Seven Sages*. Variants cluster around the introduction of the story matter, for which some versions imagine an oral performance; the identities given to the emperor and the empress; the description of the prince's education, in which the Middle English texts take special interest; the motivations and actions ascribed to the stepmother; and the nature of the misogynist commentary offered in the text, which is sometimes more developed in the Middle English versions than in their source.

#### FURTHER READING

The *Seven Sages of Rome* is unusual among medieval romances insofar as it applies to learning and scholarship the critical attention that the genre more typically dedicates to chivalry. See Foehr-Janssens, *Le temps des fables*, esp. pp. 13–18. The contrast between the training of the hero in the *Seven Sages* and in Arthurian romances is highlighted by Cosman, *The Education of the Hero*, pp. 147–52. On the equivocal depiction of learning and scholarship in the *Seven Sages*, see Foehr-Janssens, “La trahison des sages”; and Speer, “Recycling the Seven Sages”; and contrast Colliot, “La mauvaise vieillesse,” who argues that negative assessments of the sages are appropriate only later in the *Seven Sages* cycle of romances.

On baronial counsel in the *Seven Sages*, see Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, pp. 116–20. On the prince's silence, see Foehr-Janssens, “L'Art de ne rien dire”; and Speer, “The Prince's Baptism.” For the *Life of Secundus*, see *Secundus the Silent Philosopher*, ed. and trans. Perry.

On the transformation of the *Book of Sindbad* in medieval Europe, see Belcher, “The Diffusion of the Book of Sindbād”; Critten, “Sodomy and the East”; Foehr-Janssens, “Le désir et le savoir,” “De Jérusalem à Rome,” and “Misogyny and the Trends”; and Ziolkowski, “Vergil as Shahrazad.”

**E1–2**     *Herkenythe lordynges . . . Howe thys gentylle geste shalle ende.* The opening lines of the poem present it as a work that is meant to be performed. Subsequent interjections maintain this impression e.g., at lines **E18**, **234**, and **424**. Gestures towards orality are common in Middle English romance; on their interpretation, see Reichl, “Orality and Performance.” These lines are paralleled in the northern version (**C1–2**); they are absent in **B**, **D**, **A\***, **Aw**, **He**, and **Hs**.

**K** and **Do** depart from the opening scheme given in the **A**-group texts. **K** (1–42) opens with a minstrel's prologue that inserts the poem in a longer history of misogynist storytelling. There then follows a rendition of the *Vengeance Nostre Seigneur* story: shortly after the crucifixion, the Roman emperor Vespasian is visited by Cilofida, who cures Vespasian of leprosy with a piece of Christ's shroud and dispatches him to Jerusalem to exact vengeance upon the Jews (43–158); on his return, the emperor marries and has a child (159–68). Next come excursions on the age at which baptism is appropriate and how parents should choose their children's nursemaids (169–244). The poem proper is then announced as an example of women outwitting men (245–52). On the minstrel's prologue, see Jeay, “La mise en scène du

narrateur.” On the significance of the *Vengeance Nostre Seigneur* in **K** and the manuscript that transmits it, see Foehr-Janssens, “De Jérusalem à Rome.”

**Do** opens with a dedication in which the author, who calls himself Johannes, one of the monks of Alta Silva, directs his work to Bertrand, bishop of Metz; Johannes then announces his topic: his work, *The King and the Seven Wise Men*, will treat the history of a certain king and the amazing things that happened during his reign (pp. 1–4). The story begins with the youth of king Dolopathos, whose name means “one who suffers treachery or grief,” and who, when still a boy, inherits the kingdom of Sicily (p. 5). Dolopathos rules righteously and when slandered at Rome before the emperor Augustus, is defended by reports from his people of his upright rule. Indeed, Augustus is so impressed by Dolopathos that he gives him his wife’s sister, Agrippa, to marry (pp. 6–11). On their return to Sicily, Dolopathos and Agrippa must wait many years for a child (p. 12).

- E5** *Dioclician*. Diocletian, emperor of Rome 284–305 CE, was the last imperial persecutor of the Christians before Christianity was legalized under Constantine (313 CE) and made the state religion under Theodosius (380 CE). Diocletian’s position in history prior to the Christianization of Rome leaves his rule open to skeptical assessments from medieval readers. All the Middle English versions, **S**, **A\***, and **Aw**, agree in making Diocletian the emperor during whose reign the action occurs. **K** and **Do** set their action at other important moments in Christian history. **Do** (p. 5) places the story in Sicily during the reign of emperor Augustus, around the moment of Christ’s advent, and **K** places it just after the crucifixion, during the reign of Vespasian, at Constantinople (**K**283). In **He** (p. 1) the father is called Poncianus. **D\*** (pp. 1–2) connects the *Seven Sages* to the matter of Troy. There the emperor is Marcomeris, son of Priam, who was rescued by a nurse after the fall of Troy and taken to Rome, and from there to Constantinople, where he became emperor and king of France.
- E9–14** *a emporas . . . dyde and went henne*. The empress is named in **B** (*Mylycent*), **F8** (*Ilacent*), the northern version (*Milisant*, **C**12), the midland version (*Helie*, **D6**), and **Aw** (*Eva*, p. 647). In **He** (pp. 1–2) the emperor’s first wife is given a deathbed speech in which she asks Poncianus not to allow his next wife any influence over their son and begs her husband to send him away to be educated. In the midland version (**D**221–23) the death of the first empress is delayed until after the prince has been sent to school.
- E15** *seven yere olde*. Popular medieval schemes of the “ages of man” divided the lifespan into six or seven phases, the first of which, infancy, ended when a child reached the age of seven. Seven was also the traditional age for schooling to begin. See Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 68.
- E17** *Florentyne*. In **A\***, **Aw**, **D**, **K**, and **S**, the prince is unnamed. In **He** (p. 1) and **Hs** (14), the son is called Diocletian. **M** rewrites the **A\*** Prologue in anticipation of the *Roman de Marques*, which is the first of several continuations of the *Seven Sages* story. In **M** (p. 1, lines 1–16), Marcus, the hero of the sequel and Cato’s son, is raised alongside the prince, who is called Phiseus. In **Do** (p. 13), the child is called Lucinius. Campbell (p. 150n25) notes that the name Florentine occurs in medieval romances. It appears in the Middle English *Octavian* as well as in Gower’s *Tale of Florent* and in some of the Old French versions of *Amis and Amiloun*. Florentine may also recall Floris, the name of the hero in the romance that follows the *Seven Sages* in the

Auchinleck Manuscript, *Floris and Blanchefleur*. On this last connection, see Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, p. 116.

- E22**      *The seven sagys that were yn Rome*. On the Greek tradition of the seven sages, whose history can be traced back to ancient Indian sources, see Martin, “The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom.” For the argument that the Roman seven sages are appropriated from this tradition, see Foehr-Janssens, “La parole condensée.” In **K** (269–82), the sages are said to come without delay because the emperor is quick to anger. In **He** (p. 3), the sages are summoned on the advice of the emperor’s counsellors and the emperor entrusts his son to all seven men for fear of causing dissension among them (p. 6). In **S** (pp. 213–14), the emperor chooses the seven sages who will instruct his son; the sages do not compete as elsewhere. In **Do** (pp. 13–15), Lucinius is entrusted to one sage alone: Virgil.
- E24**      *Forto knowe the letters blacke*. In the northern text (**C**47–50; **C**152–54), the emperor orders that his son be taught the seven liberal arts. **Aw** (p. 647) has a contrasting curriculum in which the boy is to learn manners, customs, and poetical measures.
- E31–38**      *Bancillas . . . “In seven yere, I understonde.”* On the names of the sages, which vary, see Campbell, pp. 151–52, and the note for **E**61–62, below. In the midland version (**D**25–100), the sages do not compete over the length of their instruction. In **K** (305–34), **He** (pp. 5–6), and **Hs** (27–58), each sage after the first promises to complete his program in a year less than the sage who has spoken before him. Elsewhere, in **E**, the sequence is disrupted. In **F** (35–68) the masters are more aggressive in their haggling: the first master promises to deliver his course in seven years, the second in five, and the third in three. **F** (101–02) also introduces fishing as one of the subjects that the sages promise to teach.
- E61–62**      *a red man . . . Malquydras*. In **E**, “red man” is written as one word. We have it as two because it appears to translate directly the French in **A\*** (1.14), where the sage is called *malcuidarz li rous*. Malcuidas is a name frequently given to Muslims in Old French epic. See Foehr-Janssens, *Le temps des fables*, p. 41. Here the sage is also distinguished by his darker complexion. The appellation does not reach the *Seven Sages* via the *Book of Sindbad*, where the sages are rarely named. Instead, this is a new import. An update may be required to the *OED*, whose entry for *red man* does not cite the use of the phrase to refer to race before 1740, when it designates an indigenous person of North America.
- E74–75**      *Catonne of Rome. / He made Catonne*. The reference is to the popular collection of Latin proverbs, the *Disticha Catonis*, which was a mainstay of elementary Latin education. In the Middle Ages, the text was traditionally attributed to the Roman senator and historian, Marcus Porcius Cato (234–149 BCE). This reference to the *Distichs* is shared by the southern and the northern versions. It is absent elsewhere. On the prominence of the *Distichs* in Latin education and on its influence on Middle English writers, see Mann, “He Knew Nat Catoun.”
- 148–49**      *For burgeis, maiden, other knave / Mighte him in som riot sette*. In the northern version (**C**170–71) and **F** (138), women are the only distraction imagined. In the midland version (**D**125–32), **He** (p. 6), **Hs** (71–72), and **K** (363–66), the description of the town’s distractions does

not single out women. In **S** (p. 214), the emperor asks the sages to construct their school in a forest away from the distraction of the crowds.

- 167 *of Donet thre pars.* The reference is to the *Donatus*, or *Donet*, a popular manual of elementary Latin by Aelius Donatus (ca. 310–380 CE) that was used throughout medieval Europe. See Orme, *Medieval Schools*, pp. 28–29. This line is shared with **F** (155) but is absent elsewhere. In **B**, Cato’s *Distichs* are painted on the wall of the sages’ school.
- 168–72 *the seven ars . . . and ek fisike.* With one exception, the sages’ curriculum treats the seven liberal arts that were taught as part of the foundational arts course at medieval universities. These were usually understood to include grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy; their mastery preceded study of the higher subjects of law, medicine, and theology. See *The Seven Liberal Arts*, ed. Wagner. In the southern and northern versions, the replacement of dialectic with one of the higher subjects — *fisike*, or medicine — might indicate a flaw in the sages’ program. **A\*** (2.11–17) has the traditional sequence including dialectic but replaces geometry with “nigromance.” This enumeration is lacking elsewhere. In **K** (357–80), the prince also learns medicine, astronomy, magic, and song.
- 180 *despout.* Oral disputation, or *disputatio*, was a primary means of education and examination for upper-level undergraduates pursuing the university arts course. See Leff, “The *Trivium* and the Three Philosophies,” pp. 325–28. Mention of the prince’s training in this subject stokes the anticipation resulting from the long silence that he will observe upon his return to his father’s court.
- 181–82 *argument / Of the sterre and of the firmament.* Florentine will owe his success to his expertise in astronomy. On the development of this aspect of the prince’s education in **Hs**, see Robbins, “Medieval Astrology.”
- 183–84 *Thei wolde prove in the sexte yer / Yif he ware wis and wer.* In **M** (p. 2, lines 50–87), the prince is tested alongside Marcus, whose challenge is to determine through astronomy the reward that the sages will receive for their teaching from Diocletian; Marcus determines that the emperor will soon attempt to destroy both the sages and the prince.
- 212–18 *And: “Sire, par nostre fai . . . make hem riche everichon.”* The Middle English text shifts into direct speech more abruptly than written Present Day English allows. For further examples of this feature, see lines 293, 316, and 468. For further discussion of the handling of direct speech in the poem, see Critten, “The Affordances.”
- 219–20 *Themperour was wel ipaied / With that the barons had seid.* In the midland version (**D235**), lust is adduced as a reason for the emperor’s agreement to his baron’s demands. In **Hs** (121–23), the emperor initially resists his counsellors’ attempts to have him remarry, citing his age.
- 231–33 *Thai weren iwedded . . . lovede hem thourg alle thing.* In **K** (401–36), the emperor’s decision to remarry triggers some violently misogynist commentary. In **He** (p. 9), the emperor’s second wife is the daughter of the king of Castile. In **M** (p. 4, lines 112–13), the second wife is intro-

- duced as the daughter of the count of Provence; she is said to be not yet thirteen, and we are shown the knight who rides out to fetch her asking for and obtaining her consent to the marriage before her departure for Rome (**M** p. 4, line 117; pp. 4–5, lines 130–43).
- 235–38     *Thing ihid . . . Godes owen priveté.* These lines are proverbial; see Whiting T165. All four lines are shared with **E**; only the second of the two statements is shared with **B** and the northern version (**C**283–84). These lines are absent elsewhere. In **S** (p. 214), the empress knows that her husband has a son from the outset.
- 239–42     *Som squier . . . Hou he with the maistres wone.* In **F** (227–36), the words of the informing courtier are reported in direct speech. In the midland version (**D**256–60), the informant is blamed for the empress's obsession with killing the prince. In **Aw** (p. 647), the empress learns from a hag that the emperor has a son and appears contented with the news. In **M** (pp. 5–6, lines 157–74), the empress's cunning is evidenced by her quick discovery of the emperor's son, whom she asks to see on her wedding night.
- 247–54     *Than couthe sche bothe qued and god . . . on hemselfe falleth al the smerte.* These lines are common to the southern version texts, except **F**. The northern version (**C**313–15) keeps only the lines about harm to others turning to harm to oneself and adds a digression in which the empress enlists the help of a witch who authors the curse necessitating the prince's silence (**C**295–312). The midland version (**D**296–302) agrees with the northern version in attributing the curse to the empress's use of black magic. In **Aw** (pp. 647–48) and **Do** (pp. 31–34), it does not seem that the empress plots the prince's murder from the outset. Instead, her approach towards him will be motivated spontaneously by lust.
- 249         *stepmoder.* It is a given in medieval romance and related genres that stepmothers are bad characters. The negative connotations of the word are well illustrated in the citations listed in the *MED*, under *step-moder* (n.).
- 260–61     *I thee love with fin amour / And thou nowt me.* The phrase *fin amour* is used throughout the Middle Ages to refer to an especially refined kind of love thought appropriate to elites and having its own complex set of rules and expectations. In anglophone scholarship the phrase commonly used to describe this kind of affection is *courtly love*. While in the context of this speech, the empress's questioning of her husband's love belongs to her plan to persuade him to destroy his son, her complaint that she suffers in a loveless marriage anticipates the dissatisfaction of three wives in tales told by the sages (*tentamina, inclusa, puteus*).
- 271–80     *“Thi most time . . . Let me of him han a sight.”* These lines in which the empress expresses a desire to adopt the prince are common to the Middle English versions, **He** (p. 10) and **HS** (138–42). In **A\*** (3.16), the empress merely states that there are enough teachers in Rome for the boy to continue his education with them. In **K** (443–48), the empress argues that the son should return to Rome to learn courtesy and chivalry.
- 303         *writen in bok.* While the main function of this tag may be metrical — it prepares for the rhyme in the next line — the phrase also alerts the audience of the poem to the long, written tradition

to which it belongs. No direct mention is made of the text's eastern origins here. On the effacement of these in the western branches of the *Seven Sages-Sindbad* tradition, see Foehr-Janssens, "De Jérusalem à Rome," "Le désir et le savoir," and "Misogyny and the Trends," and the comments in the Introduction, p. 3.

- 333–38 "Yif we him bring . . . se wel in the mone." In **F** (300) and the midland version (**D**344–45), the sage understands that the empress is at the root of the matter. In **S** (p. 214), the prince learns that he should not speak in a dream in which he sees eight branches growing out of his bed in the middle of which there lies a serpent who aims to kill him by spilling its venom along the branches' leaves. The sages determine that the snake is the empress and the branches represent the days to come, during the first seven of which the prince must not speak. The sages decide on their own initiative to help the prince by telling tales.
- 363 "This seven daies I nel nowt speke." On the significance of the prince's silence, see the headnote. In **D**\* (p. 2), as well as staying silent at his father's court, the prince must forgo kissing both men and women.
- 370–72 "So the ax . . . wrout me this wo." In this extended simile, the sages are compared to the blade in the axe that Florentine will wield against his enemy, the empress. It appears to literalize an idiom, perhaps to comic effect. *MED*, *ax(e)* (n.1), sense 2b lists the phrase *putten the ax in the helve* (lit. put the axe blade in the handle) with the translation "to solve a problem." The phrase "to put the axe in the helve" was apparently proverbial. See Whiting A254. On the creative use of proverbial Middle English in the poem, see further Critten "The Affordances."
- 374 *Seint Nicholas*. While the saint by which the sage swears may have been chosen for primarily metrical reasons (to rhyme with *Bancillas* in line 373), the associations that Nicholas conjures are not entirely inappropriate. In the Middle Ages he was celebrated as (amongst other things) a protector of children. See Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 322–23.
- 382 "Maistres," he saide, "graunt merci." The Middle English versions and **He** lack lines in **A**\* (3.41), **HS** (179–82), and **K** (563–98) that clarify the plot, specifying that the sages should come to court one a day.
- 397 *To overcome the emperice*. These lines in which the prince identifies the empress as his enemy are common to the northern and southern versions, except **F**. They are absent elsewhere.

#### DAY 1

- 406 *the bois of Seint Martin*. Campbell (p. 155) finds no location fitting the name in Rome or near the Tiber. Speer and Foehr-Janssens (p. 147) point out that there is an area of Constantinople called Martinakou whose main monument is a monastery. The mention of the forest of saint Martin in texts situating the emperor at Rome may be a survival from an older version whose geography is more perfectly preserved in **K**, which places the emperor in Constantinople. In **F** (270), the *boys seynt Martyne* is the location of the sages' school.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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- 408        *The maistres here wai agen nome.* In **A\*** (3.46), the prince weeps upon taking leave of the sages.
- 409–12    *Tiding had themperour . . . rod him agen with mani a knight.* The northern version (**C**491–500) condenses this part of the narrative, sending the empress out to meet the prince and having him taken to her chambers immediately.
- 415–18    *Knight and erl . . . themperour palais.* The southern and northern versions lack lines in the midland version (**D**400–53), **A\*** (4.1–14), **He** (pp. 14–15), **Hs** (183–210), and **K** (701–84) in which the emperor discovers his son's mutism and the empress embarks upon her seduction plot.
- 424        *Wil ye nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?* This line incriminating women in general is shared with **B** but is absent elsewhere. On the narrator's misogynist bias, see Critten, "Hating Women."
- 431–46    *"Mi leve suete grom . . . ich have ikept mi maidenhod."* In **F** (369) and **K** (805–06), the empress offers to kill the emperor; in **K** (798–802), she also claims to have used magic to avoid sex with her husband. In **He** (pp. 17–18), the seduction scene includes a moment when the empress bears her breasts in front of the boy as well as a letter that he writes explaining his reasons for rejecting her. In **M** (p. 8, lines 255–305), the empress makes two moves on the boy before finally crying rape. In **S** (p. 215), the empress initially attempts to win the prince's favor by promising to be a good mother to him.
- 457–82    *the emperice wex wroth . . . "lengere on him see."* On this iteration of the Potiphar's wife motif, see the Introduction, pp. 15–16.
- 477        *He ne was nevere of thi blod.* **K** (851–70) adds the claim that the emperor's first wife was unfaithful.
- 494–504    *Gentil ronnen . . . "conseil of thi gentil men."* In **K** (881–944), the emperor summons the barons to judge his son, the barons deliberate, and sentencing is postponed until the morning. In **F** (419–28), it is a steward who intervenes, asking for an adjournment as a personal favor. In **Aw** (p. 648), the barons do not intervene and the emperor swears that his son will be executed the next day. This moment in the story is absent in **S**, where the empress's accusation continues directly with her first story, *arbor*.
- 511–12    *An even late . . . to bedde with honor.* In the Middle English versions, **A\***, **Aw**, **He**, and **Hs**, the empress tells her stories in the intimate context of the bedroom that she shares with the emperor. In **K** (e.g., 967–82), she tells her stories in the morning.

### TALE 1: ARBOR, THE TREE. THE EMPRESS.

In her first tale, the empress broaches a theme to which she will return repeatedly: usurpation. From her perspective, the story's meaning is clear. The grand, old pine tree represents the emperor; the shoot is his son; and the success of the shoot at the expense of the old tree shows what will happen to the emperor unless he acts (611–19). This interpretation is complicated by the presence of the citizen of Rome, the

*burgeis*, whom the empress does not account for. The burgess who fosters the shoot and orders the gradual destruction of the old tree also has something of the emperor insofar as he can be accused of favoring novelties in the form of his new wife over his longer-term commitments to his son and to his lineage. Two analogues of *arbor* direct the reader's sympathies to the young tree, suggesting that in the *Seven Sages* the tale has been adapted to suit the empress's argument.

*Arbor* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages*. The main variant readings concern the rank of the man in whose garden the tale is set; the properties of the tree and the genesis of the shoot; the outcome of the gardener's interventions; and the empress's moralization. On the recycling of the motif of the beloved tree in *tentamina*, see the headnote to that tale, below.

#### FURTHER READING

On the sympathies for the empress that might be generated in *arbor*, see Foehr-Janssens, "Quand les bêtes se taisent." On the tale's analogues, see Krappe, "Studies [2]."

- 536 *a riche burgeis*. In the southern and the northern versions, **A\*** (6.1), **He** (p. 22), and **Hs** (292), the owner of the garden is a burgess; in the midland version (**D594**), he is said to be a knight. In **K** (985–86), he is a powerful duke, a variant that facilitates the identifications of the tale's main character with the emperor. Where the owner of the garden is a merchant (e.g., **A551–54**), the extradiegetic audience of the Middle English poem might feel implicated. The compilers of the manuscripts containing texts **B** and **E** are thought to have been London merchants, and there is a long tradition of viewing **A** as a book made for a mercantile readership. On the manuscripts and audiences of the Middle English *Seven Sages*, see the Introduction, pp. 6–12.
- 544 *a pinnote tre*. In the southern and northern versions, **A\*** (6.2), **Hs** (297), and **K** (993), the tree is a pine; the midland version (**D598**) has an apple tree. **He** (p. 22) has a tree whose fruits are a source of miraculous healing. In **K** (997–1002), the rich duke encloses his beloved tree with a wall in a move that recalls the treatment of wives by old and jealous husbands in medieval romance. Another reading of the tale is thus available in **K** that has sympathy accrue to the empress, whose experience of marriage may be dissatisfactory and whose precarious place at court is threatened by the young prince, symbolized here by the new shoot. The figure of the immured wife features most prominently in the sages' last story, *inclusa*.
- 560 *Thanne segh he wexe a litel stren*. In all the Middle English texts as well as **He** (p. 22), **Hs** (317–24), and **K** (1017–20), the shoot sprouts spontaneously; **Hs** adds that the shoot remains fruitless. In **A\*** (6.3), the burgess first fertilizes the older tree. *MED*, *stren* (n.), sense 2c lists this line as the only example for the definition "a young shoot of a tree."
- 596 *abrad*. *MED*, *abreden* (v.), sense 1b lists this usage as the only quotation for the definition "spread out, prostrate." The word appears to have been rarely used.
- 608 *'Lat the yonge tre atire, aflight.'* The instruction that the *burgeis* gives to his gardener mimics the vague but incisive command of a superior to a more specialized inferior.

- 609–10     *Thous was the olde tre doun ithrawe / And the yonge tre forht idrawe.* In all the Middle English texts and in **A\*** (7.3), the shoot grows at the expense of the old tree. **E** adds a line in which the burgess explicitly compares the decline of the old tree to the decline of an old man, and **B** has the gardener say that the shoot has achieved its will. At the end of **K** (1059–60), the shoot flourishes. In **Hs** (343–50), the old tree is cut down so that the shoot might bear fruit, but the effects of this action are uncertain and the burgess is blamed by his peers for sacrificing the old tree. In **He** (p. 23), the shoot dies after the old tree has been cut down and the poor people who had benefitted from its healing fruit curse the counsellors who conspired in the old tree's destruction. In **S** (p. 216), the young shoot also dies with the old tree.
- 611–19     *Gode sire . . . thou ne hast no might.* **A** gives the kernel of a moral that is shared across the extant versions of the *Seven Sages*. Elsewhere the empress expands upon her lesson. In **A\*** (7.8), the empress states that the prince will shame his father as the shoot shamed the old tree, adding that the whole empire desires to disinherit her husband. The claim that the prince is not acting alone is also present in **Aw** (p. 648) and **E**. In some versions, the branches of the trees are incorporated into the lesson. In the midland version (**D**638–43) and **He** (p. 24), the branches are said to represent the emperor's far-reaching power, which his son is stripping away; in **F** (473–76), the branches (of the new tree?) represent the sages, who are intent on the emperor's downfall. In **Hs** (358–59), the empress identifies the "fals" gardener as an avatar of the sages. In **K** (1069–73), the moral focuses on the role played by the owner of the garden, who is blamed for sacrificing his old tree for the sake of the newer one. The empress claims that the emperor risks doing likewise.
- 615–16     *He sschal be sone forht idrawe / And maister, and thou his knaue.* According to our editorial policy, *knaue* in the second of these lines should be normalized to *knave*. We keep the manuscript spelling in this instance since it leaves open the opportunity for rhyme with *idrawe* in the preceding line. On another example of stretched rhyme in the poem, see the Explanatory Note to lines 2363–64, below.

## DAY 2

- 653–54     *"God thee defende, / Fram god dai and fram god ende."* The emperor's sarcastic retort subverts the more usual formula, "God give you good day and a good end."
- 671–72     *Thei he had iwraththed your wif, / Yit had he nowt agelt his lif.* As well as questioning the truth of the stepmother's accusation, the sage also casts doubt over the severity of the crime.
- 675–78     *"I fond hire torent . . . non nede of witnessing."* The correct reading of signs will emerge as a central thematic concern in the *Seven Sages*. Bloody signs assume special importance in the sages' first tale, *canis*. On this point, with primary reference to the *Dolopathos*, see Foehr-Janssens, *Le temps des fables*, pp. 195–215.

## TALE 2: CANIS, THE DOG. FIRST SAGE, BANCILLAS.

The sages begin their defense of the prince with a tale about the unreliability of women's advice. In *canis*, the central character's mistake is said to result from his willingness to act upon his wife's counsel; if the emperor has his son killed on the empress's advice, he will suffer the same shame as did the knight in the tale on account of his erroneous canicide (837–42). The tale is well-chosen insofar as the knight's treatment of his dog appears to acknowledge the conflicting feelings that fathers can have regarding their succession at the same time as it adumbrates the happy outcome of the emperor's conflict with his son. Other aspects of the tale are harder to recruit to the sages' rhetorical purpose. In particular, the knight's extravagant mourning at the close of the tale recalls his characterization in other versions of *canis* as a figure lacking in self-control. In its long history, *canis* has more often been told as a warning against hastiness than as a demonstration of the dangers of women's counsel.

*Canis* was a popular story throughout the premodern east and west; it is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages*, the *Dolopathos*, and all the versions of the *Book of Sindbad* except **SindA1001** and **SindP3**. In the *Book of Sindbad*, the story treats the fate of a well-trained dog who defends his master's baby from an attack by a viper when both the master and his wife are away from home (the mother has gone to visit her relatives, and he has been called to attend the king at short notice). When the father returns, he sees the dog covered in blood and kills it, assuming that the animal has either killed or eaten the baby (**SindA101**, pp. 254–57; **SindSyr**, pp. 116–17; **SindGr**, pp. 74–79; **SindSp**, p. 33; **SindHeb**, pp. 164–69). In the Persian versions, the mother has died since giving birth and it is a cat who saves the child and suffers the consequences of the father's hasty action (**SindP1**, pp. 119–23; **SindP2**, pp. 56–58). In all the versions of the tale transmitted in the *Book of Sindbad*, the story is told as a warning against hasty action.

The main variant readings amongst the versions of *canis* transmitted in the *Seven Sages* concern the nature of the moral and the insistence with which it is propounded. The Middle English versions, **A\*** (9.1–11.21), **He** (pp. 28–31), and **Hs** (405–501), agree in presenting the tale as a warning against acting on women's testimony and following women's advice, but they make this claim with varying degrees of insistence. **K** (1165–1398) and **Do** (pp. 40–42) moralize the story as a warning against haste. Other variant readings concern the backgrounding and order of the narrative; the age of the greyhound; the gender of the snake; and the treatment of the knight's self-exile. On the recycling of the motif of the beloved dog in *ten-tamina*, see the headnote to that tale, below. For a brief discussion of *canis*, see the Introduction, pp. 14–15.

## FURTHER READING

*Canis* has attracted an unusual volume of critical interest amongst scholars who frequently take the tale as a test case for the kinds of reading that the *Seven Sages* anticipates. On the forms that *canis* assumes in **K** and **Do**, see Speer, "Specularity in a Formulaic Frame Romance" and "The Prodigal Knight." On the mixed feelings regarding succession that the tale explores, see Foehr-Janssens, "Le chien, la femme et le petit enfant" and "Quand les bêtes se taisent." On the knight's extravagant mourning, see Ho, "Framed Progeny." For the argument that the tale provokes fresh reflection on the importance of animal lives, see Steel, "Ridiculous Mourning" and *How Not to Make a Human*, pp. 17–40. On the interdependence of humans and animals in the tale, see too Foehr-Janssens, "Le chien, l'enfant et le serpent." On the long history of the tale's transmission from east to west, see Blackburn, "The Brahmin and the Mongoose"; and Eichel-Lojkine, "*Canis* dans tous ses états." On the analogues of *canis*, see too Campbell, pp. lxxix–lxxxii; and Krappe, "Studies [3]."

703 *A swithe noble strong burdis*. **E**, the midland version (**D726–27**), **He** (p. 28), and **Hs** (405–10) begin directly with a description of the knight. Otherwise, the Middle English versions agree

with **A\*** (9.1–2) in opening with a description of the joust. **Aw** (p. 649) conflates the text's woman protagonist with the empress. In **K** (1203), the main character is a powerful seneschal and the story begins with an account of the ten-year wait that he and his wife endure before the arrival of their son; both the seneschal and his wife are said to be well liked, in particular the wife is praised for her slowness to anger. The distracting event is bear-baiting (**K**1195–1216). **Do** (pp. 40–41) gives the male protagonist the fullest backstory. There he is a spendthrift knight who, after exhausting his resources, must leave his homeland taking only his wife, his child, a horse, a dog, and a hawk. The family lodges in an uninhabited building and the knight goes out every day to hunt with his animals; when he brings nothing home, his household goes hungry. **He** (p. 28) also gives the knight a bird of prey.

- 710 *forcrased*. This is the *MED*'s only example of this word.
- 719 *a graihond*. The Middle English versions, **A\*** (9.9), **He** (p. 28), and **Hs** (429–30) make the greyhound a mature dog and, effectively, a double for the knight. In **K** (1217–18), where the greyhound is a puppy, the identification between the dog, the baby, and the prince is strengthened. See too **K** (1341–42), where the dog's inability to speak is highlighted upon the knight's return home.
- 729 *pointt tournis*. *MED*, *pointe* (n.1), sense 3b gives the definition "at the mid point of the tournament field" for the phrase *in pointe torneis*, citing this line. **A\*** (9.11) has the wife leaving her home by the gate and standing on the *pont torneiz*, or drawbridge. Compare *DMF*, *tournis* (adj. and n.). Our gloss prefers this sense, which avoids positioning the wife amid the *mêlée*.
- 735 *An addre*. The variable gendering of the snake in the following passage (735–70) reflects the double gender of the French word. See *DMF*, *serpent* (n.). The other extant texts of the poem vary broadly in their treatment of this point of grammar. In the other southern texts and the midland version, the serpent is referred to by both masculine and feminine pronouns; in **A\*** (10.2–11), **He** (pp. 29–30), and the northern version, the snake is masculine throughout; in **Hs** (432–49), the snake is feminine throughout; in **K** (1235–76), the snake has masculine articles and masculine and feminine pronouns. On the literary significance of this grammatical point, see the commentary on *canis* in the Introduction, pp. 14–15. On the grammatical conditions that allow for the alternate gendering of the animal in Middle English, see Critten, "The Affordances."
- 792 *I nelle never ete bred*. *MED*, *bred* (n. 1), sense 4a glosses the phrase *as ever I ete bred* with "as I live." In the negative and in the future, the phrase expresses a death wish. The expression was proverbial. See Whiting B520.
- 795–96 *'And but ye willen him slen . . . mi lif forgon.'* The wife's ultimatum to her husband is shared across the southern and northern texts but is not in the midland version, **A\***, **He**, **Hs**, **K**, or **S**. In **Do** (p. 42), the wife is absent when the knight returns home because she has gone to a neighbor's house to beg for food.

- 812–14     *‘Ne be that man . . . leve wimmannes pleint.’* This generalizing comment on the perils of believing women is shared across the southern and the northern versions. In **A\*** (11.15–16), the knight restricts himself to blaming his wife for misinforming him. In the midland version, blame is shared between the wife, for a quickness to worry that is said to be characteristic of women (**D**824–25), and the nurses, who are blamed for leaving the baby alone (**D**759–61), and who are shown regretting their negligence (**D**818–19). The midland version also expands upon a line in **A\*** (10.16) according to which the nurses believe the dog has eaten the baby; there, both the nurses and the wife subscribe to this notion (**D**813–14, **D**836–37, **D**848–49; see too **C**873–74 and **Do**, p. 42, where the knight assumes that the baby has been eaten). In **He** (p. 31) and **Hs** (490–92), the knight blames himself or is blamed for believing his wife. In **K** (1369–72) and **Do** (p. 42), the male protagonist regrets his action without blaming his wife.
- 820–22     *slawen was his gode graihond . . . for his fole wives rede.* These lines blaming the outcome of the story on the wife’s bad advice are shared across the southern and northern versions; they are absent in the midland version, **A\***, **He**, **Hs**, **K**, **S**, and **Do**. In **S** (p. 217), the baby is equated with the city of Rome; the snake is the empress, who wants to devour the honor of the Romans; and the son is the dog, who kills the snake; the knight’s self-exile is absent.
- 823–26     *‘O grehound,’ he seide . . . ‘leve here leuedis conseil.’* The southern and northern versions agree in having the knight present his self-exile as a lesson to other men that they should not believe their wives; the northern version repeats the idea that the knight’s suffering derives from his willingness to follow his wife’s counsel (**C**925). These lines are absent in **A\*** (11.17), where the knight describes his self-exile as a penitential journey; in **He** (p. 31) and **Hs** (484–88), where he breaks his weapons and leaves for the Holy Land; in **F** (1390–1401), where he leaves on pilgrimage; and in the midland version (**D**880–85), where the knight drowns himself in a pond.
- 837–42     *“So falle on thee . . . slough his greihond nowt geltif.”* The Middle English versions, **A\*** (11.20), **He** (p. 31), and **Hs** (499–501), agree in having the sage present the tale as a lesson on the danger of following women’s advice; **A\*** adds that if the emperor follows his wife’s counsel, he will be ignoring that of his barons. The northern version and **E** also blame haste for the knight’s demise. In **K** (1387) and **Do** (p. 42), the story is moralized as a warning against hasty action.
- 855–56     *For I thee warni of thine fon, / And thou ne kanst me thank non.* This is the first in a series of remarks in which the empress worries about the effectiveness of her tales. See too 1212–14 (before *gaza*), 1353 (after *gaza*), and 1539–44 (before *senescalcus*). Lines to this effect occur at this juncture throughout the southern texts, excepting **F**. In **He** (p. 32) and in the other English texts, they are absent. In **K** (1427–32), the empress cites Cato to the effect that those who listen to stories without catching their meaning are worthy of ridicule. Where the empress doubts the capacity of her tales to change the emperor’s mind, she highlights a problem lying at the heart of the story-telling competition. Both the empress and the sages are invested in the idea that stories can be persuasive and effect change in the world, but the emperor’s vacillation suggests otherwise. On the failure of judicial rhetoric in the poem, see Foehr-Janssens, “La parole condensée” and Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, pp. 132–34.

TALE 3: *APER*, THE BOAR. THE EMPRESS.

The empress responds to *canis* with a lesson on the dangerous allure of storytelling. The moral that she draws is clear: like the herdsman who calms the boar before killing him, the sages seek to lull the emperor with their tales in preparation for a mortal attack of their own (926–32). But the parallel between the emperor and the boar might also shed a light on the frame narrative that is less helpful for the empress's purpose. The boar in *aper* is not an innocent victim; it inspires fear across a whole region (871–73) and is capable of terrifying displays of anger (896–E903). Diocletian is likewise prone to fits of rage. Earlier in the day, during a fractious conversation with the sage who tells *canis*, the emperor adds to the punishments that he is planning for his son, saying that he will be drawn as well as hanged (667–68). The shepherd boy's youth and vulnerability invite comparison with the situation of the prince, and so *aper* might also be read as an allegory of the emperor's tyrannical and potentially self-destructive assault on his son.

*Aper* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages* and in all the versions of the *Book of Sindbad* except **SindA1001** and **SindP3**. In the *Book of Sindbad*, the story concerns a monkey and either a boar or a pig. In some versions, the concubine invites the prince's father to see the monkey as a stand-in for the sages. In that case, the boar or pig arrives at a fig tree in which the monkey is sitting; the monkey throws down one or more figs; and the creature kills itself by straining its neck upwards for more fruit (**SindA101**, pp. 254–55; **SindSp**, p. 32; **SindGr**, pp. 72–75). **SindHeb** (pp. 204–07) follows this pattern but has a man in the tree instead of the monkey: he has climbed up there in his flight from the boar. **SindSyr** (p. 116) also belongs in this group, but the animal is a sow. In the two Persian versions the concubine presents the monkey as a stand-in for herself. Here the monkey has retired from the world, either to pursue a life of prayer or for fear of becoming a burden on its family. Fleeing his enemies, the boar strays onto the monkey's patch and is fed from the tree by the monkey, either until the monkey accuses the boar of being an ungrateful guest or until there are no more figs. The boar then kills himself in the process of attacking the tree (**SindP1**, pp. 131–38; **SindP2**, pp. 59–60).

The main variant readings amongst the versions of *aper* transmitted in the *Seven Sages* concern its geographical location; the motivation of the herdsman; and the nature of the empress's moral.

## FURTHER READING

On the various versions of *aper*, see Campbell, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiv, and Krappe, “Studies [1].”

867        *here bi west*. The northern version, **Hs** (527), and the southern versions excepting **F** set the tale “out west” in a part-geographical, part-historical, part-mythical location that often provides a backdrop for Middle English romance. Compare the opening of *Lay le Freine*, line 29, which is also preserved in the Auchinleck Manuscript, and see *MED*, *Britaine* (n.). **A\*** (12.1) and **F** (645) set the story in the empress's own country, i.e., Rome, and **Aw** (p. 649) sets the story in France. The midland version, **K**, and **He** do not locate the tale.

879–82    *In that forest woned an herd . . . he hit hadde isought*. **A\*** (12.5) and all the Middle English versions except **F** agree in having the herdsman set out into the forest to find a lost animal. In **F** (649–52), the herdsman has lost an animal and flees into the forest to avoid his master's anger; there he climbs an oak tree and starts to eat its acorns. **K** (1927–30), **Hs** (539–40), and **Aw** (p. 649) have the herdsman discovering the boar's tree by chance; **K** also insists on the character's youth. In **He** (p. 34), an emperor has promised his daughter and his kingdom to anyone who can kill the boar: this is why the shepherd enters the forest.

- 901        *aresede*. *MED*, *aresen* (v.2) lists this as its only example of the verb used in this sense.
- 926–32    “Lo, sire emperour . . . sle with dethes glaive.” **A\*** (13.1–2) and the Middle English versions agree in presenting the boar as a reflection of the emperor and the herdsman as a reflection of the sages. In **He** (p. 35), **Hs** (571–82), and **K** (1983–2004), the herdsman is equated with the prince, whom the empress accuses of conspiring to bring about her husband’s downfall with the help of the sages’ soothing tales. **K** insists that the boar is to blame for his downfall and **Hs** adds further allegorical touches: the tree that the son climbs is the tree of knowledge and the fruit that he throws down to the boar is the fruit of the sages’ learning. In **S** (p. 217), the boar is said to be the emperor; the tree represents the emperor’s imperial dignity, which the son, as the herdsman, appropriates for himself; and the fruits thrown down to the boar are the arguments of the sages.

## DAY 3

- 981        *For here bolt is sone ischote*. The image is of the shooting of a bolt from a crossbow; the sense appears to be that women shoot carelessly and to little effect. *MED*, *bolt* (n.), sense 1b identifies the phrase as proverbial. See too Whiting F408.

TALE 4: *MEDICUS*, THE DOCTOR. SECOND SAGE, ANCILLES.

The second sage intends his tale to underline the unprofitability of competition with one’s natural successors: by killing his nephew and burning his books, Ypocras deprives himself of two routes to healing that he might have tried had he let his apprentice live (1145–68). Like *gaza* and *vii sapientes*, which are told by the empress, *medicus* is a tale in which scholars come off poorly. The tale also raises the specter of the unnatural child in the form of the king of Hungary’s illegitimate son. The nephew’s treatment of the Hungarian prince (1037–87) risks recalling the empress’s claim that Diocletian’s son is illegitimate (477) when the sages would have the emperor’s attention focused elsewhere. Also counter to their purposes is the characterization of Ypocras’s nephew, who is tricky. When his uncle stops teaching him, the nephew finishes his education by spying on his guardian (1011–14).

For medieval readers, the criticism that accrues to Ypocras in the tale might recall the doctor’s presentation as a dupe of women in the Arthurian romances. In the *Estoire del saint Graal*, Hippocrates is humiliated first by a woman who flirts with him but then leaves him hanging in a basket from her window, then by his own wife, who poisons him. Campbell (p. 160) suggests a distant link between the first part of *medicus* and a story according to which Hippocrates discovers from external signs that an illness of Perdiccas II, king of Macedonia, was caused by the king having fallen in love with his father’s concubine. Campbell (p. 161n1086) also notes as inspiration for the tale a fable relating Hippocrates’s burning of his books at Kos, where he was librarian, in order to conceal the use that he had made of them in his own writings. In the Arthurian tradition and in the *Seven Sages*, the value of the book learning that wise men might wield can never entirely escape doubt.

*Medicus* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages*. **A\*** stands apart from the others where it lacks lines describing Ypocras’s early envy of his nephew and identifying the doctor’s dysentery as his punishment for killing the boy (compare, e.g., **A**1018, **A**1119–22, **A**1148–56). In **K**, the tale’s stages are ordered differently. **K** lacks the description of the nephew’s apprenticeship, beginning instead with the story of the

adulterous queen's son, which **K** situates in Greece (1707–56). Ypocras is afflicted with dysentery and performs the barrel trick for his friends before he kills his nephew (**K**1783–1804); there is also a discussion of an enigmatic dictum that is the only doctrine Ypocras will transmit to his students (**K**1805–28). Other variant readings across the extant versions concern the nephew's apprenticeship; the diagnosis of the son born out of wedlock; the treatment of Ypocras's barrel trick; and the scope of the sage's concluding moral.

#### FURTHER READING

On the negative depiction of book learning in *medicus*, see Foehr-Janssens, “La trahison des sages” and Speer, “Recycling the Seven Sages.” On the Arthurian background to the tale, see Foehr-Janssens, “Arthur et les sept sages.” On Ypocras as an avatar of the emperor, see Foehr-Janssens, “La parole condensée.” On the representation of Hippocrates in Arthurian romance, see Nicolas, “Fabrique du personnage.” For a Middle English translation of the *Estoire*, see Lovelich, *The History of the Holy Grail*, ed. Furnivall and Kempe; on Hippocrates, see chapters 35–37. On the sources and analogues of *medicus*, see Campbell, pp. lxxxiv–lxxxv; and Krappe, “Studies [1]” and “Studies [3].” On a possible link between this tale and the tale of Yunan and Duban in the *Thousand and One Nights*, see Mallette, “Narration and Silence.”

- 1003        *Sire Ypocras*. The celebrated physician, Hippocrates of Kos (ca. 460–ca. 370 BCE). On his representation in Arthurian romance, see the headnote to this tale.
- 1005–06    *his neveu . . . lere of his vertu*. In the southern and the northern versions, and in **He** (p. 91), where the nephew is called Galienus, after another famous doctor, Ypocras breaks off his instruction when he sees that his apprentice is learning too quickly. In **A\*** (14.2) and **Hs** (623–24), he never undertakes to teach his nephew. In the midland version (**D**1048–57), the nephew is a wastrel who teaches himself medicine from his uncle's books.
- 1039–40    *He taketh an urinal for to sen, / He ne segh nowt of the kyng, but of the quen*. In the southern and northern versions and in **He** (p. 93), the nephew only needs one urine sample; in **A\*** (14.10), the nephew also asks for urine samples from the child's parents. In the midland version (**D**1072–79), **Aw** (p. 650), and **S** (p. 218), the nephew guesses the cause of his patient's illness from looking at him; the midland version also has a passage in which the passing of such skillful scholars is lamented. In **K**, the method of diagnosis is not specified.
- 1044–80    *‘Dame,’ he saide, ‘be aknawe . . . A, leve maister, let no man wite.’* This exchange is condensed in the midland version (**D**1084–1103), where the boy approaches the mother more delicately.
- 1071        *Therl of Naverne*. In the Middle English versions, where he is identified, the father is a lord of Navarre, a kingdom in northern Spain. In **A\*** (15.1), he is from Namur; in **He** (p. 93), he is from Burgundy; in **Hs** (688), he is from Artane; in **K** (1748), he is from Frisia.
- 1084–86    *Contrarius drink, contrarius mete . . . gaf the child anon therof*. The Latinate adjective *contrarius* belongs to a scientific register and is well chosen to reflect the medical proficiency of the nephew; several of the examples in the *MED* under *contrarious* (adj.) are drawn from astrological or medical texts. It is unclear whether the direct speech in these lines ends with line 1084 or continues into 1085. We take the loose syntax in 1085 to indicate that the direct speech continues for a line. Some version of the nephew's remedy including beef and either broth

- or water is given everywhere except in the northern version, where boar's flesh is called for (C1184), and in the midland version, which does not mention how the child is cured. In **D\*** (p. 13), where the child is identified as the natural son of the king of Frisia, the elements of the cure are said to match the Frisian diet.
- 1118 *He let alle hise bokes berne.* It is not clear here whether the books to be burned are Ypocras's or the boy's; the imprecision is met again in line 1160. Readers with an awareness of Hippocrates's reputation as a burner of books (on which see the headnote to this tale) may have had little difficulty interpreting these lines. For those unaware of the backstory, it will have been unclear whether Ypocras destroys his own learning or his nephew's.
- 1133–44 *An empti tonne he let fet . . . Mervaille hadde mani a man.* The barrel trick is absent in the midland version, which ends with Ypocras falling ill and dying (**D**1152–53), and in **Aw**, which ends with Ypocras being cursed for killing his nephew (p. 650). **S** (p. 218) underlines the point that the doctor's nephew might have saved him.
- 1157–68 *"Lo!" saide the maister . . . "on maister Ypocras."* The southern and northern versions and **Hs** (779–90) agree in giving the sage a moral that concentrates on the waste of life and learning constituted by Ypocras's murder of his nephew. In the midland version (**D**1154–63) and **A\*** (16.4–5), the sage expands upon this moral with a reminder to the emperor that he only has one son. **K** underlines Ypocras's responsibility for his own demise (**K**1855–66).
- 1201–02 *A! Hou wimmen conne hit make, / Whan thai wil ani man lake.* These lines that incriminate women in general are unique to **A**.
- 1212–14 *"Lat be, sire . . . bi hevene kyng."* These lines in which the empress doubts the effectiveness of her tales are found in the northern and the southern versions, except **F**; they expand on a line in **A\*** (16.13). They are absent elsewhere.
- 1218 *tellen als a fals wimman.* This line presenting the empress as an example of women's falseness is shared with variants by the southern version texts, except **F**. They are absent elsewhere.

#### TALE 5: GAZA, THE TREASURE. THE EMPRESS.

Like *medicus* and *vii sapientes*, *gaza* is a tale in which sages come off poorly. It is also a tale whose total implications appear to escape its teller. The connection that the empress intends her husband to draw between the behavior of the thieving sage in *gaza* and his own sages is made patent where she identifies him as one of a group of seven sages at the court of the emperor Octavian (1227–34). She also impugns the prince's loyalty to his father: unless the emperor acts, she concludes, his son will be just as quick to chop off his father's head and throw it in a privy as was the son in the tale (1348–50). But the empress's moral sits uneasily with her story insofar as the father in *gaza* repeatedly commands his own decapitation (1288–89; 1297–98). By killing him, the son performs an act of obedience that is ordered to save not only himself but also his family (1292–96). Indeed, the empress seems rather to be clutching at straws when she reserves her principal objection for the way the son disposes of the head rather than the beheading per se (1339–45). Such is

the gap between the tale and the empress's purpose that some readers find the match of teller to tale in this instance to be deliberately designed to discredit her.

*Gaza* was a popular story in antiquity and in the Middle Ages; it is included in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* and in the *Dolopathos*. Some part of the empress's difficulty may derive from the pliability of the tale; in the *Dolopathos*, it is told as an example of the propensity of appearances to deceive by one of the sages contesting the empress's rape accusation (**Do**, pp. 43–50). The main variant readings across the extant versions concern the identity of the father; the backgrounding of the narrative, and the character of the son, whose eagerness to engage in the theft and to decapitate his father varies.

#### FURTHER READING

On the disjunction between the empress's moral and her tale, see Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, p. 132 and Ho, "Framed Progenies." For the argument that *gaza* is given to the empress to discredit her, see Speer, "Translatio as Inventio." On the transmission of *gaza*, see Paris, "Le conte du trésor du roi Rhampsinite," which finds the earliest extant rendition of the tale in Herodotus. On the tale's analogues, see too Campbell, pp. lxxxv–xc. On the far eastern career of the story, see Matsubara, "Chinese and Japanese Versions of *Gaza*," and "Une version japonaise de *Gaza*."

- 1221      *Octovien*. Octavian, Caesar Augustus (63 BCE–CE 14), was the adoptive son of Julius Caesar and the first Roman emperor, reigning from 27 BCE until his death. Campbell (p. 162n1318) notes that, in the Middle Ages, his great wealth was proverbial. Octavian's love of treasure is sometimes found problematic. The midland version (**D**1193–1235), **A\*** (17.1), and **Hs** (824–28) suggest that his hoarding is unreasonable, but these lines are absent elsewhere. On the tale's implicit criticism of greed in the *Dolopathos*, where the ruler is unnamed, see Foehr-Janssens, *Le temps des fables*, pp. 267–78.
- 1225      *Cressent*. Campbell (p. 162n1317) notes the recurrence of this name in some versions of *Roma*, where it is also the name given to a tower, and in *Virgilius*, where it is a variant for Crasus, the anti-hero of that tale.
- 1227–30      *Seve wise men . . . kepe Rome with rightful dome*. In the Middle English versions, **A\*** (17.3–4), and **K** (2863–66, 2871–74), both the keeper of the treasury and the thief are sages; in **A\*** and in the southern and midland versions, the connection between the sages in the frame narrative and the sages in *gaza* is strengthened because there the two sages are said to belong to a larger group of seven sages at Rome. In **He** (p. 46) and **Hs** (829–34), the keeper of the tower and the thief are knights. In the midland version (**D**1206–15), **He** (p. 46), and **Hs** (835–46), the father's debts necessitate his robbery of the tower. In **S** (p. 219), the thief is a knight who is dismissed after twenty years of faithful service on the report of his enemies; he and his son return to steal bits of treasure from the tower over several years in order to eke out a living. In **Do** (pp. 43–44), the father is a knight who has retired from his role as the keeper of the king's treasury but returns to rob it when his profligate son uses up the inheritance that he has given him.
- 1235      *als we finden writen in boke*. The empress's appeal to written authority in this tale can be interpreted as an attempt to bolster her credibility. Because the version of the popular story that she tells differs broadly from its analogues, it may be that the gesture was interpreted ironically

by its medieval readers, who could interpret her rewriting of the story as a further example of her deceptive nature. On the transmission history of *gaza*, see the headnote to this tale.

- 1249 *withouten sojour.* In the Middle English versions, the son does not resist his father's plan; in **He** (pp. 46–47) and **Do** (p. 44), the father and son decide on the theft together; in **A\*** (17.13–16; 18.3), **Hs** (863–66), and **K** (2885–90), the son is reluctant to embark upon the theft.
- 1261–62 *He ne made no pleint to no man, / But stopped the hole anon agen.* **Do** (pp. 44–45) adds a passage where an old thief advising the proprietor of the treasure teaches him a trick to discover the thieves' point of entry.
- 1265–66 *For thef of steling wil nowt blinne, / Til he honge bi the chinne.* This gnomic commentary is unique to the southern version. The phrase is proverbial. See Whiting T79.
- 1273–74 *The stolen catel ispended is, / The wise bicometh a fol, iwis.* This gnomic commentary is unique to the southern version.
- 1288–1300 *'Sone, with thin hond thi swerd . . . al that sinne.'* Two versions cast the son in a less positive light at this juncture. In **Hs** (909–14), the son does not hesitate to kill his father and, in **Aw** (p. 651), the decapitation is the son's idea, to which the father objects. In **S** (p. 219), the son is shown decapitating his father with none of the conversation found in the other versions.
- 1301–08 *His fader heued . . . and his sustren also.* The midland version (**D**1259–67) concludes after the son has decapitated his father and thrown his head in a ditch. **Aw** (p. 651) ends directly after the decapitation and does not show the son disposing of the head.
- 1315–22 *He let him drawe . . . 'For of that kyn he was ibore.'* Variations on this trial are shared at the conclusion of the southern and northern versions and in **A\*** (19.6–16) and **Hs** (931–52). In **K** (2959–74), the father has warned the son that his body will be dragged around Rome and instructs him on how to proceed; once he has passed the test, the son leaves his father's body behind and sets out with his family for Carthage (**K**3023–28). In **He** (pp. 48–49), where the keeper of the treasure is being instructed by the emperor, the corpse is hung on the gallows after being dragged around Rome and the son leaves his father's body exposed there. In **Do** (pp. 47–48), the body is dragged past the son's house twice; he disguises his family's mourning first by cutting off his thumb, then by throwing his child into a well. Finally, by a clever ruse he manages to save his father's body from the gallows at night (p. 49).
- 1339–45 *"Lo, sire, swich a foul wille . . . Ibiried hit ower preveliche."* The southern and northern versions and **K** (2029–38) share this brief moral. **A\*** (19.17), the midland version (**D**1268–73), and **Hs** (957–58) add that the son quickly forgot his father once he came into his inheritance. In **He** (p. 50), the empress adds that, while the emperor labors for his son's profit, his son labors for the emperor's destruction. In **Do** (p. 49), where the story is told by one of the wise men defending the prince, the tale is said to exemplify the frequently deceptive nature of appearances. In **Aw** (p. 651), the empress predicts that the emperor's son will kill him because he desires the empire.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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- 1349–50 “*Thi sone, the devel him mote anhonge, / But he cast thin heued in a gonge.*” The curses with which the empress and the sages typically end their moralizations usually wish ill on the emperor unless he changes his course of action. Here the empress modifies the formula to suggest that the son would be a fool not to kill his own father. She thus emphasizes the likelihood that the prince will attempt to usurp the emperor unless he is stopped.
- 1353 “*Sire, I leve thee nowt, sikerliche.*” This line in which the empress doubts the effectiveness of her tale is unique to **A**.
- 1355 “*Graunt merci,*” *she saide*, “*sire gent.*” The empress’s change of heart after the imprecation uttered above (**A**1349–50) is doubled by a change in language, perhaps to comic effect. After her thoroughly English curse, the empress switches to the French of court in order to express her gratitude. These phrases are not taken over from the French source, which instead has the empress hoping that the emperor will follow through on his promise to kill his son. See **A**\* 19.20.

## DAY 4

### TALE 6: PUTEUS, THE WELL. THIRD SAGE, LENTILIOUN.

The sages’ third tale is presented as an example of feminine deceit: if the emperor kills his son on the advice of his wife, he will have been betrayed by his wife in the same way as was the husband in the story (1516–20). Nevertheless, sympathies might accrue to the tale’s ostensible villain. The opening puts the husband in the wrong where his snobbish rejection of his neighbors’ children is described (1403–08); the marriage agreement is also said to be struck between the husband and his wife’s father, further alleviating the wife of responsibility for the union’s failure (1410–12). Sympathy for the wife in the tale might extend to sympathy for the empress, whose marriage is likewise arranged (227–30). Like *tentamina* and *inclusa*, *puteus* is a tale in which wives might be less damnable than the sages imply.

*Puteus* is included in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* and in the *Dolopathos*, where it is combined with *inclusa* (**Do**, pp. 78–79). There the wife is kept in a tower, escapes to visit a lover, and is locked out, but can switch places with her husband thanks to the well trick. Instead of leaving the husband outside to be discovered by the town guard, in this version, the wife lets him back in after he has promised to stop locking her up. The main variants in the telling of the story in the *Seven Sages* concern the identity of the male protagonist; the arrangement of the couple’s marriage; the wife’s relationship to her suitor; and the conditions that allow for the husband’s discovery of his wife’s infidelity.

### FURTHER READING

On the transmission of *puteus* beyond the *Seven Sages*, including mention of Molière’s *George Dandin*, which reworks the tale’s faked suicide, see Campbell, pp. xc–xci. On the curfew mentioned in many versions of the story, see Hilka, “Zum Roman des Sept Sages.”

- 1402–03 *A riche man of gret renoun, / That wolde spouse no neyhebour’s schild.* The identity and age of the husband vary, as does the manner of his marriage. In the southern and northern versions and **K** (2125), the protagonist is called a bourgeois or a rich man; in the midland version, he is simply a man (**D**1333); in **Hs** (1019), he is a citizen of Rome; in **He** (p. 37), he is a knight. In

- Do** (p. 78), he is a philosopher. **A\*** (21.1–4), **D** (1336–38), **He** (p. 38), and **Hs** (1019–25) provide a traditional reason for the wife's infidelity: there the husband is said to be old; **A\*** and **Hs** further encourage a mental connection between the husband and the emperor where the husband is shown to take a new wife on the advice of his friends. With two exceptions, the northern and the southern versions have the husband disdain his neighbors' children and take a stranger's daughter as his wife. In **B**, the husband disdains poor matches and, in **F** (531–36), the husband is said to be on his third wife, whom he has married for her inheritance. In **K** (2125–36), the husband marries locally but above his rank.
- 1413      *He spoused hire and ladde hire hom.* **Hs** (1028–38) and **Do** (p. 78) add that the husband shut his wife up in a stone tower built specially for her keeping. The inclusion of this motif strengthens the connections between *inclusa* and *puteus* in **Hs** and **Do**.
- 1414      *Hire forme lemman hire after com.* In the northern and the southern versions, except **F**, the wife already has a lover when she is married; the northern version adds that the wife kept her lover once he had moved to be with her and that the lover befriended her husband (**C**1522–26). In **F** (545–50), **D** (1336–38), **A\*** (21.4), **He** (p. 37), and **K** (2137–38), the wife takes a lover after her marriage. In **Hs** (1041–50) and **Do** (p. 78), the wife spots the man who will be her lover when sitting at the window in her tower.
- 1417–23      *Than was the lawe . . . him villiche drive.* This description of the curfew is shared by the northern and southern versions and by **He** (p. 37); **F** (537–44) makes breaking the curfew punishable by death. **A\*** (21.5) adds a link to the frame narrative where it says that the judgment of those caught out late awaits the arrival of the seven sages in the consistory the next day. There is some variance among the other versions regarding the handling of the curfew. **Aw** and **Do** do not mention the curfew, and the midland version (**D**1413–37) postpones its description of the curfew but shares the claim with **F** that breaking the rule was punishable by death. **K** (2185–96) gives a reason for the establishment of the rule: young people had been making love to the city's statues at night.
- 1432–33      *Sche stal awai mididone / And wente to here lotebi.* The degree of ruse deployed by the husband and the wife varies. There is no subterfuge on the part of the husband in **D** (1339–46) and **Aw** (p. 651); in the northern version he pretends to be asleep (**C**1547–78). In **He** (p. 37), the wife steals her husband's keys; in **Hs** (1051–56), she steals his keys after getting him drunk. In **A\*** (21.9), the wife feigns illness to go to see her lover; in **K** (2139–44), the wife carefully prepares the excuse for her absence by complaining of toothache throughout the day.
- 1438      *And schet the dore swithe skete.* In **K** (2163–70), the husband has gone searching for his wife with his sword drawn but does not dare attack the couple upon discovering them because he knows that the guilty should be tried at court in Rome. The husband's hesitancy in this version contrasts with the emperor's impetuous behavior in the frame narrative.
- 1445–46      *'A, lat me in, sire, par amour, / Men sschal sone ringe corfour.'* In **He** (p. 38) and **Hs** (1083–86), the wife claims that she was called away to visit her sick mother by one of her mother's maids.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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- 1456        *'For here thou havest lived too longe.'* Both **A\*** (21.25) and **He** (p. 39) mention that the night becomes especially dark at this moment in the narrative.
- 1460        *'Her now, sire, I schal me adrenchen.'* In **He** (p. 39) and **Hs** (1108–12), the wife makes her testament, leaving her soul to God and the Virgin, her body to St. Peter's, and her belongings to her husband. In **F** (591–94), she has a final prayer for forgiveness.
- 1490        *Thai wist ful wel hou hit ferde.* This suggestion that the wife's infidelities are common knowledge is transmitted in **B** and **Ar**; it is absent elsewhere. In the northern and southern versions and in **A\*** (22.6–7), but not in the midland version, **He**, and **Hs**, the watchmen are aware of the husband's good reputation and encourage the wife to readmit him. These variants adumbrate a larger culture in which men might use their social power to help each other out. In **K** (2309–14), the wife makes this point patent when she accuses the watchmen of accepting bribes from her husband.
- 1500        *The burgeis was lad forht with wrong.* In the midland version (**D**1446–52), the husband tries to prevent his arrest by claiming that he had gone out at night to look for a lost spaniel. In **Do** (p. 79), the wife finally readmits her husband after he promises that he will no longer keep her against her will. Her tower is pulled down and she is left to come and go as she pleases.
- 1505–10    *Amorewe the burgeis . . . Gelteles he suffred, this penaunce.* In **F** (625), the husband is stoned to death the next day. In **S** (p. 221), the husband is also killed.
- 1516–18    *She wil thee traie sikerlich . . . dost thi sone to ded.* The moral varies. In the southern version texts except **F**, and in **A\*** (22.14), the sage threatens the emperor with a betrayal greater than that visited upon the husband by his wife. In **F** (627–30), the emperor's life is at stake. The northern version says that the emperor's shame will be greater than the husband's in the tale if he follows the empress's advice (**C**1653–56). The midland version says that the emperor risks losing his honor as did the husband in his tale (**D**1470–73). **He** (p. 42) and **Hs** (1159–60) focus on the husband's punishment, which the emperor's punishment would exceed should he execute his son. **K** (2331–34) presents the tale as another exemplum against hasty action: the emperor will no more be able to undo the execution of his son than could the husband reenter the house from which he had been shut out.
- 1539–44    *"Nai, sire," she saide . . . "suffri wel that man thee spille."* These lines in which the empress doubts the effectiveness of her tales are common to the southern version texts, except **F**; they expand on a line in **A\*** (22.25). The empress also expresses doubts about the effectiveness of her tales in **Hs** (1182–83).

### TALE 7: SENESCALCUS, THE STEWARD. THE EMPRESS.

The empress uses her fourth tale to present a new argument. If the emperor loses his power, he will be driven from his own country as is the steward in her story; her own losses will be smaller, she says, because she will be free to remarry, as was the steward's wife (1651–58). While there is a long tradition of portraying stewards as morally tricky characters, the empress's lesson sits oddly with the tale because there

has been no suggestion that the emperor shares this steward's covetousness; it also shows the empress somewhat indecorously making plans for a life without her current husband. The empress's attribution of sodomitical tendencies to the king at the opening of the tale may likewise reflect unfavorably upon her given that in medieval romances such accusations are often revealed to be malicious and fallacious. The fourteenth century has been interpreted as a moment where attitudes towards male homosexuality begin to harden and, as this happens, homosexual desires are increasingly projected onto foreign others — here the Italians of Apulia and Calabria.

Some part of the interpretative challenge that the tale and its moralization pose may derive from a mismatch between the tale and its teller. In the *Book of Sindbad*, where scholarship refers to the tale under the title *balneator* (the bath attendant), *senescalcus* is told by one of the father's counsellors as a warning against acting in haste (**SindA101**, pp. 246–49; **SindGr**, pp. 58–63; **SindSp**, pp. 29–30; **SindA1001**, 2:562–63), or as an example of the fickleness of women's affections (**SindP1**, pp. 139–43), or their wives (**SindHeb**, pp. 208–19). It may be that in the *Seven Sages* the empress is given *senescalcus* to tell as part of a deliberate attempt to discredit her. But it should be emphasized that in the *Book of Sindbad* the tale is not a perfect fit for the counsellors either. In **SindGr** (pp. 62–63) and **SindA1001** (2:563), the wife does not always enjoy the attentions of the prince and additional blame accrues to the husband for disrespecting his spouse.

*Senescalcus* is found in all the versions of the *Seven Sages* consulted for this edition except **F**. It is found in all the extant versions of the *Book of Sindbad* except **SindSyr**, where the manuscript is damaged, and **SindP3**. It is left untranslated in the text that we have consulted for **SindP2** (p. 61n1), apparently on account of its risqué plot. In the *Book of Sindbad*, the sodomy motif is absent. There, a bathkeeper who has questioned the virility of a fat prince is charged by the prince with finding him a prostitute to have sex with. Assuming that the prince is impotent and wishing to pocket the prostitute's fee, the bathkeeper sends his own wife to the prince. The plot backfires when the prince proves himself eminently capable of sex, and the bathkeeper hangs himself, or throws himself off the bathhouse, in shame.

Regarding the king's sexuality and his illness there is considerable variance across the versions of *senescalcus* compiled in the *Seven Sages*; two of the Middle English texts appear to have been altered to straighten the story (see the Explanatory Note to lines 1553–54, below). In **He** (pp. 99–106), *senescalcus* is conflated with *Roma*. In this version, the king who unwittingly procures sex with the steward's wife is the same person as the king who attacks Rome and is routed by the sages' tricks. The other main variants across the versions of *senescalcus* transmitted in the *Seven Sages* concern the description of the relationship between the king and the steward; the fates of the steward and his wife; and the moral. Gower appears to have known one of the **A**-text renditions of *senescalcus*, which he retells in *Confessio amantis* 5.2643–2825 (*The English Works*, ed. Macaulay, 2:19–24).

#### FURTHER READING

On the mismatch of the tale to the teller, see Speer, "What Ails the Sodomite King of Egypt?" On the king in *senescalcus* as an avatar of Diocletian, see Foehr-Janssens, "La parole condensée." On fallacious and malicious accusations of sodomy as a motif in medieval romance, see Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law*, p. 90. On the varying treatment of the sodomitical ruler in the *Seven Sages* tradition, see Critten, "Sodomy and the East." On male homosexuality more generally, and for the thesis that the fourteenth century sees a hardening of attitudes towards male homosexuality, see Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Boswell's arguments have not found universal acceptance; see too the review essay by Kuefler, "Homoeroticism in Antiquity and the Middle Ages"). For a survey of romance stewards, see Hazell, "'Trewe Man' or 'Wicke Traitour?'" On the conjoining of *senescalcus* and *Roma* in the **H**-text, see

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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Foehr-Janssens, *L'Histoire des sept sages*, pp. 32–37; and Runte, “From the Vernacular to Latin and Back.” On Gower’s use of *senescalcus*, see Gower, *The English Works*, ed. Macaulay, 2:496n2643ff. On the tale’s analogues, see too Campbell, pp. xci–xciii.

- 1551–52 *Al Poile and Calabre lond — / Al he held hit in his hond.* The action is situated in Italy in all the Middle English texts as well as **A\*** (23.1) and **Hs** (1187). **K** (1441) and **D\*** (p. 9) set the tale in Egypt. **Aw** (p. 659) sets the story in Germany.
- 1553–54 *Wimmen he lovede swithe lite / And usede sinne sodomighte.* There is considerable disagreement among the surviving texts regarding the nature of the king’s sexual behavior. **A** follows **A\*** (23.1) and agrees with **D\*** (p. 9) in calling the king a sodomite but some uncertainty remains because the label is written out as three individual words: “so do might” (**A** fol. 93r). If three words are read here rather than one, the line could be translated: “and regularly committed sins, as well he might.” **B** is clearer — “He vside synne of sodomyte” — but none of the other Middle English versions is so direct. The northern version mentions that the king had no delight in love or women (**C**1693–94); the midland version (**D**1517–19), **Hs** (1188–89), and **S** (p. 220) say that the king hated women; and in **K** (1441–42), the king is held to be a sodomite. Several texts dispatch with the sodomy motif entirely. In **He** (p. 99), the king’s sexual inactivity is not of his choosing: here he is an enemy of Rome who wants sex with a woman before he launches an attack on the city; he needs the help of his steward because his face is offputtingly deformed. In two of the southern texts, the king is said to be a womanizer. In **Ar**, he loves women day and night and, in **E**, he takes great delight in women.
- 1555–58 *So long he pleiede with yong man . . . ne mighte himselve welde.* The nature of the king’s illness and its cause are handled differently across the extant versions. In **A**, the swelling in the king’s members is apparently venereal in its cause insofar as it is presented as a result of his dalliances with young men; in **Ar** and **E**, it is attributed to intercourse with women in his youth. In the northern version, the midland version, and **Hs** (1190–91) the king’s illness is linked to abstention from sex with women; in **Hs** (1211–12), he is threatened with leprosy unless he finds a cure. In **K** (1443–48), the king grows fat due to his sexual inactivity; in **S** (p. 220), he is called Grossus. In **He** (p. 99), the king is not ill but deformed. In **Aw** (p. 659), the reason for the king’s swelling disease is not given.
- 1563–64 *Barli bred . . . And barli water.* The diet of barley bread and barley water or (spring) water is prescribed in **A\*** (23.4), **Hs** (1203–04), **K** (1499–1502), and in all the southern texts of the tale except in **B**, where these lines are omitted; mention of the diet is also omitted in the northern and midland versions.
- 1569–70 *his stiward . . . com als a leopard.* Leopards were reputed for their cunning and cleverness. See *MED*, *leopard* (n.), sense 1b.
- 1581–82 *Thanne thout that stiward coveitous: / ‘That silver schal bileve with ous.’* The northern version goes one step further, having the steward wish that he were a woman so that he could lie with the king and win the money himself (**C**1726–28). The homoerotic connections between the king and the steward are most strongly brought out in **K** (1461–64), where as well as being

- described as a handsome young man, the steward is said to be the king's *dru*, a word whose possible translations include "lover." See DMF, *dru* (n.). In **K** (1516–20) and **B**, the steward plants the idea that payment for sex will be necessary.
- 1593–94     *Who that selver winne nelle, / Lese he mot with right skille.* This bit of wisdom is transmitted in the northern and southern versions and in **A\*** (23.15). It is absent elsewhere.
- 1597         *O nedes he sschal that nedes mot.* This line is proverbial. See Whiting N61.
- 1625–26     *'Nai, sire, hit is mi leuedi / That al night hath laien thee bi.'* Here the possessiveness that the steward belatedly feels for his wife explodes. The midland version alone has the king discover the identity of the woman by himself at light of day (**D**1600–03). In **S** (p. 220), the steward's wife sets the king against the steward during the night and the king has the steward hanged in the morning. In **K** (1613–22), the steward attempts to excuse himself by saying that he could find no other woman willing to sleep with the king.
- 1644         *He com agein nevere more.* The tale usually ends with the banishment of the steward. **B** puts a more definitive end to his story: he is bound naked to a post and molten silver and lead are poured into his mouth until he dies (**B**1691–1700).
- 1646–49     *And kep the leuedi with the best . . . a riche erl of that lond.* The other southern texts and the northern texts agree with **A** in having the king pass her on to one of his noblemen. In **A\*** (23.36), **He** (p. 102), **Hs** (1274–75), and **K** (1643–44), the king keeps the wife for himself. In the midland version, the fate of the wife is not specified.
- 1651–62     *"Sire, and so wil hit fare bi you . . . But thou do als I rede thee."* In **A**, the other southern texts, and the northern version, the empress's moral emphasizes the positive outcome that the tale gives the queen and promises the emperor that he risks sharing the fate of the steward unless he follows her advice. The midland version follows **A\*** (24.5) more closely with the suggestion that the emperor is covetous for the sages' tales in the same way that the steward coveted the emperor's money (**D**1621–24); in **A\*** (24.6) and **Aw** (p. 659), the empress expects help not from a future husband but from her friends or family. **K** (1645–52) says that the king risks ending up banished like the steward and that, like the steward's wife, the emperor's son will bear the crown. In **He** (p. 105), the empress argues that the prince covets power as the steward coveted money: the emperor should do with his son as the king did with the steward while he still can. **Hs** (1282–86) says that the sages should be banished as the steward was.

## DAY 5

### TALE 8: TENTAMINA, THE TESTS. FOURTH SAGE, MALQUIDRAS.

The sages' fourth tale is a story of a wicked wife with a difference. In this instance, the old husband's intervention stops the adultery that his young spouse is planning and apparently succeeds in taming her desires. For this reason, the moral drawn in **A** feels rather weak: if the emperor kills his son on his wife's advice, the sage says, a worse fate will befall him than befell the old husband in the tale (1927–32). As is the case in

*inclusa* and *puteus*, some sympathy may accrue to the wife in this tale. The situation of the wife in *tentamina* recalls that of the *mal mariée*, or unhappy wife, of medieval romance. She is trapped in a loveless marriage to a man much older than herself, who is both unresponsive to her attempts to attract his attention and cruel in his punishment of her. It is also significant that two of the wife's tests allow her to strike out at love objects introduced elsewhere in the collection that attracted inordinate male affection: the little tree in *arbor* and the dog in *canis*. The targeting of the little tree and the dog in *tentamina* reminds us of the propensity of men throughout the poem to neglect their wives.

*Tentamina* is found in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages*. A version of the story is also included as one of the examples in the *Mesnagier de Paris*, a manual of advice written by an elderly husband for his younger wife; the *Mesnagier* cites the *Seven Sages* as the source of the anecdote. The major point of difference between the versions of *tentamina* told in the *Seven Sages* tradition concerns the psychology of desire that underlies the mother's advice to her daughter. In the northern and southern texts, except **F**, the mother's logic runs that, by angering her elderly husband, her daughter will reignite his libido (e.g., **A**1811–12; **A**1829–30). The other versions either have the mother suggest that her daughter should test the old man's quickness to punish before embarking on an affair (**A\***, **Aw**, **D**, **He**, **Hs**, **S**) or propose that she might wear him down with her continued assaults (**F**, **K**). Further important variants concern the husband's prehistory; the wife's reliance on her mother and willingness to challenge her; the husband's reactions to the tests; and the sage's moral.

#### FURTHER READING

For sympathetic readings of the wife's predicament in *tentamina*, see Ho, "Framed Progenies"; and Critten "Hating Women." On the husband in the tale as an avatar of the emperor, see Foehr-Janssens, "La parole condensée." The recurrence of the little tree and the dog in the tale has led to the suggestion that the story was written specially for this collection. See Foehr-Janssens, "Le désir et le savoir" and "Misogyny and the Trends." On the tale's analogues, see Campbell, pp. xciii–xciv. For the *Mesnagier*, see *The Good Wife's Guide*, trans. Greco and Rose; *tentamina* analogue at pp. 132–36. On the use of the *Seven Sages* in the *Mesnagier*, see Brereton, "Deux sources."

- 1719–20     *In his youthe . . . two jolif wives*. This description extends a brief mention of the husband's previous marriages in **A\*** (25.4); the northern version expands further still (**C**1879–87). **D** (1676–77), **F** (709–12), **Aw** (p. 660), **He** (p. 69), and **Hs** (1327–30) omit details of any previous marriages; **He** and **Hs** indicate that a young wife has been sought to provide an heir. **K** (2479–96) gives the old man one previous wife with whom he lived happily for twenty years without fathering any children; in both these marriages, the husband marries above his station.
- 1729–32     *Bi her rede . . . wraw and gelouse*. The description of the heroine's entrapment in a marriage to an older man may recall the description of the emperor's marriage to the empress (221–30), with the result that the fate of the heroine in *tentamina* might encourage a more sympathetic apprehension of the empress's situation. In **A\*** (25.3), the connection between the husband in *tentamina* and the emperor in the frame narrative is further strengthened by a description of the emperor sending his men to find him a wife.
- 1743         *'Ich moste have som other love.'* In **A\*** (25.6), the wife gives the marriage a year before she complains to her mother. In **Aw** (p. 660), the wife has already selected a lover by this point; in

the midland version (**D**1680–81), she has a clerk in prospect; and, in **F** (725–28), she wants a priest. In **He** (pp. 69–71) and **K** (2497–2512), the wife remonstrates with her mother for marrying her to an old man and tells her that she intends to take a lover.

- 1748     *'Lat ben, moder, for hit is nede.'* The southern texts except **F** are initially unclear regarding the reason for the wife's tests; in **F** (729–30), the mother hopes that her daughter will achieve mastery over her husband in private. **A\*** (25.13), **Aw** (p. 660), and the midland version (**D**1691–93) clarify that the mother's advice is to test her husband before she takes a lover. **He** (p. 71) and **Hs** (1347–52) are more explicit still, establishing that the test concerns the husband's lust for revenge: if the young wife can get away with these stunts, then she can safely take a lover. In the northern version, the mother hopes to provoke the husband's anger so that he might correct her daughter's wayward tendencies before things go too far (**C**1921–24). In **K** (2547–50), the mother's advice to try the husband's vengefulness becomes clear during her description of the first test.
- 1749–60     *'Doughter, thi louerd hath o gardin . . . To warme bi his colde bones.'* In the midland version, it is the daughter who thinks up the tests for her husband, including the first test with his beloved tree (**D**1694–96). In the **F** text, the wife suggests the husband's little tree as a possible testing point, mentioning that he loves the tree more than her (**F**736–40). **F** and **D** also plan more blatant attempts to attract the husband's ire. In **F** (744), the wife is told to plant docks and nettles in the prized tree's place and, in **D** (1707–08), the wife leaves the pieces of the tree chopped up in the hall for her husband to discover.
- 1763     *al maugre the gardiner.* In **A\*** (25.25), **He** (p. 72), **Hs** (1377–78), and **K** (2569–72), when the gardener refuses to fulfil the wife's order, she takes an axe to the tree herself.
- 1768     *'O,' thoughte he, 'her was a sscherewe.'* The husband in **A** is unusually controlled in his reaction to his wife's infractions. In **Ar**, **E**, **B**, and **Aw** (p. 660), the husband requests an explanation for his wife's actions; in **A\*** (25.32), the northern version (**C**1951), **F** (753–56), and **K** (2585–88), he tells her of his regret. In **He** (pp. 72–73) and **Hs** (1402–15), his remonstrations must be calmed by the wife's tears. In the midland version, the husband is said to hold a grudge against his wife (**D**1717–19).
- 1786–87     *Thi louerd hit wile sone asprie / And he him wolde fellich awreke.* At this point the northern version adds lines in which the wife blames her mother for marrying her to an old man (**C**1958–61).
- 1789–96     *'A grai bichche . . . a wives pleint.'* With the exception of **F**, the southern version remains vague about the purpose of the mother's instructions. **A\*** (25.43) and **Aw** (p. 660) make clear that the second trial with the dog is a test. In **He** (pp. 73–74), **Hs** (1425–26; 1431–32), and **K** (2617–22), it is patent that the test is designed to establish the husband's vengefulness. In the midland version, the wife comes up with the idea of killing the dog herself (**D**1736–39); in **A\*** (25.46), she suggests the idea before her mother can. In **F** (770–71), the wife offers the dog as a possible testing point and complains that her husband loves the animal more than her.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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- 1803–04 *She hadde on a pilche of pris / And a chaisel.* Other versions are more explicit on the point that the wife has put on her best clothes in order to have a pretext for killing the dog when it jumps on her. See, e.g., **A\*** (25.54–64) and **K** (2655–62).
- 1807 *Sche drow a knif and smot.* In **He** (p.74), she kills the dog by throwing it against the wall when it jumps on the marital bed; in **Hs** (1442–46), she kills it with a blow to the head.
- 1810 *The lord ros and yede to bed.* Again, the husband in **A** is unusually taciturn in the face of his wife's provocations. In **Ar**, **E**, **B**, **F** (782–83), the northern version (**C**1993–95), and **Aw** (p. 660), the husband remonstrates with his wife. In **D** (1746–55) and **K** (2663–68), the husband expresses his regret; in **A\*** (25.60–69), **He** (pp. 74–75), and **Hs** (1447–66), the wife's tears calm her husband's ire.
- 1811–12 *For al hire wrenche and al here ginne, / The more love sche ne might awinne.* The southern version texts with the exception of **F** agree at this juncture in identifying the goal of the tests as the reignition of the old husband's libido.
- 1818 *'Doughter, ich rede that thou lat.'* **A\*** (25.76) and **Hs** (1479–82) add lines in which the daughter counters her mother's advice not to bring shame on the family with the argument that her case is different: whereas her mother and father married young, she has an old husband.
- 1820 *'What man hastou ment to love?'* The **F** text omits this discussion and proceeds to the description of a test that is unique to this version, in which the wife kills a hawk that her husband loves more than her (**F**802–27). The midland version also omits this discussion and proceeds directly to the announcement of the third test, which is shared with the other extant versions, in which the wife disrupts a public meal (**D**1782–97). **Hs** (1488–98) has the discussion and adds that the wife is attracted to the priest because of his handsomeness and reliability.
- 1829–30 *'Nai, doughter, her a queinte ginne, / Thi louerdes love hou schalt winne.'* These lines reconfirm that the tests are designed to reignite the libido of the old husband. They are shared across the southern version and the northern version (**C**2019–20). **K** (2699–2702) agrees with **F** (729–30, 798–99) at this juncture where **F** suggests that the mother's goal for her daughter is the subjection of her husband.
- 1845–46 *'And wite I sschal, moder, bi than, / Yif he wil plaie, that olde man.'* These lines clarifying the wife's motives are unique to **A**.
- 1857–58 *Swithe sore sche him atraid, / Certes he was wel ivel ipaid.* The husband's reactions are again unusually muted in **A**. **Ar**, **E**, **B**, and **D** (1798) have a line expressing the husband's anger. In the northern version the husband complains on his guests' behalf (**C**2045–46); in **He** (pp. 76–77), he puts a good face on things for them. In **A\*** (25.95–99) and **Hs** (1535–40), he remonstrates with his wife.

- 1877–89     *Therof ne stod him non owe . . . The barbour in the veyne hire smot.* It is not clear in **A** when the barber takes over the bleeding. In the lines leading up to 1889, the masculine pronouns might refer to the husband or the barber.
- 1901–16     *Hire moder com and sche saide . . . Than thou kanst do with ani wrenche.* The midland version does without the final interview with the mother. Instead, the husband nurses his wife back to health and promises forgiveness in return for amendment (**D**1820–31).
- 1912         *‘I nelle neither lovie clerk ne knight.’* The daughter’s promise seems to satisfy her mother but is oddly formulated in **A** given the preference for priests that she has voiced above.
- 1927–32     *“So fareth the quen . . . As dede to that elde wise.”* In **A**, the emperor is threatened with an outcome that is worse than that which befell the husband in the tale. This is odd insofar as the husband in the tale escapes his wife’s trap. In **A\*** (27.4) and the midland version (**D**1837–47), the emperor is incited to follow the husband’s example; in **K** (2817–18), the advice is that he should bleed the empress. **B** and **E** replace the last three lines of this passage (**A**1930–32) with lines shared with the northern version (**C**2126–28), in which the emperor is threatened with general outrage if he kills his son. **Aw** (p. 661) warns that the emperor should avoid falling into sin as did the wife in the tale. Only **Hs** (1592–94) parallels the moral in **A**. There the emperor is threatened with a worse outcome than the husband in the tale if he follows his wife’s advice and kills his son.

#### TALE 9: VIRGILIUS, VIRGIL. THE EMPRESS.

The Roman poet Virgil (70 BCE–19 BCE) is now remembered principally as the author of the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*. Over the course of the Middle Ages, a series of legends attached to this figure that represented him as a magician. Three of these legends are included in the empress’s fifth tale, where the poet is credited with making i) a fire for the poor at Rome that is overseen by an archer statue (1957–72); ii) two more statues at Rome’s east and west gates that throw a golden ball between them (1986–96); and iii) a mirror alerting the Romans to the movements of their enemies (1998–2008). This last Virgilian contraption was perhaps the best known to medieval audiences; to catalogers of Virgilian legend it is known as the *salvatio Romae*, or the salvation of Rome. **He** (pp. 82–84) and **Hs** (1643–76) offer descriptions of the *salvatio* that are closest to the canonical accounts in which the machine is said to comprise a series of figures representative of the Roman provinces; when one of the provinces is plotting to rebel, the relevant figure rings a bell.

Notwithstanding the time she takes describing the Virgilian marvels, for the empress, the moral of the tale is that wise men flatter and lie in pursuit of their own aims (2145–50). Crassus is painted as another figure who falls foul of false stories (1945–47); in this regard, he reproduces the error of the boar in *aper*. *Virgilius* is also paralleled by the empress’s other stories about deceitful wise men: *gaza*, *vii sapientes*, and *Roma*. But it differs from these tales insofar as Virgil offers a positive example of a clerk whose knowledge is turned to the public good. Virgil’s marvels are either useful or delightful and those who destroy them are clearly in the wrong. The significance of the narrative is thus more complicated than the empress suggests. *Virgilius* teaches us not to reject clerks and learning outright but that it is important to distinguish between applications of learning as either profitable or dangerous.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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*Virgilius* is found in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* except **F**. The main variants among the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* concern the description of the two Virgilian marvels; the involvement of the people of Rome in the story; and the moral. A version of the story of Virgil's mirror is also told by Gower in *Confessio amantis* 5.2031–224 (*The English Works*, ed. Macaulay, 2:3–8).

### FURTHER READING

For an overview of the legendary afterlife of Virgil in the Middle Ages as well as an anthology of legendary texts, see *The Virgilian Tradition*, ed. Ziolkowski and Putnam, pp. 825–1024. On the relationship of *Virgilius* to the legendary tradition, see Spargo, *Virgil the Necromancer*, pp. 29–31, 60–68; and Campbell, pp. xciv–xcvii. On the eastern debts of the tradition, see Krappe, “Studies [4].” On Gower's use of *Virgilius*, see Gower, *The English Works*, ed. Macaulay, 2:495. Virgil assumes a more central role in the *Dolopathos*, where he is the sole tutor of the accused prince and where he is shown to play a crucial role in the preparation of the Roman world for the coming of Christianity. On the poet's incarnation in that text, see Pifarré, “Le personnage de Virgile.”

- 1955        *Virgil*. All the extant versions of the story give Virgil as the originator of the tale's marvels, except the midland version, which attributes them to Merlin (**D**1878), and **Aw** (p. 654), which attributes them to an unnamed alchemist. On the Virgilian legends that the story engages, see the headnote to this tale.
- 1957–58    *He made a fair conjuring / Amideward Rome cheping*. In the southern and the northern versions, **He** (p. 84), and **Hs** (1620–28), the *conjuring* helps the poor; **A\*** (28.2–3) specifies that it serves women and children in particular; in **K** (3933–38), it is merely a marvel. The midland version and **Aw** omit this wonder and begin with a description of the miraculous mirror. **He** (pp. 82–84) describes the mirror before giving its description of the marvelous fire.
- 1974        *A Lombard com with gret noblai*. The man comes from Lombardy, in the north of Italy. The southern and the northern versions present the Lombard as a visitor to Rome; in **A\*** (28.6) and **Hs** (1629–31), he is described as a student there; in **K** (3951), he is a bishop coming to Rome from Carthage. In **He** (p. 84), the destroyer of the fire is a clerk; he is motivated to topple the figure by the false notion that treasure might be found under it.
- 1976–79    *And saide to the folk about . . . and he him smette*. Like **A**, **E** and **B** implicate the people of Rome in the destruction of their marvel; **Ar**, the northern version (**C**2188), **A\*** (28.8), and **Hs** (1632) have the vandal in conversation only with his entourage. In **K** (3953–58), the bishop's people advise him not to strike the statue and the bishop ignores them. In **He** (p. 84), the clerk operates alone.
- 1984        “*That was no rightwis doing*.” **A\*** (28.12) adds a line in which the emperor sympathizes with the women and children who have lost their source of fire. In **S** (p. 223), it is the clerks who extinguish the fire just before they burn down the supports holding up the mine under the mirror.
- 1986        *Ac Virgil dede yit more mervail*. The description of the ball-throwing statues is omitted in **D**, **Aw**, **He**, and **Hs**.

- 1998 *Virgil made another ymage.* In the southern and the northern versions, the mirror is held by an anthropomorphic statue; **A\*** (28.16), the midland version (**D**1880–89), and **K** (3979–4002) have a mirror without the figure holding it. In **D** and **K**, the mirror is said to illuminate the town as well as identifying Rome’s traitors. **He** (p. 82) explains that the marvel has been built to protect the overweening Romans from their increasingly numerous enemies; **Hs** (1655–60) adds to this description the familiar prophecy attributed to Virgil that the mirror will stand until a virgin bears a child.
- 2009 *The kyng of Poile.* All the versions that identify the enemy king agree with **A** in making him the king of Apulia, except **Aw** (p. 654), which makes him the king of Poland, and **K** (4003–06), where he is the king of Hungary.
- 2017 *And tolde hem alle his grevaunce.* **A\*** (28.18) and **He** (p. 85) more explicitly blame the Romans for stoking the enmity of their opponents.
- 2021 *Twei clerkes, brether, that were in Rome.* In **He** (p. 85) and **Hs** (1685), four knights take the place of the two clerks.
- 2036 *This was a dede of queint list.* The southern and the northern versions agree with **A\*** (28.28) and **Hs** (1705–13) in having the treasure buried beneath the gatehouses at Rome; in the midland version (**D**1918–28), **Aw** (p. 654), **He** (p. 85), and **K** (4027–44), the treasure is buried outside or on route to the town.
- 2037 *Amorewen thai sschewed hem in Rome.* Uniquely in **K** (4055–58), the emperor visits the treasure hunters; he is attracted by news of the luxury in which they live. **A\*** (28.28) also mentions their fine living.
- 2046 *grot. MED, grot* (n.3) gives the definitions “an English silver coin equivalent to four pennies” (sense 1), or “any of several small European silver coins” (sense 2). The sense is that the emperor has lost everything down to his smallest change.
- 2053 *Ich mot mete a sweven tonight.* Uniquely, the northern version dispatches with the dreams whereby the treasure hunters usually pretend to find their booty.
- 2096 *‘Goht an hast.’* **B** adds lines here further compromising the emperor in which he exhorts the diggers to go about their work energetically.
- 2123 *The smale and the poeple of Rome.* The agents of Crassus’s punishment vary. The northern and southern versions and **K** (4149) agree where they have the emperor attacked by the Romans in general; in the midland version, the lords of the city rebuke the emperor but he is executed by the crowd (**D**2044, 2054–57). In **A\*** (30.1–10), **He** (pp. 88–89), and **Hs** (1811–27), it is the emperor’s own retainers who rebuke and execute him. In **K** (4151–52) and **Hs** (1822–27), the emperor is drowned in molten gold.

- 2135        *make thee heit!* *MED*, *hait* (interj.) describes a command to a horse. Here the phrase is being used facetiously as the children and the people of Rome encourage Crassus to drink the molten gold with which they are murdering him.
- 2137        “*Nou is he ded with mochel schame.*” **He** (p. 89) ends with the destruction of Rome by its enemies.
- 2139–50    “*Ya, sire, for his lesingges . . . thou mai sike.*” The southern and northern versions agree in moralizing the tale as a warning against believing the tales of false *gadelinges*, or rascals, here equated implicitly with the sages. In the midland version (**D**2072–79), the empress claims that the sages’ tales have caused the emperor to fall into covetousness; she also points out how Crassus was executed without proper legal process. Other versions incorporate Crassus’s reputation for covetousness in their morals. **A\*** (31.4), **K** (4155–62), and **He** (p. 89) say that the emperor is greedy for stories like Crassus was for gold; **He** adds that the sages are undermining the emperor’s wits, which are symbolized by the warning figures kept in his tower. **HS** (1828–40) has an elaborate moral: the emperor is the first image with the arrow that guarded Virgil’s warming marvel; the fire is his charity, which causes him to love the poor; the child that struck down the first marvel is the emperor’s son, who will take the emperor’s crown; the treasure hunters are the sages; and the empress is the mirror who shows her husband his enemies. In **S** (p. 223), the empress also claims to be the mirror; the son is the fire that devours it; and the clerks are his agents.

## DAY 6

## TALE 10: AVIS, THE BIRD. FIFTH SAGE, CATOUN.

The sages’ fifth tale allows for a demonstration of two of their favorite arguments: hasty action should be avoided, and women are habitually tricky. The moralization highlights both these ideas. Reading the magpie as an avatar of the prince, the sage points out that the unjust murder of the magpie might have been avoided if the husband had taken counsel and that the wife’s plotting against the magpie is like the empress’s plotting against the prince (2291–96). If the prince is killed on the empress’s advice, the sage concludes, the emperor will be wracked with regret as was the husband in the tale (2297–2302).

The tale was liable to attract alternative readings, however, not least because there was a strong association in medieval minds between women and magpies. In an Anglo-Norman poem written down contemporaneously with the Auchinleck copy of the *Seven Sages*, for example, women are said to be like magpies on account of their delight in ornament as well as their tendencies towards trickery, pride, scolding, spying, vindictiveness, secrecy, and chatter. The potentially double significance of the bird in *avis* is especially clear in **A**, where the magpie is referred to by both masculine and feminine pronouns (see further the Explanatory Note to line 2206, below). Any association between the magpie and the empress complicates the tale’s moral considerably because this magpie tells the truth (2209–10; 2289–90).

If the magpie has something of the empress as well as the prince, then the tale might encourage consideration of the similarities between these characters’ experiences in the frame narrative. While the prince is his father’s literal captive, the tale teaches us to see that the empress might also be constrained, or caged, as the bird is here (2204). Her situation as a woman married to an older man recalls the *malmariée* of medieval romance (on which, see the headnote for *tentamina*, above). The power structures that the empress

must negotiate also shape her actions. There is no reason to disbelieve her when she claims at the close of the text that she was motivated in her desire to destroy the prince by a fear of losing her position at court (E3519–25).

The story of the tell-tale bird was well known in the Middle Ages; other versions in Middle English include those told by Gower in *Confessio amantis* 3.768–817 (*The English Works*, ed. Macaulay, 1:246–48) and Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* (IX[H]105–362). In both those story-collections, the fate of the bird is presented as a lesson on the importance of keeping one's counsel. *Avis* is found in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* except **Aw**. It is also included in all the versions of the *Book of Sindbad* except **SindP3**. In the *Book of Sindbad*, the story concerns a husband who has a parrot that he sets to spy on his wife during his travels. When the wife meets a lover at home, the parrot reports back and the wife is repudiated. The wife at first suspects her servant of revealing her secret but the servant tells her it was the parrot, and together they simulate a storm one night so that the bird will give a false account of the weather to the husband in the morning. The plan works and the husband assumes that the parrot has been lying all along, kills the bird, and reconciles with the wife. The story is told as an example of the dangers of haste as well as of the wiles of evil women (**SindA101**, pp. 228–31; **SindSyr**, pp. 105–06; **SindGr**, pp. 24–31; **SindHeb**, pp. 102–11; **SindSp**, pp. 22–23; **SindA1001**, 2:549–50).

There are some interesting variants amongst the versions of the tale compiled in the *Book of Sindbad*. In **SindA101**, the husband is shown teaching the bird to speak and setting it free at the end of the story; and in **SindA1001**, the wife is subsequently rediscovered in her adultery and killed. The Persian versions have a slightly longer tale. First the husband departs, the wife spends the night with her lover, the parrot reports, and the husband beats her; then the husband departs again, the wife and the servant perform the trick, the parrot relates the storm and is killed, and a neighbor questions the husband's judgment: since birds cannot lie, the neighbor says, the husband should press the servant to discover the truth. The servant reveals the trick and the husband regrets his error (**SindP1**, pp. 71–81; **SindP2**, pp. 31–35).

The main variants between the versions of *avis* as it appears in the *Seven Sages* concern the characterization of the magpie; the wife's reasons for taking a lover; the identity of her helper; the tale's conclusion; the moral; and the density of misogynist commentary with which the tale is infused.

#### FURTHER READING

On the magpie as a representative of the empress in *avis*, see Foehr-Janssens, “Quand les bêtes se taisent”; and Critten, “Hating Women.” For an edition and translation of the Anglo-Norman poem “Femmes a la pye” (“Women and Magpies”), see *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. and trans. Fein, 3:124–29. For a collection of tell-tale bird stories, including eastern analogues of *avis*, see Clouston, “The Tell-Tale Bird.” More recently, including an assessment of Chaucer's possible debts to the *Seven Sages*, see Wheatley, “The Manciple's Tale.” On the tale's analogues, see too Campbell, pp. xcvi–xcix.

- 2193        *A burgeis*. The hero is a burgess in all the versions consulted except **K** (3077), where he is a chatelain.
- 2197–2200    *But sche was fikel . . . al bilapped therinne*. The first two lines of this misogynist commentary are shared by the northern and southern versions, except **B** and **F**, where they are absent. They are absent elsewhere. The last two lines of the passage are unique to **A**.
- 2201        *a pie*. The bird is a magpie in all the extant versions of the *Seven Sages* except the midland version (**D2143**), where it is a *popyniay*, or parrot.

- 2203 *Freinch langage*. Where the language spoken by the magpie is mentioned, the extant texts often have it speaking Latin. See e.g., **A\*** (32.1), **Ar**, **B**, **Hs** (1888). In **He** (p. 54), the husband trains the bird to speak Latin and Hebrew.
- 2205 *And seth lemmans comen and gon*. Some versions rationalize the wife's adultery. In **F** (1506–09) and **He** (p. 54), she turns to adultery because the husband is an insufficient lover; in **K** (3081–84), the wife scorns her husband and takes a knightly lover.
- 2206 *And teld hire louerd*. The gender of the bird alternates in **A**, where the magpie is referred to by pronouns both masculine (2210, 2237, 2242, 2272, 2275) and feminine (2206, 2243, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2275). In the northern version, feminine pronouns are used for the bird throughout. The other southern texts including this part of the poem differ in their treatment of the creature. **B** and **Ar** have a mixture of masculine and feminine pronouns, with **Ar** clearly preferring masculine pronouns and **B** feminine; **E** has feminine or neuter pronouns throughout. In the midland version, the bird is gendered masculine or neuter. Feminine pronouns are used in **Hs**, **He**, and the French versions. In **K** (3097–99), the bird is said to speak like a woman. On the alternate gendering of the bird in *avis*, see further Critten, “The Affordances.”
- 2210 *he couthe nowt lie*. Other versions are less sure about the truth-telling capacities of the bird. Elsewhere in the southern texts it seems to the husband (**E**2258: *hym thought*) or, as in the northern version, he expects (**C**2428: *he hoped*) that the bird cannot lie. According to **A\*** (32.3–4), the bird often told the truth and the husband was particularly inclined to believe it when it spoke about his wife's lovers. In **He** (p. 55), it is the husband — not the narrator of the tale — who asserts the reliability of the magpie; in **Hs** and **K** and in the midland version, no claims are made for the bird's truthfulness at the opening of the text.
- 2224 *‘I schal you wraie, bi the rode.’* At this juncture, **Hs** (1930–81) departs from the other versions, reporting the unexpected return of the husband and a trick that the wife's mother puts in motion to save her daughter's reputation: she gives the lover a sword and tells the husband that the lover is hiding out in their house after an assault; the husband believes the story, and the women escape punishment despite the truthful report of the magpie. **Hs** (1982–2011) then inserts a second lucky escape for the daughter. When the husband returns early from a pilgrimage during a visit from the lover, the mother and daughter pretend to have made new sheets, one of which they hold up to show the husband, allowing the lover to escape undetected. After these two escapades, the wife and her maid proceed to trick the magpie. These innovations appear to have been taken over from the *Disciplina clericalis* of Petrus Alfonsi. See further *The Buke of the Sevyne Sagis*, ed. van Buuren, p. 335n1934–60.
- 2227 *a maide*. The identity of the wife's helper varies. In **A\*** (32.16), **He** (p. 55), **Hs** (2015), and in the southern texts except **F**, she is helped by her maid; in **F** (1530–39), where the lover is a priest, and in the northern version (**C**2451–70), she is helped by her lover; and in the midland version (**D**2161–82) and **K** (3133–62), she is helped by a manservant. **K** (3111–26) adds a motivating detail: the bird reports on everyone in the household, not just the wife.

- 2238      *This was on of wommannes wrenche.* The southern texts except **F** share this generalizing misogynist comment, which is absent elsewhere.
- 2272      *But also swithe his nekke tobrak.* The midland version ends with the killing of the bird (**D**2249–50).
- 2285–88      *And with a god staf ful sket . . . twenti devel wai.* In the northern version and in the other southern texts, except **F**, the husband beats his wife and drives her out of the house. The wife is also chased out of the house in **A\*** (32.42). In **Hs** (2073–78), the wife is banished and the husband departs on pilgrimage for the Holy Land; in **He** (p. 57), the husband departs on pilgrimage but no punishment for the wife is mentioned. In **K** (3261–62), the husband decapitates his wife. In **F** (1576–77), the wife and the lover go unpunished and kill the husband.
- 2289–2300      *“Lo, sire,” he seide, “for a foles red . . . thou art bicought.”* The moralization usually compares the wife in the tale to the empress and threatens the emperor with a fate like that of the husband in the text, who regrets killing his magpie, if the emperor kills his son (see e.g., **A\***32.46–47, **D**2251–56, **Hs** 2080–85). In **F** (1578–81), where the lovers kill the husband, the sage predicts death for the emperor and his wife if the emperor kills his son on her advice. The northern version adds lines to the usual moral counseling against hasty action and emphasizing women’s capacity to trick men (**C**2541–44). The moral is less clearly pointed in **He** (p. 58), where the emperor agrees with the sage that the wife was full of falseness.
- 2301–02      *“Al the werld thee sschal despise / Yif thou do bi here and lete the wise.”* These lines threatening general disapprobation for the killing of the son are unique to **A**.

TALE 11: VII SAPIENTES, THE SEVEN WISE MEN. THE EMPRESS.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s influential *History of the Kings of Britain* (ca. 1140), the British king Vortigern is advised to build a tower to defend himself against invading Saxons but whenever foundations are laid, they are swallowed up by the earth on which they stand. Vortigern’s magicians advise him that the building materials should be fortified with the blood of a fatherless child and the search which follows results in the discovery of Merlin, whose anonymous paternity comes to light in an overheard dispute between the boy and one of his peers. Merlin escapes death by showing Vortigern the true reason for his failing construction: beneath the land chosen for the stronghold lies a pond under which there are two sleeping dragons. The pond is drained and the two dragons emerge and fight.

The empress’s sixth tale adapts the Arthurian story of Vortigern’s tower so as to furnish a further example of deceptive wise men. Several key elements from the story are taken over, including the pernicious advisors, the character of the child Merlin, and the subterranean source of the emperor’s predicament. At the same time, the story-matter is domesticated — the action in *vii sapientes* takes place in the emperor’s bedchamber, not on the battlefield — and the scene is moved to Rome. The empress fits the tale to her broader argument. The similarity between Diocletian and the ruler in the tale is highlighted at the outset — both emperors are advised by seven wise men (2333–34) — and the moral makes the empress’s understanding of this parallel patent. Just as the overweening magicians in the tale blinded their master through their machinations, she says, so the sages in the frame narrative are clouding her husband’s judgment (2511–14).

Some aspects of *vii sapientes* evade the empress's moral and risk undermining her position. Most obviously, the tale implicitly aligns the empress with the tricky figure of Merlin, who liberates Vortigern from the grip of his bad advisors. Merlin is a morally ambiguous figure throughout Arthurian literature, not least because his conception was said to have resulted from an encounter between his mother and an incubus. The tale's intertextual connections also complicate its meaning. In the *History of the Kings of Britain*, after interpreting the battle between the dragons, Merlin goes on to forecast the downfall of Vortigern at the hands of his rivals. For audiences of *vii sapientes* who were aware of this connection, the bigger context in which the tower story fits invites doubt regarding both the security of Diocletian's position and the loyalties of his wife and son. For Merlin might also be read as a representative of the prince. Like Merlin, the emperor's son is precocious in his learning and, although he is not fatherless, risks disinheritance and murder at his father's hands.

The tale of *vii sapientes* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome*. The main variants concern the condition of the emperor at the opening of the tale and the nature of his affliction; the discovery of the child who heals the emperor; and the conclusion of the tale and its moral. The story of Vortigern's tower was well known in medieval England thanks to Geoffrey of Monmouth's history and the translations and adaptations that it inspired, including the Middle English romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, which is compiled with the *Seven Sages of Rome* in the Auchinleck Manuscript. The similarity of the descriptions that these texts give of the sages' discovery of Merlin is marked. See *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, ed. Macrae-Gibson, lines 1195–1208. The version of the Vortigern's tower story told in *vii sapientes* appears to have influenced subsequent Arthurian literature in a fashion that belies the traditional distinction between the matters of Rome and Britain.

#### FURTHER READING

On *vii sapientes* as a skeptical comment on the value of clerical wisdom, see Foehr-Janssens, "La trahison des sages"; and Speer, "Recycling the Seven Sages." On the ruler in the tale as an avatar of Diocletian, see Foehr-Janssens, "La parole condensée." On the overlap between the matters of Rome and Britain in *vii sapientes*, see Foehr-Janssens, "Arthur et les sept sages." On the Celtic and Germanic analogues of the story, see Krappe, "Note sur un épisode de l'*Historia Britonum*"; and Paton, "The Story of Vortigern's Tower." On the adaptation of the story in the *Seven Sages*, see too Campbell, pp. 175–76n2635f; Campbell, "The Source of the Story of *Sapientes*"; Foehr-Janssens, "Misogyny and the Trends," and "Le désir et le savoir"; and Krappe, "Studies [1]," and "Studies [4]." For Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Vortigern's tower and Merlin's conception, see *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Reeve, pp. 136–44.

- 2331      *Herowdes*. Whenever he is named in the extant versions, the ruler in *vii sapientes* is called Herod. In the Bible, Herod is king of Judea when Christ is born in Bethlehem; in an attempt to destroy the baby before it can threaten his rule, Herod has all the children in the town killed. See Matthew 2:1–20. This moment will have been familiar to medieval audiences of the *Seven Sages* thanks to its frequent rendition in medieval drama. See, for example, the play of the Massacre of the Innocents in *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Davidson, pp. 130–38. The vitriolic speeches given to Herod in productions such as this led to a more general set of connections between Herod, bombast, and tyrannous rule. The connection that the empress draws between this figure and her husband jars with the text's portrayal of Diocletian as a dithering ruler.

- 2333–34 *He hadde with him seven wise, / Als ye han.* The northern and the southern versions, except **F**, emphasize the parallel between the ruler in the tale and Diocletian; in **A\*** (33.1), Herod is said to have seven sages “as there are now.” In the northern version, the great reputation of the sages is presented as the opinion of the emperor (**C2584**). **F** (1601, 1625, 1685) repeatedly states that the ruler in the tale thinks that his wise men are wiser than God.
- 2335–36 *Al that themperour dede or thout, / Bi here conseil al he hit wrouit.* These lines emphasizing the wise men’s power over Herod are common to the northern and southern versions, except **F**, but absent in **A\***. **B** and **F** (1604–05) anticipate the moral in additional lines stating that the wise men almost ruined Herod. **Aw** (p. 657) announces at the outset that the ruler’s wise men aimed to kill him and divide his kingdom between them.
- 2337–44 *So her was arered in this toun . . . richcher than themperour.* Responsibility for the custom whereby the wise men are paid for interpreting dreams is handled differently across the extant versions. At the extremes, in **He** (pp. 61–63) and **F** (1606–13), the custom is enshrined in law, and in the northern version (**C2596–600**), popular enthusiasm sustains the tradition. **B**, the midland version (**D2300**), and the northern version (**C2595**) cast doubt on the veracity of the wise men’s dream readings. **F** (1616–17) adds that the sages built a treasury at Rome’s gates to store their wealth; in that text, it is upon riding past this treasury that the king is blinded (**F1619–21**). **Aw** does without the dream-telling custom and does not specify how the wise men enrich themselves.
- 2341 *besaund.* While the *besaunt* might just be a silver coin, the word is frequently used to refer to eastern and biblical currencies. The use of the word here plays into the Roman setting of the tale. See *MED*, *besaunt* (n.).
- 2349 *He bicam blind so ston.* **He** (p. 61), **K** (3292–3306), **Aw** (p. 657), and **S** (p. 224) handle the emperor’s predicament differently. In **He**, his vision is troubled whenever he attempts to leave his palace. In **K**, the king’s sight is unaffected but he is unable to leave the city, and he interprets this affliction as a punishment for his sinfulness. In **Aw**, the king dreams that he is blinded by sparks from a fire warming a cauldron with seven feet in it; in reality he retains his sight. In **S**, the sages are responsible for Herod’s predicament, which prevents him from entering his city.
- 2350–52 *His maistres he ofsente . . . out of Rome te.* In **He** (p. 63) and **Hs** (2128–30), the emperor summons his sages on the advice of his wife; in **He**, the wife claims that the sages are to blame for his predicament and deserve to die in consequence. In **He** (p. 62), **Hs** (2132–36), and **F** (1630–31), the emperor demands that the sages find a cure on pain of death.
- K**, **He**, and **Hs** organize the tale’s opening elements differently. At the outset in **K** (3281–86), the king is suffering from an unspecified illness that has made him lethargic; notice of the custom regarding dream interpretation is postponed until after his failed attempt to leave Rome (**K3327–36**). In **He** (p. 61), the extent of the sages’ domination over the emperor is stressed. Their responsibility for the king’s blindness is made clear at the outset and their ability to acquire riches through dream interpretation is attributed to their laws. **Hs** (2113–24) begins by announcing the custom of dream interpretation established by the sages before going on to state that Herod trusted them in all things.

- 2353      *respit a fourteen night*. The length of time that the sages are accorded varies between seven nights (**Ar**, **B**, **E**) and twenty-four days (**F** 1639–41). The midland version and **Aw** dispense with the following interlude in which the sages seek out Merlin (**A** 2350–2426). Instead, the boy is brought to the ruler’s court directly (**D** 2321–26, **Aw** p. 657).
- 2363–64      *Thai soughte conseil fer and negh / Ase man that is queinté*. Here we assume that the redactor is stretching the phonology of the French word *queinte* in order to make it rhyme with *negh* in line 2363. On the poem’s flexible rhymes combining English and French elements, see further Critten, “The Affordances.”
- 2366      *an hold man*. Some versions have the discovery of Merlin do without the old man. In **F** (1634–42) and **Hs** (2137–44), the sages set out for Merlin, whose reputation they already know; in **He** (p. 64), they discover him by chance. In **K** (3327–3482), the child’s existence is discovered from a dreamer who is seeking out the sages to interpret his dream.
- 2379      *ther Merlin pleid*. On the similarity between this scene and a passage in the Auchinleck romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, see the headnote to this tale. In **K** (3345–56), the child’s name is Jessé and the story of his generation is altered: he is said to have been conceived when his mother inhaled a magical powder contained in a box that she had been given to take care of. In **Aw** (p. 657), the child who is brought to court to interpret the ruler’s dream is unnamed.
- 2386      *‘Al to loude thou spak thi Latin.’* As well as referring to the Roman language, in Middle English, “Latin” could also mean “what one has to say.” See *MED*, *Latin* (n.), sense 1c. See too the use of *Latin* at **A** 2476.
- 2390      *‘Ich wil hem helpe swithe sone.’* Merlin’s words to his fellows have a double meaning for readers who know the outcome of the story. In **F** (1654–61), he expresses his enmity towards the wise men more clearly, calling them his greatest foes.
- 2401      *donghel*. The southern and the northern versions feature a dream about a dunghill, but **A\*** (33.22) has a dream in which the fountain is located beneath the man’s hearth. In **He** (p. 64), the dream fountain springs in an orchard; in **Hs** (2154–55), it appears in a field. In **K** (3377–90), the fountain emerges from the dreamer’s house, which has partly been destroyed by fire. Whereas the fountain signifies the gold that he will find, the child says, the fire in his home betokens the death of his wife.
- 2435–36      *‘Lo her, sire, a litel page / That schal sai thee thi corage.’* Lines in **B** here attribute the boy’s learning to his education by wise men (2528–39).
- 2453–54      *And therwhiles thai boilland be, / Sire, thou ne schalt never ise*. In addition to the extinction of the bubbles in the cauldron, **F** (1694–97) specifies that the emperor will need to share out the sages’ ill-gotten treasure to secure his recovery. In **Aw** (p. 657), the child says that if he doesn’t take counsel, his dream of blinding will become a reality. In **S** (p. 224), the bubbles are replaced by seven demons who are blowing on the flames heating a boiling cauldron under Herod’s bed; the demons disappear when the sages are executed.

- 2476 *swich Latin*. See the note at line 2386, above.
- 2505–06 *Tho themperour wiste this, / He let sle alle sevene, iwis*. **A\*** (34.30) and the midland version (**D**2389–92) have lines preceding these in which the emperor reiterates his determination to follow Merlin's advice. **F** (1718–21) adds lines following in which the emperor redistributes the sages' treasure to the poor. In **Aw** (p. 657), the emperor ignores the child's advice that his wise men should be killed and is finally killed by them.
- 2509–10 *Anon he wichss therof his hond, / And overseth al the lond*. In **B**, the emperor's sight is restored and the text does not mention his rule; in the northern version (**C**2765–66), Merlin washes his eyes and restores the emperor's vision in this way. Several versions offer a brief continuation of the action. In **K** (3628), Merlin's reward is briefly mentioned; in **He** (p. 66), the child is made a lord; in **A\*** (35.2–13), the midland version (**D**2407–22), and **Hs** (2218–26), Merlin and the emperor ride out of Rome together and Merlin is retained; in **Hs**, he is made steward.
- 2511–18 *"And sire, so fare maistres thine . . . browt to ivel ending."* To the core moral that the sages in the frame narrative are blinding the emperor as did the sages in the tale, the midland version adds commentary on the beneficent intervention of Merlin (**D**2423–30), and **He** (p. 67) suggests that the sages' power derives from the emperor's son. **K** (3631–32) presents the tale as an example of the punishments that befall those who treat others unjustly.

## DAY 7

### TALE 12: VIDUA, THE WIDOW. SIXTH SAGE, GESSE.

The sages' sixth tale reprises the popular story of the Matron of Ephesus with the aim once again of discrediting the emperor's wife and women more generally (2547–48). (Since the sage's name is not given in the lead-up to the tale, we give it from the Prologue (E91), where the sixth sage is named Gesse). At the close of *vidua*, the same fate is wished upon the emperor as befell the husband in the tale should the emperor kill his son (2717–20). That fate is worse than the outcome described in the classical iteration of the plot by Petronius in his *Satyricon* (ca. 50 BCE); there the narrative misses the mutilation of the husband's corpse. In *vidua*, after hanging her own husband's body, the wife wounds him and knocks out his teeth so that he better resembles the thief whose place he is taking (2657–2704). Some versions visit further indignities upon the corpse (see Explanatory Note to line 2704, below). Petronius's text also lacks the attempt at moral clarity that characterizes *vidua*. In the *Satyricon* we are told that some of the people who hear the tale laugh, a woman blushes, and only one man draws a harsher moral: "Lichas was not amused, shook his head angrily and said: 'If the governor had been a just man, he would have put the husband's body back in the tomb and attached the woman to the cross.'" See *Petronius: Satyricon*, ed. and trans. Schmeling, p. 317.

In the Middle Ages, too, the Matron of Ephesus could be treated more lightly. The fabliau of *La dolente qui fu fotue sur la tonbe* (*The Mourner Who Got Fucked at the Grave Site*) is an analogous treatment of the theme in which some grudging credit accrues to the wife for finding satisfaction with the knight. If the meaning of the story in the *Seven Sages* is not completely controlled by the sages' moral, its resonances with the frame narrative might likewise generate sympathy for the empress, who at the outset of the poem renounces her old husband in favor of a newcomer, his son. When contrasted with the overwrought

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emotionality of the husband and the hypocrisy of the knight, the pragmatism of the wife in *vidua* may strike readers as the least objectionable of the qualities displayed in the tale.

*Vidua* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome* except **Hs**. The main variants concern the description of the relationship between the husband and wife and the manner of her injury; the mutilations visited upon the corpse; the conclusion and moralization of the tale; and the density of misogynist commentary.

### FURTHER READING

On the tale's early analogues, see Campbell, pp. ci–cviii. For a longer reception history, see Ure, “The Widow of Ephesus.” For an edition and lively Modern English translation of *La dolonte qui fu fotue sur la tonbe*, see *The Fabliaux*, trans. Dubin, pp. 324–31. On this fabliau rendition of the Matron of Ephesus story, see Foehr-Janssens, “Mourir d’aimer.” On the generic affiliation of the tale and its moralization in *vidua*, see Critten, “Hating Women.”

- 2556–57     *he lovede hire has his lif, / And ssche him*. Some versions more explicitly cast doubt on the affection of the wife for the husband. Both **A\*** (36.2) and the northern version (**C2815**) suggest that the wife dissimulates; in **F** (1080–83), the wife is jealously guarded. The midland version (**D2469–70**) only mentions the husband's reluctance to aggrieve his wife.
- 2563     *The knight his wif in the wombe carf*. In **A\*** (36.5), **E**, and **B**, the knight cuts her thumb; in the northern version (**C2820**), he cuts her finger. The midland version does not specify the location of the injury. In **F** (1084–89) and **He** (p. 129), the wife cuts herself, either when cutting a pear or when playing chess. In **K** (3695–3708) and **Aw** (p. 655), the husband is preparing an arrow or a spear-shaft when the wife is hurt. In **S** (p. 226), the accident is not related and the young man dies of apparently natural causes.
- 2569–70     *And wel faire browt on erthe / After that he was werthe*. The midland version (**D2479–82**) specifies that, as a suicide, the husband is buried in unconsecrated ground outside the town. **A\*** (36.8) and **K** (3709–12) also specify that the burial takes place out of town.
- 2574     *Sche wolde be ded and bi him laide*. **E** has an extra line saying that the wife wept and lamented as women are inclined to do.
- 2593     *A logge thai made upon his grave*. In **F** (1104–05), the wife makes her own lodge.
- 2606–07     *A knight of the countré held his fe / For to loke the thre knighttes*. The northern version (**C2879–80**) adds that if he loses any of the men, he risks forfeiting his lands; in **He** (p. 131), he risks losing his life too.
- 2624     *Sche let him in anonright*. In the northern version (**C2897–2914**), the knight asks to be admitted four times before the wife relents. In the midland version (**D2529–42**), the ensuing conversation is replaced with a wooing scene in which the wife and the knight have sex. In **S** (p. 226), the wife and the knight negotiate their marriage before the knight realizes that one of his corpses is missing.

- 2628 *gade. MED, gade (n.)* gives this as its only example of the word.
- 2637 *He was so smal and so gent.* Whereas in **A** the wife recalls her husband's slender physique, in **E**, **B**, and **Ar**, she remembers his courteous, loving, or sweet nature. In the northern version (C2940–42), she recalls how pliant he was to her will.
- 2640 *He thoughte men mighte don him gile.* In place of this idea, **B** has lines asserting that the knight planned to trick the wife.
- 2647 *He thought that wimmen couthe red.* These lines ironically asserting the reliability of women are common to the northern and southern versions, except **F**. They are absent elsewhere.
- 2653–54 *'Sire, ich wille helpe thee, / So that thou wille spousi me.'* In **B**, the wife offers the knight advice and he promises to wed her in return without prompting. In the northern version (C2966–69), before making her condition, the wife ascertains that the knight has never had a lover or a wife. In the midland version, the help is given unconditionally.
- 2662 *Here red was don.* In **F** (1162–66), the wife must dig up her own husband and carry him to the gallows on her back; in **Aw** (p. 656), she also lifts him to the gallows herself.
- 2676 *The knight of hire dedes was agast.* This line detailing the knight's reaction is common to the southern versions, except **F**, but absent elsewhere. **A\*** (38.11) points out that her heart has changed entirely.
- 2689–90 *'Nai, dame, for moche ne lite, / The dede knight wolde I nowt smite.'* **B** adds that the knight fears the wife's disapproval if he wounds the dead man. In **He** (p. 134), the knight won't harm the corpse because the man was his friend. In some versions, the wife requires less persuasion to mutilate her husband's corpse. In **A\*** (38.15–22), for example, the wife gives him a head wound and knocks out his teeth without being asked.
- 2697–98 *Thanne the knight wel understod / That fals and fikel was hire blod.* With minor variations, these lines are common to the northern and southern versions, except **F**. In **B**, the knight sees the wife's subtle and false disposition; in **E**, he thinks she's mad. In the northern version (C3008), he deduces that she comes from unnatural blood. Elsewhere the lines are absent.
- 2704 *And smot hem out everichon.* In the midland version, the tale ends here. Some versions add an extra mutilation. In **Aw** (p. 656), the wife shaves the corpse's head; in **F** (1186–91), she must cut off two fingers, and she cuts off three; in **He** (pp. 134–35), she cuts off his testicles.
- 2713–16 *'Thou hast itawt me . . . bigile thee altherformest.'* This generalizing misogynist moral is common to the northern and the southern versions, except **F**. In **A\*** (38.26–28) and **K** (3901–08), the knight says that the wife is fit to be burned but restricts himself to blaming bad women. In **Aw** (p. 656) and **F** (1196–99), the knight refuses to marry the woman but forgoes further misogynist comment. In **He** (p. 135), the knight decapitates the wife. The action is briefly continued in **A\*** (38.29–30) and **K** (3909–10), which give the wife's shocked reaction.

- 2717–24 “*Sire and on thee falle . . . Rightfulliche thou him awreke.*” The moral is abbreviated in **E**, which also lacks the announcement of the prince’s account of events. In **A\*** (38.31–32), the sage warns that the emperor will end as did the husband in the tale unless he changes course. In **F** (1200–03), he and his wife will suffer the same fate as the husband if he kills his son. In the midland version (**D**2609–16), he will lose his honor as the husband lost his life if he falls for his wife’s lies. In **He** (pp. 135–36), the emperor acknowledges that the wife was a terrible woman and looks forward to hearing his son. In **K** (3911–14), the sage says that, like the husband in the tale, the emperor is too quick to believe his wife.
- 2738 *folen feste*. The empress refers to the Feast of Fools, a moment of carnivalesque inversion in the medieval ecclesiastical calendar that appears to have involved masks and costuming. The Feast of Fools took place in January; it is first mentioned in the twelfth century and was suppressed in the fifteenth. See further Speer and Foehr-Janssens, p. 241n88.

### TALE 13: ROMA, ROME. THE EMPRESS.

In her final tale, the empress returns to her claim that Diocletian’s wise men are deceivers. In *Roma*, she shows how a sage in an elaborate disguise strikes fear into seven heathen armies and enables the inhabitants of Rome to break a long siege that has confined them; the moral that she draws is that her husband’s sages will deceive and subjugate him similarly (**E**2820–25). The obvious problem with this deployment of the tale is that in *Roma*, the costumed sage is defending Rome, Diocletian’s own town, from a formidable enemy. The text identifies this hostile force as *saresonys*, or Saracens (**E**2806). This term was used by Europeans to refer to the Muslims met in the Holy Land in the context of the crusades; the descriptions that it enabled were often so extravagantly exoticizing and bear so little relation to what is now known about actual medieval Muslims that modern scholars now use the term only to refer to medieval European representations of these people. Since the term is so loaded with racist meaning some recent researchers argue that its use even in this narrow sense should be avoided.

By virtue of its form as a framed narrative, the *Seven Sages* affords an unusual opportunity for reconsideration of what *saresonys* might be. Anyone pursuing the empress’s logic must at least momentarily weigh up the commensurability of the besieging forces and Diocletian’s own Romans; in effect, the empress asks her audience to take sides against Rome. It takes an effort of the mind to fault the empress, and individual readers might vary in their haste to condemn her reasoning. The inclusion of a Muslim element at this juncture appears to have been deliberate, because it does not characterize the analogous versions of the story in the *De Divisionibus temporum* attributed to Bede (ca. 673–735 CE) and in Philippe de Thaon’s *Comput* (ca. 1113 CE). In contrast to the general trend in the *Seven Sages* to obscure the eastern origins of the story collection (on which see the Introduction, p. 3), here it appears that an eastern element has been imported.

*Roma* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome* except **Hs**, **L**, and **S**. The tale remains stable across the extant versions; the main variants concern the sage’s eventual reward and the moralization of the tale. In **He** (pp. 99–106), *Roma* is conjoined with *Senescalculus*, so that the king who sleeps with the steward’s wife is identical with the king besieging Rome. See further the headnote to *Senescalculus*, above. In **Aw** (pp. 652–53), where *Roma* is told by one of the sages, the tale treats a different story of siege at an eastern town. When the oppressing forces offer to depart in return for the sages who have opposed them, the sages dissuade their fellow citizens from handing them over by telling them a story about a wolf, a shepherd, and his dogs. The wolf had promised to leave the shepherd in peace if the shepherd gave the dogs over to him.

But when the shepherd complied, the wolf slaughtered both him and his flock. The citizens of the town are persuaded to keep the sages and, with the sages' help, they finally defeat their besiegers.

#### FURTHER READING

On the significance of the term "Saracen," with particular reference to the texts of the Auchinleck Manuscript, see Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 1–12; and, more recently, Rajabzadeh, "The Depoliticized Saracen." On the tale's Islamophobia, see Critten, "Sodomy and the East." On the sources and analogues of *Roma*, see Campbell, pp. cviii–cix; Krappe, "Studies [3]"; and Paris, "Le récit *Roma* dans les *Sept Sages*." On the treatment of *Roma* in **Aw**, see Gadsden, "*Chwedleu Seith Doethon Rufein*."

- 2743        *seven soudans*. The number of besieging kings varies. In the midland version (**D**2647–48), there are three, for example. On **He**, see the headnotes to this tale and to *Senescalcus*.
- 2746        *Seinte Petres sate*. The phrase repeats the reference to Rome in the preceding line. The "see of Saint Peter" is the church of the first Pope, Saint Peter, now Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.
- 2751–52    '*To seven wise men toke we this toun, / To kep hit fram destructioun.*' The other Middle English versions present this statement as an old man's suggestion. See **B**2836–41, **Ar**1793–1802, **E**2764–69, **F**1980–88; in the midland version, one of the sages suggests that they should be given the city to keep (**D**2659–76). The northern version (**C**3075–86) adds that the sages are given the task of defending Rome on pain of death. The parallels between the frame narrative and the situation in the tale are variously developed. In **A**\* (39.3–4) and **K** (2375), the sages are said to take turns defending Rome for a day. In **He** (p. 103), the empress points out that her husband's sages have promised to defend the prince likewise.
- 2755        *A moneth thai kept hit*. The duration of the siege varies. In **A**\* (39.5), for example, the sages keep the town for seven months; in **K** (2384), they keep it for six.
- 2761        *so seith the rime*. **Ar** (1809) mentions a Latin source here.
- 2765–**E**2789a *garnement . . . brennynge lede*. The details of the sage's disguise vary. **A**\* and **B** miss the description of the mask's noses; **F** (2008–09) and the northern version (**C**3109–10) describe its eyes. The midland version (**D**2685–86) simply has a glowing costume. **He** (p. 104) adds peacock feathers.
- E**2794        *thys Junyus*. **A** breaks off incomplete after line 2770; the remainder of the text is given from **E**, as we record in our Textual Notes. In **E**, the sage in the tale is called Junyus, not Gemes (compare **A**2762).
- E**2795        *a toure that het Crassus*. Other versions have *carfus* (**Ar**1830), *cressus* (**B**2686), *cressant* (**A**\*40.9), or *croisant* (**K**2421). Speer and Foehr-Janssens (p. 247n94), identify a reference to Hadrian's mausoleum, now the Castel Sant'Angelo, which in the thirteenth century was known by the name of a Roman consul who occupied it, Crescentius (d. 998). The name in **A** recalls the anti-hero of *Virgilius*.

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- E2806–07 *The Saresonys behelde hyt, / They were ny woode and owte of wyt.* Some versions add that the sage was mistaken either for a devil (**Ar**1847–48, **C**3138) or the Christian God, descended to earth to defend the Romans (**A**\*40.13–14, **B**2881–86, **D**2708–19, **He** p. 104). On the word “Saracen,” see the headnote to this tale.
- E2818–19 *The fyrste day thereof, iwys, / Junyus wrotte that ylke prys.* In some versions, it is asserted that January is named after the sage (**A**\*40.1, **Ar**1861–62, **F**2046–47), or that the sage is made emperor as a reward for his services to Rome (**B**2891–94, **Ar**1859–60, **F**2644–45, **C**3155–56).
- E2820–25 *“And thus shulle the seven wyse . . . Ye wene eche of hem be as Cryste.”* **A**\* (40.18–23) and **K** (2441–52) have lines in which the empress criticizes the emperor for his fickleness, comparing him to a moody child. These lines are absent in the English versions, except for a line carried over in **Ar** (1864).

### TALE 14: *INCLUSA*, THE RECLUSE. SEVENTH SAGE, MAXENCYON.

The sages’ final story is moralized as an example of the dangers that come from trusting one’s wife’s words over the evidence that one has before one’s own eyes (**E**3214–17). The moral suits the story insofar as the husband in *inclusa* misses the abduction of his wife as it takes place under his very nose. But the enclosed wife in the tale, in fact, says relatively little. The main agent in the deception of the husband — at least in this version of the story — is not the recluse but the knight who sets out to find her after seeing her in a dream. Any attempt to present this story as another example of the wiles of women seems destined to be at least a partial failure. What is more, the husband’s treatment of his wife and her own questioning of his treatment of her (**E**3019–23) seems more likely to provoke sympathy for the heroine than condemnation. In this respect, *inclusa* joins *puteus* and *tentamina* as a tale told by the sages in which men’s treatment of women might attract censure.

*Inclusa* was a well-known tale in the Middle Ages. It is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages of Rome* except **L** and **S**. In the *Dolopathos* it is combined with *puteus*. See further the headnote to that tale, above. Two texts attempt to repair the mismatch between the moral and the tale described above. In the midland version, the wife becomes the agent of her own abduction: she plans the ring trick and then instructs the knight in the method he will use to take her away. In **He**, the tale switches tellers. There the empress tells the story as another example of deceit amongst royal servants: the husband is a king and the knight who abducts his wife has previously been made his steward; **He** (p. 119) also devotes some time to a reflection from the queen on the difficult situation in which the affair has placed her. Other important variants amongst the extant texts concern the geography of the tale; the outcomes for the mason and the husband; the commentary that accompanies the tale; and the moralization.

### FURTHER READING

On the propensity of *inclusa* to elicit sympathy for the wife, see Foehr-Janssens, “Une recluse fort (peu) courtoise”; and Critten, “Hating Women.” On the changing of the tale’s teller in the **H**-texts, see Foehr-Janssens, *L’Histoire des sept sages*, pp. 38–41; and Runte, “From the Vernacular to Latin and Back.” On the transmission of *inclusa* and its analogues, see Campbell, pp. cix–cxii; Hilka, “Die Wanderung der Erzählung von der *Inclusa*”; and Krappe, “Studies [5].”

- E2871 *Houngerye*. The Middle English texts all situate the knight in Hungary at the outset. **A\*** (42.1) and **K** (4226) have him in Monbergier; **Hs** (2265) has him in Mobrig (two unknown locations).
- E2890 *monythys thre*. The duration of the knight's search varies. In **A\*** (42.7), he looks for his lady for three weeks, for example. In **B** (2968), he searches for one month.
- E2893 *Poyle*. **F** (2131) and the midland version (**D**2805) also locate the knight's destination in Apulia; **Ar** (1951) sends the knight to *Pletys* (modern Plecis?). The northern version (**C**3264), **A\*** (42.9), **K** (4251), and **Hs** (2284) send him to Hungary.
- E2895 *An erle*. The rank of the husband varies. In **He** (p. 116), he is a king; in **Hs** (2294–96), he is a steward. In **A\*** (42.11), where the husband is a lord, the text adds that he is hated throughout the country.
- E2919 *make hym mery*. The northern version adds that the earl is playing chess (**C**3294). After this scene, in the midland version (**D**2837–52), the knight takes lodgings in town and enquires after the husband's situation before returning to him the next day to offer his service.
- E2925 *a knyghte that I there slowe*. The backstory in which the knight has killed a companion at home is absent in **He**, **Hs**, **D**, and **Aw**.
- E2927 *'Here I wyll abyde with thee.'* The northern version adds lines in which the knight claims that his enemies have destroyed his land (**C**3307–08). These claims endear him to the husband, who is also under attack.
- E2932 *with the erle dwellyd that knyght*. Arrangements for the knight's accommodation vary. In **A\*** (43.1) and **Hs** (2304–08), he lodges with a burgess in town.
- E2937 *made hym stywarde*. **A\*** (43.5) and **K** (4309–12) add that the knight is popular with the people. In **He** (p. 118), he wins the king's affection by jousting.
- E2942 *a letter iwretyn fulle ryghte*. The wife also throws down a letter in **F** (2190), **He** (p. 118), and **Hs** (2234); in the northern version, the letter is in French (**C**3338). In **B** (3036), **Ar** (2011), the midland version (**D**2884–90), **A\*** (43.7), and **K** (4321–30), she attracts his attention by throwing down a reed.
- E2962 *a mason fre*. Several versions add that the mason is a foreigner. See **B** (3072), **F** (2223), **Ar** (2047), **C** (3371), and **A\*** (44.1); in **K** (4353–54), he is brought from Monbrison.
- E2982 *The knyght hym slowe there*. The mason escapes with his life in the midland version (**D**2901–18) and in **Aw** (p. 658), where this part of the story is dealt with more briefly.
- E2986 *she made blys*. In **He** (p. 119), where the story is told by the empress, the wife is more reluctant to accept the knight's advances and ponders the difficult situation in which the affair leaves her.

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- E2998      *For he shulde thyngke hyr uppon.* In the midland version (D2924–26), the wife adds that her husband should see the ring because she is planning the trick to facilitate her own abduction.
- E3006      *The erle sawe hys golde rynge there.* **Ar** 2118–22 has extra lines expressing the husband's displeasure at seeing the ring. In **He** (p. 120), the king sees the ring while he is out hunting with the knight.
- E3019–23      *And axyde of hyr howe she dyd fare . . . 'Howe shalle I thanne fare wele?'* This conversation is handled differently in other versions. In **A\*** (45.12–13), the husband adds that he has enclosed her because he loves her and the wife reiterates her complaint. In **B** (3162–65) and **Ar** (2145–48), he claims that he is motivated by a desire to keep her safe. In the northern version (C3470–78), he tells her he wants to remove the opportunity for her affections to alter.
- E3031      *The erle hadde thereof grete mervayle.* In **He** (p. 121) and **Aw** (p. 658), the husband regrets suspecting his wife. **A\*** (45.19) and **He** (p. 121) have him reflect that rings often look alike.
- E3036–37      *And for alle that, withowtyn lye, / Blereyd were bothe hys yee.* This comment on the development of the narrative is shared with **F** (2330–31) and **Ar** (2173–74); it is absent in the other versions, including **A\*** and **B**; the northern version reports the wife's satisfaction at having tricked her husband (C3505–06). In the midland version (D2949–52), the wife is credited with authoring the trick. Also in the midland version, after these lines, the knight returns, and the wife instructs him in his role: he should say that his lady has arrived to call him home, the husband will ask to see her, she will dress as the lover, and so their plan to elope will be advanced (D2953–94).
- E3082–83      *hyr lorde ne non othyr wyght / Ne shulde knowe hyr aryght.* In the northern version (C3548–52), **He** (p. 121), and **Aw** (p. 658), the knight gives the wife a pep talk explaining the purpose of her disguise.
- E3104–07      *And thoughte hys toure . . . hys leve.* These lines in which the husband takes comfort in the strength of his tower are shared with **A\*** (46.3), the northern version (C3583–85), **K** (4507–08), and **He** (p. 122). In **Ar** (2243–48), he trusts his wife. The lines are lacking in **F** and in **B**, which cuts from this point to E3126.
- E3113      *As he was of that golde rynge.* **Ar** (2253) adds a line specifying that the husband was tricked.
- E3142–43      *For lyke hyr was that lady / That at the mete sate hym by.* **He** (p. 124) and **Aw** (p. 659) have the husband regret that he suspected the pair.
- E3168–69      *He was in wylle to wedde hyr thanne / That longe had ben hys lemman.* In **He** (p. 125), the knight additionally requests that the husband should instruct his wife in her marital duties towards him, her new husband.

- E3196–99 *And worthy he ys to lesse hys play . . . sorowe hys lyf.* These lines that moralize the story and anticipate its outcome are not present in the other Middle English texts, **He** or **K**. **A\*** (46.26) has the general moral but lacks the last couplet applying it to the tale.
- E3211 “*Therefore hym scornyd meny a man.*” In the midland version, the husband commits suicide (D3066–67). In **He** (p. 126), the king regrets the trust that he put in the knight.
- E3215–21 “*Whenne thy wyfe spekythe . . . thy owne wyf.*” The moral that the emperor believes his wife over what he can see with his own two eyes is common to **A\*** (46.32), **K** (4601–02), and the northern and southern versions, except **B** (3302–05), which says that there is much wonder in the land that the emperor will trust his wife over his son. In **His** (2502–04), the sage asserts that if the emperor trusts his wife about his son, he’ll be deceived. In **He** (p. 126), where the tale is told by the empress, the moral is that, like the lover in the tale, the sages are attempting to destroy her, his wife. The empress accuses her husband of believing the sages’ words over what he can see with his own eyes, namely the self-inflicted wounds she gave herself before accusing the prince of attempted rape.

## DAY 8

### TALE 15: VATICINIUM, THE PROPHECY. THE PRINCE.

When the prince finally speaks on the eighth day of his trial, he prefaces his response to the empress’s accusations with a tale of his own. His argument differs from that of his masters, who in their stories and moralizations have insisted on the unreliability of women in general and the empress in particular. Instead, the prince’s tale features examples of filial helpfulness and forgiveness that hold out to the emperor the possibility of a positive outcome to their shared ordeal. In *vaticinium*, the prince draws a parallel between his experience and the career of the boy in the tale, who is cast out by his father but who makes good, thanks to his obedience and intelligence. These are the qualities that win him the love and respect first of his adoptive father (E3336–37), then of the king and the barons for whom he interprets the crying of three crows (E3426–31). In his moralization, the prince reproaches his father for throwing him into prison but stresses his loyalty to him notwithstanding this harsh treatment (E3494–3503). This is how the prince responds to the empress’s recurring claim that unchecked sons will usurp their fathers’ power prematurely.

The crows’ debate and its resolution complicate the prince’s argument insofar as the judgment in favor of the more recently arrived bird (E3410–17) invites reconsideration of the empress’s condition as the newest member in the family constituted primarily by the emperor and his son. More crucially, the prince leaves the resolution of his tale hanging. It is unclear at the end of *vaticinium* whether the boy who is by this point king will forgive his father for his transgression or insist upon his punishment (E3482–85). Thus, *vaticinium* engages without resolving two of the key themes running throughout the *Seven Sages*: the management of succession and the correct interpretation of speech.

Regarding the tale’s treatment of succession, it has been observed that *vaticinium* returns to the story of Joseph, which also provides the Potiphar’s wife motif deployed at the opening of the frame narrative (on which see the Introduction, pp. 15–16). In Genesis 37, Joseph recounts a dream that he interprets as proof that he will surpass his father and his brothers and is cast out by his brothers. In *vaticinium*, the story is adapted so that the envy motivating Joseph’s treatment becomes paternal. Regarding the tale’s interest in acts of interpretation, the species of the birds involved is potentially telling because there was a long

tradition associating crows with poets and the pitfalls of poetry. In Chaucer's Manciple's Tale, for example, the crow loses his song as a punishment for telling tales on his master's wife (CT X[H]292–308). On Chaucer's possible familiarity with *avis*, which tells a similar story, see Wheatley, "The Manciple's Tale."

*Vaticinium* is included in all the versions of the *Seven Sages* except **L**. The main variants are of crucial importance to interpretations of the tale, because they relate to the interpretation of the crows' debate and the tale's conclusion. In **He** and **Hs**, the crows are fighting over custody of the third crow, their son (see the Explanatory Note to lines E3376–78, below). Regarding the conclusion, **E** is unusual in not describing a moment of resolution between father and son. Also of note is a lengthy interpolation of a version of the *Amis and Amiloun* story in the **He** text of *vaticinium*. Other points of difference include the age of the child and the involvement of the barons in the king's decision making.

#### FURTHER READING

On the significance of the prince's returning speech, see Foehr-Janssens, "L'Art de ne rien dire"; and Speer, "The Prince's Baptism." On the tale's handling of the theme of succession, see Allen, "Episodes"; and Foehr-Janssens, "Le désir et le savoir." On the significance of bird speech in the tale, see Foehr-Janssens, "Quand les bêtes se taisent." On the interpolation of the *Amis and Amiloun* story in the **H**-text, see Foehr-Janssens, *L'Histoire des sept sages*, pp. 41–47. On the tale's debts to the Joseph story and its analogues more broadly, see Campbell, p. cxii–cxiv; and Krappe, "Studies [2]."

- E3286–87    *a sone wyse and bolde, / Offfiften wynter he was olde*. The age of the child varies. In **A\*** (48.1) and **K** (4695), he is twelve; in **F** (2570), he is seven. In **He** (p. 144), the child has just returned from a seven-year long education with a wise master. The midland version (**D**3138) opens with an announcement of the boy's ability to understand birdsong.
- E3288–89    *And apon a day hys fadyr and he / Saylyd togedyr*. In **He** (p. 144), the scene takes place at the family dinner table; in **Hs** (2563–65), the father and mother are at sea on a pilgrimage with their son. In these versions, the bird whose song is interpreted is a nightingale (**Hs** 2570).
- E3292        *Lyght two ravenys and made a crye*. **F** (2579) adds that the birds were a good omen.
- E3304–05    *The whylys my hondys waschyn bene, / Ye shalle be fayne to holde the bason*. In the northern version (**C**3848–50), **A\*** (48.5), **K** (4716–17), and **Aw** (p. 661), the son says that his father will be glad to take up his sleeves when he washes his hands.
- E3319        *Four dayes mete ete he non*. The duration of the son's abandonment on the island varies. In **Hs** (2593–94), he is picked up immediately; in the midland version, he waits two days (**D**3180); in **A\*** (48.12), he waits three.
- E3329        *Anon he toke hym into hys bote*. In the northern version (**C**3908–14), the child tells the fisherman his story at this juncture.
- E3336        *The constabylle lovyd welle that chylde*. **B** (3439), **A\*** (49.4), and **K** (4749–50) give the boy a bigger adoptive family, pointing out that the man's wife loved him too.

- E3367–71 *And bade the constabil . . . the ravenys cryyng.* The northern version (C4009–12), A\* (49.17), and K (4815–20) stoke tension in this conversation with the boy's guardian pointing out the danger of misinterpreting the birds.
- E3376–78 *the chylde up stode . . . And sayde.* He (pp. 147–48) and Hs (2648–78) have a different story in which two of the crows are parents to the third. The mother crow leaves the father and son alone when the family falls on hard times but returns and wants custody of the child when things improve. The king decides in favor of the father raven. This version of the crow's debate thus constitutes another example of the positive potential of paternity.
- E3392–93 *And that grete ravyn blacke / Yonde female alone hadde forsake.* In the midland version (D3275–76), the older raven behaves worse still, beating his mate away.
- E3408–09 *The kyng thorowe the baronys wyll / Gaf the dome.* This insistence on the king's consulting with his barons is matched in B (3521), the northern version (C4081–88), and K (4871–74). Elsewhere it passes unmentioned. In A\* (50.15), the barons approve the king's judgment after it has been pronounced.
- E3425 *And evyr aftyr they ferde wele.* The happiness of the younger raven and his mate is also affirmed in B (3532–33), F (2730–31), the northern version (C4109–11), and K (4889–90). Elsewhere it passes unmentioned.
- E3430–31 *Alle the lordys hym love began, / For he was so wyse a man.* He (pp. 149–73) has a long interpolation at this point in which the child, here called Alexander, goes on to have further adventures with a friend, Ludovick, whom he first meets at the court of the emperor Tytus. Their story culminates in Ludovick's murder of his two children to procure a cure for leprosy for Alexander; the children are miraculously restored to health, however, and Alexander marries Ludovick's sister. This excursion takes its outline from the Amis and Amiloun legend, a Middle English version of which is compiled with the *Seven Sages* in the Auchinleck Manuscript.
- E3442–43 *And soo the kyng lay there bysyde / And wyste hit in a lytylle tyde.* In the northern version, the hero is informed of his parents' fate in a dream (C4133–36).
- E3449 *Barnarde norysshe sone.* In the other versions, where he is named, the father is called either some form of *Girart le filz Thierry* (A\*51.11; K4926) or *Gerard the Nurses Son* (B3662, F2759, C4145).
- E3462–63 *"But suche goode as I have / Hyt ys redy to hym, God me save."* In the northern version (C4177–79), the wife appears to know that an upturn in their fortunes is imminent.
- E3474–75 *And bade a servande take the towelle thare / Of the modyr that hym bare.* In He (p. 175), the father is forced to admit his attempted murder of his son before the hero reveals his identity.
- E3483–85 *He was fulle sore adrad . . . hangyde or drawe.* A\* (52.5), E, and M (p. 73, lines 154–56) leave the father hanging at the close of the tale. Elsewhere, the son forgives his parents and restores

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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them to prosperity. See **B** (3610–11), **F** (2810–13), **C** (4231–38), **D** (3367–70), **He** (p. 177), **Hs** (2714–22), **K** (5005–08), and **Aw** (p. 662). In **S** (p. 230), where *vaticinium* is told after the empress's execution, the son promises not to kill his father but does not explicitly forgive him.

**E3490–91** *also lytylle gylte have I / As hadde the chylde*. **Hs** (2723–27) draws a different comparison: the son says that if he had the whole empire, he would give as little trouble to his father as had done the son to the father in the tale.

**E3509–10** *For encheson that I shulde wene / That I hadde hyr inforsyd soo*. The assertion that the empress simulated the rape in order to convince the prince that he had done wrong is very unusual. The impression habitually given is that the empress's performance is intended to persuade the emperor.

## CONCLUSION

The extant copies of the *Seven Sages* conclude the frame narrative differently. The variants recorded below cluster around the empress's defense; the events occurring prior to her execution; and the resolution of the story. The *Book of Sindbad* also varies in its final stages. In **SindA101** (pp. 280–81) and **SindHeb** (pp. 294–95), the concubine is pardoned; in **SindA1001** (2:610), she is banished; in **SindGr** (pp. 174–77) and **SindP1** (p. 262), she keeps her life but has her head shaved and is ridden through town in infamy; and in **SindSp** (p. 51) and **SindP3** (p. 68), she is executed. In two versions, manuscript damage obscures the passage describing her fate (**SindSyr**, **SindP2**). In several versions, the prince's accuser is given another story in which she compares herself to a fox trapped in a city by night. The fox plays dead during the day and must suffer various parts of its body to be cut off by the townspeople for various uses until someone attempts to excise the animal's heart, at which the fox jumps up and flees through the town gates, which have been opened for the new day. Like the fox, the concubine says, she can suffer everything apart from having her heart torn out (**SindGr**, pp. 170–75; **SindHeb**, pp. 288–93; **SindP1**, pp. 259–62).

On the eighth day of the trial in **Do** (pp. 77–96), Virgil flies in on a giant bird, denounces the queen, tells his version of *puteus* (on which see the headnote to that tale, above), and announces that Lucinius should not have been tried because he was mute. Lucinius is released and tells his story, the queen is burned, and then the deaths of Dolopathos and Virgil are narrated. Lucinius becomes ruler of Sicily, converts to Christianity after a lengthy exchange with a visiting missionary, abdicates, and finally departs on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

## FURTHER READING

Kunkel, "Misogyny, Wisdom, and Legal Practice" and Reynders, "How Lonely Are Women[?]" offer comparative readings of texts in the *Seven Sages* tradition that focus in part on the frame narrative's differing conclusions.

**E3514–15** *"Dame," quothe the emperoure at o brayde, / "Ys hit sothe that my sone hathe sayde?"* The empress's defense varies. In **A\*** (52.10) and **K** (5032–39), she says that she was worried that the prince would destroy the emperor and take his empire; in **F** (2828–30) and the northern version (**C4271–78**), she worries for herself or her children as well as for her husband; in **B** (3650),

she adds that she wanted her son to be heir; in **Hs** (2744–46), she says that she was trying to tempt the son; in the midland version (**D**3408–17) and **He** (p. 180), she offers no excuses.

- E3531**      *"Thou shalt drynke as thou haste browyn."* The phrase is proverbial. See Whiting B529.
- E3538–39**    *"Sythe she ordaynyd syche treson / To sle my sone agayne reson."* **B** (3676–77) adds that the order is fulfilled quickly; the northern version (**C**4397–4408) adds that the barons approve. In **Hs** (2751–74), before the empress is burned, she is revealed to have harbored a cross-dressing lover amongst her maidens; the lover is sent to be executed with her. In **He** (pp. 138–39), the presence of the cross-dressing lover is revealed before the son tells his story.
- In three versions the action is extended by a judicial combat. In **L** (pp. 73–76) and **S** (p. 228), representatives of the son and the empress fight and the empress is executed when the prince's knight wins. In **S**, before she is sent to the pyre, the empress recognizes the truthfulness of a dream that she had: a snake issued from her mouth and was pursued by seven birds who, with the help of an eagle, brought the snake back to her before she and the snake were burned together in a great fire. The serpent signifies her falseness, the seven birds were the seven sages, and the eagle was the prince. In **D\*** (pp. 51–54), which also concludes with a judicial combat, the prince fights for himself against a nephew of the empress and wins but is ambushed by the nephew's men and must be rescued by his father. Before she is executed, the queen begs a final request that she should be burnt with the best of fleeces. When the wish is granted, she presents the emperor with a conundrum: his own hide, she says, is the best fleece. The prince disproves her argument and the empress is finally burnt.
- E3544–45**    *And thys was the emperice ibrent, / As welle worthy was by juggement.* The northern version, **F**, **A\***, **K**, and **Aw** end with the burning of the empress. **B** (3690–93) and **He** (p. 180) have concluding lines detailing the sages' reward and the prince's replacement of his father; **Hs** (2778–81) also briefly mentions the prince's subsequent reign. **D** (3434–51) ends with a description of Diocletian's final years in widowhood but neglects to recount the prince's accession.
- E3547**      *Of falssenys comythe evylle endynge.* The phrase is proverbial. See Whiting F51.
- E3571**      *myddelle hyrthe.* "Middle earth" is the world of humans, i.e., not heaven or hell.



## TEXTUAL NOTES

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These textual notes record differences between the text of this edition and the corresponding manuscript texts on which it is based (**A** and **E**). These notes also include a record of visual features in the manuscripts (rubrication, penwork initials, paragraph signs) and of our editorial emendations, which have been made for sense or to correct clear errors. We do not record here codicological and paratextual features, such as catchwords, signatures, and marginalia. Nor do we provide here a record of variants between the Middle English texts, for which readers are directed to the editions by Brunner, Campbell, and Whitelock.

- Title        E includes a title for the text written over three lines linked by a bracket: *This boke ys / callyd the vij / sages of Rome*. The title is written in the outer margin, has an initial rubricated capital *T*, and is enclosed within an inked frame drawn with cross-hatching and rubrication.
- E1            *Herkenythe*. The initial *H* is an enlarged capital in red ink, six lines high. The scribe of **E** indented the text of lines 1–6 to allow space for the enlarged letter to be inserted and included a guide letter (although incorrectly used a *t* rather than an *h*).
- E31          *Bancillas*. The initial *B* is an enlarged capital in red ink, two lines high. The scribe indented the text of lines 31–32 to allow space for the enlarged letter to be inserted and included a guide letter *b*. Enlarged two-line rubricated initial capitals appear throughout the *Seven Sages* in **E**; in our text at E39, E51, E61, E73, E89, E99, E2870, E3236, E3284, E3464, E3486, E3514, E3526, E3534, and E3548. In every case, the scribe of **E** has allowed space in the text and a guide letter. All of the initials and rubrication are in the same style and ink and by a single hand, added as a batch. These initials are well-proportioned and drawn with skill, although they do not include additional decorative or artistic features, such as calligraphic extensions, flourishes, or penwork.
- E52          *swanne*. **E**: *swanne*.
- E53          *cryspe*. The *s* is altered from another letter.
- E61          *red man*. **E**: *redman*.
- E92          *man*. **E**: *ma*.
- A120        This is where the poem begins in the Auchinleck Manuscript, whose text of the Middle English *Seven Sages* is damaged.
- 125         *Ich*. **A**: *Iich*.

- 127 *Dioclician*. The initial *D* is an enlarged capital in blue ink, with red-ink decoration, two lines high. The scribe of **A** indented the text at lines 127–28 to allow space for this enlarged letter to be added subsequently. Further penwork initials of this kind appears throughout the *Seven Sages* in **A**, at lines 209, 255, 287, 341, 457, 511, 551, 623, 645, 675, 701, 787, 843, 933, 967, 1003, 1103, 1169, 1219, 1275, 1329, 1351, 1401, 1511, 1549, 1645, 1663, 1933, 1955, 2015, 2057, 2155, 2189, 2265, 2311, 2329, 2417, 2467, 2519, 2553, and 2741. The scribe of **A** allowed indented spaces in the text of two or three lines high (switching from 2- to 3-lines deep from folio. 98v onwards) and included guide letters for the artist (as is visible beneath the decoration of the initial at line 843). All of these penwork initials are by the same hand, added as a single batch. The penwork is finely drawn by an accomplished artist using linear and foliate designs (there are no zoomorphic or anthropomorphic elements and no gilding). Blue ink is used for each letter, with red ink reserved for the decorative penwork surrounds and infills. The penwork includes lines, loops, lobes, dots, spirals, cross-hatch, quatrefoils, hooked and serifed finials, extended calligraphic tendrils, and tapering hairline strokes reaching into the margins (up to 17 lines in each vertical direction, above and below).
- 132 *gentil*. **A**: *genal*.
- 138 *And*. **A**: *An*.
- 159 *founden*. **A**: *fomden*.
- 171 *metrike*. **A**: *mutike*.
- 181 *yer*. **A**: *ze*.
- 199 *wexen*. **A**: *weren*.
- 215 *might*. **A**: *mit*.
- 220 *the barons had*. Erasure between *the* and *had* in **A**, which may have been the word *pemperour* but is now illegible. Emended from **E**: *barons*. **B**: *conselle*.
- 247 *and*. **A**: *an*.
- 250 *falsenesse to torne*. **A**: *falsenesse torne*.
- 261 *sikerli*. **A**: *sikeli*.
- 266 *fram me hedde*. **A**: *fram hedde*.
- 272 *ending*. **A**: *eding*.
- 286 *thousand*. **A**: *pounsed*.

## TEXTUAL NOTES

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- 288–92      There is a mark or smudge that extends across lines 288–92 and partially obscures the words *to*, *tofor*n, and *with his*.
- 331          *Themperour*. **A**: *Penperour*.
- 356          *The*. **A**: *P*.
- 379          *wald with wit*. **A**: *wald wit*.
- 383          *hit*. **A**: *hi*.
- 402          *destrers*. **A**: *destres*.
- 426          *And in hire*<sub>1</sub>. **A**: *And hire*.
- 446          *maidenhod*. **A**: *maindenhod*.
- 474          *hadde*. **A**: *dhadde*.
- 475          *had*. **A**: *ad*.
- 478          *is*. **A**: *his*.
- 541          *appel tres and of*. **A**: *appel-tres and and of*.
- 550          *solas*. Erasure of one letter in **A** after this word.
- 557          *light*. **A**: *liz*.
- 567          *Seste*. Erasure of one or two letters in **A** after this word.
- 590          *iket*. **A**: *ikest*.
- 604          *Hit is so*. **A**: *Hit so*.
- 625          *Ich*. **A**: *Iich*.
- 628          *ferste*. *r* added above in **A**.
- 647          *deciple*. **A**: *deciphe*.
- 655          There is an in initial paraph mark in blue ink.
- 679          *hale*. Erasure of one letter or space between *a* and *l* in this word in **A**.
- 714          *soukeying*. **A**: *souke zing*.

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|        |                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 718    | <i>and. A: an.</i>                                                                                                                                |
| 720    | <i>Ther. A: Þ.</i>                                                                                                                                |
| 735    | <i>wal.</i> Deletion or damage after <i>wal</i> .                                                                                                 |
| 751    | <i>strong.</i> <i>g</i> added above in <b>A</b> .                                                                                                 |
| 775    | <i>greihound. A: greihoun.</i>                                                                                                                    |
| 796    | <i>Right.</i> <i>t</i> added above in <b>A</b> .                                                                                                  |
| 803    | <i>forth goth. A: goþ forþ.</i>                                                                                                                   |
| 804    | <i>and.</i> <i>d</i> added above in <b>A</b> .                                                                                                    |
| 817    | <i>And<sub>1</sub>. A: &amp; and.</i>                                                                                                             |
| 853    | <i>sweting.</i> <i>g</i> added above in <b>A</b> .                                                                                                |
| 871    | There is a mark on the <i>a</i> of <i>was</i> .                                                                                                   |
| 878    | <i>Ech dai he. A: Ech he.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 880    | <i>and. A: an.</i>                                                                                                                                |
| 903–07 | <i>And nyste what . . . wombe fulle withalle.</i> Not in <b>A</b> . These lines are supplied from <b>E</b> (folio 16r).                           |
| 909    | <i>Tho. A: Þ.</i>                                                                                                                                 |
| 923    | <i>herd. A: bor.</i>                                                                                                                              |
| 939    | <i>strengthe. A: strengye.</i>                                                                                                                    |
| 941    | <i>night.</i> <i>t</i> added above in <b>A</b> .                                                                                                  |
| 945    | <i>unlek. A: unkek.</i>                                                                                                                           |
| 967    | <i>Than. A: Þþan.</i>                                                                                                                             |
| 983    | <i>him sle bi. A: him bi.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 985    | <i>Ypocras. A: Þpocras.</i> The initial letter <i>Þ</i> , sometimes with a dot above, appears several times and is transcribed here as <i>Y</i> . |
| 992    | <i>schal. A: scha.</i>                                                                                                                            |

## TEXTUAL NOTES

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- 1006 *lere. A: l* altered from another letter.
- 1019 *thing. A: zing.*
- 1054 *schal. A: scha.*
- 1066 *Ich. A: Iich.*
- 1096 *and<sub>2</sub>. A: a.*
- 1102 *To* is written in the separated initial column.
- 1110 *nas. A: was.*
- 1130 There is fading or smudging on *hi* of *his*.  
*was. A: wa.*
- 1151 *Ich. A: Iich.*
- 1153 *Ich. A: Iich.*
- 1219 *An. A: A.*
- 1228 *he. A: zhe.*
- 1249 *Forth. A: For.*
- 1272 *the. A: þe þe.*
- 1277 *bi store. A: bistore.*
- 1294 *iscent. t* added above in **A**.
- 1310 *louerdes. A: loruedes.*
- 1311 *an. A: and.*
- 1316 *his fet faste. A: his fet fet faste.*
- 1327 *and. A: an.*
- 1344 *might. A: miȝ.*
- 1356 *And. d* added above in **A**.
- 1363 *sikerlik. A: sikerklik.*

- 1373      Damage or smudge in **A** over *Lentilioun*.
- 1403      *neyheours*. **A**: *nepheours*.
- 1416      *husbounde*. **A**: *bounde*.
- 1422      *folk*. **A**: *fokk*.
- 1435      *and*<sub>3</sub>. **A**: *an*.
- 1442      *Ich*. **A**: *Iich*.
- 1472      *give thee kare*. **A**: *giue kare*.
- 1476      *Ich*. **A**: *Iich*.
- 1480–94      There is no rubrication of the initial separated letter of these lines, as is found throughout this text. These are the final 15 lines of folio 92v, column a, in **A** and the rubrication recommences at the start of the next column.
- 1481      *an*. **A**: *and*.
- 1492      *him in ar*. **A**: *him ar*.
- 1493      *answered*. **A**: *answere*.
- 1553      *Wimmen he loved swithe*. **A**: *Wimmen he louede he louede swiþe*.
- 1554      *sodomighte*. **A**: *so do mizte*.
- 1573      *with hire plai*. **A**: *with plai*.
- 1579      *Bihot*. **A**: *Bi hot*.
- 1580      *me*. **A**: *þe*.
- 1585      *whiderward*. **A**: *whideward*.
- 1601      *again*. Second *a* corrected from *o* in **A**. **A**: *agoin*.
- 1610      *uprape*. **A**: *vrape*.
- 1631      *winning*. **A**: *winnng*.
- 1654      *whil*. **A**: *til*.

## TEXTUAL NOTES

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- 1700 *of*. Altered from *op* in **A**.
- 1717 *old and wis*. **A**: *old wis*.
- 1727 *And bad him*. **A**: *And him*.
- 1732 *and<sub>2</sub>*. *d* added above in **A**.
- 1749 *hath*. **A**: *had*.
- 1764 *ympe*. **A**: *þmpe*.
- 1767 *ympe*. **A**: *þmpe*.
- 1789 *louerd*. **A**: *louer*.
- 1799 *afterward*. **A**: *afterwar*.
- 1807 *knif and smot*. **A**: *knif and here smot*.
- 1850 *Of*. **A**: *O*.
- 1864 *understonde*. *r* added above in **A**.
- 1866 *misdedes*. **A**: *misddedes*.
- 1875 *And*. **A**: *An*.
- 1881 *veyn*. **A**: *vreyne*.
- 1903 *nou red me red*. **A**: *nou red me red me red*.
- 1943 *wroth*. **A**: *wrozt*.
- 1949 *and*. **A**: *an*.
- 1965 *on a donjoun*. **A**: *on o donioun*.
- 1980 *ymage*. **A**: *þmage*. The initial letter *þ*, sometimes appears several times and is transcribed here as *y*.
- 1981 *The*. **A**: *þ*.
- 2013 *biwraid*. **A**: *bi wraid*.
- 2039 *And*. **A**: *An*.

|      |                                                                                                                                         |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2051 | <i>elder. A: elderer.</i>                                                                                                               |
| 2072 | <i>gave. A: haue.</i>                                                                                                                   |
| 2075 | <i>and. d added above in A.</i>                                                                                                         |
| 2212 | <i>The. A: Þ.</i>                                                                                                                       |
| 2236 | <i>Thai. A: Þa.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 2267 | <i>Staining in A over night.</i>                                                                                                        |
| 2275 | <i>hir wete and his. There is a word missing in A, with a space of around four letters hire . . . and his; wete is supplied from E.</i> |
| 2301 | <i>thee sschal despise. A: þe spise.</i>                                                                                                |
| 2353 | <i>fourten. A: r added above.</i>                                                                                                       |
| 2430 | <i>thing. A: king.</i>                                                                                                                  |
| 2442 | <i>Sir is written in the separated initial column.</i>                                                                                  |
| 2456 | <i>wel have. A: wel wel haue.</i>                                                                                                       |
| 2467 | <i>themperour. A: þempour.</i>                                                                                                          |
| 2521 | <i>Fro. A: For.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 2525 | <i>and. A: an.</i>                                                                                                                      |
| 2539 | <i>That. A: Þa.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 2546 | <i>Ich. A: Iich.</i>                                                                                                                    |
| 2555 | <i>And had a yong. A: And zong.</i>                                                                                                     |
| 2556 | <i>lovede hire has. A: louede has.</i>                                                                                                  |
| 2566 | <i>his. A: hir.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 2568 | <i>He. A: 3he.</i>                                                                                                                      |
| 2570 | <i>he. A: sche.</i>                                                                                                                     |
| 2573 | <i>hir<sub>2</sub>. A: him.</i>                                                                                                         |

## TEXTUAL NOTES

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- 2574        *and. A: an.*
- 2591        *confort. A: confor.*
- 2595        *hire. A: him.*
- 2647        *He thought that. A: He þat.*
- 2699        *he. A: 3he.*
- 2768        Blot or stain in **A** over the *u* of *thousand*.
- A2770        This is where the poem ends in the Auchinleck Manuscript, whose text of the Middle English *Seven Sages* is damaged.
- E2820        *shulle. E: shullt.*
- E2841        *knave. E: knawe.*
- E2843        *noldyste. E: woldyste.*
- E2994        *hys. E: hyr.*
- E3002        *went yare. E: went ~~yar~~ yare.*
- E3072        *a robe of. E: a ~~bo~~ robe of.*
- E3096        *evyr hadde he. E: euyr ~~he~~ hadde he.*
- E3121        *good. E: goo.*
- E3170        This verse line is written across two manuscript lines (the second line starting *Hit is . . .*).
- E3219        *Ye. E: She.*
- E3396        *grete ravyn. E: grete ~~femate~~ rauyn.*
- E3474        *And. E: A.*
- E3502        *I be. E: I be be.*
- E3521        *he. E: she.*
- E3552        *fadyr dede was. E: fadyr ~~was~~ dede was.*
- E3580        *Amen.* Underlined in red ink.

Explicit      The explicit is marked with a rubricated paraph mark.



## APPENDIX 1: TEXT SAMPLES

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The text samples provided in this section have been selected from across the text of the *Seven Sages of Rome*. Their purpose is to show different features of scribal language, presentation, and layout. Abbreviations used by the scribes are expanded in italics.

- TEXT SAMPLE 1 provides manuscript transcriptions that correspond to lines A120–159 of this edition of the *Seven Sages*. The transcriptions are from the Auchinleck Manuscript and the Egerton Manuscript, presented in parallel for comparison. The passage gives the point early in the narrative where the emperor employs the seven sages to instruct his son.
- TEXT SAMPLE 2 provides a transcription from the Auchinleck Manuscript of the passage that corresponds to lines 1169–1218 in this edition. It is provided in parallel with the edited text, which is here re-lineated for ease of comparison. This passage features the link to inset Tale 5, *gaza*, and the dialogue between the emperor and empress.
- TEXT SAMPLE 3 provides manuscript transcriptions that correspond to lines 2755–2770 and lines 2755–E2805 of this edition. The transcriptions provided are from the Auchinleck Manuscript and give the point at which the manuscript ends imperfectly; the text of the Egerton Manuscript is presented in parallel for comparison. This passage is from inset Tale 13, *Roma*.

Students and teachers of Middle English might like to consider the following questions in relation to these extracts:

- How many variations can you observe between the language of the Auchinleck Manuscript and the Egerton Manuscript?
- At which levels of language (spelling, grammar, lexis, punctuation, visual layout, phrases) do variations between the manuscript texts occur?
- What are the possible reasons for these kinds of manuscript variations?
- How do these manuscript transcriptions compare to the edited text of the *Seven Sages of Rome* prepared for this edition? What decisions and changes have the editors of this edition made?

A recommended introduction to language variation and change that is relevant to these questions is Horobin and Smith, *An Introduction to Middle English*.



## TEXT SAMPLE 1

---

AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT (A), FOL. 85R

*Corresponding lines in this edition: A120–159*

1            ffor þe mede of mi seruise  
             Tac me þi sone to loke and lore  
             Of mi seruise kep i nammore  
             And i þe wille þonke conne  
5            And al þe clergie vnder sonne  
             Iich wille in to his bodi diȝt  
             Boþe bi dai and bi niȝt  
             Dioclician þe maistres herde  
             He strok his berd and schok his ȝerde  
10           And on hem made milde chere  
             And spak þat hi alle miȝte ihere  
             Þonke i ȝou kan gode lordingges  
             Of ȝoure genal answerunges  
             I kan ȝou þonke of ȝoure speche  
15           Þat ȝe desire mi sone to teche  
             ȝoure compaignie is fair and gent  
             Nel ich hit departe verraiment  
             He tok his sone bi þe hond a non  
             An bitauȝte him to hem euerichon  
20           Þai vnderfengen him wiȝ cher blithe  
             And þonged him a þousant sithe  
             Þe seuen wise wiȝ gret glorie  
             Þ<sup>t</sup> child ladde to consistorie  
             Þ<sup>t</sup> is a stede wiȝ inne Rome  
25           Þer men makeȝ wise dome  
             Þis seuen wise men in boke  
             Here conseil þere to gider toke  
             Þ<sup>t</sup> he scholde nowt in Rome bilaue  
             ffor burgeis maiden oþer knaue  
30           Miȝte him in som riot sette  
             Þat al his lore he scholde lette  
             Þer þai toke to gideres alle  
             Þai wolde make a riche halle



## TEXT SAMPLE 1

---

EGERTON MANUSCRIPT (E), FOL. 4R-V

*Corresponding lines in this edition: A120–159*

- 1            ffor the loue of my seruyse /  
              Take to me youre yong sone in boke to lore  
              ffor my seruyse I kepe nomore —  
              And I wylle you moche thonke conne  
5            And alle the clergy vnder the sonne /  
              In hys hert I shalle hit dighte /  
              Wytte and wysdome bothe day and nyghte /
- The Emperowre thes maysters hyrde  
              He stant and strykys on hys berde /  
10           And sayde graunte marcy fayre lordelyngys /  
              Ye haue me plesyd in alle thynges /  
              Grete thanke I canne for youre speche /  
              ffor ye desyret my sone to teche /  
              Youre company ys fayre and gent /  
15           I wylle not yowe for sake verament /  
              He toke his sone thoo a non  
              To the Maysters euerychon  
              And they nome hym w<sup>t</sup> herte fre /  
              And thonkyd the Emperoure apon hyr kne /  
20           The vij. Mayster of grete clergy  
              Ladde the chylde into hyr constorye  
              In to a howse w<sup>t</sup> ynne Rome  
              There that they hylde hyr wysdome  
              Ther vij. Maysters in a boke /  
25           Alle to gedyr hyr consayle toke  
              That the chylde myght not dwelle in Rome  
              ffor burges doughters and for grome /  
              That sone myghte hym in ryot sette  
              And moche of hys lore lette /  
30           So that they nome hyr conselle alle /  
              fforto make a nobylle halle  
              W<sup>t</sup> owtyinne Rome in a verger /

35           Wizouten Rome in on verger  
              A mile þennes bi o riuer  
              Tiber hit hatte wiz outen dout  
              A mile long al about  
              Alle tres þer inne were  
              Pat ani frut an erthe bere  
40           A mideward þai founden a space

35           A myle thens by a reuer /  
              Tyber hyt hat wt owte doute  
              A myle longe hyt was a boutte /  
              Al maner treys there yn were  
              That any fronyte myght bere  
              And there a mydde they founde a space —



## TEXT SAMPLE 2

---

AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT (A), FOL. 90v–91r

*Corresponding lines in this edition: 1169–1218*

- 1           Pe maister had so isped  
             Pemperour sone was his frend  
             Pe maister was o wai inome  
             Pemperour was to chaumbre icome  
5           Per he fond his emperice  
             Wiȝ lourand chere and wiȝ nice  
             Hond wringging and loude koupe  
             And here visage al biwope  
             Dame he saide pluk vp þi cher  
10          Oþer tel me whi þou makest swich cher  
             Sire ȝhe saide hit is wonder non  
             Hi se þi honor al igon  
             I se þe wede waxe ouer þe corn  
             Allas allas þat iwas boren  
15          And þat ischal þis dai ise  
             Þat we ischulle departed be  
             What dame is hit comen þus to  
             We sscholle be departed so  
             Ȝe sire bi Adam & bi Eue  
20          ffor þou nelt nowt me ileue  
             Of him þat þout clepest þi sone  
             Certes he had þe deueles wone  
             He þe procureȝ niȝt and dai  
             Al þe sschame þat he mai  
25          Þine barouns and þine gentil men  
             Alle þai holden þe aȝen  
             Þai sschal wel sone for nithe an hete  
             Put þe out of þi kinges sete  
             And sette him stede inne þine  
30          Þat ware mi deȝ and mi pine  
             Ich hadde leuere to ben an honge  
             Pan þat ischolde liue so longe  
             · A · hou wimmen conne hit make



## TEXT SAMPLE 2

---

EDITED TEXT PREPARED FOR THIS EDITION

*Lines 1169–1218*

1           The maister had so isped,  
          Themperour sone was his frend.  
          The maister was owai inome;  
          Themperour was to chaumbre icome.  
5           Ther he fond his emperice  
          With lourand chere and with nice  
          Hond wringing, and loude koupe,  
          And here visage al biwope.  
          “Dame,” he saide, “pluk up thi cher,  
10          Other tel me whi thou makest swich cher.”  
          “Sire,” she saide, “hit is wonder non.  
          Hi se thi honor al igon;  
          I se the wede waxe over the corn.  
          Allas! alas! that I was boren  
15          And that I schal this dai ise  
          That we sschulle departed be.”  
          “What, dame, is hit comen therto,  
          We sscholle be departed so?”  
          “Ye, sire, bi Adam and bi Eve,  
20          For thou nelt nowt me ileve  
          Of him that thou clepest thi sone.  
          Certes he had the develes wone.  
          He thee procureth night and dai  
          Al the sschame that he mai.  
25          Thine barouns and thine gentil men,  
          Alle thai holden thee agen.  
          Thai sschal wel sone for nithe an hete  
          Put thee out of thi kinges sete  
          And sette him stede inne thine;  
30          That ware mi deth and mi pine.  
          Ich hadde levere to ben anhonge  
          Than that I scholde live so longe.”  
          A! Hou wimmen conne hit make,

35           Whan þai wil ani man lake  
          Ac sire 3if hit falle so  
          Þat þempire is diȝt him to  
          On þe falle swich a cas  
          As de de on him þat his heued was  
          Of his sone icast in a gong  
40           Wiȝ felonie and wiȝ wrong  
          · O · dame who miȝt þat be  
          Wolde do his fader swich vilite  
          Tel hit me for god aboue  
          Lat be sire for mi loue  
45           Þou ne louest nowt of mi telling  
          Hit schal þe rewe bi heuene kyng  
          3is dame he saide lat here þe speke  
          And ich wil sone þe awreke  
          Sei on dame & ssche bigan  
50           To tellen als a fals wimman

## APPENDIX 1: TEXT SAMPLES

---

35           Whan thai wil ani man lake.  
              "Ac, sire, yif hit falle so  
              That thempire is dight him to,  
              On thee falle swich a cas  
              As dede on him that his heued was  
              Of his sone icast in a gong  
40           With felonie and with wrong."  
              "O dame, who might that be  
              Wolde do his fader swich vilté?  
              Tel hit me, for God above."  
              "Lat be, sire, for mi love,  
45           Thou ne lovest nowt of mi telling;  
              Hit schal thee rewe, bi hevene kyng."  
              "Yis, dame," he saide, "lat here thee speke  
              And ich wil sone thee awreke.  
              Sei on, dame." And ssche bigan  
50           To tellen als a fals wimman.



### TEXT SAMPLE 3

---

AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT (A), FOL. 99v

*Corresponding lines in this edition: 2755–2770*

- 1           A moneþ þai kept hit  
          Ase we findeþ in þe writ  
          Whan hit com to þe moneþ ende  
          Þai ne miȝt hit no lenger defende  
5           But ase þai dede afair queintise  
          Herkneþ now in what wise  
          A man þer was so seiþ þe rime  
          Þat hit gemes In þat time  
          He was on of þe seuen wise  
10          Þer he dede afair queintise  
          He let *him* make a garnement  
          Ase blak ase ani arnement  
          And heng þer on squirel tail  
          A þousand and mo wiȝ outen fail  
15          A viser ȝit he made more  
          Two faces bihinde & two bifore

[Gathering missing in the manuscript after this point. Around 1,200 lines lost, from the end of *The Seven Sages of Rome* and the start of the next text, *Floris and Blaunche flour*.]



## TEXT SAMPLE 3

---

EGERTON MANUSCRIPT (E), FOL. 43R

*Corresponding lines in this edition: 2755–E2805*

- 1           And alle a monythe they kepte hyt/  
            As we fynde in boke Iwrytte /  
            Whenne hit come to the monythe ys ende  
            Noo longer myght they hyt defende /  
5           ffor as I you telle samfayle /  
            Them faylyd bothe store and vytayle  
            And as the geste tellythe vs /  
            Thare was a man that hyet Iunyus /  
            And he was one of the wyse /  
10          And he wrought aftyr quentyse /  
            He lete make hym agarnement /  
            As blacke as any arnement /  
            And hyng ther on squyrelle ~~tayls~~ taylys  
            A M<sup>l</sup> and mo samfaylys /  
15          And a veser he made hym more /  
            Too facys be hynde a nother by fore /  
            And ij. nosys in ether halfe /  
            More horrybeler thenne any calfe /  
            And the tonge also there on rede /  
20          As euyr was ii brennyng lede  
            He sent to the Soudans samfayle /  
            He shulde be redy to byde batayle /  
            And they answeyd alle in haste /  
            They shulde ben redy leste and moste /  
25          A morowe come thys Iunyus  
            And stode in a toure that het crassus /  
            The hyste toure that was ouyr the walle /  
            That men myghte see hym ouyr alle /  
            Than hadde he made a woundyr merrovre /  
30          And bare w<sup>t</sup> hym in to the toure /  
            And vppon hys hede dede that vysoure /  
            And lokyd a pon the merroure clere /  
            And ij. swerdys he ganne owte brayde /



35           And skyrmyde faste and on layde /  
              And made more noyse and boste  
              Thenne wolde akyng and hys hoste /





## APPENDIX 3: PLOT SUMMARY

---

### PROLOGUE

The Middle English *Seven Sages* opens with a couplet announcing the beginning of the poem (E1–2). The wife of the emperor Diocletian dies shortly after giving birth to Diocletian's son, Florentine (E3–14). When the child reaches the age of seven, Diocletian summons the seven sages with a view to selecting one of them as his tutor (E15–30). The sages audition for the role, promising to complete Florentine's education in longer or shorter periods of time (E31–A126). Having heard these speeches, Diocletian decides to employ all seven sages to instruct his son and the sages depart for the Roman countryside, where they construct a specially designed school on the banks of the Tiber (127–74). There Florentine is taught Latin and the liberal arts; his teaching is intensive and successful: after seven years he surpasses his masters (175–208).

Meanwhile, Diocletian's barons persuade him to take another wife, who, upon discovering Florentine's existence, plots to trap the son who will inherit Diocletian's wealth and power (209–54). Feigning an interest in getting to know her stepson, the unnamed empress asks Diocletian to have Florentine come to Rome and Diocletian sends messengers to the seven sages instructing them to deliver the boy to him (255–322). Before responding to the request, the sages consult the heavens and discover that Florentine's return will result in disaster: if Florentine goes to court, he and they will be killed at the first word he speaks. But Florentine sees a further sign in the stars. If he can keep from speaking for seven days, his safety and that of the sages will be guaranteed; Florentine will be able to secure this if each of the sages agrees to keep him safe for one of the seven days of his silence (323–72). The sages agree; Florentine and the sages entertain the emperor's messengers; and the scene ends with Florentine in bed plotting to overcome the empress (373–98).

### DAY 1

The next day Florentine is conducted to Rome and met by his father on the road (399–418). The empress has him sent to her chambers, where she offers Florentine her love: the emperor is old and impotent, she says, and she only married him to be allied with Florentine (419–46). Florentine rejects his stepmother when she attempts to kiss him, at which the empress becomes angry. She tears at her hair and scratches her face and, when the emperor asks for an explanation, she accuses Florentine of attempting to rape her (447–82). The emperor orders that his son be stripped, beaten, and hanged but his noblemen intervene and Florentine is put in prison awaiting judgment the following day (483–506). The empress is furious and proposes to reignite her husband's anger towards his son with the first of her tales (507–35).

### TALE 1: ARBOR, THE TREE. THE EMPRESS.

A rich *burgeis* (citizen) of Rome had a beautiful garden behind his palace in the middle of which was a pine tree under which he liked to sit (536–50). One day, on returning from a year-long business trip away

from home, the *burgeis* noticed a little shoot springing from the root of the pine tree (551–64). Having learned from his gardener that branches from the older tree were blocking the shoot's light and preventing it from growing taller, the *burgeis* ordered the offending boughs to be cut off and the shoot flourished at the expense of the tree (565–92). As the shoot thrived, the old tree became dry and gangly until, one day, the *burgeis* ordered the old tree to be cut down to the ground (593–608). The empress tells the emperor that he is the tree and the shoot is his son: his son will overtake him similarly unless the emperor attends to the situation (609–22). The emperor vows that this will never be the case and resolves to put Florentine to death the next day (623–28).

## DAY 2

When the emperor gets up, he commands that Florentine be brought up from his prison and hanged (629–44). The first sage, Bancillas, rides in and greets the emperor before asking him why he is determined to slay his own son (645–58). The emperor upbraids the sage for teaching his son poorly; Bancillas questions the severity of the empress's accusation as well as its veracity; and the emperor replies that he requires no further proof of his son's guilt (659–78). Bancillas counsels against listening to stepmothers' tales and offers his own story of a knight and his greyhound, which he proposes to tell if the emperor will agree to stay Florentine's execution (679–92). The emperor agrees; Florentine is led back down to prison; and the sage begins his tale (693–700).

### TALE 2: CANIS, THE DOG. FIRST SAGE, BANCILLAS

Tournaments were to be held in a meadow belonging to a knight of Rome who had a beautiful wife, a treasured child, and a well-behaved greyhound (701–24). During the jousts, the wife watched from a draw-bridge and the nurses left their charge under a wall (725–32). Hearing the noise from the fighting, a snake living in the wall poked its head out, saw the unattended child, and pounced on it, but was prevented from killing the child by the knight's faithful dog (733–44). In the combat that ensued between the animals, the infant's cradle was overturned but the baby remained unharmed, and the snake was killed (745–70). When the tournament was finished, the nurses found the upturned cradle and the bloodied dog and assumed that the dog had killed the child; when their mistress returned, they passed on this unhappy news (771–86). The mother threatened to kill herself if her husband would not kill his dog and he complied with her wish, only to discover shortly after the remains of the adder and the child hidden beneath the upturned cradle (787–810). After announcing that his example should teach other husbands not to take their wives' counsel, the knight left for a forest exile where he intended to expiate his misdeed (811–36). The sage prays that similar dishonor may befall the emperor if on the advice of his wife he kills his son as the knight in the tale did his greyhound (837–42).

The emperor vows that this will not be the case and agrees to postpone Florentine's judgment until the next day (843–46). The court disbands, the sage departs, and the emperor goes to his bedchamber, where he is met by the empress, who is angry because he has ignored her advice (847–60). If he will not avenge her on Florentine, she threatens that he risks suffering the same fate as did a certain boar who liked getting scratched (861–62). The emperor asks to hear the story and the empress begins (863–66).

### TALE 3: *APER*, THE BOAR. THE EMPRESS

Out west there was a forest in which there lived a fearsome boar who every day ate the fruits of a hawthorn tree growing in a clearing there (867–78). A herdsman also lived in the forest and while looking for an animal he had lost came upon the hawthorn tree and gathered some of its fruits (879–87). The herdsman was met there by the boar and, terrified, climbed up the hawthorn tree, which the boar proceeded to attack (888–901). Despairing, the herdsman threw down the fruits that he had collected; the boar ate them and was pacified (902–08). The herdsman climbed down the tree and, hanging from one hand, started to scratch the boar (909–16). Once he had lulled the boar to sleep, he pulled out his knife; stabbed it through the heart; and left the clearing (917–25). The empress says that the emperor is the boar and that his sage is lulling him with wicked tales while at the same time sharpening his teeth; like the herdsman, the sages will deceive the emperor with their “scratching” until they finally kill him (926–32).

The emperor replies that his will not happen because he will have his son killed the next day; the empress thanks the emperor and prays that he might kill his son before nightfall (933–40).

### DAY 3

The next day, the emperor arrives at court in a fit of anger and orders the hanging of his son (941–52). The execution is interrupted by the arrival of the second sage, Ancilles, whom the emperor rebukes for having mistaught his son (953–78). Ancilles replies that the empress’s accusations should not be believed and proposes that, if he kills his son on her account, the same fate will befall him as befell Ypocras, who falsely slew his nephew (979–86). The emperor asks to hear the story and, when he has secured a stay of execution for Florentine, the sage begins (987–1002).

### TALE 4: *MEDICUS*, THE DOCTOR. SECOND SAGE, ANCILLES

Ypocras, a famous Roman doctor, noticed that his nephew, who was also his apprentice, threatened to overtake him in learning, and stopped instructing him, but the nephew learned anyway by secretly observing his uncle, much to Ypocras’s displeasure (1003–18). When the king of Hungary sent for Ypocras to treat his ill son, Ypocras dispatched his nephew in his stead (1019–32). Upon arrival, the nephew discovered from the prince’s urine that the prince was the fruit of an adulterous liaison and, after some persuasion, he extracted the truth of the matter from the queen (1033–80). The nephew promised not to reveal the queen’s indiscretion; healed the son by giving him a diet of beef and broth; and was lavishly rewarded by the king of Hungary (1081–90). When his nephew returned successful, Ypocras plotted his demise: when they are out collecting herbs together, Ypocras stabbed his nephew in the back, buried him as if he had died suddenly, and burnt his books (1091–1118). As punishment for his misdeed, God sent Ypocras incurable dysentery (1119–26). Ypocras gathered his neighbors and announced his imminent death with a trick whereby he stopped a perforated barrel full of water from leaking (1127–44). He could perform this miracle, Ypocras said, but he couldn’t cure himself; he deserved his illness, he added: it was punishment for having killed his nephew, the one person who might now be able to help him (1145–56). In his moral, Ancilles points out that Ypocras gained nothing from killing his nephew and the sage prays that, if he kills his son and his masters on the advice of the queen, the emperor might meet with a similar fate as did the doctor in the tale (1157–68).

After he has reconciled with the sage, the emperor goes to his chamber, where he meets the empress, who accuses Florentine of colluding with the emperor’s barons to exile her husband and take the kingdom

for himself (1169–1202). If this is indeed the case, she continues, she wishes the same fate upon the emperor as befell the father whose son cast his head into a privy (1203–08). The emperor asks for the story, and, after protesting that he does not like any of her tales, she begins (1209–18).

TALE 5: GAZA, THE TREASURE. THE EMPRESS

Octavian, a Roman emperor, acquired great wealth, which he stored in a tower called Cressent (1219–26). Octavian left town, taking five of the seven sages that he had with him and leaving two at home to keep the city; one was stingy, the other was a spendthrift, and though the stingy sage was given the treasury to look after, his spendthrift counterpart knew about it too (1227–42). Taking his son with him, the spendthrift sage raided the treasury one night; when the stingy sage found out he said nothing but made a trap in the tower, reasoning that the thieves would return (1243–72). Once they had spent the treasure that they stole, the father and son returned to the tower, but this time the father was caught in the trap that the stingy sage had set (1273–79). To prevent his discovery and identification, and to protect his family, the spendthrift sage ordered his son to behead him and the son, reluctantly, agreed (1280–1302). The son then threw the head into a privy when he fled the scene (1303–08). When the stingy sage found the headless body, he ordered that it should be dragged through the town: when the spectacle reached the home of the thief's family, he hoped, the family would betray themselves with their grieving (1309–22). Sure enough, when the body was dragged in front of the dead sage's house, his family wept, so in order to prevent detection, the son stabbed himself in the thigh (1323–32). When the stingy sage's officers asked why the family was mourning, the son showed his wound, and the officers are satisfied (1333–38).

Having concluded the tale, the empress asks the emperor whether it was not a foul deed when the son threw his father's head into the privy; he might have buried it more privately, she suggests (1339–45). The emperor agrees and the empress says that a similar fate awaits her husband unless he kills his son (1346–50). The emperor agrees to kill Florentine the next day and the empress thanks him (1351–58).

DAY 4

The next morning, the emperor returns to court determined to execute his son, much to the distress of his people (1359–72). Preparations for the execution are interrupted by the arrival of the third sage, Lentilioun (1373–76). The emperor upbraids Lentilioun for miseducating his son and Lentilioun replies that if the emperor kills his son without the assent of his barons, the same fate should befall him as befell the rich man who was overcome by his wife (1377–90). The emperor wants to know how any woman might beguile a man and, having secured a stay of execution, Lentilioun begins his tale (1391–1400).

TALE 6: PUTEUS, THE WELL. THIRD SAGE, LENTILIOUN

Disdaining his neighbor's children, a citizen of Rome married a beautiful but dishonest woman; her lover followed her to her new home and met with the woman when the husband was asleep (1401–16). This was during the time that there was a curfew at Rome, so that anyone who was found out at night was arrested and shamefully driven through town in the morning (1417–23). The husband noticed that his wife was often absent during the night and hatched a plan: he pretended to be drunk, waited until his wife left, then bolted the door, and told her through a window that she had been caught red handed and could look forward to having her misbehavior made public (1424–50). The wife threatened to drown herself in the well before the house if her husband would not let her back in and, when this failed to mollify him, she took a

### APPENDIX 3: PLOT SUMMARY

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big stone; dropped it in the well; then hid by the door (1451–62). Thinking that his wife had made good on her threat, the man rushed out to look for her; meanwhile the wife reentered the house and bolted the door (1463–70). The wife berated her husband from an upstairs window as he had berated her and refused him reentry to the house (1471–84). When the watchmen came, they found the husband and, suspecting what had happened, they asked the wife to readmit her husband (1485–92). She refused; the husband was arrested; and the next day he was led through the town in infamy (1493–1510).

At the conclusion of his tale, the sage has the emperor confirm his impression of the wife's guile and warns him that his own wife is just as bad; if the emperor kills his son on her advice, the sage hopes that a similarly awful fate will befall him as befell the husband in the tale (1511–20). The emperor agrees not to follow his wife's advice that evening, and the sage departs amidst blessings for the service that he has done for the prince (1521–26). At night, the emperor goes to his bedroom and is greeted sourly by the empress, who predicts that the same end will befall them as befell a lady, a steward, and a king who entered into an agreement together (1527–36). The emperor wants to know what the agreement was and the empress begins the story, although she wonders what the point can be in her tale-telling since the emperor is not inclined to believe her (1537–48).

#### TALE 7: *SENESCALCUS*, THE STEWARD. THE EMPRESS

A sodomitical king of Apulia and Calabria was rewarded for his youthful dalliances with men by a divine punishment that took the form of an incapacitating swelling in his limbs (1549–59). The king sent for a doctor, who saw in the man's urine that his disease was curable, placed a poultice under his rib, and prescribed a diet of barley bread and boiled barley water; for the final stage of the king's cure, the doctor prescribed sex with a woman (1560–68). The king agreed and sent for his steward, whom he ordered to bring him a woman to sleep with; when the steward objected that no women were likely to be willing, the king said that the steward should offer twenty marks as a reward (1569–80). The steward determined to win the reward for himself and, going to his wife, ordered her to spend the night with the king, despite her protestations (1581–1600).

At night, the steward introduced his wife to the king's bedchamber and withdrew, but found it difficult to sleep (1601–09). The next day, the steward rose to find his wife still in the king's arms and the king reluctant to let her go (1610–24). The steward confessed his predicament to the king — that the woman that the king had been sleeping with was his wife — and the king upbraided him for his deceit, banishing him from his lands on pain of death (1625–40). The steward fled, never to return, and the king kept the steward's wife for two years before marrying her off with a big dowry to one of his earls (1641–49). The empress concludes that, if he does not follow her advice, the emperor is likely to be driven from his land as was the steward, adding that, like the wife in the story, who was not duped, she will be able to find a new husband even if the emperor is overthrown (1650–62). The emperor agrees to follow her advice (1663–66).

#### DAY 5

The next day, the emperor rises, his court gathers, and the prince is brought forth to be executed, much to the distress of Rome's citizens (1667–76). The fourth sage, Malquidras, arrives and is insulted by the emperor, who accuses him of leading his son astray; in response, the sage criticizes the emperor for planning to kill his son without the consent of his barons and wishes on him the same fate that the old wise man had of his wife (1677–1704). The emperor assumes that the wife betrayed her husband and, when

Malquidras corrects him, requests to hear the tale (1705–08). After securing the day-long postponement of the prince's execution, the sage begins (1709–16).

TALE 8: *TENTAMINA*, THE TESTS. FOURTH SAGE, MALQUIDRAS

An old man who had already been married twice was persuaded by his attendants to take a young wife but served her poorly (i.e., didn't have sex with her) (1717–36). Meeting her mother at church, the young wife complained that she must take a lover; the mother attempted to dissuade her from taking this course of action but, when her daughter insisted, she suggested a plan: the daughter should chop down the tree that her husband loved best and tell him she had done it to warm his bones (1735–60). The daughter executed her mother's plan and upset her husband without bringing about the desired improvement in her marital relations (1761–74). The daughter reported back to her mother, again in church, and again insisted that she must have some loving (1775–81). This time the mother suggested that her daughter should kill the husband's favorite greyhound (1782–96). The daughter executed the plan, again without exciting her husband's desire, and again reported back to her mother in church (1797–1817).

This time, as well as attempting to dissuade her daughter from taking a lover, the mother asked whom the daughter intended to love (1818–20). The daughter replied that she wanted a priest because she could not trust a knight not to talk (1821–28). The mother said she should not give up on exciting her husband's love and suggested another plan: at a banquet that the husband would host, the daughter should contrive to get her keychain caught up in the tablecloth and, getting up from the table precipitously, ruin the meal (1829–46). The daughter executed her mother's plan but this time she was punished: the next day, the husband sent for the barber and terrified his wife by having her bleed three dishes full, one dish for each of her transgressions (1847–98). The daughter sent for her mother, who reminded the daughter of her warnings and extracted from her the promise that she had given up on finding a clerk or a knight to love (1899–1918). Malquidras adds that if the young wife had taken a priest as a lover, things would have turned out worse; he also compares the young wife's antics with the lying of the empress, which he encourages the emperor to reject (1919–32).

The emperor postpones his son's trial and at nightfall goes to his bedchamber, where he meets his wife, who is weeping and wringing her hands (1933–40). When the empress says that the emperor believes lies and deceit as did Cressus, the emperor wants to hear the story, and the empress begins her tale (1941–54).

TALE 9: *VIRGILIUS*, VIRGIL. THE EMPRESS

Virgil was a magician who made a miraculous fire in the middle of Rome by which the poor used to warm themselves; next to it, he put a shining metal statue armed with a crossbow (1955–68). On the forehead of the statue there was written a warning that if anyone should shoot him, he would shoot back, and, when a Lombard tested the promise, the statue shot into the magical fire and extinguished it forever (1969–81). The emperor agrees with the empress that this was a poor outcome (1982–85).

The empress continues, explaining that Virgil made three more statues: two on the east and west gates tossed a golden ball between them and a third statue in the middle of the city held a mirror in which the enemies of the city could be seen making their preparations, allowing for their swift eradication (1986–2008). The king of Apulia resented this strategic advantage, which always frustrated his attempts to attack the city, so one day he gathered the wisest men of his land and promised to reward whoever might destroy the statue (2009–20). Two clerks took up the challenge: first they had chests of treasure buried under the east and west gates, then they turned up in Rome promising to reveal the location of hidden treasures to

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the emperor, Cressus, provided that he would share half whatever they find with them (2021–44). Cressus, who had lost all his money, agreed, and the two clerks departed for the night, claiming that they would discover the location of the treasure in their dreams (2045–56).

The next day, the clerks led the emperor to discover the treasure that they had planted at the east and west gates and the older clerk promised to recover even greater treasures after again consulting his dreams (2057–78). On their third day in the city, the clerks told the emperor that more treasure was buried under the statue holding the mirror and, while he was reluctant to risk the statue, Cressus agreed to let them mine beneath it (2079–96). The clerks destroyed the statue's foundations and, at night, set it alight, causing its collapse (2097–2116). The clerks fled and, when Cressus's mistake was spotted, the poor people of Rome seized, bound, and killed him: his mouth, nose, ears, and eye sockets were filled with molten gold as a reward for his greed (2117–37). The empress concludes that unless the emperor stops believing the flattering words of his own sages, the emperor will end up like Cressus and his son will be installed in his place; the emperor replies that he will prevent this by ordering his son's destruction the following morning and the empress is pleased with his response (2138–54).

#### DAY 6

The next day, the emperor gets up and has his son fetched out of prison; meanwhile, Cato, the fifth sage, arrives at court and is encouraged by the people of Rome to work to save his pupil (2155–65). Cato responds to the emperor's accusations that he has misled his son with the wish that, if the emperor continues to believe the empress, the same fate might befall him as befell a burgess on account of his magpie (2166–82). The emperor wants to hear the story and, after securing the prince's life for the day, Cato agrees to tell it (2183–92).

#### TALE 10: AVIS, THE BIRD. FIFTH SAGE, CATOUN

A rich citizen of Rome, a merchant, had an adulterous wife and a beloved magpie that reported on her lovers' comings and goings in French (2193–2210). One day when the merchant was away, the wife welcomed a lover to her home and the magpie threatened to reveal her infidelity to her husband (2211–25). In response, the wife executed a plan with her maid: together they took a couple of tiles off the roof and from above they harassed the magpie by flashing a candle, banging a bowl, and pouring water on its head (2226–38). The next day, the merchant returned, the lover departed, and the magpie told the merchant that the previous night a visitor had made a whore of the lady of the house during a terrible storm (2239–54).

The wife defended herself by saying that the bird must be lying because the weather the night before had been fair; indeed, the wife wants revenge on the magpie for slandering her (2255–64). Upon learning from his neighbors that there was no storm the night before, the merchant broke the magpie's neck, but immediately regretted his action: he saw that the bird's cage was wet and spotted further evidence of the wife's trick (2265–82). The merchant then took a good staff and hammered on his wife's door and cursed her to the devil (2283–88). Cato concludes that if the merchant had taken better advice the magpie would still be alive; likewise, the emperor should not follow the empress's advice (2289–2302). The emperor agrees and postpones the judgment of his son (2303–10).

Night falls and the emperor goes to his bedchamber, where he meets his wife, who is displeased (2311–14). When she is asked the cause of her anger, she replies that the seven sages will cause him to destroy himself by making him love his enemy: this is why she wishes to leave him, and if he continues along this

path, she hopes that the same fate will befall him as befell Herod the king, who marvelously lost his sight (2315–24). The emperor wants to hear the story and the empress begins (2325–28).

TALE 11: VII SAPIENTES, THE SEVEN WISE MEN. THE EMPRESS

A Roman emperor, Herod, had seven wise men whose counsel he followed in all things (2329–36). One of the customs that the wise men established is that anyone who had a dream must come to them to have it interpreted and pay one gold coin in return; as a result, the wise men had become richer than the emperor himself (2337–44). One day when the emperor wanted to leave Rome, he became blind at the city gates (2345–49). He sent for his wise men to ask them the cause of his affliction and they secured a fortnight's reprieve in which to find an answer (2350–57). The wise men were unable to find the required information in their books so resorted to seeking the help of an old man, who told them that the only person who could aid them would be a fatherless child (2358–76).

The wise men set out to look for this child and, one day, happened upon Merlin who was bickering with his companions; Merlin broke off, saying that he was about to help the seven wise men visiting him from Rome (2377–90). At the same time, a man appeared with a gold coin in his hand seeking an interpretation for his dream; Merlin told him he could keep the coin and went on to describe his dream and its significance: the man had dreamed that out of his dunghill there sprang a pleasant fountain serving both him and his neighbor, which meant that the dreamer should dig up his dunghill, where he would find treasure (2391–2408). The dreamer followed Merlin's instructions, found his treasure, and shared it with the sages and his neighbor; Merlin would accept no reward (2409–16).

On the road to Rome, the wise men asked Merlin whether he would be able to explain the emperor's blindness (2417–22). Merlin said that he was confident that this was the case and, on the day that they were appointed to report to the emperor, the sages presented the boy at court and vouched for his reliability (2423–40). Once he had secured a private audience with the emperor, Merlin proceeded to tell him the root of his trouble: deep in the ground under his bed there was a cauldron boiling with seven bubbles and these bubbles blinded him; if he wanted to see again, the bubbles must be extinguished (2441–56). The emperor had his men dig under his bed, discovered the cauldron, and asked Merlin what the bubbles meant (2457–70). After the room had again been cleared, Merlin explained that the seven bubbles stood for the seven wise men, who had established a new tradition whereby everyone who had a dream had to have it interpreted by them; although the sages gave whatever interpretation they liked, they still required a payment of one gold coin: this injustice was the reason for the emperor's blindness (2471–92).

When the emperor asked Merlin how he should remedy his situation, Merlin invited him to test his answer: he should cut off the head of the oldest of the sages; this would extinguish one of the bubbles (2493–2500). The emperor followed the child's suggestion, the bubble was extinguished, and so the remaining sages were likewise killed; the water became calm and the emperor took over the rule of his lands himself (2501–10).

The empress concludes with her moral: the seven sages have blinded the emperor; if he continues to follow their advice, she hopes that he will become blind like Herod, who narrowly escaped a terrible fate (2511–18). The emperor replies that she need not worry because he has little regard for his sages; the empress agrees, repeating her point about their intention to betray him (2519–25).

DAY 7

The next day, the emperor is accosted in his hall by the sixth sage, who tells the emperor that he is foolish to believe his wife and threatens him that, if he kills his son, a fate will befall him like that which befell a certain Roman sheriff: he hurt his wife with a knife and she died (2526–40). The emperor wants to hear the tale and, when he has secured the prince's safety for the day, the sage proceeds with his story (2641–52).

TALE 12: *VIDUA*, THE WIDOW. SIXTH SAGE, GESSE

A rich sheriff had a wife whom he loved and who loved him in return (2553–58). One day, the couple was playing with a knife that they had been given and the sheriff stabbed his wife in the belly; the husband so regretted his mistake that he died of grief, prompting the sage to reflect that he was either a fool or too tender-hearted (2559–66). The man was buried and the wife was distraught; despite the advice and comforting of her friends, she threw herself on his grave and hoped for an imminent death (2567–91). Her friends built her a little lodge over the tomb and left her there (2592–98).

The same day, three thieves had been taken and hanged in the graveyard and a knight had been appointed to watch over their corpses for three nights (2599–2608). That night, the knight spotted the widow's lodge and went towards it, hoping to warm himself up; he found the mourning widow and begged her to let him in (2609–19). After initially refusing him entry, the widow let the knight in and they talked; he counseled her against excessive mourning and encouraged her to find another lover, all to no avail (2620–38). Remembering his task, the knight then returned to the gallows to find that one of the corpses had been stolen and he worried that he would lose his livelihood (2639–46). Thinking that women give good advice, he returned to the lodge, where the wife agreed to help the knight if he would marry her (2647–54).

After the knight agreed to her bargain, the widow said that they should dig up her husband and hang him in place of the missing thief; the knight acquiesced but balked at the idea of hanging a fellow knight, so the widow hoisted up her husband's body on the gallows herself (2655–75). The knight was horrified by the woman's actions but finally more concerned by the possibility that their subterfuge would be detected: he pointed out that the missing thief had a head wound by which he was recognized everywhere; the widow told him he should make one similar on the corpse; the knight refused; and so the widow herself made the cut with the knight's sword (2676–96).

The knight understood that the widow was false but continued to turn her willingness to his advantage: he mentioned that the front teeth of the missing man were broken; the widow replied that the knight should break the corpse's teeth; the knight refused, and so the widow took a stone and did them in herself (2697–2704). The widow expected to have earned the knight's love through these actions, but he rejected her saying that she would treat him just as she had treated her former husband; indeed, she taught him to avoid women altogether: where they seem fairest they are at their most deceptive (2705–16).

The sage concludes with the wish that the same fate might befall the emperor as did the sheriff because the empress has made the emperor want to kill his son; if he can wait until the next day, all the sorrow will be hers when the emperor hears his son speak (2717–24). The emperor agrees; the court retires; and the emperor goes to his quarters, where he finds the empress looking angry, although his own men rejoice (2725–32). When the empress offers to tell a story about a feast for fools, the emperor agrees (2733–40).

## TALE 13: ROMA, ROME. THE EMPRESS

Rome was besieged by forces intent upon destroying Peter's see and killing Christians (2741–48). Following an old custom, the protection of the city had been entrusted to seven sages, who had kept it safe for a month (2749–56). After this time, however, their position weakened, and they were forced to resort to special measures (2757–60). Gemes, one of the seven wise men, had a special costume made — it was as black as ink, had more than a thousand squirrels' tails attached to it, and came with a mask having two terrifying faces painted on it with a bright red tongue — and summoned the sultans besieging the city to battle (2761–E2791). The sultans agreed and the next day, the sage climbed up into a tower at Rome called Crassus, and, positioning himself in front of a mirror there, proceeded to play fight with two swords and to make a frighteningly loud noise (E2792–2805). The sultans' men were terrified and, when the Roman troops ran out of the city to fight them, the besiegers were slaughtered in great numbers (E2806–15).

The empress says that Junyus (E's name for A's Gemes) did this on the first day of January and that the emperor's sages will betray him likewise (E2816–25). The emperor promises to kill his son and orders him to be brought out for execution (E2826–31). While Florentine is being led through the town, the next sage arrives and upbraids the emperor: the emperor keeps changing his mind about whether or not he will kill his son; if he can wait until the next day he will want to keep him, otherwise he is giving too much credence to his wife's tales and he will meet the same end as did a certain earl from a faraway land (E2832–49). The emperor wants to hear the story and the sage agrees, provided that the prince is kept safe for the day: the next day, the son will speak for himself and the emperor will clearly see who is in the wrong, his son or his wife (E2850–59). The emperor acquiesces, adding that whoever is found to be in the wrong will be put to death, and the sage begins a tale to the detriment of the empress (E2960–69).

TALE 14: *INCLUSA*, THE RECLUSE. SEVENTH SAGE, MAXENCYON

Once in the kingdom of Hungary, a knight had a dream that he loved a lady; he did not know where she might be but he knew that if he could lay eyes on her he would recognize her (E2870–79). The lady had the same dream (E2880–85). The knight went in search of the lady and after three months arrived in Apulia at the castle of an earl (E2886–95). The earl had a noble wife whom he loved very much and jealously kept locked up in a tower; at this time, he was at war with another earl (E2896–2905).

When the knight approached the earl's tower, he saw his lady and began to sing and lark around; she recognized him but did not dare to call out to him because her husband was sitting below (E2906–19). The knight greeted the earl and presented himself as a man who had had to flee his homeland because he had killed another knight; the earl returned the knight's greeting, enlisted him in his struggle against the other earl and, with the knight's help, defeated his enemy (E2920–34). As a reward, the earl made the knight his steward (E2935–37). One day, the knight was amusing himself around the lady's tower and she threw down a letter to him that persuaded him that he must see her by any means (E2938–49).

Having obtained permission from the earl, the knight had a house built next to the lady's tower and, with the help of a skilled mason, had a secret passage built between the two buildings; once the tower was built, the knight killed the mason (E2950–83). On his first visit to the lady, she greeted him fairly and gave him a gold ring (E2984–98). When the knight went for dinner with the earl wearing his present, the earl noticed the ring as a gift that he had given his wife (E2999–3011). The earl planned to visit his wife to check that she still had the ring, but the knight got there before him and returned the jewel to her (E3012–17). When the earl greeted his wife, she answered him defiantly and showed him the object that he sought; he spent the night with her and was fooled (E3018–37).

### APPENDIX 3: PLOT SUMMARY

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The next day the earl invited the knight to go hunting with him but the knight declined: he had received news that he was welcome to return to his homeland, because a pardon had been arranged for his killing of the other knight; his own lady had come to tell him the news (E3038–51). The knight invited the earl to dine with them the next day and the earl promised to visit them after his hunt whenever he was summoned (E3052–61). While the earl was out hunting, the knight decorated his home, brought over his lover, dressed her in a rich robe from his own country, decked her with rings, and disguised her with veils and headdresses (E3062–83). When the earl arrived, he was greeted by the knight and his own wife and, although he was confident that his tower was impregnable, he was fascinated by the similarity between the knight's lady and his own: many women look alike, he reasoned, just as the gold ring he gave his wife had (he supposed) its double in the knight's ring (E3084–3115). The knight explained that his lady had come to visit him from their country and said that he wished to return to see his friends (E3116–25). After dinner, the earl dashed to the tower to see his wife, but the knight got her changed back into her own clothes and she returned to her place before the earl arrived; the earl was pleased to see his wife and had his way with her for what would be the last time (E3126–46).

Next the knight hired a ship and, when the earl was out at mass, dressed his lady finely (E3147–61). When the earl returned, the knight asked the earl's permission to marry his lover and at church the earl gave his wife to the knight in marriage (E3162–79). After the ceremony, the earl saw the couple off as they boarded the ship that the knight had chartered; the sage adds that whoever gives his pleasures away deserves to lose them (E3180–99). When he returned home to his tower, the earl was distraught and became a figure of scorn amongst men (E3200–11). The sage concludes that the emperor will likewise be deceived by his own wife, whose tales he believes over the evidence of his own two eyes; tomorrow he will learn the whole truth of the matter (E3212–21). The emperor expresses his eagerness to learn the truth and promises to kill whoever is in the wrong (E3222–27). The sage announces that the son will reveal the empress's desire to kill him and the empress sorrows at the prospect of the son recovering his speech (E3228–35).

#### DAY 8

The next day, the emperor and his lords and ladies go to hear mass; many people have gathered to hear the prince speak, including the sages (E3236–47). Once the mass is over, Florentine is dressed in fine apparel and brought forth by two of his masters, who set him before his father (E3248–53). Silence falls and the prince begins to speak: he tells his father that he would have been wrong to kill him and that he has not previously spoken because he and his masters saw in the moon that speaking at court sooner would have plunged him into distress and cost his masters their lives (E3254–69). The prince wonders, too, that his father was ready to treat him as a man of wicked blood treated his son, whom he cast into the sea for saying that one day he would be greater than him (E3270–75). The emperor wants to hear the story and the son agrees to tell it (E3276–83).

#### TALE 15: VATICINIUM, THE PROPHECY. THE PRINCE

One day, a powerful Roman was out sailing with his fifteen-year-old son when two ravens alighted on the prow of their boat and began to crow (E3284–92). The father wondered what the crowing might mean and the son interpreted it: they were saying that one day the son would be such a rich man that, when his hands were being washed, his father would be content to hold the basin and his mother the towel (E3293–3307). The father was angered by his son's words and tossed him overboard (E3308–13). By the grace of God, the child washed up on an island where he spent four days without food and drink and where he was comforted

by birds who told him that Christ would soon answer his prayers for help (E3314–25). After this, he was picked up by a fisherman who took him to a castle thirty miles away and sold him to the constable there for twenty pounds; the constable loved the child (E3326–37).

In the same country, there was a king who was plagued by ravens that would not cease calling after him and, when this king summoned the wisest man in the land to interpret their behavior, the child resolved to go to court to hear his will (E3338–51). Although the king promised his daughter in marriage and half his lands to anyone who could explain the mystery of the crows' calling, none of his lords had an answer (E3352–65). After asking the constable of the castle to check that the king was serious about his promise, the child delivered his interpretation: the raven that stood apart from the others was the female; of the other two, the larger that one cried out at the smaller one had been the female raven's companion for thirty years (E3366–91). The big raven had left the female in a famine year and was replaced by the smaller raven, who in his cawing said that he would not leave her until the king judged which of the ravens should have the female; after receiving his judgment they would cease their calling and fly away (E3392–3407). With the accordance of his barons, the king judged that the raven that kept the female in the famine year should have her henceforth (E3408–17). The big raven made a doleful cry then flew away, and the other two ravens were left to each other (E3418–25).

The king gave the child his daughter and half his lands and, a short time later, died; the child was crowned king (E3426–33). The child's birth father and mother knew nothing of these developments; in the meantime, they had fallen into poverty and fled to their son's kingdom, where they were discovered by their son, who sent word by his messengers that he would visit them (E3434–55). The father regretted that he could not receive the king as he would like but said that he was welcome to visit, and the next day their son arrived (E3456–67). On meeting the king, the father and mother brought a basin to wash his hands and the towel to dry them, but the son refused their ministrations and announced the fulfilment of the prophecy that he had made all those years before; the father fears for his life (E3468–85).

The prince concludes that the emperor wanted to treat him similarly, despite the fact that he was as guiltless as the child in the story (E3486–93). Just as the child in the story was thrown into the sea, so his father threw him into prison on his return to Rome from his school (E3494–97). He says that he would rather be hanged than harm his own father; when he came home, the empress took him into her chamber, asked him to lie with her and, when he refused, tore her clothes to pieces to make it look as if he had forced her, but he would rather have died than to do so (E3498–3513).

## CONCLUSION

The empress admits that the prince is telling the truth and says that her husband should do with her what he wishes; she adds that she acted out of fear that the prince would destroy her and steal the empire from her (E3514–25). The empress is killed in the manner she had ordained for Florentine, by burning (E3526–47). Florentine respects his father during his father's life and, on his death, builds an abbey to house his tomb (E3548–57). The prince then becomes emperor and rules with great honor (E3558–65). The poem concludes with a repetition of the story matter: we have heard of Diocletian and his false wife, of how Diocletian's son was brought out of difficulty, and of how the sages saved him through their wisdom; now the sages are dead (E3566–74). A closing prayer asks that the poem's audience might have communion and confession before death; there is also a blessing in the name of the Virgin Mary (E3575–79).



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