

FRIENDSHIP AND PUBLISHING IN GEOFFREY BRITO'S *SOL MELDUNENSIS*: A COLLABORATIVE GIFT BOOK FROM CIRENCESTER ABBEY FOR GEOFFREY, ABBOT OF MALMESBURY, 1246–60

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Abstract

The regular canons of Cirencester Abbey and the monks of Malmesbury Abbey formed a literary exchange in the 1130s between Robert of Cricklade and William of Malmesbury. This relationship surfaces again with the publishing circle of Alexander Neckam (1157–1217), whose nephew, Geoffrey Brito, a canon of Cirencester Abbey, organized pittances with the 'friends of Master Alexander' to perpetuate the writer's memory. Geoffrey presented *Sol meldunensis*, a miscellany of Alexander's works, as a continuous theological treatise. This compilation forms the main production unit of Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.6.42. Marginalia in four Cirencester manuscripts corresponding to Geoffrey's extracts prove that these were the compilation's direct sources. The miscellany was a gift to Geoffrey, abbot of Malmesbury from 1246 until 1260, framed with poems emphasizing the ideal of mutual perfection in classical *amicitia*. The volume is a multilevel composition, extended with a leaf of tinted drawings of St Francis and St Dominic, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini*, and Geoffrey Brito's verse anthology *Felix ille*. The Cirencester decorator's integration of the additions with rest of the volume shows that the manuscript is a collaborative product, either the result of co-production at Cirencester or of an exchange with Malmesbury. Geoffrey's emphasis on cooperation and correction as aspects of friendship is exhibited in his book's physical arrangement.

The assumption that unprinted written works from the Middle Ages should also be considered unpublished is gradually unravelling as scholars uncover the extensive publishing circles that sustained medieval book

circulation.¹ Growing evidence for deliberate publication is prompting researchers to reconsider what is often considered organic dissemination.² A category that scholars have not yet widely explored in relationship to the formation of such networks is the single-author miscellany. The best-known example from thirteenth-century England is the anthology of Henry of Avranches, the result of Matthew Paris's iterative approach to curation.³ Writers meticulously copied, arranged, and expanded upon such collections, presenting works as deliberately structured compilations that invite reinterpretation and circulation. The resulting books present unique codicological challenges, particularly in reconstructing the roles they played in shaping and supporting relationships between textual communities.

The miscellany opening with the words 'Sol meldunensis' ('the sun of Malmesbury') that forms the main production unit of Cambridge, University Library (CUL), MS Gg.6.42 is a particularly vivid witness to how and why religious houses sustained relationships with one another, in this case forming part of a long-term connection between Cirencester Abbey and Malmesbury Abbey.⁴ This article distinguishes between this miscellany as a textual work, referring to it as *Sol meldunensis*; and the volume as a whole, as CUL, MS Gg.6.42. *Sol meldunensis* focuses on the works of Alexander Neckam (1157–1217), a polymathic Augustinian or regular canon from St Albans, educated in Paris. He

¹ For Anglo-Norman England, J. Tahkokallio, *The Anglo-Norman Historical Canon: Publishing and Manuscript Culture* (Cambridge, 2019), explores the publishing circles of William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Geoffrey of Monmouth; to be read alongside S. Niskanen, *Publication and the Papacy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2021); B. Pohl, *Publishing in a Medieval Monastery: The View from Twelfth-Century Engelberg* (Cambridge, 2023).

² J. Tahkokallio, 'Theories, Categories, Configurations: A Historian's Point of View on the Study of Publishing in Manuscript', in *The Art of Publication from the Ninth to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by S. Niskanen, *Instrumenta patristica et mediaevalia*, 93 (Turnhout, 2023), 371–81, reflects further on this problem, complementing the case studies in this volume.

³ D. Townsend and A. G. Rigg, 'Medieval Latin Poetic Anthologies', pt 5, 'Matthew Paris' Anthology of Henry of Avranches (Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd.11.78)', *Mediaeval Studies*, 49 (1987), 352–90.

⁴ Formal descriptions and photographs of CUL, MS Gg.6.42 appear in A. N. J. Dunning, 'Sol meldunensis (MS Gg.6.42)', Cambridge Digital Library, 2023; P. Binski and P. N. R. Zutshi, with S. Panayotova, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of the Collection in Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge, 2011), 106–07 (no. 113); *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 6 vols (Cambridge, 1856–67), III, ed. by C. Hardwick (1858), 231–34.

taught in St Albans, Dunstable, and Oxford; wrote widely on grammar, theology, and natural philosophy; and died as the abbot of Cirencester.⁵ Researchers have deployed CUL, MS Gg.6.42, which R. W. Hunt called the Alexander Neckam *Florilegium*, as evidence for establishing the canon of Alexander's works, alongside the poetic anthology in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. Latin 11867, fols 189v–240v.⁶ The book has also drawn notice for its illustration of St Francis, one of the first in English art, though until recently art historians only considered it in isolation from the rest of the manuscript.⁷

Despite this attention, previous research has not identified the author of *Sol meldunensis*, who only calls himself 'Galfridus', and has advanced 'no more than a guess' that CUL, MS Gg.6.42 itself originated at Cirencester Abbey.⁸ This article establishes that Alexander Neckam's nephew Geoffrey Brito created the work, who is identifiable through a combination of internal textual references and documentary sources. It uncovers evidence that the canons of Cirencester produced the surviving manuscript: marginalia in surviving manuscripts that correspond to the compiled text. It interprets the additions to the volume as the result of a collaborative effort. The manuscript extends a literary dialogue between Cirencester and Malmesbury abbeys, visible at earlier points in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

⁵ For Alexander's biography, see R. W. Hunt, *The Schools and the Cloister: The Life and Writings of Alexander Nequam (1157–1217)*, ed. by M. T. Gibson (Oxford, 1984), 1–18; for a summary of more recent findings, see P. Hochgürtel, 'Leben und Werk des Alexander Neckam', in Alexander Neckam, *Suppletio defectuum, Carmina minora*, ed. by P. Hochgürtel, Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 221 (Turnhout, 2008), ix–xx; A. N. J. Dunning, 'St Frideswide's Priory as a Centre of Learning in Early Oxford', *Mediaeval Studies*, 80 (2018), 253–96 (273–85).

⁶ C. J. McDonough, 'Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.42, Alexander Neckam and the *Sacerdos ad altare*', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., 46.2 (2005), 783–809; C. J. McDonough, 'The *Laus beatissime Virginis* and the Canon of Alexander Neckam', *Mediaeval Studies*, 66 (2004), 99–128; R. W. Hunt, 'Alexander Neckam' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1936), 8–22, 160–61, which contains more detail on CUL, MS Gg.6.42 than the published version; J. C. Russell, 'Alexander Neckam in England', *English Historical Review*, 47.186 (1932), 260–68 (265–68); M. Esposito, 'On Some Unpublished Poems Attributed to Alexander Neckam', *English Historical Review*, 30.119 (1915), 450–71 (471).

⁷ P. N. R. Zutshi, 'Images of Franciscans and Dominicans in a Manuscript of Alexander Nequam's *Florilegium* (Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.6.42)', in *The Franciscan Order in the Medieval English Province and Beyond*, ed. by M. Robson and P. N. R. Zutshi (Amsterdam, 2018), 51–66.

⁸ Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 119.

The literary relationship of Cirencester and Malmesbury

Cirencester Abbey was a community of Augustinian canons founded in 1117. Evidence for its literary contacts with Malmesbury Abbey, a Benedictine house founded in the seventh century, begins with Robert of Cricklade, a canon of Cirencester until he became the head of St Frideswide's Priory, Oxford, in 1138/39.⁹ In *The Marriage of the Patriarch Jacob* (*De connubio patriarche Iacob*), a monastic handbook allegorizing Jacob's betrothal to Leah and Rachel, he wrote of his enthusiasm for William of Malmesbury's works, especially his commentary on Lamentations and *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Yet above all, Robert expressed his gratitude for William's anthology of Gregory the Great, *Deflorationes ex libris beati Gregorii papae*.¹⁰ The only surviving copy of this work is an autograph in which William dedicated his extracts to his brethren at Malmesbury as 'pledges of my love' ('amoris mei pignera').¹¹ If William wrote a similar dedication to the canons of Cirencester as a gesture of friendship, Robert may have valued the book for personal reasons as much as for its contents. Robert later borrowed the title for his own anthology of Pliny the Elder, *Defloratio naturalis historie Plinii secundi*,¹² whose text is closely related to William's *Polyhistor*.¹³ The miscellany format naturally supported the growth of publishing circles and the commemoration of literary friendships.

⁹ Dunning, 'St Frideswide's Priory', 258–70.

¹⁰ Robert of Cricklade, *De connubio Iacob*, II. 22 (Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P.iv.8, fol. 38v); discussed in R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, introduction in William of Malmesbury, *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Woodbridge, 2015), xv; R. W. Hunt, 'English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 19 (1936), 19–42 (31).

¹¹ William of Malmesbury, *Deflorationes ex libris beati Gregorii papae* (Malmesbury Abbey, 1131 × 1137), CUL, MS Ii.3.20, fol. 2r; printed in D. H. Farmer, 'William of Malmesbury's Commentary on Lamentations', *Studia Monastica*, 4.2 (1962), 283–311 (308–11). See S. O. Sønnesyn, 'Lector amice: Reading as Friendship in William of Malmesbury', in *Discovering William of Malmesbury*, ed. by R. M. Thomson, E. Dolmans, and E. A. Winkler (Woodbridge, 2017), 153–64 (158–59).

¹² Robert of Cricklade, *Defloratio naturalis historie Plinii secundi*, ed. by B. Näf, *Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters*, 36 (Bern, 2002), prol.

¹³ J. O. Ward, 'William of Malmesbury's *Polyhistor*: The Work of a Historian, an Antiquarian, or a Rambling Raconteur?', *Viator*, 50.3 (2019), 165–96 (184–86).

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the relationship between the abbeys is visible again in the work of another Cirencester canon, Walter of Mileto.¹⁴ He was one of the scribes of a manuscript of John of Salisbury's letters (Oxford, Bodleian Library (Bodl.), MS Barlow 48), whose exemplar is a copy from Malmesbury Abbey (Bodl., MS Barlow 6).¹⁵ An autograph letter to Roger Noreys, a monk at Christ Church, Canterbury, shows Walter in the process of collecting Alexander Neckam's sermons.¹⁶ Most striking is a letter to Walter from S., prior of Malmesbury.¹⁷ The letter sends Malmesbury's condolences on Alexander's death:¹⁸

¹⁴ A. N. J. Dunning, 'Mileto [Melida, Melide], Walter of (fl. c. 1170–c. 1220), Scribe and Augustinian Canon', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2018).

¹⁵ N. Michel, 'Jean de Salisbury et son rapport aux sources: à propos des notes marginales dans les manuscrits du *Policraticus*', *Scriptorium*, 74.2 (2020), 259–76 (276).

¹⁶ Walter of Mileto, letter to Roger Noreys, after 31 March 1217, Canterbury, Cathedral Library, MS Lit. B. 13, leaf inserted after fol. 67; printed in N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1969–2002), II, *Abbotsford–Keele* (1977), 274–75.

¹⁷ The prior eludes identification: a Prior S. appears in a document of 1246, *Charters and Documents Illustrating the History of the Cathedral, City and Diocese of Salisbury, in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. by W. R. Jones and W. D. Macray, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 97 (London, 1891), 301; but this is likely a different figure, as there was a Prior G. in 1244: W. de G. Birch, 'On the Succession of the Abbots of Malmesbury', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 27.3 (1871), 314–42 (330).

¹⁸ P. Meyer, 'Notice sur les *Corrogationes Promethei* d'Alexandre Neckam', *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale et autres bibliothèques*, 35.2 (1896), 641–82 (657); Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 12.

Since it is a dutiful obligation to savour all good things when our minds are already under the influence of good things, nevertheless, to those whom familiarity renders dear and love makes intimate, particular honour is due: both in the celebration of their merits when their deeds are noble, and in the exaltation of their praises when their successes are virtuous. Hence, therefore, as one part of his friends, wishing to extol the titles of Master Alexander, a man worthy of acclaim and a great friend, while I give birth to mountains, I might be said to give forth a ridiculous mouse in birth.¹⁹

The prior's letter refers to Horace, *Ars poetica*, line 139: 'mountains will be in labour, a ridiculous mouse will be born' ('parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus'). This leads into an elaborate parody on the title of Alexander's most widely circulated work, *The Collections of Prometheus (Corrogationes Promethei)*. Prior S. had recognized the origin of this title and its self-deprecating intent from the depiction of Prometheus as a ridiculous schoolmaster in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, iv. 9. The prior may be responding to an earlier letter that had less successfully attempted to explain the title.²⁰ He closes with a request that Walter let him know if he is dissatisfied with anything in the letter, which might be both a genuine request for modifications to better fit an occasion on which the letter was to be read, but it was also a gesture of friendship: mutual perfection was an ideal of classical *amicitia*.²¹

¹⁹ Prior S. of Malmesbury, letter to Walter of Mileto, after 31 March 1217, BnF, ms. Latin 11867, fol. 240v; corrected with London, British Library (BL), Royal MS 5 C. v, fol. 57r–v:

Cum de bonis omnibus bene sapere bonorum mentibus bene affectis sit officiosum debitum. hiis tamen quos et noticia caros et amor intimos exhibet: precipuus debetur honor et in bene gestis predicatio meritorium. et in bonis successibus extollencia laudum. Hinc ergo quota pars amicorum. predicandi uiri et magni amici magistri Alexandri titulos extollere cupiens dum montes parturio. ridiculum (murem) in partu emittere dici possum.

²⁰ [Walter of Mileto?], letter on *Corrogationes Promethei*, after 31 March 1217, Évreux, Bibliothèque patrimoniale, ms. lat. 72, fol. 1v; discussed in L. S. Cropp, 'A Critical Edition of Alexander Neckam's *Corrogationes noui Promethei* with Introduction, Textual Notes, and Commentary' (unpublished PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1991), 53–55; C. Guéry, *Histoire de l'abbaye de Lyre* (Évreux, 1917), 393–94; Meyer, 'Corrogationes Promethei', 651–52.

²¹ C. S. Jaeger, 'Friendship of Mutual Perfecting in Augustine's *Confessions* and the Failure of Classical *Amicitia*', in *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse*, ed. by A. Classen and M. Sandidge (Berlin, 2010), 185–200.

Without the chance survival of this evidence, researchers might label the circulation of books between Malmesbury and Cirencester as merely organic, given the proximity of two communities with an established publishing framework and travel routes. King Henry III, for example, travelled directly between the two locations during a visit in July 1241.²² The evidence of Robert of Cricklade, Walter of Mileto, and Prior S. shows that the relationship was sustained by a series of intentional acts that sustained a publishing circle encompassing both abbeys. The ideas of exchange and mutual correction that underpin this evidence are central to *Sol meldunensis*.

Geoffrey Brito's authorship of *Sol meldunensis*

The opening verse epistle of *Sol meldunensis* names its author Galfridus. The sources for Geoffrey's prefatory material point to Geoffrey Brito, a canon of Cirencester who was also the nephew of Alexander Neckam. *Sol meldunensis* was part of Geoffrey's broader effort to direct the energies of the 'friends of Master Alexander' towards the benefit of the abbey community.

Geoffrey presents *Sol meldunensis* as a theological treatise in two books. He opens both books with a verse epistle and provides an envoi to the work, all on the theme of correction and collaboration. The work's opening poem is unique, while the other two are adaptations of verses by Reginald of Canterbury, a poet and Benedictine monk at St Augustine's, Canterbury, in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.²³ A rubric labels the opening text, 'A sermon for Maundy Thursday, excerpted from the books of Master Alexander, abbot of Cirencester.'²⁴ The first book concludes with a verse address to the book (fol. 69r-v) on the role of poetry, reading, and prayer in alleviating worries, drawn from Alexander's *Laus sapientie diuine*. The second book is more discursive, opening with a verse proem with extracts on constructive literary criticism (fols 70r-71v), followed by a text discussing mercy and moral faults.²⁵ The closing verse envoi returns to the theme of exchange.

²² *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry III*, 6 vols (London, 1901-13), III, *A.D. 1232-1247*, ed. by J. G. Black (1906), 255.

²³ A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066-1422* (Cambridge, 1992), 24-30; F. Liebermann, 'Reginald von Canterbury', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 13.3 (1888), 517-56.

²⁴ Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*, CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 3r: 'Sermo in festiuitate reliquiarum. excerptus ex libris magistri alexandri abbatis cyrencestrie.'

²⁵ Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 72r: 'Incipit liber secundus. In quo agitur de misericordia: et de suggillatione quorundam uitiorum.'

Geoffrey's opening verse epistle, in dactylic hexameters, appears under the rubric *Epistula* (fol. 3r). He does not name a recipient, but makes it clear that he is addressing the head of Malmesbury Abbey:

Sun and moon of Malmesbury, light of the monks,
May your graciousness accept, I ask, a new song
Which the devotion of simple Geoffrey offers to you.
I thirst for you as a corrector, pious pastor:
May you apply a file to this work, who corrects the roughness of the cloister.
May you be a merciful forgiver of fault, and may you, a kind judge,
Absolve what the presumption of the tongue has done wrong.²⁶

The humility topos that Geoffrey constructs in casting himself as a student in relation to the abbot of Malmesbury is so common in medieval literature that scholars often assume that it was not taken seriously.²⁷ The many additions and corrections to CUL, MS Gg.6.42 may directly reflect Geoffrey's ethos, a question to be considered in light of the manuscript's physical evidence. The reference to the abbot as Cynthia (the goddess of the moon, Diana) recalls a passage of Alexander Neckam praising Pope Honorius III as Cynthus (the

²⁶ Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 3r; H. Walther, *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi posterioris latinorum*, 2nd edn (Göttingen, 1969), no. 18380:

Sol meldunensis et Cinthia lux monachorum.
Suscipiat tua queso nouum dignatio carmen:
Quod tibi Galfridi deuotio simplicis: offert.
Te correctorem sicio pastor pie_ limam:
Apponas operi. qui corrigis aspera claustris.
Sis pius indultor culpe. iudexque benignus:
Absoluas, quod deliquit presumptio lingue.

See McDonough, 'Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.42', 791; J. Szövérfy, *Secular Latin Lyrics and Minor Poetic Forms of the Middle Ages: A Historical Survey and Literary Repertory from the Tenth to the Late Fifteenth Century*, 4 vols (Concord, NH, 1992–95), III (1994), 464.
²⁷ E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by W. R. Trask (London, 1953), 407–13.

sun god, Apollo).²⁸ To explain the meaning of ‘simple Geoffrey’, the word ‘simplicis’ in the third line includes a marginal gloss in the text hand: ‘He who belongs to a cloister is called simple; he is also called simple who is without the fold of duplicity.’ (‘Simplex uocatur claustralis. dicitur et simplex qui sine plica duplicitatis est.’) The regular canons were self-conscious that they were not monks, as in the case of Robert of Cricklade’s relationship with William of Malmesbury. By describing themselves as claustral, they put themselves forward as equals to those in other religious orders, a strategy that Alexander deployed.²⁹ For all the humility that Geoffrey professes, he presents Cirencester as Malmesbury’s match.

The proem to the second book of *Sol meldunensis* opens with extracts from poems by Alexander on the social aspects of literary criticism. These first address the reader with advice on constructive criticism. Geoffrey places these alongside poems on Zoilus, an unteachable Greek literary scholar, mocked for his sneering, for his love of Statius’s *Thebaid*, and for his disparagement of Homer. The series concludes that the reader should instead listen to the author as a guide to wisdom. To this series, Geoffrey adds an unattributed extract from a poem in Leonine hexameters by Reginald of Canterbury (d. after 1109) to Lambert of St-Bertin (d. 1125), presenting his *Vita. S. Malchi*.³⁰ Geoffrey adapts the poem for the abbot of Malmesbury:

²⁸ Alexander Neckam, *Suppletio defectuum*, II. 1217–22 (BnF, ms. Latin 11867, fol. 229r):

Scripsimus hoc anno quo rex in fata Iohannes:
 Cessit. quo fulsit Cinthius orbis apex.
 Orbis frena regens. sol cleri. gloria mundi.
 Gemma sacerdotum. pontificumque decus.
 Cinthius est oculus mundi splendore coruscans.
 Illustrans radiis sydera cuncta suis.

²⁹ Alexander Neckam, *Super Cantica*, II. 16, quoted in Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 9.

³⁰ Walther, *Initia carminum*, no. 20780; Liebermann, ‘Reginald von Canterbury’, 531–32; L. R. Lind, introduction in Reginald of Canterbury, *Vita sancti Malchi* (Urbana, 1942), 12; on the verse structure, L. R. Lind, ‘Reginald of Canterbury and the Rhymed Hexameter’, *Neophilologus*, 25.4 (1940), 273–75.

My page thinks sweetly when it greets you voluntarily,
 O Geoffrey, kind father, abbot of all wisdom.
 May, I pray, its hail be sweetly, pleasantly acceptable to you.
 It wishes, certainly, to be acceptable to you, O man of uprightness:
 In that it magnifies you, it tells of each of your good qualities.
 May you consider our greetings as thanks rendered to you.
 Now, good Geoffrey, whose praise resounds everywhere,
 It asks that our letter may be more secure through you.
 If perchance this book should speak inelegantly to you,
 Spare it, judge, that it be not immediately cast aside.
 Often it does good to have reread a page and remember it.
 Add your hand more often: what you will have will, I think, be plain.³¹

Geoffrey omits four of Reginald's lines describing the book's crossing of the sea. He may have chosen the passage particularly for its use of the terms 'littera' and 'carta', which can refer to a charter or deed as well as a literary work,³² reminding his recipient of practical as well as literary affairs. Since the manuscript is datable palaeographically to the middle of the thirteenth century, the dedicatee named in this poem, Gaufridus, must be Geoffrey,

³¹ Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 71v:

Pagina dulce putat cum te mea sponte salutat:
 O Gaufride pie pater. omnis papa sophie.
 Sit precor eius aue tibi gratum dulce suaue.
 Esse quidem gratum tibi uult o uir prohibitum:
 Quod te magnificat de te bona singula dicat.
 Grates esse putes tibi nostras ergo salutes.
 Nunc bone Gaufride laus cuius ubique sonatur.
 Tucior ut per te sit littera nostra precatur.
 Hic si forte tibi liber inconcinna loquatur:
 Iudex parce sibi ne statim proiciatur.
 Sepe relegisse cartam iuuat et meminisse.
 Sepius adde manum. quod habebis erit puto planum.

The penultimate line refers to Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1. 203: 'forsan et haec olim meminisse iuuabit'. In Reginald's text, as edited by Liebermann, 'sponte salutat' reads 'sepe salutat'; both instances of 'Gaufride' read 'Lamberte'; 'Hic si' reads 'Qui si'; and 'habebis' reads 'hebebit'.

³² *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. by R. K. Ashdowne, D. R. Howlett, and R. E. Latham, 3 vols (Oxford, 2018), s.v. 'charta', '1 littera'.

abbot of Malmesbury abbey from 1246 until 1260.³³ He had previously been the abbey's sacrist, a role that often included responsibility for books.³⁴ The request for the abbot to amplify the book raises the question of whether any of the manuscript's later additions can be attributed to Malmesbury.

Geoffrey Brito's envoi to book 2 is a contemporary addition, written in the main text hand but with a different pen to the preceding passage. This poem builds on the theme of judgement and correction, borrowing from a different dedicatory poem to Reginald of Canterbury's *Vita S. Malchi*, this one addressed to Gilbert Crispin, abbot of Westminster from 1085 to 1117.³⁵ Geoffrey divided his adaptation using paraph marks into three stanzas:

¶ Now, father and lord, you will have seen this book in its entirety,
Whether it has carried the point or is full of faults.
If you wish it to stand, it shall stand; if not, the flame shall consume it.
Your word is its praise or destruction.
If I have set down its parts like one who does not know the arts,
Have mercy on this occasion, apostolic teacher.
The Muse has given these beginnings, filled with your praise,
For the glory of your noble renown everywhere.

¶ May an exchanged page pass between us:
May your mind and my mind be known by a mediating note.

³³ *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2001–08), II, 1216–1377, ed. by D. M. Smith and V. C. M. London (2001), 51; T. McAleavy, *Malmesbury Abbey, 670–1539: Patronage, Scholarship and Scandal* (Woodbridge, 2023), 147; Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 118.

³⁴ Birch, 'Abbots of Malmesbury', 330; T. Webber, 'Cantor, Sacrist or Prior? The Provision of Books in Anglo-Norman England', in *Medieval Cantors and Their Craft: Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800–1500*, ed. by K. A.-M. Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel, and M. E. Fassler (Woodbridge, 2017), 172–89 (178–81).

³⁵ Walther, *Initia carminum*, no. 19300; *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by T. Wright, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 59, 2 vols (London, 1872), II, 259–60; Lind, *Vita sancti Malchi*, 11–12; T. Haye, *Verlorenes Mittelalter: Ursachen und Muster der Nichtüberlieferung mittellateinischer Literatur*, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte*, 49 (Leiden, 2016), 175–76.

¶ May the joys of the present and everlasting life,
And all good things, God grant to you, my lord.³⁶

The first group of lines correspond to lines 23–28 and 37–38 of Reginald’s poem, and the last to lines 39–40, all in Leonine elegiac couplets. The middle stanza is a couplet from the conclusion of a poem by Alexander Neckam, which stands out from the rest not only through the paraph marks but also its lack of a rhymed caesura. In context, this quotation is the key to the writer’s identity.

Alexander originally composed these elegiac couplets on sending his nephew to school:

Receive, teacher Ralph, the nephew whom I hand over to you:
Teach him with diligent care.
I entrust him to your sincerity; watchfulness of care
Shall bear interest; this labour shall not be barren.
In verses and songs, and in literary work besides, through you
May he flourish, and may your attention be vigilant in these.
Teach him in moral conduct, inform him in virtues, with words
Adorn him, restore him with doctrine, colour him with metres.

³⁶ Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 212v (the second line refers to Horace, *Ars poetica*, 343–44):

¶ Nunc pater et domne tu uideris hic liber omne:
Seu punctum tulerit seu uiciosus erit.
Stare uelis? stabit. si non? hunc flamma cremabit.
Laus sua sermo tuus interitusue suos.
Si posui partes uelud is qui neciit artes.
Hac miserere uice doctor apostolice.
Laude tui plena dedit hec rudimenta Camena.
Ob decus ingenue laudis ubique tue.
¶ Mutua discurrat inter nos pagina. nota:
Mens tua mensque mea sit mediante nota.
¶ Gaudia presentis uite semperque manentis:
Et bona cuncta Deus det tibi domne meus.

In the middle couplet, a contemporary hand (not the original scribe) corrects ‘discurrat’ from ‘discurrant’, and transposes ‘tua mensque mea’ from ‘mea ... tua’.

May you be equally a father and teacher; may you seem
 To be both to him: a teacher in warnings, a father in love.
 With you as guide let the boy take in nothing boyish,
 And may the rein of a skilled mind govern his childish impulses.
 With you as guide during his tender years, may he grow old in virtue;
 Pure of spirit, may he cease from a boy to be a boy.
 May the work commend the craftsman; may the master's teaching
 Be manifest, the student bearing witness.
 May an exchanged page pass between us:
 May your mind and my mind be known by a mediating note.³⁷

Referring to the teacher as a craftsman recalls *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, iv. 9, to which the title of Alexander's *Corrogationes Promethei* and the letter of Prior S. of Malmesbury refers: 'an example brought forth by a writer of an art ought to be that of its craftsman' ('ab artis scriptore adfertur exemplum, id eius artificii debet esse'). Alexander had made his name as a schoolmaster

³⁷ Alexander Neckam, verse letter to Master Ralph [of Dunstable], BnF, ms. Latin 11867, fol. 238r-v; Walther, *Initia carminum*, no. 15382; *Carmina minora*, ed. by Hochgürtel, carmina metrica, 17; É. du Méril, *Poésies inédites du moyen âge, précédées d'une histoire de la fable ésoyique* (Paris, 1854), 170-71:

Quem tibi transmitto doctor Radulfe nepotem:
 Suscipe. deuota sedulitate doce.
 Hunc fidei committo tue. uigilancia cure:
 Lucra feret. sterilis non erit iste labor.
 Versibus et rithmis. et adhuc dictamine. per te:
 Floreat. et sit in hiis sollicitudo uigil.
 Moribus informa. uirtutibus inbue. uerbis:
 Exorna. refice dogmate. pinge metris.
 Sis pater et doctor pariter uidearis uterque:
 Esse sibi. monitis: doctor. amore: pater.
 Te duce nil pueri capiat puer. et pueriles:
 Motus: edocte mentis habena regat.
 Te duce sub teneris annis. uirtute senescat.
 Purus. et inde puer: desinat esse puer.
 Artificem commendet opus. doctrina magistri:
 Discipulo pateat testificante sua.
 Mutua discurrat inter nos pagina. nota:
 Mens tua. mensque mea: sit mediante nota.

in his native St Albans.³⁸ Hunt proposed that the recipient of this poem was Ralph of Dunstable, a monk of St Albans, who wrote a verse life of the abbey's patron.³⁹ He also suggested that the nephew in question could have been the Peter whom Alexander addresses in the versified version of *Corrogationes Promethei*, but this is more plausibly Alexander's correspondent Peter of Blois.⁴⁰ Documentary sources published after Hunt's research, moreover, identify another figure as Alexander's nephew: Geoffrey was quoting lines referring to his younger self.

Master Geoffrey Brito was a canon of Cirencester in the mid-thirteenth century, appearing in three of the abbey's charters.⁴¹ A document issued between 1215 and 1230 is witnessed by 'magistro Galfrido Britone vicario de Muleb'. As Milborne Port is located over a hundred kilometres from Cirencester, it is unclear whether Geoffrey served this church in person.⁴² Despite the distance, it was an important possession of the abbey, which had faced a legal battle for its right to this church in the time of Popes Innocent II and Eugenius III.⁴³ Geoffrey may have had familial connections to the area: Richard Brito was a royal clerk whose status at Milborne Port was

³⁸ The story of how Alexander gained this position was the likely source of the spelling 'Nequam': A. N. J. Dunning, 'The Ascott Park Gateway's Link to Alexander Neckam (1157–1217), an Early Oxford Lecturer', *Bodleian Library Record*, 31.1–2 (2018), 188–91.

³⁹ M. Bateson and R. Reader, 'St Albans, Ralph of (fl. 1195 × 1214?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford, 2004); Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, 124; W. McLeod, 'Alban and Amphibal: Some Extant Lives and a Lost Life', *Mediaeval Studies*, 42 (1980), 407–30 (412–16).

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 12–13; cf. Cropp, 'Corrogationes noui Promethei', 62–67.

⁴¹ Two other figures named Master Geoffrey are associated with Cirencester in the thirteenth century. A manuscript given to the abbey in 1238 belonged to a Geoffrey, vicar of Avebury, but there is no evidence that he was a canon of Cirencester: Oxford, Jesus College, MS 48, fol. 1r, 'Liber Galfr' quondam uicarii de Auebyri', discussed in C. D. Ross, introduction in *The Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey, Gloucestershire*, 2 vols (London, 1964), xxx. In 1240, Master Geoffrey of Standerwick owed rent to the canons, which held the advowson to the chapel in Standerwick: Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, Bodl., Dep. c. 292, in *Cartulary of Cirencester*, no. 614.

⁴² Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, no. 592; Ross, introduction in *Cartulary of Cirencester*, xxxii.

⁴³ Three documents concerning this church appear in Warminster, Longleat House, MS 38b, a fragmentary cartulary partially in the hand of Walter of Mileto, calendared in W. S. C. Baddeley, *A History of Cirencester* (Cirencester, 1924), 117 (nos. 39–41).

surrounded in legal disputes.⁴⁴ A Thomas Brito also made multiple gifts of land to the abbey.⁴⁵ This document reveals nothing more about Geoffrey, but the two later charters mentioning him demonstrate his efforts to secure the memory of Alexander Neckam.

Geoffrey's activities resulted in a *pietantia* or pittance for Cirencester Abbey: a bequest that provided extra food and wine for the community on the anniversary of Alexander's death, 31 March 1217. PITTANCES became increasingly popular during the thirteenth century as a means of remembering the dead.⁴⁶ Soon after Geoffrey's time, the pittance of Malmesbury Abbey made a cartulary dedicated to recording gifts (Bodl., MS Bodley 191). Between 1222 and 1230, Alexander's successor, Walter of Gloucester, issued a charter that assigned a rent from a stall in St John's Church in Cirencester as a pittance:

Be it known to you all that we, commending the devotion and enduring affection of the friends of our venerable father of good memory, Master Alexander, formerly abbot and our predecessor, have hereby kindly received a rent which, through the attention and careful arrangement of our beloved brother and fellow canon, Dom Geoffrey Brito, nephew of that abbot, has been assigned to be received each year in the town of Cirencester, from a certain stall close to the door of the church of St John the Baptist (on the left-hand side as one enters that church), on the day of the year's mind of that abbot in our community's use, to be spent each year, that is to say in accordance with what may be received therefrom, with the exception of 12*d.*, which the lord king customarily receives from it each year. We desire, however, that nothing be withheld from what is customarily granted on the year's minds of other abbots, his predecessors; but to ensure that this rent

⁴⁴ Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, no. 578; *Canterbury, 1193–1205*, ed. by C. R. Cheney and E. John, English Episcopal Acta, 3 (London, 1986), no. 409.

⁴⁵ Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, nos. 523, 524, 527, 528, 529, 636.

⁴⁶ G. Signori, 'The Refectory, Memoria, and Community', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 11 (2022), 131–77 (159–62); B. F. Harvey, 'Monastic PITTANCES in the Middle Ages', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. by C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron, Medieval History and Archaeology (Oxford, 2006), 215–27.

may be readily available on the said day, it is entrusted to the safekeeping of a trustworthy brother appointed for this purpose by common consent.⁴⁷

Following on this success, between 1230 and 1236, Abbot Hugh of Bampton issued another charter based on the earlier text, assigning the residue of a rent from a messuage to provide ceremonial candles at the daily Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Be it known to you all that we, commending the devotion and enduring affection of the friends of our venerable father of good memory, Master Alexander, formerly abbot and our predecessor, have hereby kindly received the rent which, through their attention and the careful arrangement of our beloved brother and fellow canon, Dom Geoffrey Brito, nephew of that abbot, has been assigned to be received each year in the town of Cirencester, from a certain messuage near the outer gate of Cirencester Abbey (which once belonged to Richard Woderove), which is to be spent on two candles to be burned daily at the Mass of the Blessed Mary in the conventual church of Cirencester, to be celebrated customarily by the canons of that church, which shall begin to burn from the beginning of the canon of the same Mass up to its completion; and that the residue of the said rent, if there be any, shall be spent on the day of the year's mind of that abbot in the use of our community each year. We have granted as much as may be received from the

⁴⁷ Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, no. 332 (Bodl., Dep. c. 392, fol. 98v):

Nouerit uniuersitas uestra quod nos deuocionem et dilecionis perseueranciam amicorum uenerabilis patris nostri bone memorie magistri Alexandri. quondam Abbatis et predecessoris nostri commendantes: redditum qui per sollicitudinem et diligentem procuracionem dilecti fratris et concanonicis nostri. D. Galfridi Britonis nepotis ipsius Abbatis assignatus est percipiendus singulis annis in uilla Cyr'. de quadam solda propinquiore ostio ecclesie sancti Iohannis Baptiste. in leua eandem ecclesiam intrancium: in die anniuersarii ipsius Abbatis in usus conuentus nostri. singulis annis expendendum: gratanter recepimus. uidelicet quantum exinde percipi poterit: saluo redditu .xii.d. quos Dominus Rex \singulis annis/ inde percipere consueuit. Volumus tamen quod de iis que in anniuersariis ceterorum Abbatum predecessorum suorum mos est exhiberi: nichil subtrahatur. set ut idem redditus dicto die promptior habeatur: alicuius fratris fidelis communi assensu ad hoc assignati custodie committatur.

said message, reserving to ourselves 12*d.* from the rent and other customary dues and services, following the custom of the manor of Cirencester.⁴⁸

The two charters bear the same witnesses as representatives of the ‘friends of Master Alexander’, the charters using the same phrase as the letter from Prior S. of Malmesbury to Walter. Alexander died at Kempsey, a manor of the bishop of Worcester, and was buried at his cathedral.⁴⁹ William of Blois, bishop of Worcester from 1218 until 1236, witnessed the charters alongside John Walsh, abbot of Malmesbury from 1222 until 1246.⁵⁰ The abbot also helped to ensure the independence of the canons: a mandate from Stephen Langton issued as archbishop of Canterbury between 1219 and 1228 made the abbot of Malmesbury responsible for ensuring that the bishop of Worcester did not encroach on the churches belonging to Cirencester Abbey.⁵¹ Geoffrey’s *Sol meldunensis* was not only a means of disseminating texts but also part of the economy of memory in religious orders.

⁴⁸ Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, no. 336 (Bodl., Dep. c. 392, fol. 99r):

Nouerit uniuersitas uestra quod nos deuocionem et dilecionis perseueranciam amicorum uenerabilis patris nostri bone memorie magistri Alexandri quondam Abbatis et predecessoris nostri commendantes. redditum qui per sollicitudinem ipsorum et diligentem procuracionem dilecti fratris et concanonici nostri domini G. Britonis nepotis ipsius Abbatis assignatus est percipiendus singulis annis in uilla de Cyr’ de quodam mesuagio propinquiore porte Abbacie Cyr’ extrinsece quod fuit aliquando Ricardi Woderoue. expendum in duobus cereis ardentis singulis diebus ad missam beate Marie in ecclesia conuentuali Cyr’ a canonicis eiusdem ecclesie consuetudinarie celebrandam. qui incipient ardere a principio canonis eiusdem misse: usque ad ipsius consummationem gratanter recepimus. et quod residuum dicti redditus si quod fuerit in die anniuersarii ipsius Abbatis in usus conuentus nostri singulis annis expendatur. Concessimus uidelicet quantum a dicto mesuagio percipi poterit. saluis nobis redditu .xii. denariis. et aliis consuetudinibus et seruitiis secundum consuetudinem manerii de Cyr’.

⁴⁹ Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 14–15; J. K. Floyer, ‘On a Mutilated Effigy in the Cloisters of Worcester Cathedral Said to Represent Alexander Neckam’, *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, 24 (1897), 188–96.

⁵⁰ *Heads of Religious Houses*, II, 51.

⁵¹ Cirencester Abbey, *Registrum A*, no. 406.

Geoffrey's marginalia in Cirencester manuscripts

Geoffrey compiled Alexander's works directly from Cirencester manuscripts, adapting them to flow as a continuous text. While agreeing that Geoffrey must have compiled *Sol meldunensis* at Cirencester Abbey, since he used such a wide range of Alexander's works, researchers have described CUL, MS Gg.6.42 as 'one of the original fair copies' of the miscellany, leaving the question open of whether Geoffrey was involved in the surviving manuscript's production.⁵² Marginalia in copies of Alexander's works from Cirencester Abbey that correspond to *Sol meldunensis* demonstrate that Geoffrey made selections for his miscellany from these volumes. Further, scribal errors show that CUL, MS Gg.6.42 is a direct adaptation of these manuscripts, rather than the product of an intermediary copy.

Throughout *Sol meldunensis*, Geoffrey cited the source of each excerpt in a marginal rubric. A scribe framed these typically with a border of blue ink or with simple flourishing (e.g. fols 7r–9r) and correlated them with each abstract using a red reference mark. There are only occasional citation errors, mostly through omission of a rubric.⁵³ Geoffrey adapted passages from Alexander to fit their new context, adding connecting phrases, as well as other quotations as marginal notes.⁵⁴ He also added words to make the excerpts flow together, and ensured that no anomalies were left after removal from their context by deleting cross references and abbreviating to focus on the miscellany's themes.

Sol meldunensis originated in a reading of Alexander's works in the abbey's manuscripts, in which Geoffrey marked passages corresponding to his chosen themes. His marginalia mostly function as finding aids but occasionally provide editorial enhancements. They are unobtrusive, written in a combination of drypoint, leadpoint, and brown ink. His typical practice was to make a mark the margins at the beginning and end of a passage he planned to excerpt, combining a cross 'x' and a distinctive round letter with a long tail that a contemporary reader understood as 'n', sometimes elaborating it as 'nota' in Oxford, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139. To find passages, Geoffrey sometimes also marked the head of the page. He often divided a continuous passage across the miscellany, notably

⁵² Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 118; McDonough, '*Laus beatissime Virginis*', 107; McDonough, 'Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.42', 792.

⁵³ McDonough, '*Laus beatissime Virginis*', 108.

⁵⁴ Examples in McDonough, 'Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.42', 795–99.

without repetition. Geoffrey also notated passages in the manuscripts that do not appear in his compilation, but which fit his text's themes. He may have drafted either a topical concordance to Alexander's works to assist in his selection process, and composed his work from this, or a detailed plan of the work with specific references to the passages he aimed to use.⁵⁵ Geoffrey's annotations can be found in four manuscripts: two with contemporary inscriptions showing that they were at Cirencester Abbey, and two that researchers have conjectured to have been written there, with the marginalia providing conclusive evidence.

Oxford, Jesus College, MS 94: *Tractatus super Parabolas Salomonis and Tractatus super Mulierem fortem*

The Alexander Neckam manuscript most unquestionably associated with Cirencester Abbey is Oxford, Jesus College, MS 94, an unusual assemblage of three separate manuscripts of different sizes, still in a thirteenth-century binding.⁵⁶ Their fragmentary and unfinished state suggests that they were Alexander's working materials at the time of his death.

The first booklet contains fragments of Alexander's *Glose super Psalterium* (fols 1r–56v), with his autograph additions.⁵⁷ These are from lectures that he gave in Oxford during his time there in the 1190s, where he may have been associated with St Frideswide's Priory; he may have brought this manuscript with him when he moved to Cirencester.⁵⁸ Geoffrey annotated this section but copied his extracts on the Psalms from Bodl., MS Bodley 284, a complete copy of the same work that integrates Alexander's revisions. Geoffrey made extensive use both of Alexander's unfinished *Tractatus super Parabolas Salomonis* (fols 57r–74r), which Geoffrey cites twenty-two times;

⁵⁵ Compare a fourteenth-century index of marginal reference marks ('notabilia') in a copy of Robert of Cricklade, *Omellie super Ezechielem*, Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 30*; R. M. Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts of Pembroke College, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 2022), 20.

⁵⁶ A. N. J. Dunning, 'Jesus College MS 94', *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*, 2025 provides a description and complete photography. On fol. 1r is a list of contents added in the fourteenth century, beginning 'Liber sancte Marie Cyrencestrie'.

⁵⁷ Hunt, *Alexander Nequam*, 30–31, noting examples of Alexander's marginal revisions on fols 7v and 57v.

⁵⁸ Dunning, 'St Frideswide's Priory', 273–85.

and of the revised copy of Alexander's *Tractatus super Mulierem fortem* (fols 79r–125r), which Geoffrey cites fifty-one times. Both Alexander and Walter of Mileto annotated and corrected these parts.⁵⁹

A typical example of Geoffrey's excerpting practice is a passage of *Super Mulierem fortem* in Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 120v, corresponding to CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fols 168v–169r. Geoffrey notes the opening (Fig. 1) and close (Fig. 3) of the passage he wishes to excerpt with both 'x' and 'n'. In the middle of the passage, Geoffrey has placed an editorial sign marking the point at which he interpolates a section of Alexander's *Tractatus super Cantica canticorum* before resuming with *Super Mulierem fortem* (Fig. 2). At other points, he marked passages with a simple horizontal line (Fig. 4): these marks are so indistinct that it is only possible to confirm that they are Geoffrey's where they correspond to his excerpts. Not every passage with his editorial signs appears in *Sol meldunensis*. The pairing of the marks in MS 94, together with the inconsistent form of the cross or horizontal line, suggest that Geoffrey first flagged potential passages, and later added an indicator that he had copied the extract, ensuring that he did not repeat it elsewhere. Elsewhere, he uses a single mark, reflecting either a reduced risk of repetition in manuscripts from which he quotes fewer passages, or a less developed form of his compilation technique.

A scribal error shows that the surviving copy of *Sol meldunensis* is a direct adaptation of its source manuscripts, rather than the product of an intermediary copy. At fol. 173v, an excerpt from *Super Parabolas* overruns:

Melius est sedere in angulo domatis quam in domo communi cum uxore
litigiosa. ~~Set hec deo annuente exponetur~~

*It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a
quarrelsome wife. [Prov. 21. 9/25. 24] But this, God willing, will be explained*

In Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 57v, the next word is 'below' ('inferius'), which the extract omits. The scribe underlined and partially effaced 'set hec deo annuente exponetur' to flag it as an error. Geoffrey, while either dictating to

⁵⁹ M. Gullick, 'A Twelfth-Century Manuscript of the Letters of Thomas Becket', *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700*, 2 (1990), 1–31 (23–24).

a scribe or copying the text himself, realized on reaching this word that his adaptation would not discuss the passage below, as he planned to end the excerpt after another sentence.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 284: *Glose super Psalterium*

Geoffrey excerpted only eight passages from Alexander's *Glose super Psalterium*, each of which corresponds to marginal marks in Bodl., MS Bodley 284, a copy of the commentary that integrates Alexander's revisions. A sixteenth-century hand inscribed 'Cirencestrie' at the head of multiple leaves.⁶⁰ Geoffrey's marks show that the manuscript was already at Cirencester in the middle of the thirteenth century.

Geoffrey used only a drypoint 'x' to mark some selections, both in the margin and at the head of the page (e.g. Ps. 1. 3, MS Bodley 284, fol. 1v, copied to CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 94v; Ps. 5. 5, fol. 7r, copied to fol. 66r; Ps. 22. 1, fol. 40v, copied to fol. 98r). He marked other passages using his round 'n' (e.g. Ps. 24. 2, fol. 46r, copied to fol. 162v; Ps. 36. 37, fol. 89v, copied to fol. 12r; Ps. 37. 2, fol. 90r, copied to fol. 9v). Geoffrey cites Alexander's glosses by the number of each psalm, but the manuscript did not include these references, and he occasionally miscounts.

Passages that Geoffrey marked but did not include in *Sol meldunensis* show that he was often looking for particular words in his reading. For example, at Ps. 24. 4, he marked a passage beginning 'Incessit ergo dominus humiliter. dulciter' (fol. 46v). It would have fit the theme of Geoffrey's section 'De misericordia gloriose uirginis' (*Sol meldunensis*, fol. 43r), where the word 'dulcedo' and variants such as 'dulciter' frequently appear. There are often groups of marks close to passages that he selected (e.g. Ps. 47. 3, MS Bodley 284, fol. 119r; Ps. 47. 10, fol. 120r; Ps. 48. 5–6, fol. 121v; Ps. 48. 12, fol. 122v), showing Geoffrey surveying a field before picking his flower.

Bodl., MS Bodley 284 also includes Alexander's *Glose super Quicumque uult*, but Geoffrey may have used a different copy, as the single sentence that he quotes from this work is not marked in MS Bodley 284, fol. 306r (copied to CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 8r).

⁶⁰ Bodl., MS Bodley 284, fols iii recto, 119r, 153r, 294r; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd edn (London, 1964), 52.

Oxford, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139: *De naturis rerum*

The work that Geoffrey excerpted most often in *Sol meldunensis*, on a hundred and twenty-eight occasions, is *De naturis rerum*, including its accompanying commentary on Ecclesiastes, which appears under a separate title, *Tractatus super Ecclesiasten*. The next most common text is *Tractatus super Cantica canticorum*, with a hundred and twenty citations, but no Cirencester copy of this work survives. Geoffrey's source for *De naturis rerum* is Oxford, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, established as a Cirencester manuscript through the hand of Walter of Mileto.⁶¹

Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139 includes markers for the opening and close of passages, as well as some more detailed editorial marks. To note the beginning or end of an excerpt, Geoffrey applies his usual 'n' (e.g. Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 45r, corresponding to *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 114v). Some passages are marked only with a discreet line (e.g. Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 7r, for *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 130v). Readers later overwrote or erased some of Geoffrey's marks: for example, at Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 67r, his 'n' became 'nota', corresponding to *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 116v. At a later stage, Geoffrey added marginalia that reflect how he adapted passages in *Sol meldunensis*. For example, in Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 4v (*De naturis rerum*, i. 3), a mark in the margin directs a division of the passage, corresponding to a chapter break introduced in *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 168r (Fig. 5). At Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 5v, Geoffrey adds a similar mark where he interpolates other passages and picks up the chapter again in *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 173v (Fig. 6).

Geoffrey was not merely excerpting but felt free to enhance the text. At Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 5v (*De naturis rerum*, i. 3), he recognized a verse quotation in the text and added a small marginal abbreviation for 'Versus' to plan a corresponding rubric in CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 174r (Fig. 7). Another example of the scribe's engagement with the text appears in the line, 'Yet it must be distinguished between the Lord and a lord' ('Distingendum tamen est inter dominum et dominum').⁶² In CUL, MS

⁶¹ M. Gullick made this identification in 1994, as noted in R. Hanna and D. Rundle, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts of Magdalen College, Oxford* (Oxford, forthcoming); T. Wright, introduction in Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, *Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores*, 34 (London, 1863), lxxvii comments on the accuracy of the manuscript's text.

⁶² Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, ii. 187 (Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 66r).

Gg.6.42, fol. 116v, the scribe abbreviates the first instance using the *nomen sacrum* 'dñm', and the second 'dominū', a graphic distinction that does not appear in the source manuscript. This reflects Geoffrey's interest in both the text's content and form.

Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139 also shows that Geoffrey's source manuscripts heavily influenced the inclusion and design of the marginal notes and glosses to *Sol meldunensis*. *De naturis rerum*, II. 173 (Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 55v) includes a gloss on two words for heralds, 'clarigator' and 'caduceator', enclosed in two semicircles in red ink. The scribe of CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 96r, adapted this design (Fig. 8). He improved on it by adding reference marks to the glosses and using the two circles to separate the terms. The original scribe of the main text copied this particular gloss, but in other passages, Geoffrey or others added new marginal comments on the text, usually based on other works of Alexander.⁶³ This emphasizes the extent to which the form of *Sol meldunensis* reflects the Cirencester books.

London, British Library, Royal MS 7 F. i: *Speculum speculationum*

Geoffrey presents three passages from Alexander's *Speculum speculationum*, an unfinished summary of theology similar in its intended scope to Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. London, British Library (BL), Royal MS 7 F. I, is the only surviving copy of this work. Research has conjectured but not proven that the manuscript was a Cirencester production and the copy that John Leland saw at the abbey.⁶⁴ Geoffrey marked his extracts in the margins: he quotes *Speculum speculationum*, III. 75–76 (BL, Royal MS 7 F. I, fol. 67r) at *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 143v. In addition, Geoffrey uses verses from *Speculum*, IV. 1 (fol. 74v), to open his proem to the second book of *Sol meldunensis* (fol. 70r). He marked the source passages only with a marginal 'x' in drypoint. Geoffrey's use of this book may simply reflect a desire to refer to Alexander's complete oeuvre, an approach also found in William of Malmesbury's *Deflorationes Gregorii*.⁶⁵

⁶³ Examples in McDonough, 'Cambridge, University Library, Gg.6.42', 796–99.

⁶⁴ G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (London, 1921), I, 199; R. M. Thomson, introduction in Alexander Neckam, *Speculum speculationum*, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 11 (Oxford, 1988), xi, xx; John Leland, select list of books seen at Cirencester Abbey, c.1536–40, Bodl., MS Top. gen. c. 3, p. 266, in *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, ed. by T. Webber and A. G. Watson, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, 6 (London, 1998), no. A9.10.

⁶⁵ Farmer, 'William of Malmesbury's Commentary on Lamentations', 308.

The evidence of Geoffrey's marginalia shows both that he compiled the text of *Sol meldunensis* from Cirencester manuscripts and that he took part in the production of CUL, MS Gg.6.42, working directly from these sources. While the forms of the marginalia are sufficiently consistent across the four identified volumes to attribute them to Geoffrey, he was working from a common collection of books and is unlikely to have produced his manuscript alone. This leads to the question of how to interpret the marginalia and additions to CUL, MS Gg.6.42.

Layers of composition in CUL, MS Gg.6.42

Geoffrey is the only named writer of *Sol meldunensis*, but its manuscript is a multilayered, collaborative production, enlarged with further production units after its copying. While researchers often assume that this is one of the ways in which miscellanies were typically produced, it is difficult to prove that a manuscript is a multilevel composition rather than one made by immediately collaborating scribes.⁶⁶ Physical evidence suggests that parts of the manuscript originated elsewhere than Cirencester, particularly an incongruous but decoratively integrated copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini*.

CUL, MS Gg.6.42 is a composite volume, with the two books of *Sol meldunensis* (fols 3–212) possibly written in separate stages, and with further structurally separate but contemporary additions.⁶⁷ An inserted leaf of tinted drawings of St Francis (fol. 5r) and St Dominic (fol. 5v) alongside companion friars is contemporaneous with the manuscript but stylistically distinct. An inserted quire of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini* (fols 213–222) is only connected to the preceding text through the prominence of the names Geoffrey and Alexander: its parchment wrapper suggests that it first circulated separately, but it also includes added decoration (fol. 214r) in the style of *Sol meldunensis*. The concluding part of the volume

⁶⁶ E. Kwakkel, 'Late Medieval Text Collections: A Codicological Typology Based on Single-Author Manuscripts', in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. by S. B. Partridge and E. Kwakkel (Toronto, 2012), 56–79 (69–70).

⁶⁷ The collation is a² (fols 1–2), 1¹⁰⁺¹ (fols 3–13; 3rd added), 2–6¹⁰ (fols 14–63), 7⁸⁺¹ (fols 64–71; 8th added, fol. 70bis), 8¹⁰ (fols 72–81), 9¹⁰⁺¹ (fols 82–92; 11th added, fol. 92), 10–21¹⁰ (fols 93–212) | 22¹⁰ (fols 213–222) | 23¹⁰ (fols 223–232), 24¹⁰⁻⁵ (fols 233–237; 6th–10th cancelled). Most pages measure around 210 × 140 mm, as a binder has trimmed them on all sides by several millimetres. The additions in quires 1, 7, and 24 are irregularly shaped (fol. 5, 142 × 183 mm; fol. 70bis, 133 × 89 mm; fol. 233, 133 × 209 mm).

is a verse anthology in Latin and Anglo-Norman, *Felix ille* (fols 223–237), using a similar page layout to *Sol meldunensis* but with differences in execution. Annotators concentrated marginal notations on *Sol meldunensis* but occasionally notated the other parts of the volume. The visual disparity between these main elements implies that other communities produced the drawings of friars and *Prophetia Merlini*, but also that Geoffrey or a collaborator later integrated them into the volume.

Fols 3–212: Geoffrey Brito, *Sol meldunensis*

Geoffrey continued to adjust *Sol meldunensis* after its formal copying. The most visible adjustments are cases in which he decided to extend a quotation. For example, on CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 46r, an extract from *Super Cantica* extends into the margin, in the scribal hand but in a different shade of ink and enclosed in a decorative border, added after the usual marginal notes with borders. The decorator executed these elaborate borders, featuring hybrids and grotesques in blue and red ink, after the more functional rubrication and initials. Three borders framing glosses relate closely to their subject: a standing figure holding a note on the Hebrew word for a human (fol. 9r), a peacock with ‘pau’ (fol. 40r), and a parrot with ‘psitacus’ (fol. 145r). The use of figurative borders integrated with the summaries of arguments arranged as distinctions at fols 29v–30r, 35v–36r, and 40v–41r, written in the scribal hand, shows that they were part of the manuscript’s production at Cirencester. The involvement of either Geoffrey or another canon in the addition of this decoration is particularly suggested by the integration of a marginal addition in another hand on fol. 166r by giving it a border, with minor variations in pigments; and by an addition seemingly in the scribal hand made in conjunction with planning a decorative border, which called for creative adjustment when the text did not fit the intended scheme, on fol. 183r.

The two books of *Sol meldunensis* may stand for two stages of composition. Geoffrey did not number the first book (fols 3r–69v) in the manuscript, unlike book 2 (70r–212v). Its concluding verses are comparable to a miniature version of *Felix ille*, the verse anthology that closes the volume. The text could originally have ended on fol. 68v, where the book closes with a doxology and space at the foot of the page; or with the address to the book that follows. These are close to the end of the seventh quire (fols 64–71), which is the sole quaternion in the manuscript, otherwise composed of quinternions, suggesting that Geoffrey originally planned it as the end of

the volume. One explanation could be that he began *Sol meldunensis* before 1246, intending to present it to John Walsh, Abbot Geoffrey's predecessor, who witnessed both charters documenting the pittances for Alexander Neckam. The conclusion of the proem to book 2 first names Abbot Geoffrey (fol. 71v). The proem also fits into the seventh quire exactly, and Geoffrey might alternatively have added the proem after completing the main text of the second book. Either interpretation emphasizes how involved Geoffrey must have been in the manuscript's production, which makes the inclusion of material from outside his production circle striking.

Fol. 5: Drawings of St Francis and St Dominic

The first quire of CUL, MS Gg.6.42 includes an inserted leaf of two full-page tinted drawings unlike anything else in the volume, the first (fol. 5r) depicting St Francis with another friar, both carrying books; the second (fol. 5v) showing two Dominicans, the bearded one presumably St Dominic. They are among the earliest depictions of both figures in English art. This leaf is slightly smaller (142 × 181 mm) than the rest of the book. Art historians date the drawings stylistically to the middle of the thirteenth century.⁶⁸ The placement of the leaf is in response to the surrounding text, praising those who take a vow of poverty.⁶⁹ It also emphasizes Geoffrey's theme of exchange, since the young friar is offering his book to Francis. The leaf is in the middle of a quire, which would have needed partial disbinding if it were a later addition, and it might have been included conveniently at the same time as *Prophetia Merlini*.

Fols 213–222: Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Prophetia Merlini*

Immediately following the envoi to *Sol meldunensis* is the most incongruous element of the manuscript: a copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia*

⁶⁸ Zutshi, 'Images of Franciscans and Dominicans', 55–62, with parallel examples; he does not accept the view of N. J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 4, 2 vols (London, 1982–1988), no. 84, that the artist 'was directly acquainted' with the earlier work of Matthew Paris at St Albans; S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica majora* (Berkeley, 1987), 483, also takes this view; prompted by P. H. Brieger, *English Art, 1216–1307*, Oxford History of English Art, 4 (Oxford, 1957), 143.

⁶⁹ Zutshi, 'Images of Franciscans and Dominicans', 62–66, with a transcription; arguing against A. G. Little, *Franciscan History and Legend in English Mediaeval Art* (Manchester, 1937), 41; see also K. M. Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment: The Social Lives of Medieval Books* (New Haven, 2015), 49–51.

Merlini.⁷⁰ It is a single quire with an integral parchment wrapper, which would have allowed it to circulate independently. It has an entirely different hand, page layout, and decoration from the rest of the volume. Two fire-breathing dragons painted in blue, red, and orange appear above the opening of *Prophetia Merlini* (fol. 214v). Their decorator shaded them fully, in contrast to the line drawings found elsewhere. Blue two-line initials with red pen flourishing open the two major divisions in the text (fol. 214r–v), shaded to create a sense of depth, in contrast to the initials of *Sol meldunensis*. The layout provides 8.5 mm of space between lines, but with text only 5 mm high, leaving extra space for glosses; while the margins are much smaller than those found in the rest of the volume. Given its contrasting form, Geoffrey Brito is unlikely to have planned for the inclusion of this quire. Since *Sol meldunensis* has a consistent visual format, Geoffrey would only have included such a prominently placed recycled booklet with a contrasting theme and appearance if it had symbolic value.⁷¹

Although *Prophetia Merlini* is from a different scribal context to Geoffrey's miscellany, it was bound into the volume at Cirencester. The decorators of the rest of the volume added grotesques in the border of the opening epistle, following the style of red and blue line drawings from the preceding part (fol. 214r). One of the rubricating hands from the earlier part of the volume also appears to have added the opening rubric on fol. 213v, copied from an inscription at the foot of fol. 214r. This shows that the quire is an integral part of the manuscript.

The inclusion of *Prophetia Merlini* seems intended as a playful counterpoint to *Sol meldunensis*. The text opens with a dedicatory letter from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Alexander of Lincoln (fol. 214r), who was involved in the early distribution of the work and died in 1148.⁷² He was also the nephew of Roger of Salisbury, whose death consumed years of Robert of Cricklade's life in litigation as head of St Frideswide's Priory in

⁷⁰ M. D. Reeve, introduction in Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum (Historia regum Britanniae)*, ed. by M. D. Reeve, trans. by N. Wright (Woodbridge, 2007), xxix–xxx, cites CUL, MS Gg.6.42, with the siglum ζ, forming part of the consensus □.

⁷¹ Kwakkel, 'Late Medieval Text Collections', 71–73, similarly considers reuse in Cambridge, Trinity College, MSS R.3.19 and R.3.21.

⁷² Tahkokallio, *Anglo-Norman Historical Canon*, 49–51.

Oxford immediately after he moved there from Cirencester Abbey.⁷³ As it is placed in CUL, MS Gg.6.42, the text reverses the roles of *Sol meldunensis*: rather than a work from one Geoffrey to another presenting the works of an Alexander, it is a work from a Geoffrey to an Alexander, the nephew of a far more famous uncle. Its layout is another invitation to collaboration: the wide spacing between its lines invites glossing, and two later annotators made use of this space.

Fols 223–237: Geoffrey Brito, *Felix ille*

The concluding section of CUL, MS Gg.6.42 is a verse anthology opening with the words ‘Felix ille’, the result of another layer of composition.⁷⁴ Its rubrics are not continuous with *Sol meldunensis* and do not name a creator. Its format is nonetheless consistent with Geoffrey’s presentation of the verses at fols 69r–71v, implying that he also compiled this collection. The opening poems are another literary exchange: a debate on the merits of wine and beer between Peter of Blois, Robert de Beaufeu, and Alexander Neckam, the latter addressing his work to Thomas Carbonel, abbot of Gloucester.⁷⁵ The anthology focuses on didactic and satirical poetry in Latin and Anglo-Norman; it is more deliberately structured than BnF, ms. Latin 11867, fols 189v–240v. While the two quires of *Felix ille* are visually integrated with *Sol meldunensis*, they use distinct ruling patterns, suggesting that the canons produced them at a different time.

Fol. 237 is another addition from Cirencester, with a hymn ‘On the Saviour’s Passion’ (*De passione saluatoris*) not recorded elsewhere but written

⁷³ Dunning, ‘St Frideswide’s Priory’, 262–63.

⁷⁴ The opening poem is Peter of Blois, ‘Felix ille locus quem uitis amenat amena’, Walther, *Initia carminum*, no. 6332.

⁷⁵ Peter of Blois, *Carmina*, ed. by C. Wollin, Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 128 (Turnhout, 1998), i. 6–7; *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois*, ed. by E. Revell, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 13 (Oxford, 1993), 159–60; A. Wilmart, ‘Une suite au poème de Robert de Beaufeu pour l’éloge de la cervoise’, *Revue bénédictine*, 50 (1938), 136–40; E. Brauholtz, ‘Die Streitgedichte Peters von Blois und Roberts von Beaufeu über den Wert des Weines und des Bieres’, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 47 (1927), 30–38; Alexander Neckam, *Carmina minora*, ed. by Hochgürtel, carmina rhythmica 9, carmina metrica 1–3.

in Alexander Neckam's style.⁷⁶ This leaf uses a two-column layout and is decorated in red, blue, and green, found nowhere else in the volume. This addition makes at least five layers of composition in CUL, MS Gg.6.42, two of which did not originate at Cirencester, even though the canons seem to have made a final effort to integrate the book's elements. This leads to the question of how to interpret this multilevel composition.

Friendship and collaborative production

The disparate yet integrated character of CUL, MS Gg.6.42 suggests that the book was a collaborative production, and there are two interpretations of this evidence to fit Geoffrey's emphasis on friendship. The added material might have been the result of a process of co-production at Cirencester to enhance the value of the gift to Malmesbury, framing it as an offering from the community as much as from Geoffrey. Alternatively, the recipients might have responded to Geoffrey's invitation to collaborate by returning the manuscript to him with their own contributions. Any explanation must account for the manuscript's unified decoration, which shows that the canons brought together its separate parts.

If the final form of the manuscript was a result of collaboration within Cirencester Abbey before presenting it to Malmesbury, the inclusion of elements from different creators might have carried particular significance. Some may have come from other religious houses that formed part of Alexander Neckam's publishing circle, most plausibly from Worcester Cathedral Priory, where Alexander was buried, given that the bishop of Worcester witnessed the charters on the pittances for Alexander. Geoffrey might even have overseen the production of a sister manuscript for Worcester. A rental from Worcester made in 1240, with additions up to 1285, records several pittances for the anniversary of Alexander.⁷⁷ In this scenario, the manuscript would have become a collective gift between the 'friends of Master Alexander'.

⁷⁶ [Alexander Neckam], 'Splendor patris fons', CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 237r-v; U. Chevalier, *Repertorium hymnologicum*, 6 vols (Louvain/Brussels, 1892-1921), no. 33659; *Pia dictamina: Reimgebete und Leselieder des Mittelalters*, Analecta hymnica medii aevi, 31, 7 vols (Leipzig, 1893-1905), iv, ed. by C. Blume (1898), 36-37 (omits two lines: vii. 6 and ix. 12).

⁷⁷ Worcester Cathedral Priory, descriptive rental, 1240, BL, Add. MS 89137, fol. 48v: 'De aniuersario Alexandri Abbatis de Cyrencestr'; a copy, Worcester, Dean and Chapter, Muniments, A. 2, is printed in *Registrum sive liber irrotularius et consuetudinarius prioratus beatae Mariae Wigorniensis*, ed. by W. H. Hale, Camden, old ser., 91 (London, 1865), 107b.

Given Geoffrey's emphasis on collaboration and the tradition of dialogue between Cirencester and Malmesbury, it is also reasonable to hypothesize that the manuscript's additions originated at Malmesbury Abbey. At minimum, the monks must be among the contributors to the book's marginalia, but they may further have produced the more substantial revisions. After Geoffrey issued the volume, with his invitation in the proem to his second book to 'add your hand' ('adde manum', fol. 71v), the monks could have returned it to Cirencester with augmentations. The canons might then have overseen the integration of this material, extending the volume's decorative scheme to unify the volume's visual design. *Felix ille* may have been added at this stage. Geoffrey could indeed have initially written only a single book of *Sol meldunensis* for Malmesbury, adding the second at the monks' request. This scenario would reflect Geoffrey's ethos and the multiple layers of composition in the manuscript.

By the end of the Middle Ages, the volume had returned to Cirencester. A fifteenth-century inscription may suggest that the monks of Malmesbury sent the book to Cirencester: 'To Cirencester & bid them pray for me. He that prayethe for me Jesu have merci on hym' (fol. 2v). The manuscript also includes a sixteenth-century inscription with the name Maurice Gyffard.⁷⁸ The Gyffard or Giffard family was prominent in Cirencester, as the abbey's cartularies show. The manuscript is next documented in the library of John Moore (1646–1714), bishop of Ely.⁷⁹ King George I presented this collection to the University Library in 1715.⁸⁰ Readers continued to value the book even after the dissolution of Cirencester Abbey itself.

Geoffrey Brito's *Sol meldunensis* is a product both of a long-standing friendship between Cirencester and Malmesbury and intentional engagement with publishing circles, reflecting his personal commitment and that of his community to the memory of Alexander Neckam. The continued

⁷⁸ CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 2v: 'Iste liber constat moritio Gyffardi Testante Ihesu'.

⁷⁹ CUL, MS Gg.6.42 was no. 131 in Moore's collection (inscribed, fol. 1r), corresponding to the printed catalogue, *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ in unum collecti, cum indice alphabetico*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1697), no. 9317; it is also no. 958 in Thomas Tanner, supplementary list of John Moore's manuscripts, 1698 × 1714, CUL, MS Oo.7.50(2), fol. 3r. Tanner annotated *Sol meldunensis* extensively, notably adding running headings to analyse the structure of book 2.

⁸⁰ J. Ringrose, 'The Royal Library: John Moore and His Books', in *Cambridge University Library: The Great Collections*, ed. by P. Fox (Cambridge, 1998), 78–89.

promulgation of the works of such writers was often centred on their religious houses, a pattern that lasted into print culture.⁸¹ By framing his text as an offering centred on the ideals of friendship, Geoffrey cast publishing and literary exchange as a moral and intellectual endeavour. His verses on collaboration echo the long-standing ties between the two abbeys, while his meticulous compilation of Alexander's works served both as a tribute to his uncle and as a means of fostering continued dialogue. CUL, MS Gg.6.42 is a vivid artefact of medieval textual communities, both its contents and physical form embodying a tradition of exchange and collaboration that spanned generations. The manuscript encapsulates the ideals of friendship, literary memory, and creative reciprocity that Geoffrey Brito looked to celebrate and preserve.

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⁸¹ J.-L. Quantin, 'La réception d'Hugues et Richard de Saint-Victor au miroir de leurs *Opera omnia* (XVI^e–XVII^e siècles)', in *L'école de Saint-Victor de Paris: Influence et rayonnement du Moyen Âge à l'Époque moderne*, ed. by D. Poirel, Bibliotheca Victorina, 22 (Turnhout, 2010), 601–42.

lectus anticipat: qui meditationibus omnibus humanis et ubi
 lit: et psalmodiis sese concessit. Quid in gulis. tenuissimam
 et q; discipline regularis observantiam. amantem iocundis:
 Domini iusticie. censura debita coercens excessus: ignis p[er]ga
 ratorum prevenit offm. Claustrum loca facies: paradisi repre

uentat corporis angustias: Hinc claustrum loca facies
 paradisi representat amenitatem. Virorum in medi
 planicie inuicentis. ad pascua uite nos ducit:
 prouocant omni deliciaz voluptates arbor medi

Fig. 1(a). Geoffrey Brito's 'x' and 'n' marks at the beginning of a planned excerpt from Alexander Neckam, *Tractatus super Mulierem fortem* (Cirencester Abbey, 1213 × 1217), Oxford, Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 120v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Principal, Fellows, and Scholars of Jesus College, within the University and City of Oxford, of Queen Elizabeth's Foundation.

Fig. 1(b). Corresponding excerpt, with a marginal citation, in Geoffrey Brito, *Solmeldunensis* (Cirencester Abbey, 1246 × 1260), CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 168v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

tutum p̄ncipalium. Longitudo ex equo respondens latitu-
dini. docet equalia eē lata ciuitatis. Vos ḡ in claustris re-
sidentes tanqm̄ columbe ad fenestras suas. n̄ legistis ḡna

uily petraz. ille latetant in cauinis materie.
Vos ḡ in claustris residentes tanqm̄ columbe ad
fenestras suas n̄ legistis ḡna canticca in area
sacre sc̄pt̄e. n̄c alis cōtemplatōis eleuamini in

Sign. apud
fortem.

lautes. spondendo cautelam solito diligentiorē uos ⁊ gestib⁹
⁊ uerbis ⁊ actionib⁹ adhibitis. Vir concipio sp̄m correctō-
nis. ex quo molestus ⁊ delinqm̄ sermo correctōnis. Porra
te ḡ lucnam accensam in manib⁹ ur̄is. ut luceant optima

Fig. 2(a). Geoffrey's editorial sign for planning an interpolation in *Tractatus super Mulierem fortem*, Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 120v. The mark corresponds to the point at which *Sol meldunensis* inserts a quotation from Alexander Neckam, *Tractatus super Cantica canticorum*.

Fig. 2(b). Conclusion of the *Super Cantica* extract and continuation of *Super Mulierem fortem*, with marginal citation, CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 169r.

Fig. 3. Editorial signs corresponding to the conclusion of the *Super Mulierem fortem* extract, Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 120v.

penurie: plenitudo bonorū omnium de-
bet. felices sunt set erunt felicissimi:
quib; excellentissima uigo patrocinium

Quare
peccati dicitur
uolens sit irre-
mediabile.

tam ad casum peluem: de uero peccatum
ei ēē irremediabile censuit iustissimus
iudex. Non enim dignus est uenia: qui
ex propria malitia tantum in se mittens
manus: se ipm perimit. Associentur & sup-
bia & inuidia. & manus glā. que hostem

alul in carē dāpnationē. dum ab eo qui uita ē.
se ipm auat. Diabolus hoc & deorsum ruen-
sorsum; peipnat. q; nimis ascendo p̄sūptis.
Et q; nullo ipellente cecidit. maxie & cum n̄
h̄ret uaciam ad casum peluem. de uero pec-
cati ei ēē. irremediabile censuit iustissimus
iudex. Non em̄ dign; uenia. qui ex pro-
pria ma-
lita tantū in se mittens man- se ipm perimit.
Associentur & supbia & inuidia. & in anis glā.
que hostem antiquū sollicitantur & uicium
ingratitude. & ambitio p̄sūptiosa. & p̄sūptō

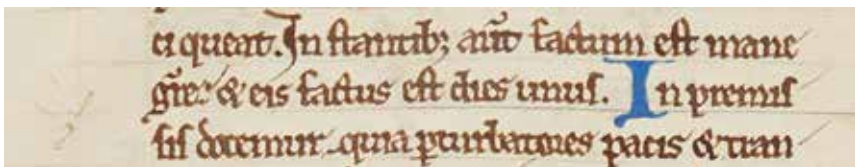
Quare
peccatum
uolens sit
irremedi-
abile.

Et eodem
capitolo.

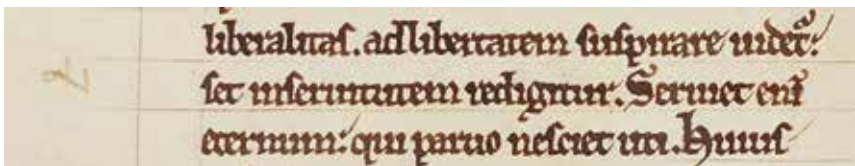
Fig. 4. An alternative set of marks for the opening of an excerpt, consisting of a horizontal line and 'n', Jesus College, MS 94, fol. 110v. These correspond to a passage of *Super Mulierem fortem* found in *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 6r.

Fig. 5(a). Geoffrey Brito's editorial mark corresponding to his addition of a chapter division in Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, Oxford, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 4v. Reproduced by kind permission of the College of St Mary Magdalen in the University of Oxford.

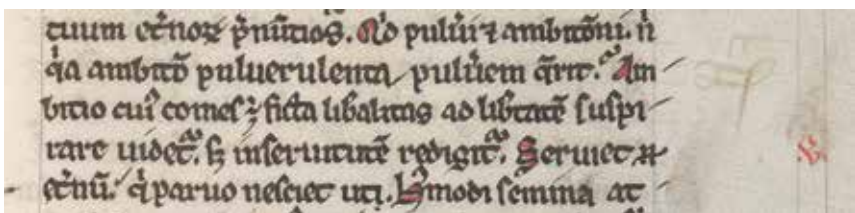
Fig. 5(b). The result of the added chapter division to the *De naturis rerum* excerpt in *Sol meldunensis*, CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 168r.



ci queat. In flammis; aut factum est mane
gie: & eis factus est dies unus. **I**n premis
sis docemur. quia perturbatores pacis & tran



liberalitas. ad libertatem suspirare uidet:
set infernitatem redigitur. Seruet eni
eternum: qui paruo nesciet uti. Huius



tuum et nos punitos. Ad puluim & ambitioni. n
ia ambato puluerulenta puluicem ante. Am
bitio cui comel: ficta liberalitas ad libertate suspi
rare uidet. s; infernitate redigitur. Seruet et
eternu. q; paruo nesciet uti. Huiusmodi semina at

Fig. 6. A second example of a division mark in Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 5v. This corresponds to *Sol meldunensis*, fol. 173v.

Fig. 7(a). Marginal annotation 'Versus', recognizing a quotation of Horace, *Epistulae*, i. 10. 41, in *De naturis rerum*, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 5v.

Fig. 7(b). Corresponding 'Versus' marker, written as both a guide and completed rubric, CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 174r.

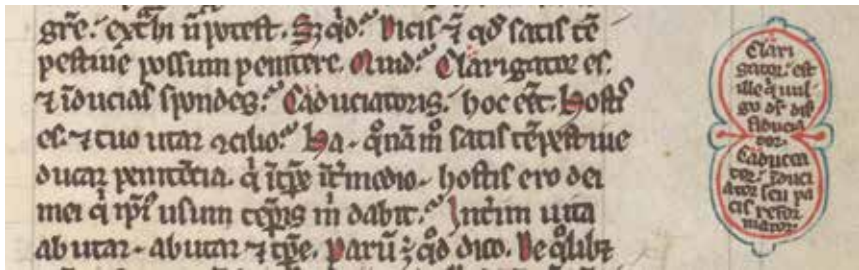
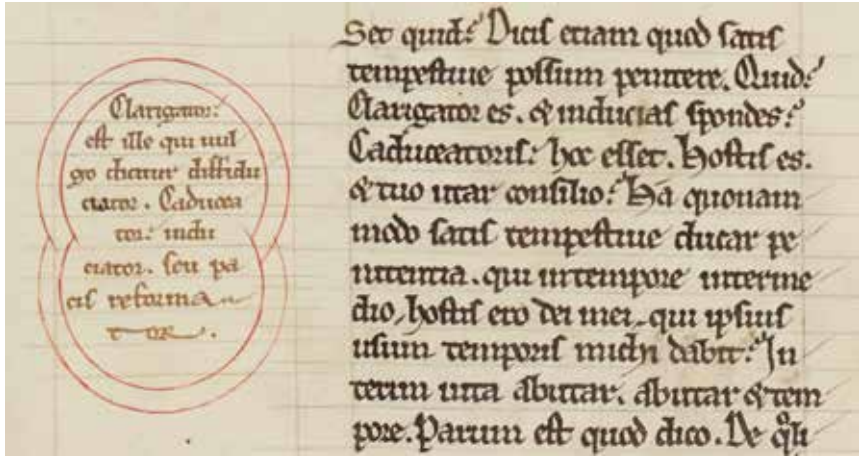


Fig. 8(a). Glosses on 'clarigato' and 'caduceator' in *De naturis rerum*, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 139, fol. 55v.

Fig. 8(b). Adaptation of the marginal gloss design, CUL, MS Gg.6.42, fol. 96r.