

Producing *Piers Plowman* to 1475:

Author, Scribe, and Reader



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Abstract

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My doctoral thesis, “Producing *Piers Plowman* to 1475: Author, Scribe, and Reader,” charts a new material history of William Langland’s fourteenth-century dream vision, *Piers Plowman*, from its earliest composition to the onset of print in England. The study is divided into three sections, which examine the production of *Piers* from three perspectives: textual history, manuscript circulation, and medieval reception. The first section of the thesis conducts a study of Langland’s revisionary process, presenting a new theory of authorial revision from the A to B version that has important implications for our understanding of authorship in *Piers Plowman* and for the future editing of the poem. The second section transitions into an examination of the early circulation of the *Piers* manuscripts in various geographical and social milieus. It examines two case studies of manuscript circulation in the Southwest Midlands and East Anglia, linking them to regionalized networks of scribes and patrons. Finally, Section III moves into a discussion of the literary contexts in which *Piers* circulates, particularly in multi-text manuscripts, examining how the poem’s reception by a medieval audience affected its development as a literary text. This section treats production from a more theoretical standpoint, investigating the relationship between the poem’s audience and the “production” of meaning in a social and historical context. As I will argue, each of these sections acts as an important frame of reference for understanding the

multifaceted formation of *Piers Plowman* as a literary text and cultural landmark. In particular, the thesis emphasizes the importance of *Piers*'s various contexts, from its textual genesis in the author's composition and revision to its circulation and reception in an unstable manuscript culture. It suggests that the people and the places that surrounded *Piers Plowman* in its early development fundamentally shaped the poem we have today.

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during this research, and for their continuing hospitality: Oxford, Bodleian Library and Cambridge University Library (as well as numerous college libraries in Oxford and Cambridge), the British Library, Society of Antiquaries Library, Pierpont Morgan Library, the Huntington Library, Leeds, Brotherton Library, and numerous other archives. I would also like to extend my thanks to all of my academic colleagues in the UK and abroad who have offered generous advice and support along the way. While there are too many to name here, all of you are much appreciated and made this research a pleasure to carry out. Finally, my most sincere appreciation goes to my parents, Alex and Carolyn Madrinkian, who have been my greatest support through this process, both financially and emotionally; without you none of this would be possible.

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Introduction

Medieval scholarship in the past several decades has seen a movement towards synthesizing the various aspects of material and literary research in order to gain a fuller picture of how late-medieval writing impacted and was impacted by the world around it.¹ Such contextualization of literary production in the later Middle Ages has led to efforts at both focusing and widening the methodological approaches to manuscript research in this period. In one sense, there has been greater emphasis placed on individual case studies of manuscript production and circulation within specific and definable contexts. In another sense, there has been an effort to use these narrower approaches to open up a wider picture of how late-medieval literature was composed, circulated, and read, and what implications these processes had for the cultural impact of a text or group of texts. This study will use these two complementary methodologies to examine one of the most popular and influential late-medieval vernacular texts in Britain, William Langland's monumental fourteenth-century dream vision, *Piers Plowman*.

¹ A good example of the growth and evolution of such manuscript research over the past thirty years is a series of conferences organized by Derek Pearsall, the essays from which were published in subsequent volumes: *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983); *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987); and *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies*, Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference, ed. Derek Pearsall (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000). This series was most recently continued at the University of Notre Dame and published as *New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies and Reading Practices: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, John J. Thompson, and Sarah Baechle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

Over the past century, *Piers Plowman* has featured as one of the most prominent fields of late-medieval codicological and textual research.² Based on its manuscript survival, *Piers Plowman* was one of the most prolifically copied literary texts in Middle English, with more than fifty extant manuscripts, and its material and textual record remains one of the most intriguing and confounding avenues for bibliographical research.³ By using a case study-based approach, it will seek to form a clearer picture of *Piers Plowman*'s literary and material production throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, proceeding from the poem's textual genesis up to the introduction of print to England in 1476.⁴ While the production of *Piers Plowman* inevitably continued after the onset of print, this study focuses its attention on the poem's manuscript circulation in the first century of its development, considering how this crucial period shaped the poem we read today. The study will investigate the poem's development from various perspectives, emphasizing, in particular,

² For some useful overviews of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts and their contexts see A. I. Doyle, "Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*," in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), pp. 35–48; Ralph Hanna, "Studies in the Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 7 (1993), 1–14; and Simon Horobin, "Manuscripts and Readers of *Piers Plowman*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 180–81.

³ For a complete list of manuscripts containing *Piers Plowman* see Appendix 1.

⁴ It should be noted that *Piers Plowman* does not itself appear in print until Robert Crowley's three editions of 1550. See Marie-Claire Uhart, "Robert Crowley's *Piers Plowman*," *Medium Aevum*, 55 (1986), 248–53; R. Carter Hailey, "Robert Crowley and the Editing of *Piers Plowman* (1550)," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 21 (2007), 143–70; and Larry Scanlon, "Langland, Apocalypse and the Early Modern Editor," in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, ed. David Matthews and Gordon McMullan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 51–73. Since this study is concerned with the poem's broader cultural impact, however, 1475 is an important transitional phase, after which manuscript copying in England begins to look forward to the sixteenth century. For more on *Piers*'s sixteenth-century circulation see Sarah Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The sixteenth-century copies of *Piers Plowman*, moreover, are decidedly early modern; the poem, in this period, is often read by Protestants as a prophetic reformist text and the manuscript witnesses are very much unlike those of the earlier century. See Wendy Scase, "*Dauy Dycars Dreame* and Robert Crowley's Prints of *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 221 (2007), 171–98, and John N. King, "Robert Crowley's Editions of 'Piers Plowman': A Tudor Apocalypse," *Modern Philology*, 73, (1976), 342–352.

the non-authorial influences on the poem, destabilizing the earlier, author-centric notions that have largely governed our understanding of *Piers Plowman*.

I. Producing *Piers Plowman*: The Social Evolution of a Text

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, *Piers Plowman* in many ways stretched beyond its function as a literary text to reach an extraordinary level of cultural penetration, both reflecting the current social temperature around it and providing an ideological and theological framework with timeless relevance. Yet the social reception of *Piers Plowman* was not only widespread and durable, it was also diverse. The kinds of responses and engagements with the poem throughout its medieval life (and continuing on in its post-medieval transmission) exhibit an extraordinary range of interests and interpretations on encountering the poem. An important overview of *Piers Plowman*'s social impact is David Benson's *Public Piers Plowman*, which explored the various ways in which *Piers* was produced for and received by a public audience.⁵ In defining his treatment of *Piers* as a "public" text, Benson writes,

I not only stress the role of others besides the poet (now as then) in its production and reception, but also show the relationship of the poem to various discourses and practices of its time and place. This is not to say that *Piers* merely reflects its cultural environment; it transforms what it finds in the public world of late medieval England into one of the most demanding poems of the fourteenth or any other century.⁶

It is this concept of "the role of others" that will be particularly relevant for this study of *Piers Plowman*'s production. While Benson was interested primarily in the literary and cultural factors in this public ethos, however, I will here turn to a closer examination of the

⁵ C. David Benson, *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

materiality that underlies the social making of the poem. As the manuscript witnesses to *Piers Plowman* suggest, the diversity of interest in the poem did not manifest solely at the level of literary interpretation. Rather, variance and diversity lie at the very heart of both the poem itself and its material transmission. In order to understand the social impact of the *Piers Plowman*, therefore, it is necessary to start from the beginning, from the foundations of its textual and material development.

This study seeks to build upon recent work in late-medieval manuscript scholarship that stresses the importance of using codicological and textual research to develop a larger picture of medieval literary production.⁷ Following this turn to contextualizing medieval literature, Ralph Hanna argues,

the ultimate goal of manuscript studies should be the composition of cultural histories. One only engages with the books to acquire the most direct surviving information about the literary situation in which medieval writing, both composition and transmission, occurred. Having grasped the production information provided by any given book or group of books, one turns to the text to discover related copies, to bring them into conjunction, and to analyse the results of that comparison. This allows one to begin a discussion of literary communities, authors, their audiences, and the later owners who continued the life of the book. The construction of textual histories is thus central to the move from bibliography to culture.⁸

Part of Hanna's proposed movement towards a cultural history of text involves a consideration of the various elements that influenced the evolution of a literary work from its origin to its later reception. A similar methodological movement in the past few decades has

⁷ As Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson argue, "the book is at the same time a material object and cultural phenomenon" ("Imagined Histories of the Book: Current Paradigms and Future Directions," in *Imagining the Book*, pp. 1–14 (p. 5)). Wendy Scase similarly notes, "the materiality of book production is always part of, and cannot be understood independently from, larger cultural processes and trends" ("Afterword: The Book in Culture," in *The Production of Books in England: 1350–1500*, ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 34–58). This focus is also found in a number of the essays in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁸ Ralph Hanna, "Analytical Survey 4: Middle English Manuscripts and the Study of Literature," in *New Medieval Literatures: IV*, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 243–64 (p. 255).

stressed the importance of decentralizing the author and canonical text and understanding the multifarious influences that governed a work's transmission. Jerome McGann argues for what he describes as “a socialized concept of authorship and textual authority,”⁹ which involves historicizing our treatment of textual criticism and expanding our understanding of authorship to include all of the influences upon the production of a text. In discussing the growth of such theories, Tim Machan suggests the need for developing a new methodology for examining the question of authority in Middle English texts. This new understanding of authority

would emerge from all the collective aspects of a work's *production, transmission and reception* [emphasis mine]: its sources and compilation, the number and chronological spread of its copies, the physical and lexical similarity or dissimilarity of these copies, and the intended social function (when recoverable) and actual social function of these copies. All these characteristics together suggest how and what a work meant to its medieval audience.¹⁰

This study will adopt this focus on “production, transmission and reception,” using these three perspectives to reexamine the cultural history and development of *Piers Plowman*. As the study will show, these three methods—here articulated as “Author, Scribe, and Reader”—are some of the most important and useful ways of approaching a manuscript corpus, especially one as complex as that of *Piers Plowman*. It will also stress the importance of bringing these multiple discourses together and breaking down the distinctions between them. As the study will show, the text, manuscripts, and reception of *Piers Plowman* cannot

⁹ Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 8. McGann further emphasizes “the dynamic social relations which always exist in literary production—the dialectic between the historically located individual author and the historically developing institutions of literary production” (p. 81). For a similar discussion of textual criticism, see Donald McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts: The Panizzi Lectures, 1985*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Tim Machan, “Middle English Text Production and Modern Textual Criticism,” *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. A. J. Minnis and Charlotte Brewer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 1–18 (p. 13).

be understood as independent categories, but rather must be seen as mutually dependent elements of a bigger picture. In order to accomplish the cultural move that Hanna describes, therefore, all of these aspects of medieval literary culture—the creator of the text, the producer of the text, and the consumer of the text—must be considered together as one narrative of production in the Middle Ages.

While Machan's first category of "production" might be more accurately called "composition" in the present context, that is, the actual authorial creation of the poem's text, the term is here adopted in a slightly broader sense to encompass all three categories, theorizing that the "production" of a poem is constituted by the action of various individuals who affected the poem in diverse ways throughout its historical development. Following the division of author, scribe, and reader, the thesis is thus divided into three sections, which examine the "production" of *Piers* through three methodological perspectives: textual history, manuscript circulation, and medieval reception. In this way, the study seeks to provide a clearer picture of the multifaceted formation of *Piers Plowman* as a literary text and cultural landmark in the later Middle Ages.

II. Methods for Approaching the *Piers* Manuscript Corpus

Approaching a corpus of manuscripts as complex and varied as that of *Piers Plowman* is no simple task and certainly not an untrodden area of scholarship. Despite the large body of work on the *Piers* manuscripts, a surprising amount of research remained (and still remains) to be done. As noted above, the five chapters that follow will comprise case studies, each of which addresses an area of *Piers Plowman* manuscript scholarship that has received little or no attention. As it will be argued, each of these case studies also offers some insight into the

larger patterns of *Piers*'s circulation in late-medieval England and contributes to a holistic understanding of the poem's evolution throughout the Middle Ages.

The first section of the study, which comprises one extended chapter, begins by examining the authorial perspective in the construction of *Piers Plowman*'s cultural history, re-examining William Langland's revisionary process from the A to B version of *Piers Plowman*. The revisionary history of *Piers Plowman* has been one of the most prominent and heavily debated areas of medieval textual criticism over the past century.¹¹ Many of the debates over how the text should best be presented and how to reach an accurate version of what the author actually wrote must ultimately remain speculative. This study, however, seeks to marry these theoretical considerations of the poem's text with the more tangible material history of the poem's transmission and reception, developing a more fully integrated understanding of how this famously complex textual tradition fits with the material contexts of its production.

One of the primary issues that will be dealt with in this study's treatment of *Piers Plowman*'s textual history is the problem of textual authority, with particular consideration of the author-scribe relationship. The chapter argues that scribal error had a much greater part to play in the authorial revisions than we have previously acknowledged, a theory which has important implications for how we understand the authorial text of the poem. A growing

¹¹ For a detailed account of the history of *Piers Plowman* editing see Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The most significant contributions by far to the textual criticism on the poem are the famous the Athlone editions, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, ed. George Kane (London: Athlone Press, 1960); *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1975); *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, ed. George Russell and George Kane (London: Athlone Press, 1999). Other important work later in the century includes A. V. C. Schmidt's parallel text edition, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z versions*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt, Vol. II (London: Longman, 1995), and A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer's controversial edition of the "Z text," *Piers Plowman: The Z Version*, ed. A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1983).

school of thought has problematized the relationship between author and scribe.¹² In the unstable textual culture of late-medieval Britain, scribes greatly impacted the texts they encountered, both accidentally and deliberately. This has important implications for the readership of medieval texts; regardless of what the author wrote, the scribal copy is what would have actually been read in the Middle Ages.¹³ The modern textual critic, therefore, is faced with the difficult task of evaluating where authorship lies between original and scribal readings. Should the scribe be seen as corrupting the original text, as the classical model would have it, or should they be granted some level of textual authority?¹⁴ The chapter seeks to problematize some modern editorial efforts at establishing the authorial text of *Piers Plowman*, suggesting that such post-Victorian preoccupations with canonical authority may misrepresent the realities of scribal transmission in this period, and, particularly, Langland's unique style of composition and revision.

Following the destabilization of authorship proposed by McGann and others, this section will thus explore the “socialization” of authorial composition, questioning what role scribal error plays in the construction of an authorial text. As we know from the exhaustive work of George Kane and other editors, the poem, in all of its versions, is ubiquitously

¹² Tim Machan notes “the potential tenuousness of the author-scribe distinction” (“Middle English Text Production,” p. 5).

¹³ For more on scribal involvement with text see Derek Pearsall, “Editing Medieval Texts,” in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome McGann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 92–106.

¹⁴ As it has been previously observed, the editor, in making choices between the available variants or reconstructing authorial text, has the power to profoundly impact the reader's encounter with a medieval literary work, and thus, ultimately, to shape the meaning of the text. For more on this see N. F. Blake, *The English Language in Medieval Literature* (London: Methuen, 1979), pp. 55–79. In seeking the “authorial” text, the modern editor has the difficult task of determining the authorial intention within the readings available in extant manuscripts, and, at times, constructing a lost authorial reading. For more on the difficulties of identifying authorial intention in editing see G. Thomas Tanselle, “The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention,” in *Studies in Bibliography*, 29 (1976), 167–211 and Tim Machan, “Scribal Role, Authorial Intention, and Chaucer's *Boece*,” *Chaucer Review*, 24 (1989), 52–64.

permeated by variant and competing readings.¹⁵ In problematizing the effort to separate these readings, the section thus seeks to destabilize the often-anachronistic division of authorial and scribal agency and to further investigate ways of dealing with this problematic area in an editorial capacity. Section I thus presents an important perspective on the history of *Piers Plowman*'s production, highlighting the diversity of influences that impacted the poem's textual genesis and the frequent impossibility of separating error from authority.¹⁶ Chapter 1, however, moves beyond these more conventional understandings of scribal agency to suggest that the variabilities of the copying process are, in some cases, indistinguishable from the author's compositional work. The chapter posits a new theory of authorial revision, suggesting that Langland may have sometimes allowed scribal error to pervade his revisions of the B version. This fundamental problematizing of text and authorial composition offers a new and important way of understanding the role of scribes in late-medieval literary transmission, and further problematizes the distinction between the author and the copyist.

Following the first section's discussion of scribal influences on *Piers*'s authorial composition, the second section transitions into an examination of the early circulation of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts in various geographical and social milieux. It stresses, in particular, the importance of regional distribution for *Piers*'s early transmission, offering two case studies of evident geographical groupings in the Southwest Midlands and East Anglia. The aim of this section is to uncover how *Piers Plowman* circulated in various geographical

¹⁵ As Derek Pearsall points out, "behind every text presented in a modern edition, with all the reassuring apparatus of titles and text divisions, capital letters and full tops, paragraphs and line numbers, there lies the spoil heap of the manuscripts from which it has been drawn" ("Texts, Textual Criticism, and Fifteenth Century Manuscript Production," in *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984), pp. 121–136 (p. 121)).

¹⁶ David Benson holds a similar view regarding the authorial agency of *Piers Plowman* scribes, pointing to their instances of independent composition, compilation, and annotation (*Public Piers Plowman*, p. 69).

and social environments, arguing that the poem was largely transmitted within discrete reading communities and definable networks of production in the provinces.¹⁷ The section will build upon a recent movement in late-medieval scholarship that has been termed “manuscript geography,” which investigates where and by whom late-medieval English literature was being circulated, situating manuscripts within the social and cultural environments that shaped their production.¹⁸

One of the primary focuses of this section will be the dialectal affiliations of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts. The study of dialect is one of the most important methods of localizing medieval texts, and has grown considerably as a field since the introduction of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)*.¹⁹ Dialectal analysis presents one of the

¹⁷ For similar geographically specific case studies of manuscript production see Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and “Some North Yorkshire Scribes and Their Context,” in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 167–91; John B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); and Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988).

¹⁸ One of the most important contributions to this focus on “manuscript geography” has been the recent collection of essays, *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the West Midlands From the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). For another important collection in this area see *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of ‘A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English’*, ed. Felicity Riddy, York Manuscripts Conferences Proceedings Series, 2 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991). Much of this trend in current scholarship is based on the earlier work of Elizabeth Salter (see “Mappings,” in *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 52–85 and *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)). Also see Richard Beadle, “Middle English Texts and Their Transmission, 1350–1500: Some Geographical Criteria,” in *Speaking in Our Tongues: Proceedings of a Colloquium on Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines*, ed. Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 52–92 and David Lawton, “Mapping Performance,” in *New Medieval Literatures*, Vol. 6, ed. David Lawton, Rita Copeland, and Wendy Scase (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 1–9.

¹⁹ *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin (New York: Aberdeen University Press, 1986).

most useful, but also one of the most problematic methods for manuscript geography.²⁰ *LALME*'s dot maps, which present each linguistic profile as a point on a map, can often lead to a conflation in manuscript studies between dialect and provenance. The problem, of course, with using dialect for localizing the production of manuscripts is scribal mobility. As the editors of *LALME* acknowledge, the dialect in a text can only tell us about a scribe's native dialect, or that of his exemplar, in the case of *literatim* copying. There is no guarantee that any scribe was copying a text in exactly the same region where he grew up and learned his trade; a Midlands-born scribe may, of course, have been copying a manuscript in London. Dialect studies must also take into account the inherent problems of dialect localization itself. Assigning a manuscript one point on a map is often to neglect the vast dialectal complexity implicit in each Middle English manuscript, and the relict dialectal layers that comprise each text. Presumably, each scribe that copied the text at each stage of its textual life had a different kind of engagement with the dialect, and thus, a manuscript could, theoretically, preserve a fragmentary glimpse into the dialect of every scribe that has copied in that textual line since the holograph. The dialectologist, therefore, must be able to unpick a complex jumble of received dialects mixing with the present scribe's native forms.²¹ The scribal

²⁰ Angus McIntosh defined three different ways in which dialect can be transmitted through scribal copying (Types A, B, and C). As McIntosh defines it, a scribe may copy a text in one of three ways: "A. He may leave it more or less unchanged ...; B. He may convert it into his own kind of language...; C. He may do some something somewhere between A and B" ("Word Geography and the Lexicography of Mediaeval English," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 211 (1973), 55–66, rpt. *Middle English Dialectology*, ed. Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels, Margaret Laing (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), pp. 86–97 (p. 92). The evidence of the extant Middle English corpus largely seems to suggest that most texts fall somewhere under what Angus McIntosh calls Type C copying, in which a scribe preserves some of the original spellings and translates some into his own language, leaving a dialectally mixed text. Also see M. L. Samuels, "Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology," *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 81–94.

²¹ It is also important to remember that a scribe is not necessarily constrained to one system of spelling, and thus, dialectal analyses must take orthographical variation into account; see Simon

dialect layers in a text must, therefore, be used as a frame of reference when considering other contextual factors, such as other texts copied by the same scribe, networks of textual affiliation, or available historical or codicological evidence.

As Section II will argue, the mapping of textual production and transmission through dialectal and codicological analyses does not simply involve pinpointing where a manuscript was copied, but rather, understanding how texts interact with one another within a regional space; geographical studies must seek to understand movement rather than stasis.²² As Simon Horobin observes, “manuscript geography becomes less a study of texts within a single geographical locale and more a mapping of networks of relationships between manuscripts.”²³ And to determine these relationships we must consider a manuscript’s dialect alongside extratextual evidence, which can, as Ralph Hanna notes, “anchor a book in time and space and allow some insight into the tastes and predilections of a specific textual community.”²⁴ In order to understand the interactions between medieval reading communities, therefore, we must understand how scribes were interacting with their texts and with each other. Through this discussion, the study will examine the ways in which medieval bibliographers may identify and deal with scribal collaboration and interconnected modes of production, charting a narrative of a text’s manuscript life. Scribal collaboration, moreover,

Horobin’s discussion of scribes’ active and passive repertoires of dialect (“Mapping the Words,” in *The Production of Books in England*, ed. Gillespie and Wakelin, pp. 59–78 (p. 64)).

²² Simon Horobin and Jeremy Smith similarly discuss the interchange between London and the West Midlands, suggesting, “Such interchange between metropolis and—most probably—province correlates rather well with the picture of scribal mobility and networking” (“The Language of the Vernon Manuscript,” in *A Facsimile Edition of the Vernon Manuscript: Oxford Bodleian Library MS. Eng. Poet. A. 1*, CD-ROM, ed. Wendy Scase (Oxford: Bodleian Digital Texts 3, 2011).

²³ Horobin, “Mapping the Words,” p. 68.

²⁴ Ralph Hanna, “Middle English Books and Middle English Literary History,” *Modern Philology*, 102 (2005), 157–78 (p. 170).

does not necessarily involve direct interaction or work within the same manuscript, but can be formed through amorphous lines of affiliation.

The second section develops the ideas of authorship discussed in Section I, arguing that the careful editorial work carried out in these scribal coterie demonstrates the continuation of post-authorial scribal agency on the production of the text. The study of regional circulation also offers new insight into the patronage of *Piers Plowman*, particularly its connection to the powerful Despenser family, a theory that has been postulated for decades, but never proven. This connection also sheds new light on the author, William Langland, and provides a fresh perspective on the hotly debated question of his familial associations.²⁵ Through these two case studies of manuscript circulation, therefore, the section gives a second perspective on *Piers Plowman*'s production history, showing the ways in which networks are formed within discrete regional environments in the provinces. Just as scribal activity was fundamental to the poem's textual production, so were the contexts and motivations of scribes and book producers integral to the earliest material production of the poem and the early popularization of the text.

Section III moves into a discussion of the literary contexts in which *Piers Plowman* circulates, examining how the poem's reception by a medieval audience affected its development as a literary text. This section treats production from a more theoretical standpoint, investigating the relationship between the poem's audience and the "production" of meaning in a social and historical context. In particular, this section will focus on the

²⁵ See Robert Adams, *Langland and the Rokele Family: The Gentry Background of Piers Plowman* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013).

twenty multi-text manuscripts that include *Piers Plowman* alongside other works,²⁶ building in particular upon the work of Anne Middleton on *Piers*'s reception.²⁷ The section seeks to extend the contextual research on manuscript production in Section II to examine the literary networks inherent to manuscript geography, and how the interaction of texts—like historical and social collaboration—can affect the presentation and reception of a work like *Piers Plowman*. The section returns to many of the issues raised in Section II, suggesting that literary reception must be understood through this lens of regionality and literary networks. While the problematic category of reception is very often approached as an abstract literary phenomenon, in reality, reception must be understood through the movement and interaction of texts in a literary and cultural community.

In considering the multi-text manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* this section will also weigh in on the problematic and contentious issue of miscellaneity in late-medieval manuscripts, suggesting new and more productive ways of understanding their potential for elucidating medieval literary reception. In order to understand how *Piers Plowman* was received in miscellaneous manuscripts, as the section will demonstrate, we must first understand what a miscellany is and how it functions. Scholars are largely divided on how to deal with manuscript miscellanies and what use these collections of texts are to the medieval

²⁶ There are nineteen manuscripts in the *Piers Plowman* textual tradition (A, B, and C-texts) that contain *Piers Plowman* alongside other works: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 323; BodL, Eng. Poet. a.1. (The Vernon Manuscript); BodL, Laud Misc. 656; BodL, Digby 102; BodL, Bodley 851. London, Lincoln's Inn Hale, MS 150; Society of Antiquaries, MS 687; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 818; Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ff. 5. 35; CUL, Dd 1.17 (The *Liber Glastoniensis*); CUL, Ll.4.14; Trinity College, B.15.17; London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.XI; BL, Cotton Vespasian B.XVI; BL, Harley 3954; University of London, Sterling v. 17 (The Clopton Manuscript); Dublin, Trinity College, MS 213; San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 114; Huntington Hm 128.

²⁷ Anne Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1982), pp. 101–123.

bibliographer and literary critic. Most divisive in this debate has been the theory that manuscript collections can display unity and intention behind the collocation of various texts. A number of scholars have argued that certain manuscripts should be considered as “anthologies,” that is, deliberately organized or cohesive codices, rather than randomly arranged “miscellanies” (though there is still no critical consensus as to the exact definition of these terms).²⁸ In the pursuit of such relationships between texts in various miscellanies, there have been numerous attempts to find literary harmony between items in miscellaneous codices and to show the ways in which scribes demonstrated sophisticated literary critical attitudes in their compilation of these manuscripts. Yet many have been critical of this desire to find order and unity in medieval collections of texts. As Derek Pearsall argues, “The necessities of production, the pressures of circumstance, the paucity of exemplars, as well as other factors, combined to make the work of compilation more random and inconsistent than many modern interpreters are happy to allow.”²⁹ The debate over the miscellany is thus largely split into two opposing camps with strong proponents on either side, which has caused scholarship on the multi-text manuscript to be largely unproductive. Some scholars, however, have advocated for a more moderate approach to the miscellany, seeing its

²⁸ The most notable proponents of for the idea of the anthology are Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel in the introduction to their collection of essays, *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). A similar argument for “anthologistic” compilation was made in a more recent volume, *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: The Shaping of English Vernacular Narrative*, ed. Kimberly K. Bell and Julie Nelson Couch (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Another manuscript often discussed as an anthology is London, British Library, Harley MS 2253. See John Scahill, “Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature,” *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 18–32 (pp. 31–32). An earlier discussion of the miscellany/anthology question in this manuscript can be found in Theo Stemmler, “Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts: MS Harley 2253, for Example,” *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 39 (1991), 231–37.

²⁹ Derek Pearsall, “The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and Their Modern Interpreters,” in *Imagining the Book*, pp. 17–29 (p. 29).

formation as an accretion of texts, which must be assessed according to the contextual influences that governed its formation.³⁰ Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu's recent volume of essays makes a good effort at finding a new method for discussing multi-text manuscripts, though it still frequently slips into the old debates.³¹ Regardless of where one falls on this issue, however, the fact remains that miscellaneous manuscripts were an extremely common form of medieval codex, and manuscript scholarship thus needs a more productive and less ideological way of discussing them. By thinking about such codices in a more neutral way and eliminating speculation about the intentionality of the scribe, we can find much more interesting and productive ways of addressing the question of the miscellany.³²

Building upon the study of regional circulation in Section II, the third section uncovers the literary works that surrounded *Piers* in these varied environments. The miscellany is particularly useful for establishing such literary networks. As a collection of various texts the miscellany demonstrates its connection to multiple literary and cultural discourses, regardless of whether or not that compilation was intentional. The section is again divided into two chapters, which examine *Piers*'s circulation with didactic works and popular

³⁰ Perhaps the most productively reasonable approach is taken Ralph Hanna, who notes a "rough unity" to the texts in Winchester College, MS 33, which implies a sense of organization on the part of the scribe, though he also stresses the importance of flexibility in the compilation of such miscellanies ("Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," in *The Whole Book*, ed. Nichols and Wenzel, pp. 37–38).

³¹ *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Also see my forthcoming review of this collection in the *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 31 (2017).

³² Jason O'Rourke has advocated the use of the term "collections," a term which "describes one basic undeniable organizing principle behind the compilation of manuscripts... without carrying the baggage that the terms 'anthology' and 'miscellany' have picked up on their recent travels" ("Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and his 'Organizing Principles,'" in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 45–60 (p. 60)).

literary fiction. These two chapters also explore two different ways in which the poem's literary reception manifests itself in late-medieval England. The first study returns to the East Anglian reading community discussed in Chapter 3 and examines the poem's common arrangement in this area in pastoral miscellanies, suggesting that the poem's literary reception in this reading circle was shaped to meet the tastes and necessities of its audience. The chapter thus explores the ways in which reception can reflect its social influences and the practical necessities of a local market. The second chapter in this section, however, moves the discussion of reception beyond the regional, discussing the poem's broader reception across the country. It argues that *Piers*'s textual affiliations evidence a very specific generic association that seems to have been attached to it, which connects the poem with a tradition of historical and biblical romance literature that explores the place of the contemporary Church within a trajectory of salvation history and navigates its relationship to cultural and religious alterity.

Through these three perspectives on *Piers Plowman*'s material and social history, therefore, this study revisits a wide range of material and synthesizes it into a new narrative of how *Piers Plowman* was produced throughout its early history. Its five chapters offer a range of insights into *Piers*'s social production, demonstrating the diversity of influences in its medieval composition, transmission, and reception that shaped the poem we have today. What is particularly important is the mutuality of influence; the poem both impacts and is impacted by the people around it. What we perhaps see more clearly, then, is the organic and fluid nature of *Piers Plowman*'s social development. Rather than considering *Piers* as a standalone work of canonical greatness, we must look to the various influences upon it to

understand its development. From its literary presentation to the author's own revisions, the poem's evolution is shaped by the people and the places that surrounded it.

Section I

Textual History and Authorial Revision

Chapter 1

The Influence of Error: Reconsidering the Early Revision of *Piers Plowman*

The circumstances that surrounded *Piers Plowman*'s revision into multiple versions have been the subject of a great deal of debate, to which the most significant contributions by far have been the monumental Athlone editions of the poem.¹ These landmarks of textual criticism, however, also introduced a number of textual problems, which still resonate in present scholarship, having raised a number of questions about the role of the editor in discovering and presenting an accurate authorial text. This study will revisit the Athlone editors' theories of authorial revision in *Piers*, suggesting that our prevailing conceptions of Langland's compositional method are inadequate to explain the textual evidence preserved in the poem's surviving manuscripts, and will propose an alternative theory about the way in which Langland revised his poem.

George Kane endeavored to produce the first scholarly edition of *Piers Plowman*, taking into account the full variorum of the manuscript witnesses to the A text. Kane's edition of A was the most comprehensive and authoritative edition yet, and was received with resounding praise. In his expansive introduction, Kane was largely critical of Knott and Fowler's earlier assessment of the manuscripts' genetic relationships,² not only finding a great deal of fault with their stemma, but also disagreeing with the idea that a recensionist

¹ Kane, ed., *A Version*; Kane-Donaldson, ed., *B Version*, Russell-Kane, ed., *C Version*. For a history of editing the poem see Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman*.

² Thomas A. Knott and David C. Fowler, *Piers the Plowman: A Critical Edition of the A-Version* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1952).

analysis of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts was possible at all.³ Kane instead adopted an eclectic approach to editing the text, outlining a list of common habits of scribal variation in the introduction, which he used as a guide to determining each individual reading.⁴ He thus argues in the edition that scribes generally comprehended the text they were copying on a line-by-line basis without a sense of the text as a whole. In this way, they would unsystematically err in their copying of texts, but do so within certain predictable patterns of error. These patterns, moreover, brought scribes to err in similar ways, producing what is known as “convergent variation,” the coincidental agreement of scribes making the same mistakes independently of one other. This principle would come to underlie much of the Athlone editorial procedures, and gave a convenient way of explaining the numerous seemingly inexplicable agreements between various unrelated manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*.

Kane saw these scribal processes as a reliable way of determining the originality of the poem’s readings. In deciding between two alternative lections, a knowledge of scribal habits of substitution allowed Kane to identify the direction of the readings’ descent, and thus, identify the authorial (or at least more authorial) reading.⁵ A scribal reading, it is assumed, should always be explainable in some way, being derived from an authorial lection.

Implicit in this editorial system is the principle of the *difficilior lectio*, which holds that the

³ Kane argues that “any ‘family tree’ of these manuscripts, or any description of their agreements in variation less detailed than a line-by-line account is grossly oversimplified and useless for purposes of recension” (*A Version*, p. 55).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149. Robert Adams has pointed out that while Kane criticizes Knott-Fowler’s formulaic approach, ironically, his eclectic use of scribal habits is similarly formulaic and lacks an appreciation of the realities of scribal variation (“Editing *Piers Plowman B*: The Imperative of an Intermittently Critical Edition,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 45 (1992), 31–68 (p. 41, n. 14). Kane also adheres to the notion that the majority attestation should be treated as evidence of a lection’s originality, though he still regards his analysis of scribal habits as most reliable (Cf. Charlotte Brewer, “The Textual Principles of Kane’s A Text,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 3 (1989), 67–90 (pp. 74–75).

more difficult of two lections is more likely to represent the original reading.⁶ The more difficult lection, moreover, should ultimately be able to explain the existence of the subsequent readings, which in theory would have arisen as a result of various factors, such as scribal misunderstanding of the original reading, attempts to simplify a difficult term, or simple mechanical error.⁷

One of the most perplexing methodological choices Kane employed in his edition of A was his rejection of interversional comparison in the editing of A. That is, he believed that the B and C texts of the poem should not be used as a guide to determining the originality of a reading, and thus edited A without reference to either of the two longer versions.⁸ This was in contrast to the view of Chambers and Grattan, who believed that the B text would have to

⁶ The *difficilior lectio* principle is fundamental to classical textual criticism and the Lachmannian method (See E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the Age of the Printed Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 21–74. This principle was also expounded in B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), an edition which had a great deal of influence on the Athlone editors (cf. Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman*, p. 211). This kind of error happens very frequently throughout the three versions of *Piers Plowman*. As an example of this process, we may take the witness of A X.202: “For in vntyme trowelicche betwyn man & womman.” The difficult reading *vntyme* in this line is misconstrued in various ways: *vntyme*] VJK; no *tyme* WH³; *non tyme* M; *my tyme* TRUChH²; *tyme* D. The diversity of easier readings that are attested in the manuscript witnesses suggests that different scribes were dealing with this challenging reading in different ways.

⁷ While Kane’s analysis of scribal variation has been extremely influential, it has been critiqued by Charlotte Brewer (see “Authorial Vs. Scribal Writing in *Piers Plowman*,” in *Medieval Literature: Texts and Interpretation*, ed. Tim William Machan (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), pp. 59–89; “Textual Principles of Kane’s A Text”; and “George Kane’s Processes of Revision,” in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. Minnis and Brewer, pp. 71–96). Brewer largely took issue with Kane’s strict adherence to the principle of the *difficilior lectio*, suggesting that many of the traits he defines as characteristically scribal, particularly that of increased emphasis or improving clarity, may in fact be authorial revisions, even if they do make the text appear “poorer” in a literary sense.

⁸ Kane does concede that B and C readings can sometimes be a useful guide “when most or all of the A variants for a passage are unsatisfactory in a way which casts doubt on their originality, and when, at the same time, the reading of another version could easily and naturally have given rise to the A variants if it had been the original of A as well” (*A Version*, p. 157).

be established before the A text was edited.⁹ While Kane's approach seemed reasonable enough for the purposes of editing A, it would come to be one of the most problematic issues of the Athlone project as a whole, a decision that would cause numerous problems for the subsequent editions of B and C. Regardless of some of its underlying logical issues, Kane's A text was met with overwhelming approval upon its release, not least because of the tremendous fortitude required for such a momentous editorial achievement.¹⁰

Undoubtedly the most controversial of the Athlone editions, however, was George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson's *B Version*, released fifteen years later, which adopted a notoriously bold editorial approach. To isolate authorial readings Kane-Donaldson relied generally on the principles that had been set out by Kane in his edition of A, rejecting recension and employing an eclectic method based on established scribal habits of substitution.¹¹ As the B witnesses showed, there was much less variation in the B tradition than in A, which meant that the editors were seldom challenged to find the archetypal reading. The problem, however, was that the archetypal text of B often differed drastically from the A and C texts. The editors concluded that every instance in which the B reading differed from AC was attributable to scribal error, and thus, that the archetype of all extant B manuscripts (Bx) was heavily corrupted from the original B version (or ur-B, as it is commonly known). To identify the archetypal reading, therefore, was not necessarily to

⁹ Chambers, R. W. and J. H. G. Grattan, "The Text of 'Piers Plowman'," *The Modern Language Review*, 26 (1931), pp. 1–51 (pp. 1–2).

¹⁰ E.g., Morton Bloomfield, "Review of George Kane, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*," *Speculum*, 36 (1961), 133–37 and J. A. W. Bennett, Review of George Kane, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, *Review of English Studies*, 14 (1963), 68–71.

¹¹ Robert Adams has observed some of the limitations of this method, showing the ways in which eclectic editing can be misleading ("Editing and the Limitations of the *Durior Lectio*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 5 (1991), 7–15). Charlotte Brewer has also argued that the editorial principle of the *difficilior lectio* is not necessarily true in every case, as authors could sometimes err in their revisions (see "Authorial Vs. Scribal Writing" and "The Textual Principles of Kane's A Text," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 3 (1989), 67–90).

discover the authorial lection. In seeking to reach the original B text that lay behind this corrupt archetype, Kane-Donaldson chose to excise the archetypal B readings they deemed to be corrupt.¹² Unwilling to undermine Kane's A text, the editors determined erroneous readings in B by comparing them to Kane's edited text of A, which had itself been deliberately edited without reference to B, creating a widely-critiqued circularity of reasoning.¹³

In using the A and C versions as guides for determining the ur-B reading, the editors replaced numerous archetypal B lections with readings that were minimally attested or even unattested in the B tradition. Kane-Donaldson also commonly use the witness of F (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201) for their edited text, as F often carries the same reading as Ax and thus supported Kane's *A Version*. The B text in F, however, is known to have been heavily contaminated by A at some point in its textual history, a fact of which Kane and Donaldson were well aware.¹⁴ To use F's contaminated agreement with A as evidence of

¹² The editors relied on an assumption of Langland's unimpeachable authority known as the "postulate of excellence" (see George Kane, "'Good' and 'Bad' Manuscripts," in *Chaucer and Langland: Historical and Textual Approaches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 210–11).

¹³ This constituted a major methodological shift from the *A Version*, where Kane had argued demonstrably held that interversional comparison should not be used in the editing of *Piers Plowman*. In defense of this change, Kane-Donaldson cite a footnote from Kane's A text, in which he admits the potential necessity of comparing the three versions (Kane-Donaldson, p. 139, n. 1). This interversional editing had been earlier supported by Chambers and Grattan, who believed that the B text would have to be established before the A text was edited (R. W. Chambers and J. H. G. Grattan, "The Text of 'Piers Plowman'," *Modern Language Review*, 26 (1931), 17–18 (pp. 1–2)).

¹⁴ Schmidt, *Parallel-Text*, II, p. 275. Adams notes that Kane and Donaldson "invoke the authority of F in 67 different instances where an A reading agrees with it, but in cases where there is no corresponding A line (that is, over nearly 70% of B's text!), they use it only 31 times to displace the common B reading" ("Editing *Piers Plowman B*," p. 51). F, along with its textual companion R, represents the alpha strand of B, a fact that was first demonstrated in E. Talbot Donaldson, "MSS R and F in the B-Tradition of 'Piers Plowman,'" *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 39 (1955), 177–212, and explored in greater detail by Kane-Donaldson. For an overview of the various theories surrounding RF see Robert Adams, "The R/F MSS of *Piers Plowman* and the Pattern of Alpha/Beta Complementary Omissions: Implications for Critical Editing," *Text*, 14 (2002), 109–137.

originality in the B version, therefore, is unavoidably circular. This means that, in certain instances, Kane-Donaldson replaced readings found in every manuscript of B with A-type readings *not attested anywhere in the B tradition*, which unsurprisingly raised a number of editorial problems.¹⁵ As this study will argue, by introducing such foreign readings into their B text, the editors obscured the actual relationship between A and B versions and ultimately, the revisionary processes that lay behind their composition.

I. A Textual Crux: Data and Findings

Within the perplexing jumble of variants that Kane-Donaldson left behind, a rather puzzling textual correspondence occurs between the A and B versions. Among the readings that Kane deemed to be scribal, and thus edited out of his A text, there are numerous readings that agree with lections in Bx that were similarly edited out by Kane-Donaldson. As an example of this agreement, we may consider A VIII.36, which, in Kane's text, reads, "And I shal sende myself seynt Michel myn aungel." This line is paralleled in B VII.34, which, in Kane-Donaldson's text, reads, "And I shal sende myselue Seint Michel myn angel." In the edited texts, then, these lines read exactly the same, and to the casual reader, there would seem to be no issue. Where the edited A text line reads "sende myself," however, manuscripts HKWMH³ have the alternative reading "sende 3ow myself." This variant, coincidentally, is also present in all of the extant B-text manuscripts except for F, which uses the Ax reading. Kane-Donaldson, however, choose to use F for their B reading against all other extant

¹⁵ According to Robert Adams's estimation, Kane and Donaldson replace nearly 700 B-text readings with lections from A or C, of which, he suggests, "considerably fewer than half can safely be presumed to attest to archetypal B corruption" ("Editing *Piers Plowman B*, p. 39). Similarly, David Fowler notes that Kane-Donaldson emend B with much greater frequency in the portions of text where B shares lines with A, indicating that the comparison with the A text falsely weighted their editorial method (Fowler, "A New Edition of the B text," p. 25).

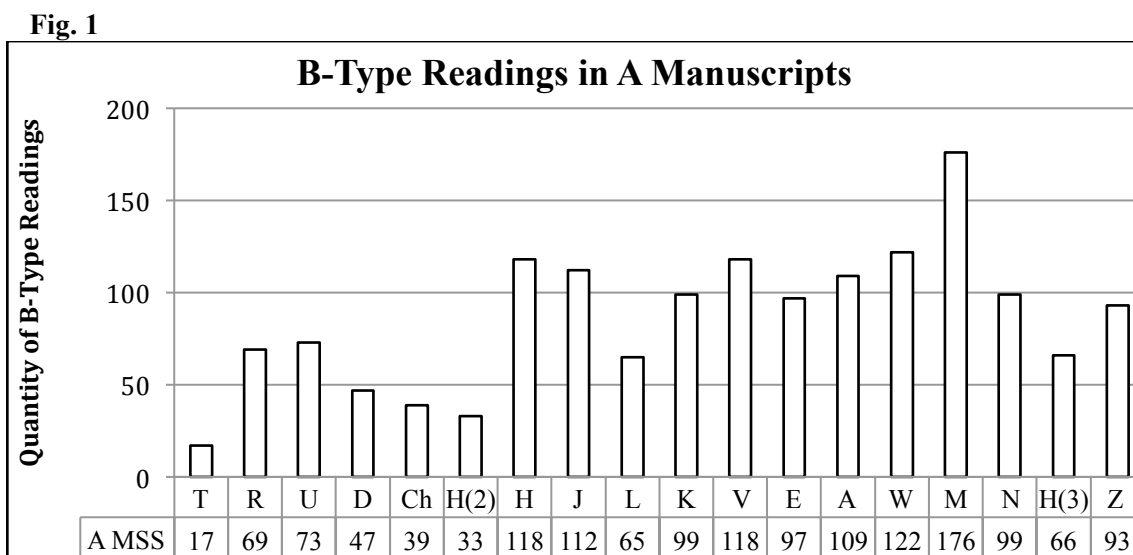
manuscripts simply because it supported Kane's original choice in A. This poses a major problem, of course, since an ancestor of F, as it was noted above, was at some point corrupted by the A version. Thus, Kane-Donaldson's decision to import Ax readings into the B version, often without any brackets in the text to indicate their substitution, means that the correspondence of minority A readings with the B text is largely obscured throughout the Athlone editions. Although this correspondence is recoverable from their extensive apparatus, it requires a laborious comparison of the two editions' textual notes. While it is apparent that Kane and Donaldson are aware of these agreements between minority A manuscripts and Bx, the editors never provide a definitive list of their appearance, instead writing them off as the result of convergent variation. A list of these (A)B agreements was, however, compiled by Charlotte Brewer in her 1986 Oxford D.Phil. on the postulated "Z text," which will be discussed further below.¹⁶ Since, for Brewer, the list pertained only to her theories about the Z text, the list of (A)B agreements only extends until A VIII.12, where Z leaves off; and thus, the list cannot allow a full quantitative analysis.

This study seeks to fill in the gaps, so to speak, so that the full body of (A)B agreements may be analyzed. The study revealed a total of 362 (A)B agreements throughout the eleven passūs of the A version.¹⁷ In the list of (A)B agreements, B-type readings are

¹⁶ Charlotte Brewer, "Some Implications of the Z-Text for the Textual Tradition of *Piers Plowman*," (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1986), pp. 93–168.

¹⁷ This number accounts only for agreements that are attested in two or more manuscripts of A, though there are 73 additional agreements present in single texts. In addition to the agreements presented by Brewer, this study finds an additional 100 agreements within the analyzed portion (marked with † in textual notes), and accounts for the remaining 66 agreements from A.VIII.121 to the end of Passus XI. While data for this study is taken primarily from the Athlone editions, the B-text readings have been cross-referenced with the lections presented in John Burrow and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 9: The B-Version Archetype* (SEENET Series A.12, 2014), available at <<http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/>>. For the editors' explication of their method see Thorlac Turville-Petre and J. A. Burrow, "Editing the B Archetype of *Piers Plowman* and the Relationship between Alpha and Beta," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 26 (2012), 98–119. Also

attested in all eighteen manuscripts of the A version. It is apparent, however, that certain manuscripts of A contain a much higher percentage of B-Type readings than others. The following table shows the attestation of these 362 (A)B agreements across all texts of the A version (for a full list of these agreements see Appendix 2). The following table demonstrates the varying levels of B-type content across the eighteen manuscripts of the A version:



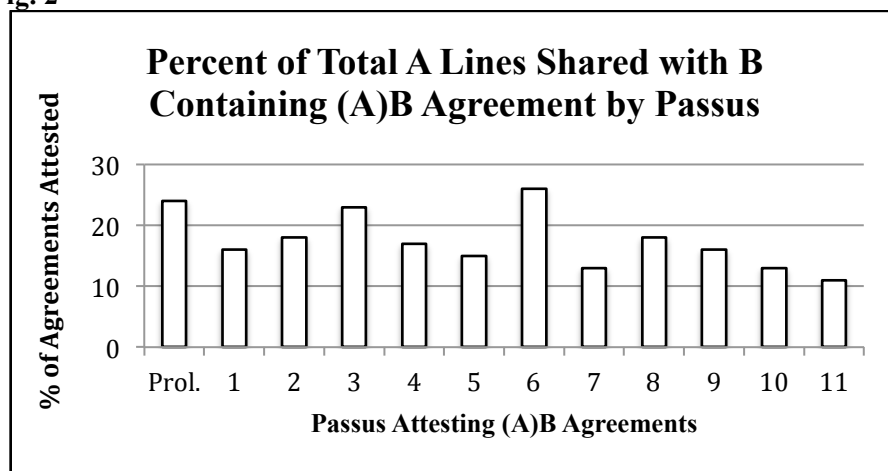
As this data shows, there is a significant amount of disparity between the various manuscripts of the A text, and no single manuscript contains all possible agreements. The texts with the highest levels of agreement in descending order are MWHVJA.¹⁸ In this group, M contains by far the highest concentration of B-type readings (176), with 54 more readings than W, the second most highly attested manuscript (122). Also added to this first group should be EH³Z, as their texts are not complete (E Prol.–VII.213; H³ V.105–end; Z Prol.–VIII.121)

see my forthcoming review of Burrow and Turville-Petre's edition in *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies*, 1 (2016), 154–58.

¹⁸ One of the most intriguing manuscripts attesting B-type readings is V (Bodleian Library, Eng. Poet. a. 1, the “Vernon Manuscript”), one of the earliest extant copies of the A text, probably made sometime in the last decade of the fourteenth century. This places the manuscript closer to the composition of B than the other highly attested A manuscripts HWMH³, all of which are dated to the fifteenth century.

their real numbers (97, 66, and 93 respectively) are misleading and their relative frequencies are among the most highly attested manuscripts. Manuscripts NK follow closely with mid to high levels of B-type content, followed by ULR, which contain a mid to low quantity of B-type readings, and DChH²T, which contain a low quantity, with T ranking by far the lowest (17). The B-type readings are also consistently present throughout all eleven passūs of the A text. Although the real number of attested agreements in each passus varies widely, they are here represented as a percentage of agreement relative to passus length and number of lines also attested in B:

Fig. 2



The data shows an average of about 18% of the lines in each passus of A that have parallels in B attesting agreement with Bx.

The question, then, is simple, and is one that will occupy the remainder of this study: how and why did this correspondence between the B archetype and the minority A manuscripts occur? While, in the Athlone editions, these agreements are treated as products of scribal error in the A tradition, somehow these “accidental” scribal readings managed to consistently and uniformly reproduce the readings of the corrupt B archetype. Of the shared (A)B variants found in this study, many are of a minor and seemingly inconsequential nature,

a fact which is, presumably, what led the Athlone editors to attribute these agreements entirely to convergent variation. What this assumption does not account for, however, is the persistence and regularity of their agreement across numerous manuscripts of A; in the body of data, there are 202 agreements that are attested in four or more manuscripts of A, which must constitute a significant persistence. Statistically, the more manuscripts of A attesting any given variant the less likely it is that this can be attributed to coincidence.¹⁹ When, for instance, a minority A reading is shared by numerous A manuscripts in agreement with Bx, it becomes increasingly improbable (though not technically impossible) that they could be coincidental and independently reproduced error, and the possibility of a genetic relationship must be considered.²⁰ Also significant is the general adherence of the (A)B agreements to textual subgroups. If coincidentally shared variation were responsible for the agreements, statistically, we would expect a generally even distribution of shared errors across all A texts. Yet as the table above indicates, there are vast discrepancies between each of the A manuscripts in the number of their (A)B readings, which correspond to textual families.²¹ The EA(W)MH³ family, for instance, has a very high number of B-type readings, while the number of (A)B agreements in the TRUDChH² subgroup is very low. This inconsistency of

¹⁹ Readers may here be reminded of the old editorial adage that manuscripts should be weighed, not counted. Yet this refers specifically to the process of recension, where the editor must judge originality based on the quality of a reading rather than the persistence of its attestation. In simply judging agreement, however, number is a perfectly valid and important consideration.

²⁰ As Chambers and Grattan note, “variants consisting merely in the *substitution of similars* can prove relationship only when they occur constantly and repeatedly. It is not the occurrence of such variants, but their occurrence *in overwhelming proportion*, that provides the argument for common origin” (“The Text of ‘Piers Plowman’” [1931], p. 16).

²¹ Schmidt’s subgroup r^1 is the least contaminated; this family is subdivided into two families, d (TH²ChD), which is the least contaminated group with an average of 34 agreements, and u (RU), which contain a very similar number of agreements (74 and 78). The family r^2 is more contaminated with (A)B agreements, containing an average of 109. Finally, the **m** family, as we know, is the most highly contaminated, with an average of 123 agreements. For Schmidt’s A-version stemma, see *Parallel-Text*, II, p. 93.

attestation, then, is in fact one of the best arguments against the notion of convergent variation, as their correlation to textual subgroups suggests a genetic factor in their distribution.

In considering Kane-Donaldson's assumption of convergent variation, however, it is also important to remark on the quality of the readings. While, as it was noted above, a number of these agreements are relatively insignificant, there are, additionally, a number of (A)B agreements of which the quality of the reading is too substantive to be easily attributed to convergent variation, as in the following 42 readings:

B.Prol.42/C.Prol.43 Faiteden: **A.Prol.42** Flite þanne] Fayteden HM(JZW).
B.II.160/C.II.176 bad hem alle: **A.II.124** alle] bad hem alle MZ.
B.II.183/C.II.196 iotten] rennen: **A.II.144** iotten] rennen
 RUDVJKLHWNMZ. **B.III.22/C.III.23** coppes: **A.III.21** pecis] coppes WZ.
B.III.38/C.III.40 boþe: **A.III.37** ichone] boþe HNM. **B.III.71/[C revised]**
 delen: **A.III.62** giue] dele JAM. **B.III.118** quod þe kyng if: **A.III.107** quod þe
 kyng 3if VJM. **B.III.198/[C revised]** his men murye: **A.III.185** hym merþe] ys
 men murye Z(EM). **B.III.210** mede to men: **A.III.197** hise men mede] meede
 to men VH. **B.IV.15/C.IV.15** And seide [hym] as þe kyng bad/sayde: **A.IV.15**
 Seide] & seide as þe king bade HW. **B.IV.44** ayeins: **A.IV.31** in to] agayns
 EAMZ. **B.IV.160/C.IV.155** Mekenesse: **A.IV.136** resoun] mekenesse AMZ.
B.V.28/C.V.130 Tomme Stowue: **A.V.28** Thomas] Thomme Stoue JZ.
B.V.126 þe beste: **A.V.103** goode] þe best HEAM. **B.V.190** *Divided after*
 baberlipped; eizen as a blynd hagge: **A.V.109** *Divided after* baberlypped
 RDEAMH³; eizen] eyn as a blynd hagge AMH³. **B.V.200/C.VI.208** wayte:
A.V.116 loke] wayte AMH³. **B.V.208/C.VI.216** liser: **A.V.124** list] leser
 RNWH³. **B.V.213/C.VI.221** webbe: **A.V.129** wynstere] webstere
 (H²)AWMH³. **B.V.215** weyed: **A.V.131** peisid] weied HW(R). **B.VI.227/[C**
 revised] vse: **A.V.143** make] vse HVA. **B.V.303** Hastow ouzt in þi purs:
A.V.153 Hast þou] hast þou ouzt in þy pors VHN(ULJA). **B.V.526** oure
 lordes Sepulcre: **A.VI.14** sepulcre] sepulcre of oure lord KAH³Z.
B.V.584/C.VII.231 In-no-manere-ellis: **A.VI.71** loke þat þou lei3e nouzt] in
 no manere elles EM(H³)Z. **B.VI.5/C.VIII.3** acre and sowen it after: **A.VII.5**
 akir] acre & sowen it after EAMH³(Z). **B.VI.33/C.VIII.32** þanne comsed:
A.VII.35 conseuede] comsede TH²HNZ. **B.VI.94/C.VIII.103** his masse:
A.VII.86 mynde] his masse AMH³(Z). **B.VI.155** forpynede: **A.VII.142†**
 pilide] pyned (A)MH³. **B.VI.186/C.VIII.182** potful: **A.VII.174†** potel] potful
 VJLKWN. **B.VII.119/[C revised]** atweyne: **A.VIII.101†** asondir] atwynen
 AWMH³. **B.VII.129/[C revised]** lereþ vs: **A.VIII.111** leriþ vs anoþer] leriþ vs
 MH³(AN). **B.VII.129–30/[C revised]** *Divided after* foweles: **A.VIII.111–12**

Divided after fowles LN. **B.VII.130**/[C revised] we sholde noȝt be: **A.VIII.112**† þat are not] we schuld not be TDChH²HJKLAWNH³(M). **B.VIII.50**/[C revised] þi soule: **A.IX.46** þiseluen] þi soule RUK. **B.IX.34**/[C revised] likkest: **A.X.35** ymage] like AM. **B.IX.167**/[C revised] welþe: **A.X.188** wele] welþe ChVJAW. **B.IX.178**/C.X.280 togideres: **A.X.199** ysamme] togeder ChH²KAWMH³. **B.X.5**/C.XI.5 quod she to wit: **A.XI.5** wyt *quap* she] *quod* sche to witt KMH³. **B.X.172**/[C revised] þynges: **A.XI.124** wyttes] þinges RUVJKAWMH³. **B.X.339**/[C revised] heris: **A.XI.227** ȝeris] heris KWMH³. **B.X.376**/[C revised] lette: **A.XI.257** make] lette AWM.

Although most, if not all of these variants are attributable to scribal error, they are, en masse, difficult to explain away as convergent variation. Both the substance of the readings and the persistence of their appearance across multiple A texts suggests that they must be explained in some way other than Kane-Donaldson's assumption that all could be explained by the coincidental reproduction of error.

II. (A)B Agreement: Theories and Explanations

The most extensive treatment of this (A)B agreement has been in regards to the Z-text theory first postulated by A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer in their edition of the "Z version." Rigg and Brewer make an argument that the text of *Piers* contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851 represents an authorial draft of the poem anterior to A.²² As the editors observe in their introduction, Z contains a high quantity of the B-type readings that have been discussed above, many of which it shares with other manuscripts of A. The editors cite 33 readings in which Z agrees with B(C) against all A manuscripts. They cite another 51 readings in which Z agrees with various subgroups of A in lections that agree with BC.²³ The editors argue that the agreement of minority A manuscripts with Z's B-type readings occurs

²² *Piers Plowman: The Z Version*, ed. A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1983), pp. 12–25.

²³ Rigg-Brewer's 84 readings do not, however, account for all of the Z(A)BC agreements, as the present study identified 102 (A)B agreements in Z.

because these readings were present in the B reviser's A manuscript. They argue that this constitutes proof of Z's originality and that Z's readings were present in the authorial draft Langland used for revision. Rigg-Brewer's argument that Z is a pre-archetypal draft of A is, however, based on a series of subjective literary assumptions about the quality of Z's readings. Any passages in Z that are not in A are explained as having been revised out of the A-text revision. Conversely, any passages in A that are not attested in Z are simply "passages not yet written,"²⁴ an easily defensible, but not overly convincing argument.²⁵

Rigg and Brewer's claims about the authenticity of the Z text have been the subject of much debate, and this is not the place to conduct an extensive analysis of Z. The most prominent critic of the theory was George Kane, who argued that the readings judged by the editors to be original could all be attributed to common processes of unconscious or mechanical scribal variation, which he identified as distinct from Langland's *usus scribendi*.²⁶ Rigg-Brewer's theory did receive support, however, from A. V. C Schmidt, who argued for the Z version's originality on metrical grounds.²⁷ Schmidt also made the somewhat controversial decision to include Z in his *Parallel Text* as a legitimate version of the poem. Schmidt's assessment of Z as an authorial draft in his commentary is similarly

²⁴ Rigg-Brewer, *Z Version*, p. 17.

²⁵ The particulars of the Z-text theory were explored more extensively in Charlotte Brewer's D.Phil. thesis ("Some Implications of the Z-Text"), which offered a more substantial analysis of the textual evidence, but was still ultimately based on the subjective assessment of the quality of Z's readings.

²⁶ George Kane, "The 'Z Version' of *Piers Plowman*," *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 910–30 (p. 916). The Z-text theory is also heavily critiqued by Ralph Hanna, who refutes Rigg-Brewer's early dating of the manuscript, which was central to their thesis that the manuscript compiler could have had access to an early version of Langland's poem (Ralph Hanna, "MS. Bodley 851 and the Dissemination of *Piers Plowman*," in *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 195–202).

²⁷ A. V. C. Schmidt, "The Authenticity of the Z-Text of *Piers Plowman*: A Metrical Examination," *Medium Ævum*, 53 (1984), 295–300. Also see Hugh White, "The Z-Text: A New Version of *Piers Plowman*?" *Medium Ævum*, 53 (1984), 290–95. While White generally supports the claim that Z is an authorial draft, he notes that Z could equally represent a post-A Langlandian revision (p. 293).

based on the notion that the Z text has distinct resemblances to Langland's poetic oeuvre, but is not as sophisticated as the other (and in his opinion, later) versions.²⁸ Yet the unavoidable problem with this theory is that Z's similar, but inferior, quality could equally be interpreted as a sophisticated imitation of the poem's style by a skilled and perceptive reader, who in some ways did and in other ways did not match the quality of Langland's text.²⁹ Furthering such an opinion, Karrie Fuller has recently discussed the ways in which the Z-poet's agenda differs from that characteristic of Langland and argues that he was most likely a later redactor, comparable to that of San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 114 [Ht].³⁰

The particulars of the Z-text theory were explored more extensively in Charlotte Brewer's D.Phil. thesis, completed three years after the publication of the Z-text edition. While Brewer's thesis offered a much more substantial analysis of the textual evidence, ultimately the argument for Z's authorial status was still based on the assumption that Z's text is good enough to be Langland. What is more useful about Brewer's thesis than the Rigg-Brewer edition, however, is Brewer's fuller account of the B-type readings in Z and their shared occurrences in manuscripts of A. The examples of (A)B readings that Brewer lists in her thesis are, however, insufficient for an accurate quantitative analysis, as they omit any agreements after the end of the Z text in Passus 8. Brewer's focus on the Z text thus skews the data by limiting the sample in favor of the desired outcome. As Brewer acknowledges, moreover, "I have not included minor agreements such as addition or

²⁸ For a discussion of Schmidt's treatment of Z see Andrew Galloway, "Review of *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions, II: Introduction, Textual Notes, Commentary, Bibliography and Indexical Glossary*, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 24 (2010), pp. 223–232 (p. 229).

²⁹ Schmidt is aware of this problem, noting that "inferior scribal work and authorial draft text are not always easy to tell apart" (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 211).

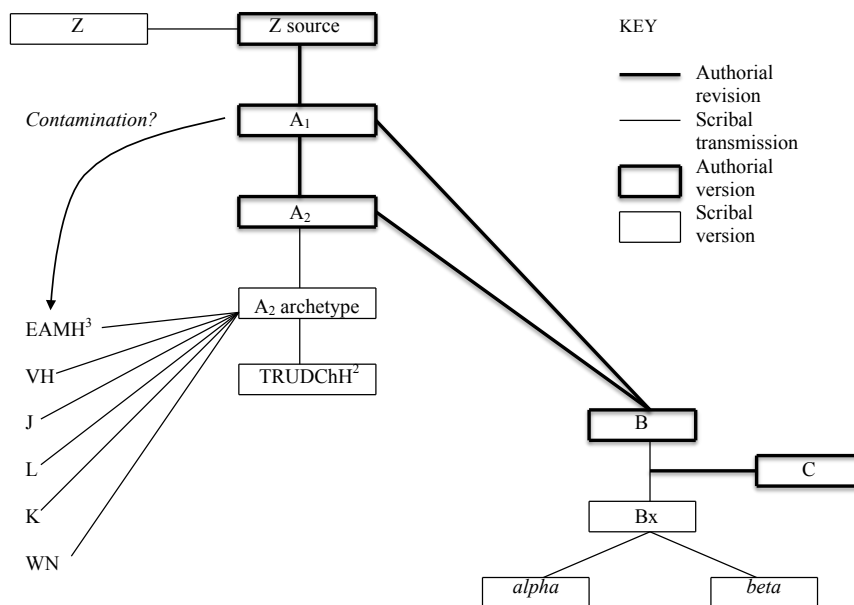
³⁰ Karrie Fuller, "The Craft of the 'Z-Maker': Reading the Z Text's Unique Lines in Context," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 27 (2013), 15–43.

omission of *and* within or at the beginning of a line, or of *that* before an object clause, etc. (Kane elsewhere describes such minor variations as typical scribal substitutions, likely therefore to occur coincidentally).³¹ Given Brewer's later rejection of Kane's editorial criteria, this seems an ironic choice to incorporate into her methodology, and one which limits the sample still more. In so doing, Brewer is able to focus attention on the more substantial readings, which are more easily argued for as original, and downplays the extent to which (A)B agreements form in minor mechanical scribal errors and substitutions.

The most interesting and provocative conclusions that Brewer reaches in this analysis of (A)B agreement lie in her proposed stemmas, which depict two possible formulations of the A text's descent and the revisionary process to B, which will be discussed below.

Brewer's first stemma is depicted as such:³²

Fig. 4: Brewer, Stemma 1



³¹ Brewer, "Some Implications," p. 10

³² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

In this stemma, Brewer proposes that an authorial revision (A_1) descended from the Z source after which another authorial revision descended from that copy (A_2). Both of these manuscripts, she proposes, were used in the composition of B . The stemma postulates that the group $EAMH^3VHJLKWN$ was contaminated by readings from A_1 , producing the B -type readings.

The theory of multiple authorial versions within the A tradition was first raised in Rigg-Brewer's edition, where they noted, "The A -text may have gone through more than one revision, so that readings preferred by Kane but not supported by Z may represent a later revision."³³ In a later article, Brewer goes on to question the principles of Kane's eclectic emendation, noting that "a number of the scribal motives for substitution identified by Kane could be conceivably attributed to Langland himself."³⁴ One of Brewer's strongest arguments for multiple authorial revisionary stages lies in her rejection of Kane's principle that scribes tend to make the text more emphatic or explicit. Brewer postulates that an author such as Langland could have desired to make his text more explicit and understandable for his audience, and may, in revising to B , have made such changes to the text.³⁵ Brewer also takes particular issue with Kane and Donaldson's complete dismissal of the possibility of authorial revision. As Brewer argues, the "corruptions" that the editors are so keen to eliminate may in

³³ Rigg-Brewer, *Z Version*, p. 25.

³⁴ Brewer, "Textual Principles," p. 82. E. G. Stanley holds a similar position in his review of Kane-Donaldson, where he argues that, rather than being attributable to scribal corruption, the variants in the B archetype may have been authorial revision to make the text more explicit (E. G. Stanley, Review of Kane and Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The B Version, Notes & Queries*, Vol. 23 (1976), 435–37). Rigg-Brewer's theory of multiple authorial revisionary stages is, however, doubted by Schmidt, who is otherwise in favor of the Z -text argument (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 81).

³⁵ This possibility would problematize not only Kane-Donaldson's emendations, but also the rationale for Kane's editorial choices in A , as any two A -text readings could also be authorial. Instead, Kane adopts what Robert Adams calls an editorial "monism," denying that any readings other than those he had chosen could be legitimate authorial readings" (Adams, "Editing *Piers Plowman B*," p. 46).

fact be products, not of scribal error, but of Langland's own revision between versions.³⁶

While this is a well-conceived and theoretically sound argument, it is continually contradicted by the textual evidence of the two versions. While there are some instances wherein a reading could plausibly be assigned to a poor Langlandian revision, the variants overwhelmingly point toward scribal activity, especially those attributable to mechanical error inherent in the copying process. Ultimately, moreover, Brewer is concerned with dismantling the arguments and logical reasoning of the Athlone editors, and not in providing empirical evidence of her alternative theories. Stemma 1 also assumes that both authorial revisions of the A version were used in the B-text revision. While this would, in theory, be possible, it does seem to be contradicted somewhat by the realities of the revisionary process from A to B. As Russell has pointed out, the A > B revision was a "radical and large-scale rewriting of the whole poem," and thus, unlike the revision to C, the B reviser was most likely not concerned with the intricacies of lexical variation.³⁷

It should also be pointed out that even if the theory of multiple stages of authorial A revision were true, which the scribal quality of the (A)B agreements makes extremely unlikely, it would in no way prove Brewer's interpretation of Z as authorial; in fact, if there are two versions of authorial revision, A¹ and A², then the initial argument for Z's originality is further problematized. It was first argued that, because Z preserved readings that were

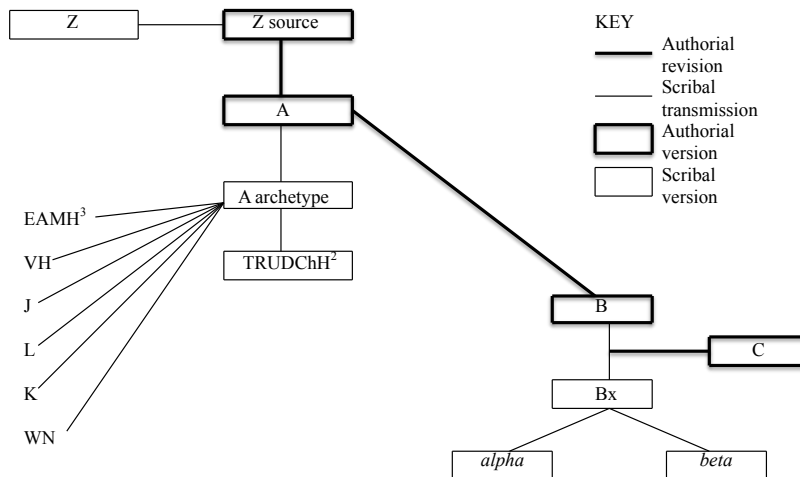
³⁶ As Brewer points out, the notion that the differences in B were scribal first began with Elsie Blackman in 1914, and seems to have been taken for granted in later editorial thought (Brewer, "Authorial Vs. Scribal Writing," pp. 69–70, n. 22; and Elsie Blackman, "Notes on the B-text MSS. of *Piers Plowman*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 17 (1918), 489–545. Adams asserts that the questioning of the three texts as discrete versions is part of a movement towards textual relativism (Adams, "Editing *Piers Plowman B*," p. 33).

³⁷ Of course, hypothetically, if A₁ and A₂ did each represent substantial revisions by the author, we might possibly imagine the reviser using both. As the (A)B evidence cited above shows, however, most of the differences between the two traditions are extremely minor, and it is hard to imagine any author, medieval or modern, who, upon undertaking a complete overhaul of his work, would consult two nearly identical copies of a draft and collate the variant readings into his new revision.

interpreted as authorial, they must be the original readings. But if, in any given lection, two readings are both potentially authorial then there is no way of determining which came first. Thus, Z's A readings could just as easily represent A² as they could A¹—there would be no way of knowing.

As Stemma 1 cannot be found to sustain any plausible explanation for the extant state of *Piers Plowman*'s text, we must turn to the second stemma offered in Brewer's thesis,³⁸ which is expressed as follows:

Fig. 5: Brewer, Stemma 2



In her second stemma, Brewer offers an almost identical formulation, but eliminates the hypothetical A₂ of Stemma 1, having the A archetype descend directly from the authorial version of A (still descending ultimately from the “Z source”). In so doing, Brewer does away with the theory of multiple authorial readings, postulating one authorial version, which was used to revise B. This authorial version was the exemplar of the A archetype, from which descended all surviving A manuscripts. By theorizing that the single authorial version of A was used to revise the B text, Brewer necessarily presents all (A)B agreements as the

³⁸ Cf. Brewer, “Some Implications,” p. 90.

author's original lections and all of Kane's readings as scribal corruptions. If the A archetype descended from the version of A used in the composition of B, then the exemplar of Ax would contain all of the readings in the B reviser's A manuscript, now considered characteristic of B, and presumably, contain some scribal corruptions. Since Kane's text includes readings not attested in B, these must, according to Stemma 2, be corruptions of the author's original text introduced into the A tradition either in Ax or in subsequent manuscripts. The assumptions needed to justify this stemma, however, are unsupported by the available evidence. As we have seen, the (A)B agreements in numerous instances display a distinctly scribal character, and to claim that the entirety of Kane's editorial text of A is scribal and all of the B-type readings in his textual apparatus are authorial would stretch the limits of plausibility. Regardless of the failures of the Athlone project, Kane was an extraordinarily skilled editor, and the vast majority of his judgments on A readings do hold up under close scrutiny.³⁹ The data presented above lends further doubt to the Z-text theory. It is of no small consequence that Z appears in only 102 readings out of 362. Even if we consider this number relative to the total number of agreements from the Prologue to Passus 8 (where Z leaves off), this still constitutes only about 25 percent. If Z is indeed original, and the (A)B agreements are indications of the original A readings being transferred to B, then how do we account for the fact that Z appears in no more than a quarter of the total agreements?

In Schmidt's parallel text edition, the editor pays relatively little attention to the vast number of B-type readings present throughout all of the A manuscripts. On the whole, the

³⁹ While Rigg and Brewer's theory about the originality of the Z text remained somewhat speculative in the 1990s and remains a subject of debate among *Piers Plowman* textual scholars, Schmidt's inclusion of Z in his *Parallel-Text* edition had the unfortunate effect of solidifying Z, in the popular conception, as a legitimate version of *Piers Plowman*.

presence of B readings in A manuscripts is treated as evidence of B contamination in the A tradition, except where Z's support of a B reading indicates, for Schmidt, its originality. In discussing the B-type readings in A, Schmidt also focuses primarily on the B content in his postulated **m** subgroup (EA[W]MH³).⁴⁰ In his treatment of these (A)B readings Schmidt argues that **m** was, at some point in its genetic history, contaminated with B readings. If, as it has been shown, however, the (A)B agreements are present in all manuscripts of A throughout every textual family, then this assumption becomes much more problematic. We would have to argue, instead, that each of the strands of A was individually corrupted at some point by the B text. Schmidt does go on to note, "at least some of [**m**'s] **B**-type lines were arguably present in Ax, and by inference in its source."⁴¹ The readings can only be assumed to have been present in the archetype, however, if the readings of minority A, and by implication, those of the B archetype, can be proven to be more characteristically authorial. Subsequently, the readings in Kane's edited text would, in those cases, need to be proven to be either scribal corruptions or a second layer of authorial revisions—no easy task. This is, however, precisely what was attempted in the theory of the Z text, and Schmidt's belief that some (A)B readings may have been present in the archetype reflects his implicit support of Z's originality. Although many textual scholars now agree that the Z-text hypothesis cannot be supported, there has been very little attempt to find an alternative explanation for the (A)B agreements upon which Rigg and Brewer built their argument. If Z is no more than a heavily revised A text which contains a relatively high quantity of B-type

⁴⁰ While this textual family does contain by far the highest concentration of B-type readings, Schmidt seems to neglect the fact that B-type readings appear in *all* subgroups of A. The editor does note, however, that, "A few **B** readings also occur in individual **r** mss, whether by collation with an **m** source or by contamination from **B**, but none were present in **r** itself."⁴⁰ Beyond the vast understatement that this constitutes, the last statement—that no B-type readings were present in **r**—is not backed up by any convincing evidence.

⁴¹ Schmidt, *Parallel-Text*, II, p. 118.

readings, and if the persistence and substance of these agreements suggests they cannot be explained away as coincidental, then we still must find some other way to account for them.

The only other extensive treatment of the (A)B agreements beyond the Z-text theory was given by Robert Adams in his discussion of the Athlone project.⁴² While Adams generally supports Kane-Donaldson's view that many of the minority A agreements with Bx could have been the result of convergent variation, he also presents an alternative explanation, what he terms "interversional micro-contamination," that is, "*individual lections* (both authorial and scribal ones) having passed between manuscripts of *different versions*."⁴³ Adams posits that A texts such as M and Z, which contain high percentages of B readings, were conflated with the B version at some point in their textual history. Adams also suggests that confluations may have taken place through memorial contamination, with A scribes consciously or unconsciously contaminating the A text with B-readings from memory, which could be either perfectly or imperfectly recalled.⁴⁴

Given the uniformly scribal character of the readings presented above, Adams's theory is far more plausible as an explanation of these (A)B agreements than that given by Rigg-Brewer; yet there are several practical difficulties which make it unlikely that all, or even a substantial number of the 362 agreements detailed above, can be explained by Adams's theory of interversional conflation. Considering the vast quantity of (A)B agreements, the theory of sporadic micro-contamination would necessitate that scribes of the

⁴² Adams, "Editing *Piers Plowman B*," pp. 49–63.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 56. This view is generally supported by A. V. C. Schmidt, who discusses "intra-versional" and "inter-versional" contamination in several manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*: "'Let Copulation Thrive': some Varieties of Contamination in the Textual Tradition of *Piers Plowman*," in *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Anne Hudson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 493–508.

⁴⁴ See Adams, "Editing *Piers Plowman B*," pp. 60–63. Important to Adams's conception of memorial contamination is his contention that the A version was released after the popularization of the B version, and thus, perhaps, scribes of the A text would have been more familiar with the text of B.

A text were conducting large-scale conflations with B-text manuscripts, using B readings to replace all manner of A lections, from significant phrases down to single words, even conjunctions or prepositions. The most important concern with Adams's theory, then, is merely one of common sense: there seems to be no logical explanation for why scribes would trouble themselves to deliberately replace one insignificant reading with another equally insignificant reading. And if these scribes saw the B readings as superior to A in these instances, why would they only pick out certain readings, rather than simply copying the whole line from B? And if the scribes had access to a B text with which they could conflate readings, and if they indeed saw B as superior to A, why would they not simply copy the B text instead? On the other hand, the notion of memorial contamination is certainly reasonable; many modern close readers of the poem, upon reading a less familiar version, may easily find themselves recalling memorable portions of text from the other versions. Yet the idea of *memorability* is key here; recalling significant words or phrases from the other versions is plausible, recalling minute lexical variations is not.⁴⁵ While some of the more substantial (A)B agreements could potentially be explained in this way, the majority are too insignificant to be attributed to memorial contamination.

Also suspicious is the fact that there is no evidence in any of the extant A manuscripts of such comprehensive scribal conflation of A and B before the sixteenth century. Adams makes reference to the case of H² (British Library, Harley MS 6041), an A text which contains numerous interlinear corrections from the B text.⁴⁶ The corrections, however, are

⁴⁵ If it were the case that the (A)B agreements in error were arbitrarily recollected or deliberately collated by individual scribes of A, we would naturally expect a highly random distribution of B-type readings throughout all texts of A. Yet this is obviously not the case, as Fig. 1 shows. Different textual subgroups display different levels of B-type readings, indicating that the agreements are in some way connected to the genetics of the textual tradition.

⁴⁶ Adams, "Editing *Piers Plowman B*," pp. 56–57.

made by a sixteenth-century hand, and thus cannot be used as evidence of fourteenth- or fifteenth-century scribal behavior.⁴⁷ One instance of medieval interversional comparison, noted above, is in Huntington Library, Hm 114, to which Adams also makes reference, which is well-known for having conflated the A, B, and C versions.⁴⁸ The text that it produces, however, is so unique as to be unlike any other text of the poem. Rather than a scribe conflating minute line-by-line variations between the versions, it is a wholesale revision of the poem. The same could be said for Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (F), a B text whose ancestor was heavily conflated with the A version, as noted above.⁴⁹ Like Ht, F's interversional conflation with A produces a highly unique text, adding spurious material and restructuring the poem's dream visions. So we must wonder, could a thorough and minutely detailed conflation have happened to the ancestor of *every* A manuscript, as Adams's theory necessitates, without other textual oddities having arisen in the process? Given these practical issues, therefore, it seems unlikely that the (A)B agreements can be attributed in any substantial way to interversional contamination.

⁴⁷ Having extensively consulted the corrections in H², moreover, it is apparent that they do not represent the same kind of revision that would be necessary to produce texts such as M or Z. Readings taken from B are generally words or phrases that substantially alter the sense of the line in some way, unlike the insignificant (A)B agreements under discussion.

⁴⁸ For discussions of Hm 114 see Ralph Hanna, "The Scribe of Huntington HM 114," *Studies in Bibliography*, 42 (1989), 120–33; Michael C. Seymore, "The Scribe of Huntington Library MS. HM 114," *Medium Ævum*, 43 (1974), 139–43; and Noelle Phillips, "Compilational Reading: Richard Osborn and Huntington Library MS HM 114," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 28 (2014), 65–104.

⁴⁹ See Simon Horobin, "Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201 and Its Copy of *Piers Plowman*," in *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift Dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday*, ed. Simon Horobin and Linne R. Mooney (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 21–39 and James Weldon, "Ordinatio and Genre in MS CCC 201: A Mediaeval Reading of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*," *Florilegium*, 12 (1995), 159–75. Also see the "Introduction" to *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 1: Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (F)*, ed. Robert Adams, Hoyt N. Duggan, Eric Eliason, Ralph Hanna, John Price-Wilkin, and Thorlac Turville-Petre (SEENET Series A.1, Ann Arbor, 2000).

III. Reconsidering the Evidence: Scribal Error and Langlandian Revision

If there is reason to doubt all of these previous theories, what then can account for the 362 B-type lections scattered throughout the A text manuscripts? There is, I would propose, another solution to the problem of the (A)B agreements that has not yet been considered, a solution that lies in the authorial revision from A to B. In his review of Kane-Donaldson's edition, David Fowler points out a strange inconsistency in the edition's introduction: while it contains sections on the corrupt B archetype and the C reviser's B manuscript, there is no section on the B reviser's A manuscript, which, he observes, "is surely a crucial question in the editing of *Piers Plowman*."⁵⁰ The editors' neglect of the B reviser's A manuscript is puzzling, particularly in an edition of the B text, and leaves unanswered a number of questions about the poem's revision.

In their section on the C reviser's B manuscript, Kane and Donaldson propose one of the most significant and well-known theories of the entire Athlone project, that Langland used a scribal copy of B to revise the C text, which they base on scribal readings shared by BC against A.⁵¹ What is far less noticeable, and often overlooked by readers of the vast edition, is their far less confident theory that Langland may have used a scribal copy of A to revise B, which they mention in little more than a single footnote. The theory arises out of a discussion of archetypal corruption that is shared between either AB or ABC. They identify two kinds of archetypal corruption: missing lines (deduced from flawed or incomplete sense in a given passage) and defective verse technique/alliteration. The editors argue that the agreements in unoriginality in AB(C) are "to be explained as early archetypal errors of the A

⁵⁰ Fowler, "A New Edition," p. 26.

⁵¹ Kane-Donaldson, *B Version*, pp. 98–127. This is further argued in Russell-Kane, *C Version*, pp. 62–88.

tradition which escaped notice in respectively one or both revisions. They are thus incidentally evidence that *Langland used a scribal A manuscript for revising to B* [emphasis mine].”⁵² The question of the B reviser’s A manuscript was addressed again in Kane’s 1988 revised edition of A, though the editor again treats the issue cursorily, dealing with it in no more than a paragraph.⁵³ It is worth noting that George Russell had expressed this view as early as 1962 in an early discussion of C’s revision from a scribally corrupt B text:

As an aside, I would remark that it seems possible that this is also true of B-’s revision of A-. There, too, are places where B’s reading suggests that it was based upon a corruption in his A-manuscript which the reviser did not notice. But with B- the situation is much less clear, and so I prefer not to discuss it in detail here.⁵⁴

Yet despite all of these speculations, the theory of scribal revision from A to B was, puzzlingly, never formally pursued, either by the Athlone editors or in subsequent scholarship.⁵⁵

As I would argue, the evidence of the 362 (A)B agreements identified in the present study may suggest that the Athlone editors’ hypothesis about a scribal revision from the A text was correct, though it seems they did not entirely know why. While Kane-Donaldson’s examples of archetypal corruption are too limited and subjective to be overly convincing, the (A)B agreements, which the editors believed to be the result of convergent variation, may, in

⁵² Kane-Donaldson, *B Version*, p. 211, n. 170.

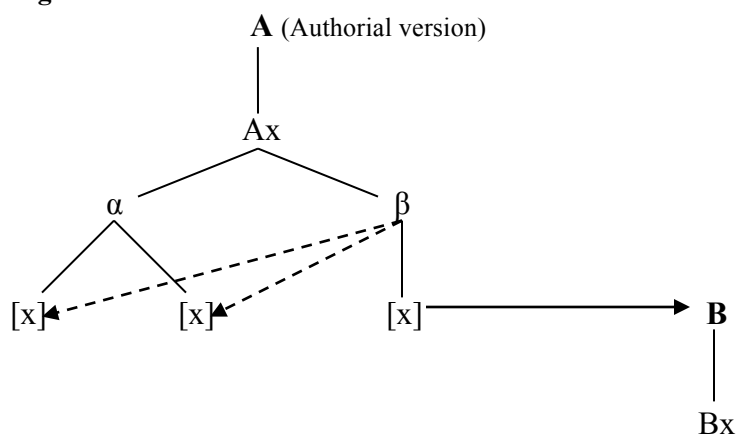
⁵³ Kane here notes, “there is evidence that Langland used a scribal A manuscript for his B revision. This takes the form of evidently archetypal, unmetrical A lines which survive in B or in BC” (George Kane, *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, Revised Edition (London: Athlone Press, 1988), p. 463). Strangely, Kane here makes no reference to the earlier discussion in the Kane-Donaldson B text, and in fact, gives different lines as evidence of archetypal corruption than were earlier given in the *B Version* (see Charlotte Brewer, “George Kane’s Processes of Revision,” in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. Minnis and Brewer, pp. 71–96 (p. 89)).

⁵⁴ George Russell, “The Evolution of the Poem: Some Reflections on the Textual Tradition of *Piers Plowman*,” *Arts* (Sydney), 2 (1962), 33–46 (p. 42).

⁵⁵ The theory is mentioned briefly by Schmidt, who calls it a “troubling (and significant) implication”; yet although he admits that the theory is “an *a priori* possibility,” he goes on to reject Kane-Donaldson’s argument, finding fault with the editors’ metrical analysis (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 37).

themselves, prove that Langland was using a scribal copy of A to revise the B text. If this is correct, the scribally corrupt readings in Bx that are attested in some A manuscripts would be remnants of the corrupt A-text exemplar that Langland used to revise the B text. The process by which this revisionary transmission from the A to B version would have taken place may be represented in the following diagram. It must be noted, however, that this should not be taken as a definitive stemma, but rather as a general representation of how the early revisionary transmission might have occurred:

Fig. 3



The diagram indicates that the B reviser used a post-archetypal manuscript, which would presumably have contained some archetypal errors common to all A manuscripts and a number of new errors that were not present in the other lines of textual descent. Thus α here represents the more authoritative version of the text found in the two subgroups **r** and **m**, while β represents a more corrupt version that was used for the composition of B, which is no longer extant. The manuscript used in the B revision, which contained at least 362 errors not found in the other strands, may have been two or more generations of copying removed from the archetype, though it could theoretically have been only one removed. Subsequently, the scribal variants present in that manuscript (or textual tradition, if there was one) made their

way into the other subgroups of A. Since the scribal A manuscript used in the B revision was not the archetype of its respective tradition, not all of the readings it contained were perpetuated in A; rather, these scribal readings inconsistently corrupted all of the extant A manuscripts and further evolved in the process of their descent, leaving an inconsistent and scattered number of agreements throughout all of the extant A texts.⁵⁶ The exact textual reconstruction of this process is beyond the scope of the present study and would require a large-scale editorial effort, including, perhaps, a new edition of the A archetype, though it is hoped that this will be attempted in future scholarship. It should be stressed that this theory does not categorically deny the existence of convergent variation or interversional contamination. What it challenges, however, is the notion that all 362 agreements can be attributed to later scribal activity, a reductive notion that is contradicted by the scale and regularity of (A)B lectional agreement.

It is a distinct possibility, however, that not all (A)B agreements reflect revisionary transmission; some may, indeed, be attributable to convergent variation or conflation. An example of this is the existence of 25 minority A readings (not included in the above survey) that agree with the majority of manuscripts in the beta strand of B, but are not attested in Bx,

⁵⁶ It should be acknowledged that this would again require some level of scribal conflation, similar to what Adams posited for B > A. Yet contamination within a single version of the poem is far more probable than interversional conflation. While, as it was observed above, there is no existing material evidence of fourteenth- or fifteenth-century scribes conflating two different versions of *Piers*, there is abundant evidence of scribes correcting their exemplars with other copies of the *same* version (some of this will be discussed in Chapter 2 in the C tradition). Schmidt notes that all A manuscripts show contamination from other textual subgroups of the same version (*Parallel-Text*, II, pp. 100–01). For more on scribal contamination within the A tradition, see David Fowler, “Contamination in Manuscripts of the A-Text of *Piers the Plowman*,” *PLMA*, 66 (1951), 495–504. The various subgroups of A seem to have been corrupted by these errors to varying degrees, with the **m** family (EA[W]MH³) having inherited the most errors from the revisionary copy.

as Burrow and Turville-Petre have defined it, or C.⁵⁷ If the agreements were not present in Bx, then, logically, they cannot represent corrupt archetypal transmission. Yet, the existence of such agreements does not impugn the theory that the other (A)B readings represent a pre-corrupted B-text. Indeed, the fact that only 25 (A)B agreements can be proven to be post-archetypal is telling in itself, showing that the vast majority of B readings attested in A manuscripts were also present in the B archetype.

Within the body of data, there is some textual evidence to support the conclusion that Langland revised from a scribal A manuscript. In addition to the exact (A)B agreements discussed above there are a small number of minority A readings that show similar, but not exact readings to those of Bx.⁵⁸ While relationships between these imperfect agreements is not always discernable, it is possible in some cases to conjecture as to the direction of the

⁵⁷ **W+**.Prol.22 wastours: **A**.Prol.22† [pise wastours] pise *om*. **H**²**LW**. **W+**.I.177 mesures: **A**.I.151 mesour] mesuris **AZ**. **W+**.II.183 Freres: **A**.II.144 fobbis] Freres **LWN**. **W+**.II.238 drede: **A**.II.197 fere] drede **RUHN**. **W+**.III.6 moolde: **A**.III.6 world] moolde **RUHEKW**. **W+**.III.11 And: **A**.III.11† Ac] and **RAM**. **W+**.III.39 Falsnesse: **A**.III.38 falshed] falsness **RUHJ**. **W+**.III.63 seye: **A**.III.52† se] seye **VHWM**. **W+**.III.130 in: **A**.III.119† &(2)] in **DVHJN**. **W+**.III.229 wel worþi: **A**.III.216† worþi] wel worþi **WN**. **W+**.IV.54 ouȝt: **A** IV.41 nouȝt] ought **UHZ**. **W+**.V.19 tailles: **A**.V.19 tail] tailles **HN**. **W+**.V.358 hom to: **A**.V.200 to] hom to **VHN**. **W+**.V.533 he: **A**.VI.21† wy] he **RUDVHJW**. **W+**.VI.42 ye: **A**.VII.41† þou] ȝe **VN**. **W+**.VI.175 boþe hise eizen watrede: **A**.VII.160† al watride his eizen] boþe his eyn watrid **VHLN**. **W+**.VII.149 thise: **A**.VIII.131 þis] þes **ChA**. **W+**.VIII.48 but if: **A** IX.44 but] but ȝif **AV(Ch)**. **W+**.X.227 Studie: **A**.XI.170 I] And **UW**. þe gode wyf] stody **JM**.

⁵⁸ E.g., **B**.I.114 þat felawshipe: **A**.I.112 his felawis] his felaship **EMZ**. **B**.II.190 his: **A**.II.151† forþ on his] on his **VHJWNM**. **B**.III.266 Weend to Amalec: **A**.III.246 þider] þou to amalek **H**. **B**.IV.46 wel wisely a gret while: **A**.IV.33 a...wisly] ful wysly a gret while **EAMZ**. **B**.IV.98/C.IV.94 Pitously Pees þanne: **A**.IV.85 Pees...pitousliche] Pytously þan pes **EAM(Z)**. **B**.V.10 of seide: **A**.V.10 tolde] seide **R**. **B**.V.213/C.VI.221 webbe: **A**.V.129 wynstere] webstere (**H**²)**AWMH**³. **B**.V.526/C.VII.171 oure lordes Sepulcre: **A**.VI.14 sepulcre] sepulcre of oure lord (**KAH**³**Z**). **B**.V.545 hotēþ: **A**.VI.33 hiȝte] hoted **L**. **B**.V.609 þat is a: **A**.VI.95† þat] for he is a **VA**. **B**.VI.33/C.VIII.32 þanne comsed: **A**.VII.35 conseyuede] comsede **TH**²**HNZ**. **B**.VI.155 forpynede: **A**.VII.142† pilide] pyned (**A**)**MH**³. **B**.VI.221 God techēþ: **A**.VII.207 kynde wolde] kynde techith **K**. **B**.VI.292/C.VIII.315 peple þo: **A**.VII.276† peple] peple þan **WN**. **B**.VII.26 myseise folk/C.IX.30 m. men: **A**.VIII.28 myseyse to] myseise men to **LAZ**. **B**.VII.52 [K-D] þe Sauter bereþ wittenesse: **A**.VIII.54 seiþ þe sauter] sauter wittenesseth **LM**. **B**.VII.106 here on: **A**.VIII.88 vpon þis] here vpon **VHLAW(M)**. **B**.VII.138 quod Piers myn: **A**.VIII.120† myn] quop he myne **HW**. **B**.VIII.74 what þow art: **A**.IX.65 art þou] þou art (**DM**). **B**.IX.192/C.X.292 [ilke] derne dede: **A**.X.205 dede derne] derne dede **RUDJKW**. **B**.X.202 For he: **A**.XI.151 And] He **MH**³.

error based on common tendencies of scribal variation. In the following instances, it will be postulated that the direction of error is A > B; that is, a preexisting error in A caused a different erroneous reading in B. Most of these are discernable through the common scribal errors that Kane calls “homœographs,”⁵⁹ in which scribes encounter words they are unfamiliar with and substitute words of similar orthographical shape, as in the following:

A V.129	My wyf was a <i>wynstere</i> & wollene clop made
JAWMH ³	<i>wynstere</i>] <i>webstere</i>
B V.213	<i>webbe</i>
C VI.221	<i>webbe</i>

Here, the original A reading uses the difficult lection *wynstere* (“wool weaver”), while manuscripts JAWMH³ substitute *webstere*, a much more common synonym for a weaver.⁶⁰ The orthographical similarity of *webstere* to *wynstere* makes it an easy substitution for the original reading, which seems to have been very obscure.⁶¹ Subsequently the *web-* prefix in the corrupt A reading caused the B reading *webbe*, yet another synonym for “weaver,” which was also carried into Cx. Thus, the progression of error in these lections would read as follows: A *wynstere* > (A) *webstere* > BC *webbe*. If the erroneous B reading is causally related to the existing error in A, moreover, it must have been first introduced into the original “ur-B” text.

⁵⁹ Kane notes that such scribal substitutions “preserve something of the shape of the supplanted, original words or phrases, but little or nothing of their meaning or relation to the context” (Ibid., p. 132).

⁶⁰ Schmidt notes that *wynstere*, as the harder lection, is the probable original, noting that it provides “a characteristic punning suggestion of profiteering (with play or ‘win’) along with the literal sense of ‘one who winds threads (of silk or wool)’” (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 348).

⁶¹ In the MED, *windestre* is recorded only in this line from *Piers Plowman* A, which might be cause to question if this is, in fact, a word at all. To do so, however, would assume that *wynstere* was simply a nonsensical scribal corruption, which seems very unlikely given that it was allowed to stand in the majority of manuscripts. Nor can I discern any logical or mechanical evidence of how a corruption from *webstere* to *wynstere* would have taken place.

In other readings, such as the following, the direction of error is indicated by surrounding lections:

A VII.35	Curteisliche þ[e] kniȝt [conseyuede] þise wordis
(T)H ² HN(Z)	conseyuede] comsede
ZJE	kniȝt] kniȝt þen
B VI.33	þanne comsed (þanne] <i>om.</i> F)
C VIII.32	thenne comesed (comesed] conseyued DM)

Here the majority of A manuscripts use *conseyuede*, while (T)H²HN(Z) use the variant reading *comsede*.⁶² In all existing editions of A, *conseyuede* is consistently taken to be the original; while one might argue that *comsede* is the harder reading, both Kane and Schmidt argue that *conseyuede* is likelier to be the original, and I am inclined to agree with their assessments.⁶³ On the assumption that all previous editors are correct in this archetypal reading, then, TH²HNZ have replaced the Ax reading *conseyuede* (“conceive of”) with *comsede* (“pronounce/speak”). The reading *comsede* is also attested in B, which adds the adverb *þanne*; the adverb, incidentally, also appears in three A manuscripts (ZJE) and appears to have been carried into the C archetype.⁶⁴ The question, then, is whether the BC reading corrupted A or vice versa; here the addition of *þanne* can be helpful in assessing direction. The addition of *þanne* seems to reflect another common scribal tendency,

⁶² Kane and Donaldson call this variant a “desperate substitution for an evidently very difficult term” (*B Version*, p. 102, n. 4). Manuscripts MH³ of the A tradition, which both use *rehersede*, may also be derived from this erroneous reading. The use of the verb *reheresen* (“to recite”) reflects the sense of *comsede* as verbal expression, as opposed to an act of intellection (*conseyuede*).

⁶³ Kane notes that *conseyuede* “is shown to be original by the homœographs of TH²HN and the attempts of MH³ and J to produce equivalents. The word means ‘receive into the mind, grasp and apprehend’, as at IX 48 below (see *NED* s.v. *Conceive* v. 9); the knight’s speech which follows is parallel to line 35 but not governed by its verb, and *þise* of line 35 refers to Piers’s speech in lines 26–34” (*A Version*, p. 446). Schmidt notes, in less detail, “On intrinsic grounds, *conseyuede* is unlikely to be a scribal [substitution] for *comsed*” (Schmidt, *Parallel-Text*, II, p. 361).

⁶⁴ Russell-Kane and Schmidt both inexplicably choose the DM reading as archetypal; the overwhelming manuscript support from both the *i*-group and *p*-group of C, however, suggest the majority reading is archetypal, and the DM reading may be independent correction from A.

discussed by Kane, to add words for increased emphasis or clarity.⁶⁵ The interpretation of *panne* as scribal is supported by the use of *panne* in JEZ (but not *comsede* in JE), which likely represents coincidental convergence with B and further demonstrates the scribal impulse to add the alliterating adverb to this line. If we were to postulate, with Robert Adams, that the A manuscripts were corrupted by the post archetypal B reading, we must wonder why each scribe of TH²HNZ chose to import *comsede* without its modifying adverb, *panne*, while JE imported *panne* without *comsede*. The theory of A > B error provides a much simpler explanation. There were, perhaps, two variant readings in the A tradition, the original *conseyuede*, and the scribal derivative *comsede*; both were subject to further scribal error within the A tradition, producing *þen/þoo conseyuede* JE and *þen comseth* Z. The TH²HNZ error *comsede* was subsequently carried into B, which added *panne*, just as JEZ did independently in the A tradition, an error that was later carried into Cx.

A similar scribal substitution seems to lie behind the progression of error in the following reading:

A VIII.28	And make mesonis deux þerewiþ myseis[e] to helpe
LAZ	myseyse to helpe] myseise men to helpe
B VII.26	myseise folk helpe
C IX.30	myseyse men fynde

In the original A reading *myseise to helpe*, LAZ here corrupts to *myseise men to helpe*. The reading *myseyse men* is also present in Cx, though the end of the line is revised in C, leaving *myseyse men fynde*. In Bx, however, the line becomes *myseise folk helpe*, dropping the *to* and

⁶⁵ Kane notes the scribal tendency for “addition or substitution designed to produced a more explicit statement” (*A Version*, p. 131). Schmidt allows *panne* to stand in brackets, presumably because of its attestation in Z (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 273). Kane, however, emends *panne* out of the line, as does Mícheál Vaughan, in his edition of A, *Piers Plowman: The A Version* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). For a similar example, see the agreement: B III.104/[C revised] kyng þanne: A III.93 king] kyng þan JAK(HM). This variant similarly adds *panne*, presumably to make the line more intelligible.

changing *men* to *folk*.⁶⁶ It seems unlikely that the LAZ reading *men* could have been contaminated from C without any of the manuscripts importing the C ending *fynde*. It is even more improbable that LAZ were contaminated from B, which would necessitate that *folke* was independently altered to *men* in each manuscript and thus agreed coincidentally with C. What seems most likely, then, is that the scribal LAZ reading reflects the scribal reading transmitted to the ur-B; the reading *men to helpe* was subsequently altered to *folk* in Bx, presumably by a scribe who noticed and tried to fix the over-alliteration in the line. The C reviser, however, consulted a pre-archetypal copy before the secondary alteration to *folk*, thus preserving the original error *men*, but revising the end of the line. Thus Cx preserves the (A)/ur-B reading, but Bx departs in a new scribal lection.

Finally, the progression of certain variant readings can be deduced from an apparent misunderstanding of sense, as in the following lection:

A II.151†	But prikede forþ on his palfray & passide hem alle
VHJWNM	forþ on his palfray] on his palfray
B II.190	his palfrey
C II.204	forþ on pacience

In this line, in which Soothness rides ahead of Mede to the King's court, the majority of A manuscripts read "prikede forþ on his palfray," while VHJWNM omit *forþ*. The B tradition also omits *forþ on*, uniformly reading "prikede his palfrey." This appears to be a progression of error that may result from a scribal misunderstanding of the sense of the line. If we take the majority reading "prikede forþ on his palfray" as archetypal (as all previous editors have done), *prikede*, in the original A line reads in the MED's sense 4b., "Of a horse: to gallop" (i.e., "Soothness galloped forth on his horse"). The loss of the adverb *forth* in VHJWNM

⁶⁶ Schmidt takes the attestation of Z to indicate that the reading *men* was "possibly lost from A," but notes that "the sense of Ax is unexceptionable," and thus refrains from emendation (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 372).

does not change the meaning of the line and retains the original sense. This variant, however, seems to have inadvertently caused a further corruption in B, which interpreted the preposition *on* to indicate the horse as the object of the verb, rendering the lection in the MED's sense 4a. "To urge (a beast) with a goad [...] spur on."⁶⁷ It thus omits *on* for the simpler reading *prikede his palfray* (i.e., "Soothness pricked [i.e., urged] his horse").⁶⁸ So the line thus offers an example of progressive error from A to B, in which a small variant reading in the A tradition was carried over and further corrupted in B. The problem with this example, however, is the C lection, which uses the original Ax reading, *prykede forth on*. For Russell and Kane, this would indicate that the Ax reading was present in ur-B, and only later corrupted in Bx. Yet, there is another possibility, which Russell-Kane do not take into consideration, that the C reviser had access to a better copy of A than was used in the B revision.⁶⁹ It is obvious that this line received some conscious revision in C, which changes *forth on his palfrey* to *forth on pacience*. Thus, the C reviser, could have belatedly recognized the error that had been carried into and developed in the B text and revised back to the Ax reading.

While I hope to have here presented some reasonable points of conjecture for the direction of error, these readings must ultimately remain a matter of subjective

⁶⁷ This functions similarly to the MED's sense 2 "To cause a pricking sensation, produce a sharp pain." See, for example, the MED entry from *Agnus Castus* (Stockholm, Royal Library, 10.90) 146/24: "Caspere... **prykkyth on** þe tunge quoso byteth þer-on."

⁶⁸ Cf. the later depiction in the B version of Religion as "A **prikere on a palfrey** fro [place] to Manere" (B X.313). This line shares the same lexical ambiguity, in which the "prikere" could either be "one who gallops [on a horse]" to "one who *urges on* [a horse]," though the sense of direction in the second stave here provides some useful context absent in A.II.151/B.II.190.

⁶⁹ For Russell and Kane, there was very little reason to distinguish between Ax and ur-B, as they believed them to use essentially the same readings. If we postulate that ur-B already had scribal variations away from Ax, however, a Cx lection that agrees with Ax may be different than ur-B.

interpretation.⁷⁰ The best argument for the theory of B revision from a scribal A manuscript remains the overwhelming persistence of (A)B agreement demonstrated above, and the theory's ability to provide a more plausible and simple explanation for this agreement than Brewer's or Adams's argument. If the direction of error suggested for these lections is accurate, however, then they would represent readings in transition, erroneous readings in A directly causing new erroneous readings in B and C, and would thus further support the theory that Langland revised from a scribal A manuscript. This would not necessarily mean that the secondary errors were made by Langland himself in his revision, but could have been made later by an archetypal or pre-archetypal scribe. What the final example above clearly demonstrates, however, is that in order to substantiate fully the theory of a corrupt ur-B, we must examine not only the (A)B readings, but also their effect on the C-text revision. In pursuing their argument that the C reviser used a scribally corrupt copy of the B text, Kane-Donaldson present 117 scribal readings in BC where A reads what appears to be an authorial lection.⁷¹ Throughout the section, they proceed to show convincingly why these readings are indeed scribal in contrast to the authorial Ax reading. What is problematic with this analysis, however, is that the A readings used to contrast the BC lections are drawn from Kane's edited text and are not necessarily representative of all A manuscripts. Indeed, out of the 117 examples given, 61 readings are attested in more than one A manuscript in Kane's textual apparatus:

B.Prol.22/C.Prol.24 And wonnen: **A.Prol.22** Wonne] and wonnen UW.
B.Prol.26/C.Prol.28 ful: **A.Prol.26** ful RUCH²VHJEZ. **B.Prol.31/C.Prol.33** chosen:
A.Prol.31 hem to] *om.* H²VHKLWMZ. **B.Prol.42/C.Prol.43** Faiteden: **A.Prol.42** Flite

⁷⁰ This is, of course, a perennial problem in textual criticism more generally; in order to evaluate readings qualitatively one must make subjective assumptions, which means we must accept uncertainty to some degree, while attempting to provide the most convincing explanation possible.

⁷¹ Kane-Donaldson, *B Version*, pp. 99–103.

panne] Fayteden HM(JZW). **B.Prol.72/C.Prol.71** wordes: **A.Prol.69** speche] wordys
 MZ. **B.I.63/C.I.59** wight: **A.I.61†** wy] wizt ChKWHRVJ(E)M. **B.I.80/C.I.77** And
 preide; **A.I.78†** Preizede] And preied ChVEJK. **B.I.89/C I.85** And doob: **A.I.87†**
 Dob] & doþ H(EJ). **B.I.185/C I.181** Iugged: **A.I.159†** joynide] Iugyd
 RUJKLNW(A)M. **B.II.139/C.II.155** And: **A.II.103†** For] And M. **B.II.160/C II.176**
 bad hem alle: **A.II.124** alle] bad hem alle MZ. **B.II.193/C.II.207** Now by: **A.II.154**
 Be] Now by UVHN. **B.III.31/C.III.34** do calle: **A.III.30†** callen] do callen NJK(W).
B.III.38/C.III.40 boþe: **A.III.37** ichone] boþe HNM. **B.III.64/C.III.68** god] god to:
A.III.53† god] god to VHJLEAKWNM. **B.III.127/C.III.127** houses and the homes:
A.III.88† hous] houses and þe homes VHJLAKNM. **B.III.106/C.III.134** Vnwittily
 womman: **A.III.95** Vnwittily wy] vnwittily womman N(LZ); **B.III.122/C.III.159** For
 she: **A.III.111†** She] For sche UH²HM. **B.III.123/C.III.160** And: **A.III.112†** She] And
 EAM. **B.III.126/C.III.163** And lereþ: **A.III.115†** Leriþ] And lereþ W.
B.III.140/C.III.178 And; top and: **A.III.129** Heo] And EM. top] top and
 RUCHVHLJKEWNM†. **B.III.182/C.III.228** also. **A.III.169†** ek] also HWN.
B.IV.57/C.IV.60 and bereþ: **A.IV.44†** beriþ] and beryþ RHJUVEAW.
B.IV.140/C.IV.137 in: **A.IV.123†** at] in JEAKNM. **B.IV.145/C.IV.142** þis:
A.IV.128† it þe] þis VHEAM. **B.V.9/C.V.109** And þanne. **A.V.9†** þanne] & þan M.
B.V.21/C.V.123 ful **A.V.21†** wel] ful VHEAM. **B.V.31/C.V.133** half (a); **A.V.31** a]
 half NZ. **B.V.47/C.V.145** stewardus: **A.V.39** stede] stedes JEKN. **B.V.200/C.VI.208**
 loke] wayte: **A.V.116** loke] wayte AMH³. **B.V.342/C.VI.400** his: **A.V.190†** þe(2)] his
 LNM. **B.V.445/C.VII.59** synnes: **A.V.217†** synne] synnes VHJKLEANMH³.
B.V.525/C.VII.170 first: **A.VI.13** faire] furst ZH³. **B.V.531/C.VII.175** helþe
 HmGCotMRF: **A.VI.19** hele] helthe JLN. **B.V.541/C.VII.186** to sowe: **A.VI.29†**
 sowe] to sowe ChVHAWMH³. **B.V.585/C.VII.232** as cler: **A.VI.72†** cler] as cler
 RUDJLWH³. **B.V.596/C.VII.244** men: **A.VI.83** man] men RVLEM.
B.V.612/C.VII.264 bienfetes: **A.VI.98** bienfait] benefetys VJWH³Z.
B.V.621/C.VII.273 hise: **A.VI.107†** hire] his LENMH³. **B.V.623/C.VII.275** ful:
A.VI.109 wel] ful VEWMH³. **B.V.628/C.VII.281** ful: **A.VI.113** wel] ful VEKMH³.
B.VI.33/C.VIII.32 þanne comsed: **A.VII.35** conseyuede] comsede H²HN(Z).
B.VI.94/C.VIII.103 his masse: **A.VII.86** mynde] his masse AMH³(Z).
B.VI.122/C.VIII.129 legges: **A.VII.114†** leg] legges VHJKLANMH³.
B.VI.186/C.VIII.182 potful: **A.VII.174†** potel] potful VJLKWN. **B.VI.94/C.VIII.103**
 his masse: **A.VII.86** mynde] his masse AMH³(Z). **B.VI.114/C.VIII.121** He sholde:
A.VII.106† Shulde] He schulde VM. **B.VI.292/C.VIII.315** peple þo: **A.VII.276†**
 peple] peple þan WN. **B.VII.58/C.IX.53** ful: **A.VIII.59** wel] ful ChH²NH³Z.
B.VII.67/C.IX.63 but if: **A.VIII.69** but] but 3if RJZ. **B.VII.105/C.IX.185** hertes:
A.VIII.87† herte] hertes VHAMH³. **B.VII.151/C.IX.300** Piers þe Plowman:
A.VIII.132 peris loue þ. p.] peris þe plouzman KM. **B.VII.189/C.IX.335** ye:
A.VIII.167† þou] 3e ChVJWN. **B.VII.196/C.IX.342** And how: **A.VIII.174** What]
 And how AM. **B.VIII.75/C.X.73** þee þis: **A.IX.66** þe] þe þis RUDVK(A)W.
B.VIII.86/C.X.83 and louelich: **A.IX.77** louelich] and louelich ChR.
B.IX.178/C.X.280 ysamme] togideres: **A.X.199** ysamme] togeder ChH²KAWMH³.

This means that of the readings used to justify BC's opposition to A, more than 50% are in fact attested in some extant A manuscripts.⁷² One might argue, as do Kane-Donaldson, that the readings in A are simply convergent variation, yet if we accept the possibility that these readings were, in fact, pre-corrupted A readings present in the ur-B, then Kane-Donaldson's postulated relationship between the three versions becomes much more problematic.

If we consider the entire corpus of (A)B agreements we may gain an even fuller statistical sample of the occurrence of C agreement. Out of the 362 readings identified in this study, there are 275 readings that have comparable parallels in C. Of these 275, there are 84 lections in which Cx uses the original A reading and does not attest the corrupt (A)B agreement. In 144 instances, however, the corrupt (A)B agreement is present in the archetype of all extant C manuscripts and an additional 46 readings in which the corrupt (A)B lection is attested in two or more C manuscripts. Indeed, of these 46, about 15 are so substantially attested in C that the archetypal reading is not entirely clear. Thus, the percentage of agreements is as follows: (A)B = 84 (30%), (A)B(C) = 190 (69%). As this distribution demonstrates, interversional agreement is significantly more prevalent where it is also attested in the C text.

The most important consideration, then, for proving the theory of a pre-corrupted B text is the presence of the 84 readings in which the (A)B agreement is not attested in C. It would seem that for C to attest the authorial reading in these instances the Ax lection must have been in the C reviser's B manuscript, and thus, in the ur-B, which would mean that these (A)B errors would have to have been made later. It should be noted that most of the 84

⁷² Kane and Donaldson do acknowledge these agreements (*B Version*, p. 101), but see no purpose in discussing their occurrence further, instead using the presence of BC readings in minority A manuscripts to illustrate "the positively scribal character of the BC readings" (p. 101).

(A)B agreements against AC are relatively minor variations, and could plausibly be attributed to convergent variation. So it is theoretically plausible that all (A)B agreements where C differs are due to coincidental error, and this would not necessarily cast any doubt on the other agreements as having been present in ur-B. This seems somewhat too easy and convenient a solution, however, and it cannot be denied that there are at least some substantive (A)B readings against AC,⁷³ which would make it less easily explainable as convergent variation. If we are to posit that at least some of these readings were present in the B reviser's A manuscript, we must explain why they have not been included in C. The answer may lie in the B > C revision. As postulated above, it is possible that, in certain cases, the C reviser consulted a better copy of the A version than the one used for B's composition and used it to revise C back to the Ax reading.⁷⁴ Such emendation in the C reviser's text would be supported by the existing evidence of corrective revision. Russell-Kane identify numerous examples of corruption in the B text that have been revised in C, suggesting that this represents the conscious reaction of the C reviser to an unsatisfactory text.⁷⁵ Such revision of scribal error to new readings in C is easily identified. The problem, however, is that if, at other points, the C reviser emended erroneous lections back to their original Ax reading, the revision would be invisible. That is, since the reading would agree with the

⁷³ E.g., **B.III.210** mede to men: **A.III.197** hise men mede] meede to men VH. **B.III.223** *Divided after* Mede: **A.III.210** *Divided after* mede DEM. **B.V.190** *Divided after* baberlipped; eizen as a blynd hagge: **A.V.109** *Divided after* baberlypped RDEAMH³; eizen] eyn as a blynd hagge AMH³. **B.V.217** barly malt: **A.V.133** barly] barly malt JN. **B.V.303** Hastow ou3t in þi purs: **A.V.153** Hast þou] hast þou ou3t in þy pors HV(ULJA). **B.V.532** corsaint: **A.VI.20** corsaint quap þei] quap þei om. VNMZ. **B.VI.210** of þee: **A.VII.196** 3if þou wifest] of the KW.

⁷⁴ Charlotte Brewer suggests a similar scenario, questioning Kane-Donaldson's assumption that Langland "revised his poem from A to B to C in a logical and consecutive way, never, for instance, going back to an A reading for his C version, having written something different from B" ("Authorial vs. Scribal Writing," p. 69).

⁷⁵ Russell-Kane, *C Version*, pp. 72–75. In their discussion of the C revision, Kane-Donaldson similarly remark that the C reviser "visibly reacted to many of the readings which we, for distinct modern editorial reasons, have identified as archetypally corrupt in B" (p. 125).

original A version, we would have no reason to think that it was ever corrupted in B. Instead, we would assume at all points, as we have done, that the Ax reading was passed to C through ur-B, and any B errors were made later in the archetype. If we use the comparison of minority A readings, however, this transmission becomes clearer.

Upon comparison of the (A)B lections, there is some evidence to suggest this kind of retrospective emendation in the C revision. In many cases, the lines in which (A)B agree in an erroneous reading where C attests the Ax reading occur in relative proximity to one another, as in the following lines:

A II.8, 9; A II.151, 154, 159, 161; A II.186, 190, 197; A III.6, 11; A III.126, 130; A III.197, 207, 209, 210, 211, 216; A V.131, 133; A VII.142, 143, 144; A VII.191, 196; A IX.92, 100.

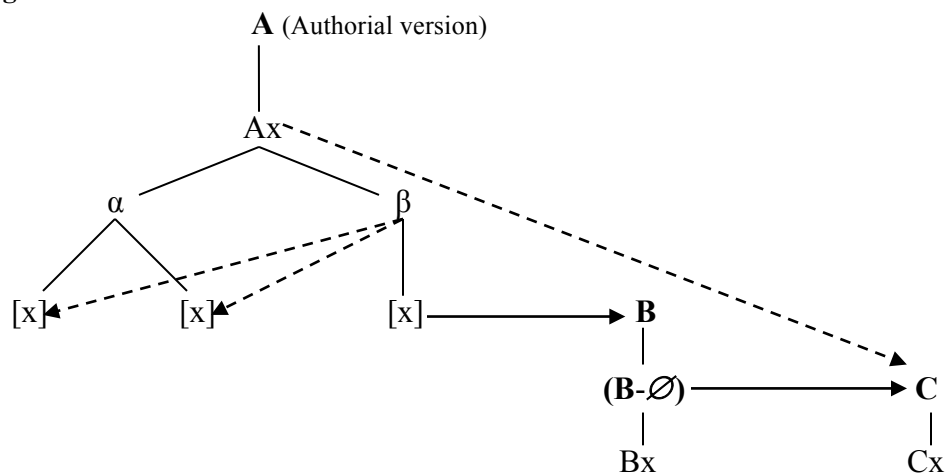
The fact that these readings often occur in clusters may indicate that the C reviser was periodically spot-checking his B-text exemplar against a better manuscript of A and noting the errors made in the proximate lines. Thus, we have groups of lines in which the corrupt (A)B reading has been revised back to the original authorial A lection in the C text. Such sporadic revision is consistent with the general process of C-text revision, which seems to have paid more attention to the details of the text, but was also sporadic and inconsistent.⁷⁶

Despite this textual scrutiny, for the C reviser to have identified every corrupt reading

⁷⁶ Russell notes, “The evidence of the text does not seem to me to indicate that the process of revision was of [an] orderly or systematic kind. One might even suggest that it was sporadic; that it had certain points of departure which were, presumably, points of dissatisfaction and that, while the revising activity might be intense at these points and might continue through relatively long passages, quite large stretches of the poem were left to stand and may, indeed, never have received close scrutiny since the need for revision did not represent itself to the reviser” (“Some Aspects of the Process of Revision,” in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 27–49 (pp. 39–40)). In an earlier discussion of the physical processes behind the C-text revision, Russell notes that the C reviser did not revise by rewriting the whole poem from beginning to end. Instead, he “took his scribally produced copy of B- and amended its lines, struck out some passages, transposed others and inserted others—sometimes by means of marginal additions, sometimes by means of slips attached to appropriate parts of his manuscript” (“Evolution of a Poem,” p. 43).

introduced into the B text seems entirely impractical.⁷⁷ In most cases, if the C reviser noticed that a lection was inadequate, he seems to have revised the line rather than restoring it to its original reading. If we add this theory of C revision to the diagram presented in Fig. 3, this revisionary transmission would be formulated as follows:

Fig. 4



Such progressive revision within the C tradition may also be evidenced by the 46 instances in which the C manuscripts are split between the Ax reading and the (A)B reading.⁷⁸ This split is frequently divided between the C version's two textual families, known as the *i*-group (XYHJP²D²[BOLUD]) and the *p*-group (PERMVAQSFKGNZW[TChH²]), as in the following instances:

⁷⁷ Russell suggests that “no medieval author in the alliterative tradition would have felt sufficiently strongly about the minutiae of his line structure to attempt a word-by-word check of his manuscript” (“The Evolution of a Poem,” p. 11). While I would be reticent to agree with this generalizing statement, there are a number of practical constraints that would make such revision impractical or even impossible for a medieval author.

⁷⁸ It has already been noted that Kane and Donaldson based their argument for the corruption of Bx on instances where the archetypal B reading differed from AC. The editors cite 152 readings in which AC agree in an apparently authorial lection where Bx appears to use a scribal reading (*B Version*, pp. 78–82). Of these 152 scribal readings of Bx in opposition to AC, 49 lections are attested in some A manuscripts. In a further 15 out of these 49 readings, the (A)B agreement is also present in some C manuscripts; and 10 of these (A)B(C) readings are attested in five or more manuscripts of the C text, thus constituting substantial witness. This means that some of the corrupt Bx readings that Kane-Donaldson cite in opposition to AC are, in fact, found in manuscripts of both A and C.

B.Prol.2 shroudes (C.Prol.2 shroudes XP²UK): **A.Prol.2** a shroud] schroudes DH²L(W)Z. **B.Prol.41** breed ful (C.Prol.42 bretful] bredful PA): **A.Prol.41**† bratful] bred ful RUDE. **B.Prol.73** bulles (C.Prol.71 bulles XP²OLBDPERMVAQSFN): **A.Prol.70** bulle] bulles RHKM. **B.Prol.84** parisshe (paryschenes HmF) (C.Prol.82 parsches/parischenes XURVQPLEMOBDS): **A.Prol.81** parisshe] paryschenes (H²)URHK. **B.Prol.213** poundes (C.Prol.163 XP²OLBUDPERMVASFG[N]): **A.Prol.86** poundide] poundes DH²VLWZM. **B.I.99** And dide (C.I.103 And dede OLBPERMVAQSFN): **A.I.97**† Dide] & did RJK. **B.I.182** yow sent (C.I.178 zou sent XOLBDGN[J]): **A.I.156** sent] zou sent LZ(EA). **B.II.3** þat blisful (C.II.3 þat blissful JLDMN): **A.II.3** þe] þat RHLAZ. blissede] blisful U(1)ChVHLANZH². **B.II.10** wiþ (C.II.11 with XUDFGN): **A.II.10**† in] wiþ UDChVHLEAKNM. **B.II.20** quod she haþ (C.II.19 quath hue hath (PER)MVAQSFN): **A.II.16** haþ] quad he hath Z (quop heo þat haþ HV[M]). **B.II.128** it boþe (C.II.144 hit bothe XJP²U): **A.II.92** boþe] it boþe HKE. **B.II.202** and lat (C.II.216 and lete PE): **A.II.163**† let] & let JNEA. **B.II.224** chirches (C.II.234 churches PEVAQSFKN): **A.II.183** chirche] chirches ChJKNZWV. **B.III.30** to (C.III.31 to XYJP²UDF): **A.III.29** hem(2)] to VJL. **B.III.63** seye (C.III.67 sey DGN): **A.III.52** se] sey HVWM. **B.III.78** and pynyng (C.III.79 and pynyng P²SG): **A.III.67**† & on pynyng] on om. UNM. **B.III.98** brenne (C.III.126 brenne P²RAGF): **A.III.87**† forbrenne] brenne VHLJEAWM. **B.III.117** To wite what (C.III.152 To wite what PERMVAQSFKN): **A.III.106** What þat] to wite what HLW. **B.III.162** she (C.III.200 she YPERMVAQSFK): **A.III.151**† he] sche UChJWENM(VHL). **B.IV.106** liztly lauþen (C.IV.101 lihtliche lawen XYJP²UDRMVAQSFK): **A.IV.93** liztly away lauþen] away om. UHWN. **B.IV.108** my (C.IV.103 my XYJUD): **A.IV.95**† þe] my JANM. **B.IV.131** Vpon (C.IV.128 Vp] Vpon RMN): **A.IV.114**† Vpe] Vpon HEKVA. **B.IV.131** whoso (C.IV.128 ho] whoso DPERMVAQSFKN): **A.IV.114**† who] who so HJKNEAM. **B.V.21** ful (C.V.123 ful YJUDERMVAQSFKN): **A.V.21**† wel] ful VHEAM. **B.V.208** liser (C.VI.216 lyser YJUPERVAQSFKN): **A.V.124** list] leser RNWH³. **B.V.214** Spynnesteres (C.VI.222 spynnesteres XYJP²UPEVAQSFKN): **A.V.130** spynstere] spinsteres WNVHEAJMH³. **B.V.514** bankes (C.VII.159 banckes RSFN): **A.VI.2** baches] bankes EA. **B.V.526** oure lordes Sepulcre (C.VII.171 sepulcre of our lord XYJUD): **A.VI.14** sepulcre] sepulcre of oure lord KAH³Z. **B.V.533** he (C.VII.178 he P²G): **A.VI.21**† wy] he RUDVHJW. **B.V.567** Til (C.VII.214 Til PERMVAQF): **A.VI.54**† Forto] Til WN(M). **B.V.612** bienfetes (C.VII.264 beenfetes XYJP²UDN): **A.VI.98** bienfait] benefetys VJWH³Z. **B.VI.20** to werche (C.VIII.18 to worch DPERMVAQKGN): **A.VII.22**† werche] to werche EAH³. **B.VI.33** þanne comsed (C.VIII.32 thenne comsed XYJP²UPERVAQSK): **A.VII.35** conseuede] comsede TH²HNZ. **B.VI.76** take (C.VIII.78 tak P²UD): **A.VII.68** asken] taken RV. **B.VI.92** catel (C.VIII.101 catel PERVAQSKGN): **A.VII.84**† my catel] my om. VEKW. **B.VII.175** passed (C.IX.320 passed YUDPERMVQFKG): **A.VIII.153** passip] passed UJKWNVAM. **B.VII.182** forbode (C.IX.328 forbode PVQFKGN): **A.VIII.160** forbade] forbode JM. **B.VII.186** Is noþt (C.IX.332 Is nat PERMVAQFKGN): **A.VIII.164** It is not] It om. UDVJAWN. **B.VIII.39** to þe (C.X.45 to þe UP[P²DEMVAQZFKGN]): **A.IX.35** þe(2)] to þe RUDAW(J). **B.VIII.75** þee þis (C.X.73 the this XYJUDPERMVAQFKZ): **A.IX.66** þe] þe þis RUDVK(A)W. **B.VIII.119** were war (C.X.115 were ywar PEMZFVAQSNR): **A.IX.109** ywar were]

were war UAV. **B.IX.3** is it (**C.X.130** is hit XYUNN²): **A.X.3** it is] is hit DKW. **B.IX.26** is a (**C.X.152** is a DRMS): **A.X.27** is] is a ChAWM. **B.IX.192** ilke derne dede (**C.X.292** derne dede PERMVAQSZFKGN): **A.X.205** dede derne] derne dede RUDJKW. **B.X.3** me þus (**C.XI.3** me so [so me]): **A.XI.3** so] me þus VJKMH³. **B.X.55** and taken (**C.XI.36** and taken PERMVAQSFG): **A.XI.41** take] & take ChKJM. **B.X.150** þe while (**C.XI.88** þe while XYJUDPEVAQZKGN): **A.XI.102** while] the while (TH²)KM.

The (A)B reading almost always aligns with the *p*-group, which has traditionally been treated as the less authoritative family.⁷⁹ It could potentially be argued that this simply indicates that some A manuscripts were contaminated from the *p*-group of C. Yet, there are also some (A)B readings attested in the *i*-group, and some that span both groups. In fact, at several points the C manuscripts attesting (A)B readings are so strongly attested that the archetypal reading is uncertain.

Similar to the readings presented above, there are imperfect agreements of (A)(C) with Bx, which may again point to a linear A > B > C progression. The textual divide between the *i*-group and *p*-group, moreover, may be the result of rolling revision in the C tradition. As Russell-Kane established, the C reviser's corrupted copy of B was pre-archetypal, and thus, not exactly equivalent to Bx. In the following instances, the reading in Bx appears to err further from the (A)(C) agreement, suggesting that the corrupt A reading was present in the B text before being integrated into C:

A VI.14	'Fro synay,' he seide, '& fro þe sepulcre
KAH ³ Z	sepulcre] sepulcre of oure lord
B V.526	oure lordes Sepulcre
C VII.171	sepulcre] sepulcre of our lord XYJUD

⁷⁹ As Lawrence Warner has recently suggested, our assumptions about the corruption of the *p*-group may be somewhat overstated, as Russell-Kane identified only about 10% more corruption in the *p*-group than in the *i*-group (*The Myth of Piers Plowman: Constructing a Medieval Literary Archive* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 41). Indeed, Russell and Kane are similarly cautious in naming X and its family more authoritative than that of P, calling it "the better of the two less-than-ideal options" (*B Version*, p. 176).

Here KAH³Z add “sepulcre of oure lord” to the end of the original A line, which resembles a common scribal tendency to express the line more fully and regularize alliteration.⁸⁰ The corruption is found in its exact form in the *i*-group manuscripts XYJUD of the C tradition. The Bx reading, however, is an inversion of the reading found in minority A and C. For this reading, it is again possible to argue that these agreements are a result of contamination, as does Schmidt.⁸¹ If we follow a reasonable line of causality, however, this agreement is more easily explainable if the erroneous A reading was present in the original B version. As we can see, the (A)(C) reading is closer to the authorial reading, simply appending the phrase “of oure lord” to the end of the line. The Bx reading, “oure lordes Sepulcre,” however, is more thoroughly corrupted and characterized by Schmidt as “clumsy,”⁸² yet still conveys the same attribution of the sepulchre in the original line to *oure lord*. Rather than these variants simply manifesting independently in Bx and minority C, it seems more probable that this reading was already in the original B version, a reading which Bx further corrupted. This reading was subsequently carried into C and eventually revised back to the Ax reading, leaving a split attestation in C. The second reading shows the same agreement of minority A with some C manuscripts of the C text:

A X.205	Pat dede derne do no man ne shulde
RUDJKW	dede derne] derne dede
B IX.192	ilke derne dede
C X.292	dede derne] derne dede PERMVAQSZFKGN

⁸⁰ Schmidt notes that “The harder reading is undoubtedly *þe sǣpúlcre*, which is allusive and has a metrical pattern paralleled in 4.172, 7.70, 20.158, 21.331, while the expanded one gives a rhythm that is uncharacteristic” (*Parallel-Text*, II, p. 358).

⁸¹ For this variant, Schmidt notes that “K may show [contamination] from a C copy of the x-type, AH³ influence from the Bx tradition (which here however has unmetrical form). If Z has [contamination], it is more probably from C” (*Ibid.*, p. 358). Considering that KAH³Z all use exactly the same reading, however, there is no indication of how or why the editor distinguishes different sources of contamination.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 358.

Here the original “dede derne” has been inverted to “derne dede” in RUDJKW, a reading also found in all *p*-group manuscripts of C.⁸³ The Bx reading also retains the inversion, but adds the unnecessary *ilke*, in a common scribal motive to add emphasis to the line. Here again, we see the minority A reading being carried on in the C tradition and further corrupted in Bx. Although the inversion of this phrase may have happened coincidentally in all three traditions, the evidence for scribal B revision that we have seen thus far may give some cause to suspect that the occurrence of the error in numerous manuscripts of A, B, and C is due to the reading having been passed through the ur-B.

This occurrence of both Ax and (A)B readings together in the C tradition may indicate that there were several stages of revision in the early composition of C. If the C reviser did, as I have argued, correct his text against a good copy of A, he may have done so after having initially composed C with the scribal errors in his B manuscript. Thus, the readings in the *i*-group that appear more authoritative because they agree with Ax may in fact reflect a second stage of revision, in which the C reviser corrected back to the A reading. This is only speculative, however, and the process by which such contamination might have occurred could only be decided by a thorough rendering of the C archetype, as Burrows and Turville-Petre have done for Bx. What is clear is that the division between the three versions that has traditionally been upheld is insufficient to explain the anomalies of the manuscript tradition, and, just as in the relationship between A and B, the C tradition shows a greater diversity of agreement than has thus far been acknowledged.

⁸³ Schmidt affirms the word order *dede derne* as the harder reading and thus, “to be discriminated as the probable original in A” (Ibid., p. 386).

IV. Implications and Conclusions

As this study has argued, the presiding assumptions about the revision of *Piers Plowman* need to be reconsidered. The textual evidence of the (A)B agreements suggests that the famously corrupt Bx readings may have already been present in the A tradition before Langland carried them over into his B revision, a conclusion that would have extremely important implications for our understanding of the B text. Rather than an archetypal scribe having corrupted Langland's ur-B, the B text itself was instead composed on top of pre-existent scribal error, which is now preserved in Bx and some A manuscripts. While I contend that a great majority of the readings attested in these (A)B agreements are scribal corruptions, I am not averse to the notion that at least some of them may be the product of "rolling revision" by the author within the A tradition that were carried into B, as, in a number of trivial variations, it is difficult to determine if the variation was scribal or authorial.⁸⁴ While it is certainly possible that Langland's revisions at times created weaker, seemingly scribal readings, among the 362 agreements, there are far too many demonstrable cases of scribal activity to be explained in any substantial way as poor authorial revision.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The term "rolling revision" refers to the possibility that the author was perpetually making smaller, incidental revisions to his text in addition to the major revisionary states of the poem. Ralph Hanna discusses rolling revision in the B text, noting that "even after B version 'publication', but before embarking on the major overhaul that produced the C version, Langland continued to tinker" ("Versions of *Piers Plowman*," pp. 222–23). This kind of perpetual authorial tinkering is attested in other contemporary English works (see Derek Pearsall, "Authorial Revision in Some Late-Medieval English Texts," in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. Minnis and Brewer, pp. 39–48). Charlotte Brewer argues for the possibility that in such progressive revisions Langland's literary quality may have varied, thus producing both stronger and weaker readings ("Authorial vs. Scribal Writing," p. 69).

⁸⁵ I would caution the editor of *Piers Plowman*, as Hanna does in the case of Chaucer, not to be overly hasty in the pursuit of "authorial" revision, as scribal variation can often be more complex than simple mechanical error (Ralph Hanna, "Authorial Versions, Rolling Revision, Scribal Error? Or, the Truth about 'Truth'," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 10 (1988), 23–40 (p. 39–40)). In discussing Kane-Donaldson's emendation of Bx, Thorlac Turville-Petre remarks on the impossibility, in many

The later recognition during the C revision of the corruption inherent in the B tradition and the large-scale emendation that took place suggests that there was something recognizably alien about the *usus scribendi* of these readings.

While the historical circumstances of *Piers*'s production must still remain somewhat a matter of conjecture, this perspective on Langland's revisionary process can offer some important new ways of understanding this early history. As both Ralph Hanna and Robert Adams have noted, the lateness of the A-text manuscripts suggests the possibility that the A version was not formally "published" until after the release of the B text, when the popularity of B caused the earlier version to be recognized. Hanna argues that "The most plausible explanation of the transmissional A evidence is that, authorially, there is nothing like an A version, and that what we possess derives from an in-progress draft," which, Hanna proposes, originally circulated in a London coterie of legal, royal, and parliamentary readers before its release to the general public.⁸⁶ If the text was distributed to a London coterie, moreover, we might reasonably expect Langland to have circulated one or more scribal copies rather than his own loose papers, especially if his readers were of a generally high social standing. If the extensive textual corruption that has been identified in this study pre-dates the composition of B, however, there may be cause to speculate that the A version had a wider circulation in the fourteenth century than has previously been imagined. Previous arguments about the late release of the A text are primarily based on the lateness of the A manuscripts; yet, as we

cases, of determining a scribal variant from an authorial revision, "Review of *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. Kane-Donaldson," *Studia Neophilologica*, 49 (1977), 153–55 (p. 154).

⁸⁶ Ralph Hanna, "Versions of *Piers Plowman*," p. 236. For a similar argument, see Ralph Hanna, *William Langland* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), pp. 23–24. Adams even more strongly emphasizes the late release of the A to support his theory that A manuscripts were later contaminated by B ("Editing *Piers Plowman B*," p. 62).

know, the dating of extant manuscripts cannot be a valid way of dating the release of a text.⁸⁷ Yet there is also no reason to think that a small coterie circulation, as Hanna proposes, would preclude the text being subject to scribal copying, and correspondingly, scribal (or even authorial) error. Daniel Wakelin discusses the early process of transmission from working drafts to fair copies, which would presumably have been copied in order to “issue the work in authoritative form.”⁸⁸ Yet, as Wakelin points out, even if the author were to copy the text himself, the fair copy is “still susceptible to errors and to corrections much like those found in other manuscripts.”⁸⁹ Other errors, as Christopher Cannon has recently suggested, may have arisen from oral transmission, with the author dictating from memory to early scribes.⁹⁰ It is possible that when Langland came to compose the B text he no longer possessed his original papers of the A version and was thus forced to consult a scribally corrupt manuscript of A for the first eleven passūs of B. As the evidence presented above would indicate, the author chose not to emend minor variations from his own *usus scribendi* in this scribal copy before transmitting them to his B text composition. It is possible that the generally unfinished

⁸⁷ Lawrence Warner has pointed to the generations of copying that lie behind the extant A manuscripts, suggesting that “while these ‘generations’ are stages of copying in lines of transmission rather than fixed periods of time, it takes time for manuscripts to be copied, travel, and find new scribes and audiences.... The wildness of the A tradition’s textual record alone, not to mention its impenetrable dialectal mixtures, should have put the restraint upon all the rhetoric about its supposedly late circulation” (*The Lost History of Piers Plowman: The Earliest Transmission of Langland’s Work* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 4). Simon Horobin supports this notion with a qualification: “Warner is surely correct in citing the large number of lost A copies as an objection to the claim that this version had only a late a peripheral circulation, although the dialect mixing first observed by Samuels need not necessarily imply the extensive period of copying and transmission he assumes” (p. 207).

⁸⁸ Daniel Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375–1510* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 281.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 281. For an in-depth study of such authorial error and self-correction corrections in the manuscripts of John Capgrave, see Peter J. Lucas, *From Author to Audience: John Capgrave and Medieval Publication* (University College Dublin Press, 1997).

⁹⁰ Christopher Cannon, “‘Wyth her owen handys’: What Women’s Literacy Can Teach Us about Langland and Chaucer,” *Essays in Criticism*, 66 (2016), 277–300.

state of A that Hanna postulates may have contributed to Langland's general ambivalence to its corruption.

This insight into Langland's early revisionary practices must also cause us to rethink our understanding of authorship in the poem and the role of the scribe in authorial composition. Unlike Chaucer, who prays of his book in *Troilus and Criseyde* "that non miswrite the,"⁹¹ Langland seems generally unconcerned, in this first revision, with the transformative effects of textual transmission and is willing to accept possibly erroneous scribal readings as a legitimate basis for his extended version.⁹² It would, indeed, be consistent with Langland's literary persona to imagine him more concerned with improving the theological force of the poem than improving its artistic merit at the level of the line. In considering Langland's conception of his own authorial status, we might also consider some contextual factors. As we know, Langland was revising his poem over a number of years. As examples throughout literary history up to the modern day tell us, it is entirely common for an author's style of writing to shift over the course of his or her lifetime. It is also possible that Langland was unable to remember exactly what he had written previously, a problem with which almost any writer revising multiple drafts could identify. We also know that Langland was highly mobile, having moved between the Southwest Midlands and London. Such movement may have had a linguistic effect, and it must be acknowledged that when

⁹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, Larry Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), V.1795. A similar concern with textual accuracy can be seen in the work of Thomas Hoccleve. As Daniel Wakelin has discussed, Hoccleve comments, in the *Regiment of Princes* on the importance of copying "withowten varyance" (l. 998), and is frequently found correcting his own work (*Scribal Correction*, pp. 89–90, 283–85).

⁹² For a more recent example of such an authorial perspective, we might consider the poetry of Lord Byron in the nineteenth century, whom Paul Elmer More described as "perfectly reckless" about the minor details of his poetry (*The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), p. v). For a discussion of Byron and authorship see McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, pp. 51–54.

Langland began his B revision his lexical construct could have been slightly different, making him less inclined to recover the exact readings he had previously composed.

The most pertinent question that this situation raises, however, is if scribal readings, even erroneous ones, were fundamental to the original composition of the B text itself, then with whom does the “authorship” of the *Piers Plowman* B-text actually lie? Daniel Wakelin and Matthew Fisher have both discussed, in different ways, the importance of scribal activity in the production of text and the construction of medieval authorship.⁹³ Both of these studies, however, discuss scribal authorship in relation to deliberate corrective or productive activity. In the case of *Piers Plowman*, however, we have, perhaps, a different kind of scribal authorship altogether, one that offers an important perspective on the editorial notion of *mouvance*.⁹⁴ Traditionally, *mouvance* is understood as the proliferation of various *états du texte* following the original authorial composition. Much like traditional emendation, a distinction between author and scribe is still maintained, even if scribal renderings of the text are viewed as equally valid. For all three versions of *Piers*, however, the *mouvance* of the text is not merely something that happens in the course of its transmission, but rather something that the “original” poem itself embodies. The “authorship” of the poem, then, is constituted by unconscious scribal errors, which were reconstituted by the author to form the basis of the original B version. The earliest scribes of the A text are thus inadvertently caught

⁹³ Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, pp. 277–301. Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

⁹⁴ For a discussion of *mouvance*, see Bella Millett, “*Mouvance* and the Medieval Author: Re-Editing *Ancrene Wisse*,” in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 9–20. For the original essay on the subject, see Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). A similar argument about the proliferation of variance is made by Bernard Cerquiglini in *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989). For discussions of variance and textual editing see Anne Hudson, “The Variable Text,” in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. Minnis and Brewer, pp. 49–60; and Derek Pearsall, “Variants vs. Variance,” in *Probable Truth*, ed. Gillespie and Hudson, pp. 197–205.

up in a fluid authorial process, effectively sharing the productive capacity of the author in the shaping of a text.

This blurring of the boundaries between authorial and scribal revision raises an important consideration for the editing of *Piers Plowman*. As textual critics, we must redefine the way we understand scribal error in the A and B texts, as error underpins the textual tradition at every stage, even permeating the author's own compositions.⁹⁵ If Langland was willing to carry over scribal readings into his B revision, the editorial impulse to emend "corrupt" readings in B becomes even more dubious, and we must ultimately question whether the terms "corruption" and "error" are applicable at all.⁹⁶ If Langland used these corrupt A readings in his original composition of B, then surely they must be understood as having achieved authorial (or at least authorized) status. Kane and Donaldson's editorial initiative to establish the best text that was closest to the Langlandian original may thus have obscured how scribes and ultimately the author himself treated the poem. In being editorial perfectionists, as Langland was not, we may be drawn to construct a text we think the author should have written, as opposed to the one he actually did. As this study suggests, in the A to B revision, the authorial and scribal influences may be impossible to fully separate. This, in itself, has damning implications for the Athlone editorial method, and indeed, for any attempt to discover a lost "authorial B text," since this copy may never have actually existed. The editorial problems that such a theory creates may provide some

⁹⁵ If scribal revision became intermingled with the authorial composition, then George Russell's belief in the necessity of "discriminating between a process of authoritative (and putatively authorial) revision and a process of non-authoritative (and putatively editorial or scribal) revision" becomes far more problematic (Russell, "Process of Revision," p. 30).

⁹⁶ As Kane himself admits in his discussion of archetypally corrupt A readings, "the consideration that Langland once or even twice either missed or did nothing about [erroneous A readings] gives them a kind of sanction" (Kane, *A Version*, Rev. ed., p. 463). I agree with Charlotte Brewer that Kane's statement here is a significant understatement ("Kane's Processes of Revision," p. 84).

explanation for why the Athlone editors leave the B reviser's A manuscript unexplored and why they never pursue the theory of scribal A revision. Yet this situation is also hopeful for the editor of *Piers Plowman*; it affirms that in the often-overwhelming scribal variance of the *Piers* textual tradition, we are not so distant from the "original" as it would seem. In fact, Burrow and Turville-Petre's recent edition of Bx may bring us closer to the ur-B text than the editors themselves realized, far closer, indeed, than Kane-Donaldson's laborious reconstruction. Although this chapter has postulated a now-lost copy of the A-text, it suggests that the "corruption" of the B archetype offers us a fossilized record, as it were, of such a scribal copy, which became the authorized text of B. This reminds us that, when engaging in emendation, we must investigate our own assumptions of editorial accuracy and textual authority, which may be at odds with the scribes and authors of the later Middle Ages.

Section II

Regional Circulation and
Manuscript Networks

Chapter 2

The C Version of *Piers Plowman* in the Southwest Midlands

The Southwest Midlands area has always held an important position in the history of *Piers Plowman*'s transmission. In a seminal article on Langland's authorial dialect, M. L. Samuels localized the dialect of the manuscripts of the C version to a contained region in the Southwest Midlands.¹ The dialectal affiliations that Samuels identifies in the C-text manuscripts are divided between the two textual subgroups. Samuels locates the more textually authoritative *i*-group to a small region around Malvern, and thus, very close to what he identifies as the author's own dialect. Samuels notes a similar dialect strand in the less authoritative *p*-group, which "seems to have radiated outwards from there to south-east Herefordshire, north Gloucestershire, east Warwickshire and north Oxfordshire."² Simon Horobin, however, has presented convincing evidence of London spellings in these texts, which suggest that the manuscripts of the *i*-group were, in fact, copied by London scribes.³ The increasing acceptance of provincial spellings among professional London scribes in this period, as Horobin argues, means that the *i*-group manuscripts more or less consistently

¹ M. L. Samuels, "Langland's Dialect," *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 232–47 (pp. 239–40).

² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³ A similar situation occurs in three manuscripts of the B tradition, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 814 [Bm], London, British Library, Add. MS 10574 [Bo], and British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.xi, part 2 [Cot], all copied around the turn of the fifteenth century, which "appear to derive certain of their dialectal features from a north Gloucestershire exemplar, itself presumably an intermediate copy in the chain of descent from the B-archetype" (Samuels, "Langland's Dialect," p. 241; the same argument is made in Hanna, *William Langland*, p. 40. Though it is likely that most of the B manuscripts were copied in London, the dialectal connection to North Gloucestershire may suggest that an earlier exemplar had come from this area and later been used in London.

preserved the western dialect of their mutual archetype in addition to introducing new London spellings.⁴

Horobin postulated further that “the inferior *p*-group text was exported to the West Midlands where it was disseminated exclusively within that region.”⁵ As the *p*-group lay beyond the purview of his article, however, Horobin did not pursue the argument beyond this brief conjecture. Until now, the *p*-group manuscripts have received less attention than those of the *i*-group, presumably resulting from the perception of them as being less authoritative, and thus, less textually significant, though Lawrence Warner has recently questioned the extent to which the *p*-group can be seen as more corrupt than the *i*-group.⁶ This chapter will further explore the circulation of the *p*-group and discuss its relationship to a regional distribution in the Southwest Midlands. It will treat, in particular, the extensive scribal interaction with the text of this sub-group and the kinds of collaborative processes that lay behind the production of its manuscripts. As this study will demonstrate, issues of regionality are essential to understanding *Piers*’s manuscript circulation. It will argue, moreover, that an

⁴ Simon Horobin, “In London and Opelond: The Dialect and Circulation of the C Version of *Piers Plowman*,” *Medium Ævum*, 74 (2005), 248–69. Horobin’s conclusion carried important implications for the history of the author’s movements. It had often been assumed that the concentration of C-text manuscripts in the Southwest Midlands lent evidence to the theory, originally proposed by Skeat, that Langland returned to the Malvern area later in life (e.g., James Simpson, *Piers Plowman: An Introduction to the B-Text* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), p. 4; Ralph Hanna, *William Langland*, p. 17; S. S. Hussey, “Introduction,” in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. S.S. Hussey (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 1–26 (p. 14). Horobin notes an element of circularity behind the idea that the dialect of the C-text manuscripts can be used to prove Skeat’s theory, as Skeat’s view was itself partially based in dialect evidence (“In London and Opelond,” p. 249).

⁵ Horobin “In London and Opelond,” p. 263. Horobin’s evidence that the more authoritative branch of the C version was circulating in London, however, suggested that the production of C-text manuscripts began in London and only later moved to the West Midlands, which would mean that Langland remained in London during the C text’s early dissemination. This would also be supported by Anne Middleton’s suggestion that Langland was probably in London in the late 1380s (“Acts of Vagrancy: The C Version ‘Autobiography’ and the Statute of 1388,” in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 208–317).

⁶ Lawrence Warner, *The Myth of Piers Plowman*, p. 41. Cf. Chapter 1, n. 76.

understanding of the material production of the C manuscripts in this area can elucidate the surrounding historical contexts of patronage and readership in the Southwest Midlands that may have underpinned the distribution of the *p*-group, and, more generally, the early history *Piers Plowman*'s reception.

I. The *P*-Group Manuscripts

The *p*-group, as identified by Russell and Kane, includes nine manuscripts with another five that agree inconsistently: PERMVAQSF(KGN[ZW]).⁷ All of the manuscripts in the subgroup seem to have been copied over a relatively short span of time around the turn of the fifteenth century, with the majority of the manuscripts copied before the end of the fourteenth.⁸ The dates and dialects of the *p*-group manuscripts are as follows:

- P] Huntington Library, Hm 137 (s.xiv/xv): East Monmouthshire
- E] Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 656 (s.xiv^{ex}): North Gloucestershire
- R] British Library, Royal 18 B XVII (s.xviⁱⁿ); dialect too late
- M] British Library, Cotton Vespasian B.XVI (s.xiv^{ex}): West Warwickshire
- V] Trinity College Dublin, MS 212 (s.xiv^{ex}): Northwest Gloucestershire
- A] University of London, Sterling V.17 (s.xvⁱⁿ): Worcestershire
- Q] CUL, Add. 4325 (s.xiv^{ex}): Northwest Gloucestershire
- S] Cambridge, Corpus Christi Col. MS 293 (s.xiv^{ex}): South Herefordshire
- F] CUL, Ff.5.35 (s.xv¹): Samuels says mid-Oxfordshire; possibly London(?)⁹

⁷ For a thorough discussion of the textual groupings of the C-text manuscripts see Russell and Kane, ed., *The C Version*, pp. 43–58.

⁸ There appears to here be a slight inconsistency in the linearity of the notion that the *p*-group manuscripts were transmitted to the Southwest Midlands *after* the release of the *i*-group in London. The *p*-group manuscripts show no signs of having been produced later than those of the *i*-group; almost all of the C-version manuscripts can be dated to around the turn of the century. Particularly early is the hand of manuscript G (Cambridge University Library, Dd.3.13), which may, in fact, be one of the earliest of all *Piers Plowman* manuscripts. Ian Doyle describes this hand as characteristic of the third quarter of the fourteenth century (“Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*,” p. 42). Michael Sargent calls Dd.3.13 “the earliest of all manuscripts of the poem” (“What Do the Numbers Mean? A Textual Critic’s Observations on Some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission,” in *Design and Distribution of Late-Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), pp. 205–44 (p. 223).

⁹ The online catalogue entry for this manuscript for the Late Medieval English Scribes projects says: “Almost certainly produced in same workshop as Wycliffite bibles produced in London. Same script,

K] Bodleian Library, Digby 171 (s.xiv^{ex}): Southeast Herefordshire
 G] CUL, Dd.iii.13 (s.xiv^{3/4}): border of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire
 N] British Library, MS Harley 2376 (s.xv¹): Southeast Herefordshire
 Z] Bodleian Library, Bodley 851: (Hands A and C) Worcestershire
 W] *Olim*. Univ. of York, Borthwick Institute for Archives, Add. 196 (s.xvⁱⁿ):
 Dialect inconclusive

Samuels's original proposition that these texts were copied in the Southwest Midlands is generally supported by the overall appearance of the manuscripts. As Simon Horobin observes, the *i*-group manuscripts were "drawing on similar scribes and features of *ordinatio* and layout to those employed in copies of major metropolitan writers such as Chaucer and Gower."¹⁰ In contrast, the *p*-group manuscripts appear to be quite plain and are more reminiscent of provincial book production. One feature that distinguishes the two subgroups (and which seems to have gone largely unnoticed) is the use of paraph marks, which are used in all of the *i*-group manuscripts, but are not found in any *p*-group manuscripts except for one, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian B.XVI.¹¹ This may be further indication that the *p*-group manuscripts were not copied in the capital. This is not to say, of course, that paraphs were solely characteristic of London book production, but rather that the *p*-group manuscripts do not replicate the stylistic features uniformly characteristic of the *Piers*

similar treatment of catchwords" ("Manuscript Description: Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.5.35," www.medievalscribes.com; retrieved 5 June, 2015), though no evidence is given to support this claim. To my judgment, there is nothing distinctive enough about the manuscript's decoration or *ordinatio* to make any definitive comparisons.

¹⁰ Horobin, "In London and Opeland," p. 264.

¹¹ The London *i*-group manuscripts are characterized by the use of paraphs to mark stanzaic line breaks in the text, though, unlike the B-text manuscripts, none use line breaks where these paraphs occur. The paraphs are present in all *i*-group manuscripts except for one, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102, which uses a unique format, being the only *Piers* manuscript to present the poem as prose, with no line breaks. The line breaks are, however, indicated with red strokes and, in some cases, red paraphs, which seem to indicate the same kind of stanza break as the other *i*-group manuscripts. For more on this manuscript see Simon Horobin, "The Scribe of Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102 and the Circulation of the C Text of *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 24 (2010), 89–112.

Plowman manuscripts localizable to the capital. In sum, the overall evidence does indeed point to a provincial production corresponding to their shared dialectal affiliations.

As the table above shows, the dialects of almost all the *p*-group manuscripts are similarly localizable to the Southwest Midlands. Their dialectal forms, however, while similar to the *i*-group, do not contain exactly the same Worcestershire spellings; instead, they are more characteristic of the border area between Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. This is not, of course, definitive proof that these manuscripts were actually produced or circulated in this area. As we all know, dialect can only take us so far; for instance, a scribe writing in a Midlands dialect could, theoretically, be copying in London, as Horobin showed with the *i*-group. Upon reanalyzing the dialects of the *p*-group manuscripts, however, there are none of the mixed eastern spellings that showed the *i*-group's West Midland forms to be relict. While it is possible that the *p*-group manuscripts were also being copied *literatim* in the capital, it is highly unlikely that none of the London scribes would have let even a few eastern forms into their texts.¹²

Only three manuscripts of the *p*-group use dialects that have previously been localized outside of this one contained area. I will, however, show briefly that even these three outlying manuscripts can, in fact, be linked back to this area. The first of these outlying *p*-group manuscripts to be considered is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 656, traditionally dated to the end of the fourteenth century.¹³ Laud Misc. 656 contains two of the

¹² In the absence of mixed Eastern forms we here return to the simple dialectal principle articulated by Samuels, who noted, it would be “very strange indeed if each C-MS (if written in London) had found a south-west Midland scribe” (“Langland’s Dialect,” p. 240).

¹³ The dating of Laud 656 is based primarily on its script. Overall, the descenders of the script show a pronounced curve back to the left, especially in <y> and <p>. The scribe’s <w> is particularly round, a feature that seems common in manuscripts copied earlier in the fourteenth century (e.g., British Library, MS Harley 2253 [xiv^{med}] and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Add. E. 6 [xiii^{ex}]), though round <w> does survive even into the fifteenth century, as in the hand of Thomas Hoccleve.

most popular Middle English alliterative poems, *Piers Plowman* and *The Siege of Jerusalem* (*SJ*), as well as three unpublished prose texts, *An Exposition on the Creed*, *Decem Mandata*, and *Proverbia Salomonis*.¹⁴ The manuscript, which is copied throughout by one scribe, appears to be a fairly low-grade production, written on rough parchment in a cursive *anglicana* hand with very little decoration or aesthetic consideration. The manuscript exists in two booklets, both of which are written in the same hand and appear to be consistently formatted throughout, and there is nothing to suggest that the scribe did not intend to put them together. The outer leaves of each booklet are noticeably dirty, which implies that there was a time lapse between their composition and their being put together; yet the manuscript still retains its medieval binding, which confirms that the booklets were not collocated at a much later time.¹⁵

M. L. Samuels places Laud 656 in North Oxfordshire based on eight distinct forms: *hure* (hear), *3o* (she), *myche* (much), *silf* (self), *puder* (thither), *to gadres* (together), *forzutte* (forget), and *laste* (lest).¹⁶ This North Oxfordshire localization has since been taken for granted by all subsequent manuscript descriptions. Laud 656, however, is not listed in the *Linguistic Atlas*, which suggests that the dialect localization of the manuscript is not as well grounded as it would otherwise appear. Many of the dialect features upon which Samuels bases his localization, however, are commonly attested forms, and thus, entirely unhelpful. Rather surprisingly, of all the significant dialect features to be found in Laud 656 only three forms are found in even one Oxfordshire manuscript.

¹⁴ For a discussion of these prose texts see Michael Madrinkian, "New Findings in a Late-Medieval Catechetical Prose Sequence," *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 18 (2015), 28–40.

¹⁵ Very little is known about the early history of the manuscript; Ian Doyle speculates that it "could have been home-made by a cleric" ("Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*," p. 43), though he offers no evidence to support this conclusion.

¹⁶ Samuels, "Langland's Dialect," p. 246, n. 39.

Conveniently for dialectal analysis, Laud 656 is a collection written throughout by one scribe. In order to isolate the various dialects that feed into Laud 656 as a whole, the manuscript must be broken down into its various texts.¹⁷ In order to isolate the dialects of each individual exemplar we must account for the forms that are unique to their respective texts. We will begin with *Piers Plowman*, which uses several dialect forms not found in any of the other texts:¹⁸

ne+will	nollen	W Mids. (Glos.)
or	oþur	SW Mids./SW (S. Worcs., S Warks., Glos., Oxon.)
again	aʒe	Southwest (Glos.); South
lest	laste	W Mids. (Glos., Herefs.)

As these forms show, the unique spellings in *Piers* are all consistently characteristic of the Southwest Midlands, particularly Gloucestershire. This stands in contrast to the unique dialect features of the three prose texts in Booklet II:

air	eyere	North (Northumberland: 1 MS)
burned	brenten	East Midlands (Beds.)
gates	ʒatis	Mostly East Mids./SE (Nor., Cambs., Herts., Essx., Suff.); 1 W Mids. (Herfs.)
laugh	laʒest	NE Mids. (Derbys.); W Midlands (Shrop.)
laughed	lowe	NE Mids. (S Derbys.); East (Nor.)
pray	praien	East (Northants., Leics.); North (Ches., Yorks. WR)
said	seiden	Mostly Central East Midlands (Beds., Northants., Hunts.)
say	seyn	Mostly E Mids. (Northants., Nor., Suff.)
see	seien	E Mids. (S Derbys.); W Mids. (Heref.)
saying	seyn	East/SE (Northants., Suff., Essx.)

These unique features group heavily in North Bedfordshire where it meets Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire. While there are several dialect features within this sample that fall slightly out of this area, they are all of a generally East Midlands focus. The dialect of the

¹⁷ The prose texts are here understood as one grouping, based on their overall appearance of textual continuity.

¹⁸ All geographical data below is taken from the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English (LALME)*.

prose texts corresponds to Samuels's dialect Type I, known as "Central Midland Standard," which is primarily found in the counties of Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire and Bedfordshire.¹⁹

The dialect of the *Siege of Jerusalem* is less easily identified than *Piers Plowman* or the prose texts. It does, however, contain several forms that are more characteristically northeastern:

air	ayere	North (NW York., Notting.)
burned	brenten	East Midlands (Beds.)
gates	zatis	Mostly East Mids./SE (Nor., Cambs., Herts., Essx., Suff.); 1 W Mids. (Herfs.)
pray	preien	Mostly NE Midlands (Northants., Beds., Hunts., Ely, Soke); Some W Midlands (S. Warks.)
say	seyn	Mostly E Mids. (Northants., Nor., Suff.)

The *ayere* form, being from the north west of Yorkshire, is most likely a remnant of the authorial dialect of the *Siege*, which has been located to the West Riding.²⁰ Three of the other forms (*zatis*, *brenten*, and *seyn*) are shared with the prose and are characteristic of the Southeast Midlands.²¹

¹⁹ M. L. Samuels, "Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology," in *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems*, ed. Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Margaret Laing (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), pp. 64–80 (p. 67) [first printed in *English Studies*, 64 (1963), 81–94], and Simon Horobin, "Mapping the Words," p. 73.

²⁰ Hanna and Lawton localize the composition of *The Siege of Jerusalem*, based on dialect evidence, to "a small area in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a neighbourhood centred around Barnoldswick and Earby" (*The Siege of Jerusalem*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 320 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. xxix). They go on to suggest that the poem may have been written at Bolton Priory, an Augustinian monastic house in North Yorkshire.

²¹ This suggests that the Laud-scribe's exemplars for these two texts were probably sourced from the same small area of North Bedfordshire, if indeed not copied from the same exemplar. This localization of the *Siege* in the East Midlands offers some context for the *SJ*'s hyparchetype of the *alpha* strand (preserved solely in Laud 656), which the editors claimed to be "nearly completely inexplicable" (Ibid., p. lxvii). Such intermediary forms would also suggest that the *Siege* was circulating in the East Midlands far earlier than the mid fifteenth century, as Hanna and Lawton surmise (p. lxviii).

Having established the individual forms of each text, we may isolate the dialect features characteristic of the scribe himself by examining the spellings that are used consistently throughout all of the texts in the manuscript.²² Of these forms, there are several that are distinct enough to be localizable, which are as follows:

hear	hure	Mostly W Mids./SW (Glos., Oxon, Worcs., Warks.)
she	ʒo	W Mids (Glos., Worcs., Wilts.)
seventh	seueþ	W Mids. (Shrop., 1 MS)
through	þroʒ	Mostly W Mids. (Staffs., Shrops., Warks., Herfs.)
together	to-gedres	Mostly W Mids. (Staffs., Shrops., Herefs., Glos., Wilts.)

From these forms, the scribe's dialect is generally localizable to the South West Midlands, again characteristic of the Gloucestershire area. Most telling is the *ʒo* form for "she," an uncommon spelling only found in northern Gloucestershire. From the dialect evidence, then, we may conclude that not only did the exemplar of *Piers Plowman* contain Gloucestershire spellings, this dialect was most likely the one employed by the scribe of Laud Misc. 656. The scribe was, however, comfortable preserving the dialects of his exemplars when they differed from his own. The identification of the scribe as using a West Midlands dialect is not, of course, evidence that the scribe was copying in this area, as a West Midlands scribe could easily be employed in London. It does, however, show that Laud Misc. 656 and its scribe match very closely the dialect features common to the other *p*-group manuscripts.²³

Another important member of the *p*-group that has been localized outside of the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire area is Cambridge University Library Ff.5.35, usually dated to

²² The forms shared by all of the texts include: *aʒen* ("again"); *brenten* ("burned"); *fadere* ("father"); *ʒatis* ("gates"); *ʒyue* ("give"); *hure* ("hear"); *seid* ("said"); *seyn* ("say"); *scholden* ("should" [pl]); *ʒo* ("she"); *þroʒ* (through); *to-gedres* ("together"); *seueþ* ("seventh").

²³ A localization of the Laud 656 scribe in Gloucestershire may also be supported by the fact that its copy of the C text [E] bears a substantial textual relationship (270 agreements in error) to another early fifteenth-century manuscript, San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 137 [P]. Samuels localizes Hm 137's dialect to the Gloucestershire–Monmouthshire border (Samuels, "Langland's Dialect," p. 239 and p. 246, n. 46), an identification which is generally supported by *LALME* (LP 7250).

the beginning of the fifteenth century, which includes *Piers* alongside *Mandeville's Travels*. Ff.5.35 is a high-quality book written on fine vellum in a high-grade textura script, and is in fact the only manuscript in which *Piers* is copied in textura. The manuscript is usually dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century, though one should be cautious with any definitive identification, as textura is notoriously static and difficult to date.²⁴ The general *ordinatio* and decoration of the manuscript, however, particularly its decorated initials, resemble other manuscripts produced around the turn of the fifteenth century.²⁵ Several scholars have suggested that Ff.5.35 may be a London production, particularly given the mid-fifteenth century inscription by Thomas Jakes on the last page of *Piers Plowman* (f. 152r),²⁶ who Doyle suggests may have been the man admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1465.²⁷ While this may be true, there is no direct evidence to suggest a London origin for the manuscript, and it could just as easily be a monastic production. It is also worth noting that the copy of *Mandeville's Travels* in Ff.5.35 is textually related to that found in Dd.1.17, a massive monastic manuscript similar to the Vernon Manuscript, which also contains a B text of *Piers Plowman*. The shared use of these closely related texts, and their pairing of it with *Piers*

²⁴ For an overview of this system of script and its development see Jane Roberts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writings Up to 1500* (London: The British Library, 2005), pp. 140–43.

²⁵ This is supported by Russell and Kane, who date the manuscript to the first quarter of the fifteenth century (*C Version*, p. 5).

²⁶ Jakes's hand also appears on the verso of this folio; although the top line of text has been partially lost through trimming, his name is still discernable. Jakes here records his ownership of the book and its contents: "Thomas Jakes owens this Boke off Maundevyle *and* of wysdome." The reference to *Piers* as the "Book of Wisdom" is an intriguing one, though beyond the purview of this study.

²⁷ Doyle, "Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*," p. 45. Similarly, Simon Horobin notes, "This manuscript is written in a high quality textura which, despite the Oxfordshire dialect of its scribe, is probably indicative of London production" ("John Cok and his Copy of *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 27 (2013), 45–59 (p. 51)). The use of textura alone, however, cannot locate the manuscript's composition to London, as textura was just as commonly used in provincial books, particularly in monastic scriptoria.

(albeit in different versions), may suggest that the exemplars were sourced from a network of religious houses.

Samuels places the dialect of Ff.5.35 in mid-Oxfordshire, a localization that is also supported by the *Linguistic Atlas*. The analysis of Ff.5.35 in *LALME*, however, is only of *Piers Plowman*—the localization presumably based on Samuels’s earlier claim—and does not offer any analysis of *Mandeville’s Travels*. As a supplement to this linguistic profile, the dialect of *Mandeville* in Ff.5.35 is here broken down into two parts. First are the forms that are unique to the copy of *Mandeville’s Travels* and are not found in *Piers Plowman*.²⁸ Most of these dialect forms are commonly attested, and thus, impossible to localize. The second dialectal category includes the forms shared between both *Mandeville* and *Piers Plowman*.²⁹ It will be noticed that many of these forms are widely attested, and thus useless for helping to localize the manuscript. There are, however, some spellings that are more easily localizable:

go	goth	“gop” attested in 1 north-Gloucestershire MS and one north Somerset MS
her	hure	Densely grouped in SW Mids.; lightly scattered on South coast
	hure	Densely grouped in SW Mids.; lightly scattered on South coast
much	muche	Densely grouped in the West; scattered in the South
she	heo	Dense grouping in SW Mids.
through	þurw	2 in Norfolk; 2 in Cambs.; 3 scattered North to South
where	whare	1 in Worcestershire
whom	wham	Groups in SW Mids. and London; lightly scattered on south coast

²⁸ These forms include: *chirche* (“church”); *dou3ter* (“daughter”); *fadir/fader* (“father”); *lif* (“life”); *-lych* (“-ly”); *moder* (“mother”); *owt* (“out”); *nou3t* (“not”); *schulle* (“shall” [pl]); *þorgh/þurgh* (“through”); *wham* (“whom”).

²⁹ These spelling forms include: *a3en* (“again”); *a3e* (“against”); *any/eny* (“any”); *beth* (“are”); *churche* (“church”); *fro* (“from”); *goth* (“go” [pl]); *gooth* (“goes”); *hadde* (“had”); *haue* (“have”); *hure* (“her”); *lif* (“life”); *-lich* (“-ly”); *my3t* (“might”); *moder* (“mother”); *muche* (“much”); *nat/nou3t* (“not”); *owt* (“out”); *ouer* (“over”); *owne* (“own”); *schal* (“shall”); *schul* (“shall” [pl]); *sche/heo/hi* (“she”); *sum* (“some”); *þogh* (“though”); *þurw* (“through”); *twey* (“two”); *whan* (“when”); *whare* (“where”); *whiche/wheche* (“which”); *whider* (“whither”); *wham* (“whom”); *whi* (“why”); *ho* (“who”); *wole* (“will”); *bithoute*; *bithouten* (“without”); *wold/wolde* (“would”); *world* (“world”).

without	bithoute	Mostly Southwest Mids.
	bithouten	Mostly Southwest Mids.

Of these forms, most are localizable to the Southwest Midlands. One of the most interesting forms is the “b” form of “without” (rendered as *bithoute*), which is rare and found predominantly in the Southwest Midlands. Of the few manuscripts that use *bithoute*, several are localizable around the Gloucestershire border, including another *p*-group manuscript: Dublin, Trinity College, MS 212, which will be discussed at length below. Only one dialect form is localizable elsewhere: *purw* (“through”), which are generally more characteristic of East Anglia and the London area. The spelling is, however, not exclusive to the east, and is attested in several southwestern manuscripts, one of which is found in Warwickshire and one in Northeast Gloucestershire. This could potentially be evidence that a London scribe was copying these West Midlands texts *literatim* and, for some reason, using his own version of “through.” This would necessitate, however, that the scribe was copying two entirely different texts with the same western dialect. As the dialect profile shows, however, there are several forms attested across *Mandeville* and *Piers Plowman* that are highly idiosyncratic, such as *bithoute* (“without”).³⁰ It seems fairly unlikely that a London scribe copying *literatim* should have encountered two different exemplars that both used the same rare forms. The most reasonable conclusion, therefore, seems to be that the Southwest Midlands dialect in *Mandeville* and *Piers Plowman* is the dialect of the scribe himself.

The third outlying manuscript is British Library, Cotton Vespasian B.XVI, dated to the late fourteenth century. The manuscript was originally a single-text *Piers* manuscript, which had an assortment of smaller texts added to it in the mid to late fifteenth century. The

³⁰ This spelling appears in two texts with dialects on the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border, the *De regionibus urine* in Cambridge University Library Dd.6.29 (LP 7340), and another *p*-group text of *Piers* in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 212 (LP 7190), which will be discussed extensively below.

dialect of Cotton B.XVI is analyzed in *LALME* and localized to Warwickshire. As far as I can tell, this identification is plausible, though there are very few dialect forms that are sufficiently dialectally distinctive for an accurate localization. What is more interesting about this manuscript, then, is the codicological evidence: on a flyleaf at the back of the manuscript is a Latin note in a mid fifteenth-century hand, relating to the holy blood of Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire. Although this is not necessarily evidence that the manuscript had anything to do with Hailes Abbey, either in its production or its afterlife, the reference is at least worth noting, especially considering the fact that Hailes Abbey is located precisely in the area where all of the other *p*-group manuscripts are centralized. In fact, Hailes is only about twelve miles from Tewkesbury Abbey, an extremely important site for the production of the *p*-group, as will be discussed below.

So as we can see, it is possible to localize most if not all of the manuscripts of the *p*-group in an area of northwest Gloucestershire, around the Herefordshire border. Although dialectal affiliation cannot accurately indicate that a manuscript was copied or produced in that region, the uniformity of dialect in this one textual subgroup indicates, at the very least, that the root of the textual tradition carries a northwest Gloucestershire/southeast Herefordshire dialect; the ancestor of the *p*-group most certainly used a northwest Gloucestershire dialect. The lack of any Eastern forms mixed in the *p*-group manuscripts' dialects, moreover, strongly suggests that scribes themselves were more likely copying in the provinces. As the remainder of the chapter will demonstrate, the textual, literary, and cultural

history of this region is important for understanding *Piers Plowman*'s circulation and growing popularity in the West Midlands.³¹

II. Textual Emendation and Collaboration in the *P*-Group

If we can associate the production of the *p*-group manuscripts with the region their dialects attest, then what can be said about the circumstances of this production? In examining the manuscripts of the *p*-group it is apparent that the scribes producing this subgroup were not simply affiliated with the same geographical area, but were also working in the same way, and as I will argue, working collaboratively. What we find in this geographical grouping is a remarkable insight into the scribal treatment of the poem, with scribes of this particular subgroup engaging in what we might think of as an early form of editorial emendation.

Throughout the *p*-group manuscripts there are several instances in which the texts have been modified or corrected. Of these, Huntington Library, HM 137 [P] is of particular interest. Hm 137 is a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century manuscript in anglicana, signed by the scribe as Thomas Dankastre (or Lankastre, as some have argued).³² Throughout Hm 137 there are a number of corrections to the text in another hand, which emend errors and supplement omissions in the original scribe's text. A particularly important fact, which has thus far gone unpublished, is that this annotator's hand can be identified as the scribe of another *Piers Plowman* manuscript, British Library, Harley 2376, which is itself a member of

³¹ For further studies of West Midlands history and culture and its relationship to literary production see Elizabeth Salter, "The Alliterative Revival I," *Modern Philology*, 64, 2 (1966), 146–50; and "The Alliterative Revival II," *Modern Philology*, 64, 3 (1967), 233–37. Also see R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Weidenfield, 1966).

³² Russell-Kane prefer the reading "Lankastre," noting, "This has been transcribed Dankastre, but the first letter looks more like a heavily flourished L" (*C Version*, p. 10, n. 70).

the *p*-group with dialectal affiliations to the same region of northwest Gloucestershire.³³ In the following example from folio 48v, the Harley annotator supplies lines 34–37 of Passus 13, which are omitted in Hm 137. Hm 137's omission is most likely attributable to genetic corruption, as the same lines are also omitted in Laud 656, which was discussed above. The annotator, however, has noticed this omission and supplied the missing lines. In the following example from folio 48v, the Harley annotator supplies lines 34–37 of Passus 13, which are omitted in Hm 137:

Original: XIII.33, 38

For yf a marchaunt and a messenger .’ metten to gederes
For þe *parcels* of hus paper . and oþer pryuey dettes

Added: XIII.34–37

And scholde wenden o way .’ where boþe most [r]est .
[A]nd rekene by fore reson [a] resonable acountes .
What one haþ .’ what a [n]oþer haþ .’ and what hy hadde boþ .
The marchante mote [n]ede be lette .’ lengere þen þe messagere .

What is especially intriguing in this added passage is that the added lines in Hm 137 are textually identical to the same lines in Harley 2376, which was copied in the annotator's hand.³⁴ This further strengthens the identification of the P annotator as the scribe of N and indicates that the annotator was using his own copy, Harley 2376 (or perhaps its exemplar), as the source for his corrections to Hm 137.

The second *p*-group manuscript with substantial textual corrections is Cambridge University Library, Additional 4325, an early manuscript in very poor condition, which has been severely understudied. The manuscript, which still retains its medieval binding, is

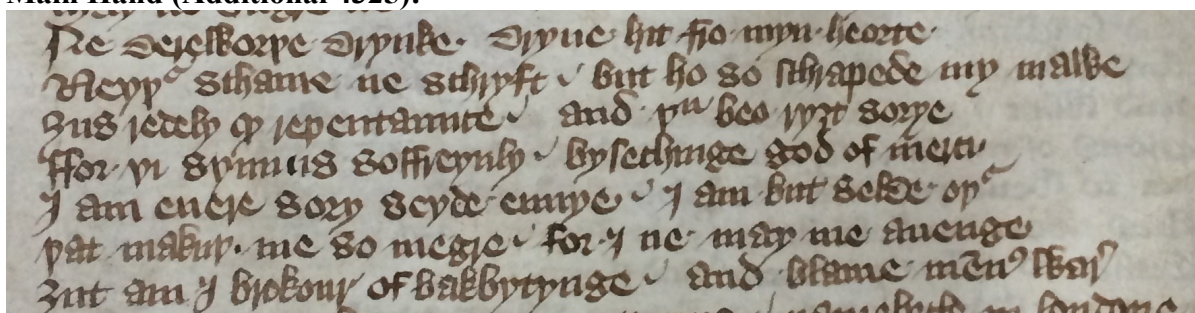
³³ This scribal identification was first suggested to me by Simon Horobin in private correspondence. Horobin also informs me that he has consulted with A. I. Doyle, who is in agreement on the identification of the two hands (email correspondence, 19 March, 2014).

³⁴ There are only three instances in the three supplied lines where the text breaks away from the R–K edited reading: 34 wende] wenden TPRZN; 35 acounte] acountes PN; 36 ylet] lett DTChPRMVAQS ZFKGNN². The only other text to attest all these specific lections is N, and N is the only other manuscript to use the plural form *accountes*.

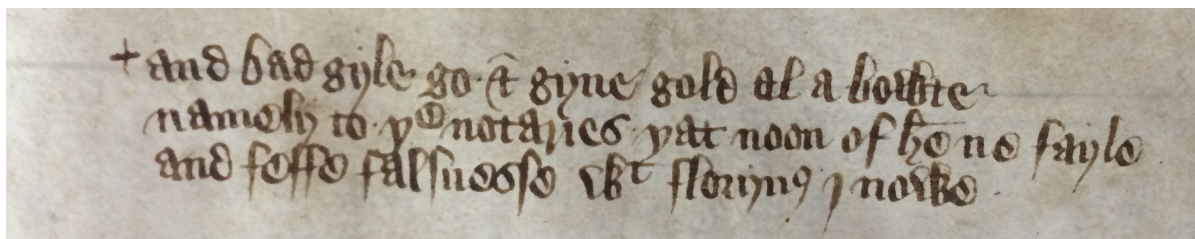
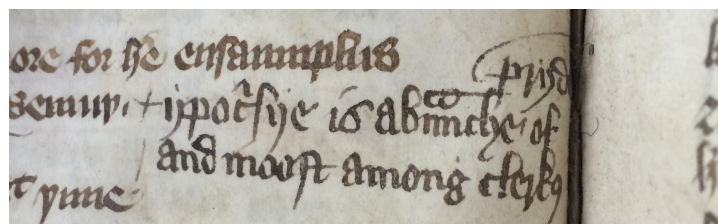
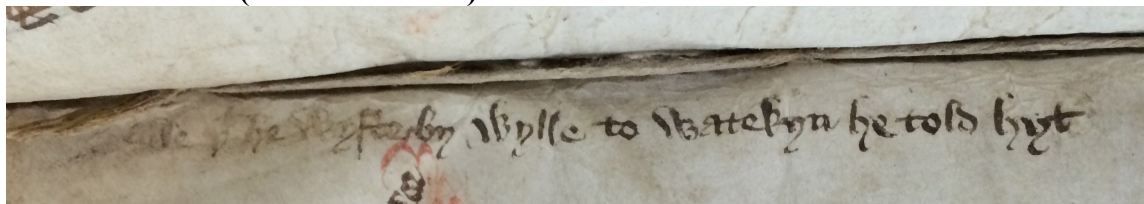
written in a good anglicana hand of the around the end of the fourteenth century. There are few decorations save for the first page, which contains an elaborate border. Throughout the manuscript are annotations in a fifteenth-century hand, which itself appears to be that of a professional (or at least competent) scribe. The annotator's script is often difficult to distinguish from that of the main scribe, though there are notable differences that suggest they are different hands:

Fig. 5:

Main Hand (Additional 4325):



Annotator's Hand (Additional 4325):



The annotator of Additional 4325, like that of Hm 137, supplies missing lines in the text, and corrects errors made by the original scribe. The first correction reads:

Original: II.160, 164

T\h/o fette fauel . forþ . florynns I-nowe
For he mede may . amaystren . *with* his murye speche

Added: II.161–63

And bad gyle go *and* gyue gold al abowte
namely to þe notaries þat noon of hem ne fayle
and feffe falsnesse *with* florynes I-nowe

In this passage, the annotator supplies three lines that the original scribe has left out.³⁵ The annotator's text contains six lectional variations from the standard C reading:

161 go] PEVAQFG (to XYJUDMSN; *om.* P²). gyue] & gyue QF.
162 And] *om.* P²PMVAQSFGN. noon] noon of hem *all C MSS* (R–K *use a B reading*). fayle] ne fayle QS; no faile F.
163 fals witness] falsnesse PEVAQSF.

The annotator's lections here side generally with the *p*-group, and in every instance agree with F. In the case of “& gyue,” the lection is only attested elsewhere in F. The annotator also corrects one of the scribe's existing lines, inserting a superscript “h” in the original scribe's “To” of line 160, changing it to “Tho.” The reading “To” is only attested in YJ, both members of the *i*-group, while the reading “Tho” is used in UP²DPERMVASFG. Thus, the original scribe has here used a reading present in the authoritative *i*-group, which the annotator has emended to fit the *p*-group reading. The Q annotator's second correction reads:

Original: VI.69, 71

.....d bydde heem meschaunce³⁶
..... hit wylle aftur

Added: VI.70

alle þat he wyste by Wylle to watekyn he told

³⁵ It is worth noting that the same three lines (II.161–3) are also omitted in P² (British Library, Additional 34779), a C-text manuscript which agrees inconsistently with the *i*-group. In Additional 34779, these missing lines are also supplied by a contemporary corrector.

³⁶ The upper corners of several folios are here damaged, leaving the lines in a fragmentary condition.

The annotator here supplies line 70, which the original scribe has omitted. It is unclear why the original scribe skipped this line, and the omission is not attested in any other C manuscript. The annotator uses the reading “alle” in place of the Russell-Kane edited reading “And.” The “alle” reading is characteristic of the *p*-group, and is attested in PERVAQSFKGN. The annotator’s text does, however, include two unique variants: a] he; hit] *om*. The annotator’s third correction reads:

Original: VI.252, 254

þat chaffarid *with* my cheuesaunce . and by the rode I leue
Schal . neuer seketour wel . by sette . þe suluer þat þou heom . leiuist

Added: VI.253

Chevede euel aft[er]
now redyly *quod* repentaunce

The annotator here corrects what appears to have been an eye-skip by the original scribe, from the end of line 252 to the end of line 253, thereby omitting half of both lines. The annotator adds the second half of line 252 and the first half of line 253. The annotator’s text uses the reading “chevede euel,” where most manuscripts use “cheued selde.” The only manuscript to replace “selde” with “euel” is F (CUL Ff.5.35). The fourth correction reads:

Original: XV.283–88

þan eny pore pacient . and þat *proue* I by reson
To haue allowaunce of þis . by lawe he cleympiþ ioye
þat *neuer* Ioye hadde . of ryȝtful iugge he askuþ .
and seyþ loo bryddus *and* bestus . þat no blysse knoweþ
and wylde wormus in wodus . þoruȝ wyntres þou *hem* greuest
hit ar but few folk of þese ryche . þat ne falluþ in arerage³⁷

Added: XV.285–86

þere þe poore dar plede / *and* preue by pure resoun
to haue allowaunce of his lord / by

³⁷ The original scribe corrects the order of the lines, indicating that “hit ar but few folk of þese ryche . þat ne falluþ in arerage” should be placed after “þan eny pore pacient . and þat *proue* I by reson,” which is the correct order according to the other C manuscripts.

The scribe here adds line 285, which has been omitted by the original scribe. This line is also omitted in ZW. In line 286 he changes “þis” to “his lord.” The original scribe’s reading, “To haue allowaunce of þis” is again attested only in ZW(S).³⁸ The original scribe’s exemplar thus seems to have reflected ZW in at least these lines. The annotator, however, corrected this for the majority reading. The annotator’s omission of the rest of the line after “by” most likely indicates that he is satisfied with the original reading, which matches the majority reading of the C text.³⁹ The fourth correction reads:

Original: XVI.264, 266

Pan for to *preche* and *preue* hit nat . *ypocrisye* hit semip
And I lykned *hem* in latyn to a lodly donghepe

Added: XVI.265

ypocrisye is a *braunche* of pryde and moost among clerkes

Here the original text omits line 265, an omission which is also attested in P²ZW. The annotator adds the missing line with no variation from the standard text in all other C-text manuscripts. The final correction reads:

Original: XX.418, 420

For we ben breþeren of blod . ac nat in baptysme alle
Schal *neuer* eft in helle come . beo he omis owte

Added: XX.419

Ac alle þat ben myn half
breþryn *in* blood *and* *in* baptisme

The annotator here supplies line 419, which the original scribe has omitted. The reading “half” is attested in PERMVAQZW, though Russell-Kane’s edited text reads “hole.”⁴⁰ As these corrections suggest, the annotator of Additional 4325 was primarily concerned with

³⁸ The variants read: his lord] þis ZW; þes S.

³⁹ Although Russell-Kane’s edited text reads, “by þe lawe he hit claymeth,” the majority of manuscripts omit “hit” and divide the line after “Ioye,” which Russell-Kane place at the beginning of line 287: “Ioye þat *neuer* ioye hadde of rihtfull iuge he asketh.”

⁴⁰ Here DF use the variant reading “ouen.”

emending the text where it was lacking or corrupt. These corrections are consistently in line with the text of the *p*-group, suggesting that the annotator was comparing Additional 4325 with another copy of the poem from the same textual subgroup.

The third manuscript of the *p*-group with substantial corrections is Dublin, Trinity College, MS 212, a single-text manuscript in anglicana from the late fourteenth century. Trinity 212 also contains the famous note on William Langland's lineage on folio 89v, which names his father as Stacy de Rokayle. Despite the importance of Trinity 212, there has been surprisingly little work done on the manuscript itself. There are, in fact, numerous annotators at work in the margins and text of Trinity 212, two of which date from the fifteenth century. The first annotator, who appears to use a light green crayon, is interested primarily in the poem's content and is most active in supplying Latin quotations from and references to scriptural and patristic sources to accompany the text. The content of these annotations, which function essentially as commentaries on the text of the poem, indicate that the green-crayon annotator was a very highly educated reader, most likely a religious. This annotator does, however, engage in 5 textual emendations:

III.358: In nombre ~~rotye~~ \sauande/ and a rise and remission to haue
(Rotye] Rote U; rotþe K; rotip̄ D; rotyd QS; to rote F. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

VII.61: For þer is non \gult/ so gret þat his goodnesse is more
(no gult] gult non QSFKGN; non PEA; non synn RM. *Original reading agrees with PEA; correction in line with majority*)

XI.108: Boþe women and wyn . wrath . ~~ire~~ \enuy/. and sleuthe
(ire] XYJP²UDPERMAQSZFKGN; om. N². *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

XI.138: To ~~kowe~~ \kunne/ and to knowe . kyndeliche dowel
(kenne] knowe A; kowe PEK; lerne N. *Original reading agrees with PEK; correction in line with majority*)

XI.142: On þe mayde marie . for mannes ~~kynnes~~ \kyndes/ sake
 (mankynde] mankynd is D; mankynne QSZK; mankynnes PERFGN; manes kynde
 M; monnes kynnes A. *Original reading agrees with PERSQGFNKZ; correction in
 line with majority*)

As the data above indicates, three of these emendations replace a *p*-group lection with the majority C reading and two are unique. In III.358, a line which discusses the “Resurrection of the Dead” from the Nicene Creed, the green-crayon annotator emends “rotye” (“to die”) to the unique reading “sauande” (“saved”). This correction may simply result from the scribe being unfamiliar with the word “rotye,” though the word’s wide attestation in the MED up to the end of the fifteenth century makes this unlikely. While the change weakens the sense of the line and the analogy to the creed, it also emphasizes the necessity of salvation in order to participate in the “nombre” and anticipates the “synnes to be assoiled” (III.359) in the next line.⁴¹ The unique emendation in XI.108 is more practical; the annotator has apparently noticed that the original line repeats two of the Seven Deadly Sins, “wrath” and “ire,” and thus corrects “ire” to “enuy.” These unique corrections, both of which deal with elements of the catechesis, could again suggest an attentive and knowledgeable reader who is particularly interested in the poem’s religious themes.

The second annotator, who writes in black ink, is difficult to distinguish from the main scribe, and could plausibly be the same person. There are several differences in script, however, which lead me to believe that the black-ink annotator is different from the main copyist, particularly in the <y> graph, which in the annotator’s script is dotted, a feature not used by the main scribe. The black-ink annotator appears to pay less attention to the content of the poem and focuses rather on incidental textual variation, emending the text where he

⁴¹ For more on the theology underlying this line see Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman, Volume 1: C Prologue–Passus 4; B Prologue–Passus 4; A Prologue–Passus 4* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 348.

deems a reading to be corrupt or lacking, similar to the emendations in Hm 137 and Additional 4325. The black-ink scribe makes seventeen textual corrections in Trinity 212, of which there are nine that bring a variant reading back in line with the standard majority reading:

III.414: Hou \god/ sente to Saul . by Samuel . þe prophete
(god] *om. A. Original reading agrees with A; correction agrees with majority*)

V.34: Or y maimed þrow som mishap wer by þow myth be æ\ex/cused
(excused] accused A. *Original reading agrees with A; correction agrees with majority*)

VI.177: In wordes in wedes in wa\y/tynge of eyen
(waytynge] waitynges K; wasting U. *Original reading unattested and probably a copying error; correction agrees with majority*)

VII.31: ʒut can y nowþer soofe [changed to “soolfe”] ne syng ne a seintes lif rede
(solfe] solfye PEQ; selven R. *Original reading unattested and probably a copying error; correction agrees with majority*)

VIII.93: To penaunce and to pilgremages y wol passe with o\þre/
(opere] PERMAQSKGN; this opere XYJP²U; þos oper D. *Original reading obscured by erasure; correction agrees with majority*)

VIII.129: and leggen legges a lery a\s/ suche lorelles conneþ
(as] & A; a *unattested. Original reading unattested and probably a copying error; correction agrees with majority*)

VIII.136: ʒoure pr\e/yeres quod peres and ʒee profit were
(prayeres] prayre RM. *Correction alters spelling*)

VIII.164: I was \nat/ woned to worche quod wastour y wol not now by gynne
(nat] *om. A. Original reading agrees with A; correction agrees with majority*)

VIII.166: And \of/ peres \sette/ \n/at a pese pleyne him wher he wolde
(And sette Peres] sette *om. A. Original reading agrees with A; correction agrees with majority*)

VIII.216: And hit aren my blody breþeren for god bou\ʒ/te vs alle
(bouhte] *all MSS. Correction alters spelling*)

IX.265: Thyne schep beoþ ~~neure~~ al schabbed þe wol\f/ schi\è/t wolle

(Wolf] wolfes G; wol *unattested and probably a copying error; correction agrees with majority*)

XII.221: As pesecoddes and pere Iune\ti/s . plomes and chiries
(pere ionettes] perus A; pyonetus Q; pynotes Z; pyonies F; notes W. *Original reading unique; correction agrees with majority*)

XII.231: lo\w/ lond ouurlayd with marl and with donge
(Lo] Lo þe F; lowe D²W; So GN². *Correction alters spelling*)

XIX.191: Graunten \eny/ grace . ne forgyuenesse of synnes
(eny] no N²; *omission of eny not attested. Original unattested; correction agrees with majority*)

XX.234: To wite what al \wo/ is þat wot of alle ioye
(wo] *all MSS. Original reading unique and probably a copying error; correction agrees with majority*)

XXI.20: And non so neodfol to ~~nemne~~ \name/ by nyht ne by day
(nemne] nemne hit G. *Original agrees with majority; correction unique*)

In 11 more instances, the corrector changes a majority reading to a unique reading, unattested in any other manuscripts:

III.1: Now \was/ mede þe mayde no mo of hem alle
(is] *om. A; was not attested. Original agrees with A; correction unique*)

III.155: Wold þow wed þis mayde \quad þe kyng/ 3if y wol assente
(maide yf] PEMAQSKGN; maiden yf R; mede yf XYJP²UD; wīzt *quod* he yf F.
Original reading agrees with PERMAQSKGN; correction unique)

III.166: Is nat a betere bande by him þat me ~~made~~ \bouhte/
(made] *all MSS; bouhte not attested. Original agrees with majority; correction unique*)

III.169: As comyn as þe cart wey to knaues \old/ and \3onge/ to alle
(and to] *all MSS; old and 3onge not attested. Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

VI.149: Til ayther cleped oþer \howr [over erasure]/ and of wythe þe clothes
(hore] *all MSS; howr] unattested. Original reading unknown; correction unique*)

VI.181: Til oure boþe\n/ wil was on to werke we 3eodon
(bothe] *all MSS; bopen not attested. Original reading agrees with the majority; correction unique, though merely an orthographical alteration*)

VI.316: And for þe \he/ na\d/ not wher wiþ he wepte ful sore
 (for þer was] for þat þer was S; for þe na *not attested*; for þe he nad *not attested*.
Original reading unique; correction unique)

VIII.127: and þouh 3e die for \lack/ þe deuuel haue þat recche
 (for deuel] *all MSS*; lack *unattested*; þe *unattested*. *Original unattested; correction unique*)

VIII.166: And \of/ peres \sette/ \n/at a pese pleyne him wher he wolde
 (And sette Peres at pes] of *not attested*; nat *not attested*. *Original readings agree with A; corrections unique*)

IX.265: Thyne schep beoþ ~~neure~~ al schabbed þe wol\ f/ schi\ e/ t wolle
 (ner] nei3 P²MFN; almoste E; neuere A; *omission unattested*. *Original reading agrees with A; correction unattested*. shy] shiteþ; shith (h(2) *another hand*) U; bischit JF; scherþ (erþ *over erasure another ink*) D; schent MQ; sitte N. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unattested*)

XIV.42: To stryke wiþ ston or wiþ staf . þis ~~strompet~~ \woman/ to deþe
 (strompet] *all MSS*; woman *unattested*. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

Finally, in 3 instances the annotator alters a majority reading to conform with a reading characteristic of the *p*-group:

III.138: For worse wrouhtest þow neuere þan \wan/ þow fals toke
 (tho] wan N; *om*. P²A. *Original reading agrees with P²A; correction agrees with N*)

VI.146: For heo had halybred \raþyr þan/ œ y myn hert can chaunge
 (ar] *all MSS*; rether þen GN. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction agrees with GN*)

VIII.215: Is no fy\ n/ al loue with þis folk for alle here faire speche
 (fial] fyal ARK; fynal DPEG; fynel N; filial JYP²U; filia X; feyþful QS; lel M.
Original reading agrees with majority; correction agrees with DPEGN)

As this data shows, most of the annotator's corrections either bring a variant reading back in line with the standard majority reading or alter it to a unique reading. The final three emendations are most interesting, however, as the annotator here emends majority C lections, all of which are judged by both Russell-Kane and Schmidt to be the *difficilior lectio*, to

conform with *p*-group readings. In these instances, all three of these corrections match the reading in N (Harley 2376). In fact, in III.138 the reading “wan” in place of “þow” is only attested in Harley 2376. It may be of some significance that this is the same text that was used by the annotator of Hm 137, as discussed above.

What these manuscripts tell us, then, is that a number of scribes were employed in the copying and editing of this particular substrand of the C text in a relatively small time frame around the turn of the fifteenth century. The non-metropolitan appearance of the manuscripts and their consistent dialectal affiliation to the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border may suggest a coherent network of book producers working together in a kind of scribal coterie in this area of the Southwest Midlands, working together to copy new texts and emend existing exemplars. It also suggests that the manuscripts of this particular strand of the C-text were readily available for consultation and correction within a limited geographical region. The evidence of textual emendation also suggests that, although we perceive the *p*-group as a generally inferior and textually corrupt sub-strand of the C text, the scribes of this subgroup were concerned with preserving the integrity of their textual tradition within an insular regional space.

The evidence of scribal editing in the *p*-group is particularly interesting for our understanding of the provincial book trade. Edwards and Pearsall discuss the availability of exemplars in the London market, noting, “Scribes themselves, given the nature of their part in the production of manuscript books, are most unlikely to have retained exemplars, or to have noticed the differences between different exemplars in copying the same text.”⁴² As we

⁴² A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, “The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts,” in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1395–1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 257–78 (p. 263). As Edwards and Pearsall

have seen, this is certainly not true in the case of the *p*-group manuscripts, in which many appear to have been edited against other copies of the text, with a particular care to textual accuracy. This discontinuity may, in fact, be an indication of the divergences between provincial and metropolitan book production around the turn of the century. Ralph Hanna has discussed the “exemplar poverty” of late-medieval England, in which exemplars of any given text were often very difficult to come by.⁴³ It would seem only logical that this situation would have been more pronounced in the provinces, given that London, as the country’s main commercial center, would have had far more texts moving in and out than a relatively remote provincial region. Yet, this may have been counteracted by the high demand of exemplars in the capital’s busy metropolitan book trade, with scribes unable to retain any one manuscript for much longer than a single copying stint. If the example of the *p*-group can give any kind of indication of the state of provincial book production in this period, however, we may gather that multiple exemplars of the same texts could be more easily retained and used to cross-reference the copying of new texts.

III. Patronage and the Gentry Context of the P-Group

The geographical locale in which the manuscripts of the *p*-group circulated is also of some historical importance, and may indicate some early sources of patronage for the dissemination of *Piers Plowman*. The regional production of books in Gloucestershire was certainly a vibrant one, and is a historical subject that needs much further research. Although

acknowledge, however, there is some evidence that London stationers may have retained at least some exemplars (see, for example, A. I. Doyle and Malcolm Parkes, “The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century,” in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. John Scattergood and Andrew Watson (London: Scolar, 1978), 163–210 (p. 201)).

⁴³ Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 31.

beyond the scope of this study, a regional study of the Gloucestershire book trade such as Richard Beadle's study of Norfolk is much needed.⁴⁴ Several scholars, however, have already commented on the various affiliations of the manuscripts in this region with noble and gentry families. Ralph Hanna has discussed the local influence of Thomas Berkeley, a patron of a great deal of literary production in Gloucestershire.⁴⁵ Although there is no evidence that Thomas Berkeley ever commissioned any manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, there is other evidence to link some manuscripts of the *p*-group with important local families. Particularly important in this area is the "Beauchamp affinity," a term that denotes the network surrounding the extremely wealthy and influential Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (1382–1439), who had connections with a number of other important families in the area.⁴⁶ Ryan Perry has argued for the existence of a West Midlands reading community, involving the circle of the Beauchamp affinity in concert with local religious houses.⁴⁷ An important part of this argument is the Clopton manuscript (University of London, Sterling Library V.17), which bears the arms of the Clopton and Throckmorton families, who had connections with the Beauchamp and Despenser families in the Southwest Midlands. Clopton

⁴⁴ Richard Beadle, "Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (London: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 89–108.

⁴⁵ Hanna, "Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage."

⁴⁶ See Christine Carpenter, "The Beauchamp Affinity: A Study of Bastard Feudalism at Work," *English Historical Review*, 95 (1980), 514–32, and *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401–1499* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Charles Ross, "The Household Accounts of Elizabeth Berkeley, Countess of Warwick, 1420–1," *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 50 (1951), 81–105; and *Estates and Finances of Richard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

⁴⁷ Ryan Perry, "The Clopton Manuscript and the Beauchamp Affinity: Patronage and Reception Issues in a West Midlands Reading Community," in Wendy Scase, ed., *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the West Midlands From the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 131–59. For a similar discussion see R. G. K. A. Mertes, "The Household as a Religious Community," in *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987), pp. 123–39.

is particularly important for our present consideration, as it contains a *p*-group copy of *Piers Plowman*. Perry also discusses in particular the relationship between Clopton and the compendious Vernon manuscript, suggesting the possibility of connections between the Beauchamp *familia*, who owned property in north Worcester, where it has been suggested the Vernon Manuscript was produced.⁴⁸ Wendy Scase has also discussed the circle of William Beauchamp and other local families in the Southwest Midlands, such as the Throckmorton, Peyto, Clopton, Besford, and Crewe families, and their importance for the production of Vernon and other Southwest-Midland manuscripts.⁴⁹ Scase notes, in particular, the connection between these families and local religious houses, which “could have formed part of a patronage and production network” in this area.⁵⁰

Richard Beauchamp’s literary importance was also increased by his two marriages. The first was to Elizabeth de Berkeley, daughter of Thomas Berkeley, the noted literary patron mentioned above. As Hanna argued, Elizabeth Berkeley may have been a patron in her own right, independent from her father.⁵¹ Elizabeth’s ability to facilitate a range of “ongoing and quasi-independent activities” of patronage most likely indicates that a number of books and resources were available in the Beauchamp household.⁵² Richard’s second marriage, after Elizabeth’s death in 1422, was to Isabel Despenser, who is also known to

⁴⁸ Perry, “The Clopton Manuscript,” pp. 142–43. For a further discussion of this connection see Thorlac Turville-Petre, “The Relationship of the Vernon and Clopton Manuscripts,” in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 201–24.

⁴⁹ Wendy Scase, “The Patronage of the Vernon Manuscript,” in *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript: The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 247–268.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 289. Also see Scase’s related essays in the same volume, “Some Vernon Analogues and Their Patrons,” and “The Patronage of the Vernon Manuscript,” pp. 247–268 and pp. 269–293.

⁵¹ Hanna, “Sir Thomas Berkeley,” p. 902.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 902. Hanna notes, in particular, the apparent interest in the Beauchamp household in Chaucer’s prose, suggesting that the Beauchamps may have had access to his *Boece* as early as 1419, based on the evidence of British Library, Additional 16165, a copy made by John Shirley, a member of the Beauchamp household who will be discussed further below.

have been a literary patron, having commissioned Lydgate to translate the “Fifteen Joys of Our Lady.”⁵³ In a representation of Isabel in the sixteenth-century Founders’ Book of Tewkesbury Abbey (which will be discussed further below) Isabel is depicted on her deathbed with one of the monks presenting her with a book. This image would seem to suggest an understanding in the sixteenth century of her important connection to books and literature.⁵⁴ In addition to the Beauchamp affinity and other Gloucestershire patronage, we might also consider cross-regional affiliations. The Hoo family, for instance, whose arms are found in British Library, Harley 6045, an A-text manuscript located near Bedfordshire, also intermarried with the Despensers. It is more than likely that such lines of familial connection facilitated the movement of literary manuscripts, which thus transcended regional patronage. Such a network of provincial gentry families may be a useful way of contextualizing the production of the *p*-group.⁵⁵ Particularly important in this regard is the note of authorship in Trinity 212, which connects Langland’s father, Stacy de Rokele, to Hugh le Despenser III, a

⁵³ Our knowledge of this is based on an introduction to the poem by John Shirley in British Library, Cotton Titus A.XXVI, which notes that the “Fifteen Joys” was “translated out of Frenshe into Englishe by daun John the Monke of Bury at þinstance of þe worshipful Prynmesse Isabelle now Countasse of Warr lady Despenser.” Margaret Connolly also speculates that John Shirley’s copy of the *Life of the Black Prince* (University of London, Senate House Library, MS 1) probably came to him through the Beauchamp household, and may have become Richard’s property through his marriage to Isabel Despenser (*John Shirley*, pp. 106–07).

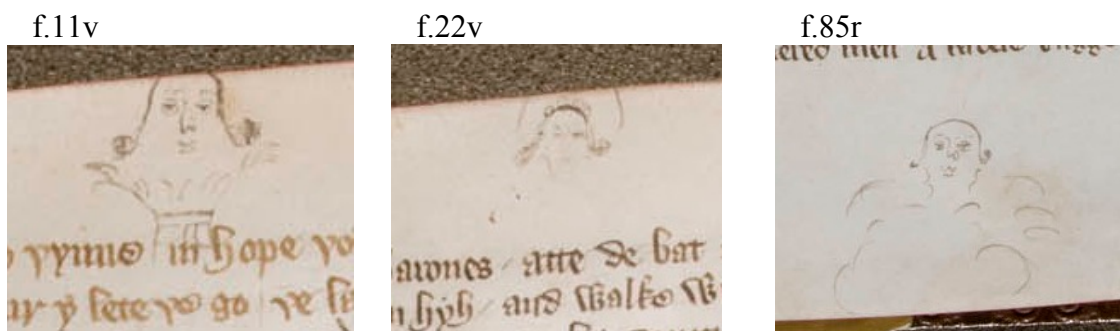
⁵⁴ For discussions of female patrons see Susan Groag Bell, “Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7 (1982), 741–68, and Karen K. Jambeck, “Patterns of Women’s Literary Patronage: England, 1200–ca. 1475,” in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 228–65.

⁵⁵ A number of studies have discussed patronage and book ownership in late-medieval England. See Kate Harris, “Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence for Ownership and the Role of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade,” in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. Griffith and Pearsall, pp. 163–99; Elizabeth Salter, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Peter J. Lucas, “The Growth and Development of English Literary Patronage in the Later Middle Ages and Early Renaissance,” *The Library*, 6th series, 4 (1982), 219–48; and Joel T. Rosenthal, “Aristocratic Cultural Patronage and Book Bequests, 1350–1500,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 64 (1982), 522–48.

powerful landholder in this area of the Southwest Midlands (and I here defer to Robert Adams’s extensive treatment of this history). As the note suggests, and as historical evidence confirms, Stacy de Rokele was a tenant of Despenser lands in Oxfordshire.⁵⁶ This note has inspired a great deal of speculation about what role the Despensers might have played in the manuscript’s history and in *Piers Plowman*’s circulation more broadly.⁵⁷

Despite the general simplicity of many of the *p*-group manuscripts, there may be some evidence that would point to a wealthy and well-connected readership. In the margins of three different folios in Trinity 212, for example, there are what appear to be contemporary drawings of three men’s heads (11v, 22v, and 85r), which have not been discussed in any of the manuscript’s descriptions:

Fig. 1



⁵⁶ In reference to the Trinity Dublin note, Hanna writes, “This note, as is customarily recognized, is mainly about Langland’s father, as a Despenser adherent; it is not at all clear that it speaks of a ‘famous local poet’ from Malvern, since it associates Langland with his father’s holdings in Oxfordshire” (“*Piers Plowman* and the Radically Chic,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 13 (1999), 179–92 (p. 182)).

⁵⁷ For a brief overview of these arguments see Simon Horobin, “Manuscripts and Readers of *Piers Plowman*.” Also see Hanna, *William Langland*; George Kane, “Langland, William (c.1325–c.1390),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed online, 18 March, 2015; and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Langland and the Bibliographic Ego,” in *Written Work*, ed. Justice and Kerby-Fulton, pp. 67–143; Kerby-Fulton also links the “very early and avid dissemination of the poem in Ireland” with the Despensers’ importance there (“Langland and the Bibliographic Ego,” p. 121 and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Iconography and the Professional Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)). This theory was rejected by Ralph Hanna in his review of Kerby-Fulton and Despres’s book (“*Piers Plowman* and the Radically Chic,” pp. 181–82).

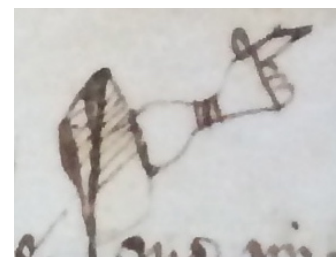
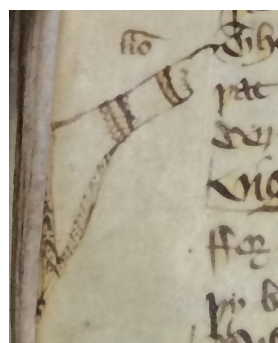
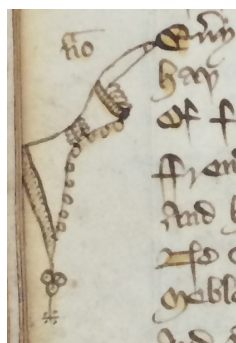
The men portrayed in these three drawings all bear signs of wealth, sporting expensive clothes and fashionable hairstyles. It is also worth noting that the first two heads appear amidst discussions of wealth. The first head appears in Passus III during Conscience's rejection of Mede, where he lists all of the corrupt officials who have become susceptible to her monetary charms. The second appears in Passus VI during the confession of Wrath; at the top of the page, directly underneath the drawing, is the discussion of wrath among the rich and the poor, in which "beggeres and barones ate debat aren ofte" (VI.123).⁵⁸

There are also a number of manicules throughout the manuscript, apparently by the original scribe, which highlight significant lines. In addition to pointing out important plot points in the text, the manicules also occasionally highlight passages on matters of political and religious leadership, as in the discussion of the cardinals from Avignon in XXI.413–23 ("þe contrey is þe corsedour þer cardinals comeþ inne") and the arrival of the king a few lines later in XXI.464–67 ("I am kyng with crone þe comune to reule"). Another manicule earlier in the text highlights the criticism of the "lords and ladies and legates of holy churche" who reward false flatterers and neglect the poor (VII.81–85). The marginalia in Trinity 212, then, seem to appeal to an audience interested in the role of the rich and powerful in society, and how they should behave rightly. It may also be significant that these manicules are all sleeved in a manner that would suggest wealthy attire:

⁵⁸ It is unclear whether these drawings are meant to represent abstract characters in the poem or people the scribe knows (e.g., patrons themselves). In either case, the illustrations at these points of concern for the wealthy may suggest a particular interest in such issues of wealth and status for the manuscript's actual or intended reader.



We might compare these to another manuscript of the *p*-group, CUL Dd.3.13, which offers much different, but similarly lavish manicules, which appear to depict hands in ceremonial armour:



How, then, does Trinity 212 relate to a wider network of manuscript production of the *p*-group? Above the note of authorship on f. 89v are a series of historical annals, which make reference to both the Despenser and Beauchamp families, who were prominent in this area of the Southwest Midlands.⁵⁹ The annals record events such as the death of Simon de Montfort, the Welsh rebellion (1294–1295), and other historical events, which, as Ralph Hanna observes, “record almost exclusively a history of events important to the Despensers.”⁶⁰ In an unpublished paper given at the International Medieval Congress in 1993, Teresa Tavormina and Lister Matheson argued that the annals and note of authorship in Trinity 212 could

⁵⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the Trinity annals see St. John Brooks, “The *Piers Plowman* Manuscripts in Trinity College, Dublin,” *The Library*, 5th series, 6 (1951), 141–53. For a more recent study see Stella Pates, “*Piers Plowman* Manuscript Trinity College: Dublin 212—The Annals Revisited,” *Notes and Queries*, 56 (2009), 336–40.

⁶⁰ Hanna, *William Langland*, p. 3.

possibly have been copied in Abergavenny in connection with Richard Beauchamp, Lord Abergavenny's dispute over Despenser lands in that region.⁶¹ Tavormina and Matheson speculate that a clerk of the Despenser-Beauchamp retinue may have brought Trinity 212 to Abergavenny, and while there, added the annals to the back of the manuscript. They also note that it is "quite possible that this hypothetical clerk had been employed earlier at Hanley Castle, a major Despenser seat and a favorite dwelling-place of the family."⁶² As Matheson later pointed out, Hanley Castle in Worcestershire was also "the administrative center for the vast Despenser estates."⁶³ Hanley was also a favored residence of the Beauchamp family, and was the place where Isabel Despenser was married to Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick.⁶⁴ This seems to be a plausible assumption, though we are lacking any convincing reason for why a clerk in an administrative role should be jotting down his notes in a *Piers Plowman* manuscript, especially as there appears to be no history of literary manuscript production at Hanley.⁶⁵

Tavormina and Matheson's theory that the annals were composed in Abergavenny is largely based on the fact that, as they observed, the annals "show a strong interest in and

⁶¹ Teresa M. Tavormina and Lister M. Matheson, "'Largeliche a legyon lees þe lyf sone': Welsh Annals and Biographical Notes in Trinity College, Dublin MS. D.4.1 (212)," paper read at the International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, 8 May 1993. I am grateful to Teresa Tavormina for sharing with me a copy of the unpublished conference paper.

⁶² Tavormina and Matheson, "'Largeliche a legyon'," p. 7.

⁶³ This idea was further developed in another Kalamazoo paper by Lister Matheson, "William Langland: Social, Political, and Geographical Backgrounds," paper read at the International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, 9 May 1997. Although I have not myself had access to this paper, Ralph Hanna notes that Matheson "finds evidence that, in 1326, the abbey of Evesham supplied Hanley with a secular chaplain and clerk, together with books—perhaps evidence for the foundation of a household school" (Ralph Hanna, "Emendations to a 1993 'Vita de Ne'erdowel'," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 14 (2000), 185–98 (p. 190)).

⁶⁴ An account of Hanley Castle was given by W. S. Symonds in 1883; for a modern reprint see W. S. Symonds, *Hanley Castle* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2008).

⁶⁵ Ker does not cite any extant manuscripts as having been produced at Hanley Castle, nor are there any other indications, as far as I am aware, of literary manuscripts having been associated with this site (see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964)).

local knowledge of the affairs of south-eastern Wales and the Marcher families thereabout, with some specialized knowledge of people and events connected with Abergavenny itself.”⁶⁶ This theory is a tenuous one, however, as there does not seem to be sufficient evidence that the annals are so specialized that they could *only* be written by someone of the Abergavenny area. Many of the records are significant enough to be known outside of Wales, and certainly in the not-so-distant region of Gloucestershire. Furthermore, even if the information in the Trinity annals is sourced from local Welsh records, there is no reason to believe that Trinity 212 itself was ever brought to that area. If the Despensers were indeed intent on securing landholdings in Wales, it would be perfectly plausible that there could have been an exchange of records between the two regions. In fact, if the Beauchamp retinue had just returned from Abergavenny in 1411, they could have taken back with them some of the local records in hope of strengthening their claim.

Several commentators have noted the similarity of the hand of the Trinity annals with the green-crayon annotator in the text of *Piers Plowman*. Kane suggests the possibility that they are the same scribe, noting A. I. Doyle’s opinion that “the ascription hand is ‘very like’ the hand of marginalia on ‘e.g. ff.13r–15v, giving fuller scriptural quotations and references’.”⁶⁷ Stella Pates offers a more confident statement that these annotations are made “by the same scribe who wrote the Annals.”⁶⁸ Pates discusses one annotation in particular by this scribe, which reads “anno domini mccccxij” in the margin of f.15v next to C III.477a, a

⁶⁶ Tavormina and Matheson, “‘Largeliche a legyon’,” p. 4. Similarly, St. John Brooks notes that the annals show “a considerable interest in the affairs of the South Wales Border, and a good deal of local knowledge” (p. 150).

⁶⁷ George Kane, *Piers Plowman: The Evidence for Authorship* (London: Athlone Press, 1965), 28, n. 2 (apparently quoting a private correspondence with Doyle).

⁶⁸ Pates, “*Piers Plowman* Manuscript,” p. 339.

quotation in the poem from Isaiah 2:4.⁶⁹ Pates draws a number of conclusions from this date, noting that the year 1412 was an eventful and hopeful year for England, with the ascension of Henry V, and for the local nobility, with the recent marriage of Isabel to Richard Beauchamp in 1411. She speculates that the annotator “wrote his marginal note alongside an ecstatic passage in the poem, prophesying a millennial era of justice and peace with scriptural quotations.”⁷⁰

As regards the identification of the hand, I am more inclined to side with Doyle’s more cautious statement that the hands are similar, though it is inconclusive whether they are the same hand, as various Latin secretary scripts from this period often look very similar. The possibility that these are the same scribes is an intriguing one, however, and would offer an interesting context to the composition of the annals. Kane observes that, should the hands be the same, we could assume that the writer of the annals “had some learning.”⁷¹ This is, surely, somewhat of an understatement; the green-crayon annotator not only provides precise scriptural citations for a number of the poem’s quotations, but also makes reference to other external secondary sources relating to the material discussed in the text. This kind of engagement would indicate a highly knowledgeable reader who is very well read in scripture and biblical commentary, which would strongly suggest a monk or other cleric.

In the same article on Trinity 212, Stella Pates also speculates that the manuscript may have been produced at the Benedictine abbey of Tewkesbury, in northwest

⁶⁹ “Non leuabit gens contra gentem gladium nec exercebunt vltra ad prelium” (“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they engage in war any more”). In the poem, this continues on from the previous quotation in C III.461a, which gives the first half of the verse.

⁷⁰ Pates, “*Piers Plowman* Manuscript,” p. 339. The date seems, for this annotator, to have been something of an afterthought, scribbled faintly after a standard referencing annotation, attributing III.477a to “ysaye secundum.”

⁷¹ Kane, *Evidence for Authorship*, p. 28.

Gloucestershire, which is only about eight miles south of Hanley Castle.⁷² Pates's suggestion is, of course, merely circumstantial, and is not based on any hard evidence connecting the manuscript with Tewkesbury. Given the importance of Tewkesbury in this area, however, it will be worthwhile to explore this speculation further. The patronage of Tewkesbury Abbey had been held by the Despenser family since 1314, when, upon the death of Gilbert de Clare at Bannockburn, Hugh Despenser the Younger inherited the advowson from the de Clare family through his marriage to Gilbert's sister Eleanor (m. 1306).⁷³ Throughout the fourteenth century Tewkesbury Abbey remained one of the wealthiest and most important of all the religious houses in England still with lay patrons and was held in high regard by the Clares and the Despensers, both of whom used the abbey as their traditional burial site.⁷⁴ Tewkesbury continued to be a favored site into the fifteenth century, when the patronage was passed to Richard Beauchamp and his descendants through his marriage to Isabel Despenser in 1423.⁷⁵ It is particularly significant for the discussion of the Welsh records in Trinity 212 that in the fourteenth century Tewkesbury Abbey owned a number of properties in Glamorgan in Wales, which had been in its possession since the 11th century. Tewkesbury's connection to Wales through these landholdings could easily explain the annalist's access to Welsh historical records.

⁷² Pates, "*Piers Plowman* Manuscript," p. 340.

⁷³ For the history of the patronage of Tewkesbury see Michael Hicks, "The Early Lords: Robert Fitzhamon to the de Clares" and "The Later Lords: The Despensers and Their Heirs," in *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art & Architecture*, ed. Richard K. Morris and Ron Shoesmith (Logaston: Logaston Press, 2003), pp. 11–18; pp. 19–30.

⁷⁴ Based on extant records, the abbey housed around thirty monks and its annual revenue in the sixteenth century was assessed at £1,598 (Hicks, "The Later Lords," p. 29). Also see Karen Stöber, "The Role of Late Medieval English Monasteries as Expressions of Patronal Authority: Some Case Studies," in *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns*, ed. Paul Trio and Marjan de Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), pp. 189–207.

⁷⁵ See Michael Hicks, "The Beauchamp Trust, 1439–1487," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54 (1981), 135–149.

The potential localization of the annals' composition at Tewkesbury would also provide a more plausible explanation for why the later scribe had access to a manuscript of *Piers Plowman*. It would seem far more likely for a large monastic establishment like Tewkesbury to possess or even have produced a high-quality literary manuscript like Trinity 212. Unfortunately, there are no surviving Tewkesbury manuscripts in the period between the late thirteenth century and the mid fifteenth century, and so we have no indication of what book production was like in the abbey during this time. As Julian Luxford notes, however, "As one of England's wealthiest and most populous religious houses during the later Middle Ages, Tewkesbury Abbey is likely to have possessed a large and diverse library."⁷⁶ There are eleven extant manuscripts and two early printed books attributable to Tewkesbury Abbey.⁷⁷ The surviving manuscripts show a keen interest in the history of the abbey, particularly relating to its connections to noble families, reflecting the general motive implicit in the Trinity annals. This is especially true in the fifteenth century, when several chronicles relating to the history and patronal affiliations of the abbey were written.

Particularly interesting is a manuscript of the early sixteenth-century known as the "Founders' Book" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Top. Glouc. d.2), which includes the "great charter" of Tewkesbury alongside various chronicles and historical narratives relating to the

⁷⁶ Julian M. Luxford, "The Founders' Book," in *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art, and Architecture*, ed. Richard K. Morris and Ron Shoesmith (Hertfordshire: Logaston Press, 2003), pp. 53–64 (p. 53). We might also compare Ker's notion that the rates of manuscript survival have "little bearing upon the actual size of any medieval library. Survival has been usually a matter of chance" (*Medieval Libraries*, p. xi).

⁷⁷ St Jerome's commentary on Jeremiah (s.xii); Missal (s.xiii) with 14th-century additions; Writings of St. Anselm (s.xii); Liturgical calendar and annals (c.1200); English history and topography [fragment] (s.xiii); Liturgical calendar (s.xiii^{med}); Metrical list of English kings (s.xv); Psalter (c.1260); Tewkesbury Annals and cartulary (1260s); Alexander of Bath's commentary on the Evangelists (s.xiii^{ex}); A genealogical roll with chronicle (s.xv^{ex}); Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* (Printed Strasbourg, 1480); John Duns Scotus's works (Printed Venice, 1490s); and The Founders' Book (s.xvi^{1/4}) (see Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, p. 188, and Luxford, "The Founders' Book," p. 53).

abbey, as well as its patrons and benefactors. The manuscript is also heavily illustrated, including one hundred and twenty-one coats of arms and twenty-four figural illuminations, most of which depict former patrons of the abbey.⁷⁸ The availability of historical information in this later manuscript is, in itself, of some interest, as it indicates that good historical records were kept in the abbey up to this period. In fact, the arms in the Founders' Book were apparently sourced from another Tewkesbury manuscript, (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lat. misc. b.2 (R)), a genealogical and armorial parchment roll produced sometime around the mid fifteenth century. The roll includes a version of the Tewkesbury Chronicle and depicts the lineage of the Lords of Tewkesbury from Oddo and Doddo, the Saxon founders of the abbey, down to the fifteenth-century patrons, along with their respective arms.

The interest in genealogical history is also evident in the medieval stained glass windows that still survive in the abbey to the present day.⁷⁹ The northwest and southwest windows depict the successive lords of Tewkesbury under canopies, including the founder, Robert Fitzhamon, the de Clare earls, and Hugh Despenser the Younger, suggesting the “uninterrupted descent of legitimate secular authority.”⁸⁰ The windows also depict a number of coats of arms, which indicate not only the patrons and benefactors of the abbey, but also the dynastic alliances of the various families, including the Berkeley arms, with whom both the de Clares and the Despensers intermarried.⁸¹ This emphasis on the familial history and connections of the Beauchamp and Despenser families offers an intriguing insight into the

⁷⁸ As Julian Luxford suggests, the composition of the Founders' Book was likely motivated by the fluctuating social and political situation at the turn of the sixteenth century, which could have inspired a resurgence of interest in history and genealogical descent (“The Founders' Book,” p. 64).

⁷⁹ For a detailed discussion of the Tewkesbury windows see Sarah Brown, “The Medieval Stained Glass,” *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art, and Architecture*, ed. Richard K. Morris and Ron Shoemith (Hertfordshire: Logaston Press, 2003), pp. 183–96.

⁸⁰ Brown, “The Medieval Stained Glass,” p. 194.

⁸¹ These arms, as Sarah Brown observes, appear to have been “chosen to emphasise the more advantageous connections of the family” (Ibid., p. 189).

annals of Trinity 212. Considering the immense effort at Tewkesbury to assert the legitimacy of the Beauchamp-Despenser lineage, and the historical records that appear to have been kept there, it would be perfectly reasonable for a monk of Tewkesbury to possess the kind of knowledge necessary to have written the annals. If, moreover, some of the entries were sourced from Welsh records pertinent to the Beauchamp-Despenser claims, it would not be improbable for such records to have found their way to Tewkesbury. If he was also the green-crayon annotator in *Piers Plowman*, he may have seen parallels in these records to the events at the end of the poem, and decided to include them at the end of the Trinity manuscript.

Throughout the extant Tewkesbury books and windows there also appears to be an implicit understanding of the relationship between genealogical and historical events and a typological religious timeline. To return to Lat. Misc. b.2 (R), the armorial roll discussed above, it should be noted that, while the Tewkesbury Chronicle is written on the verso side of the roll, the recto side presents another family tree, this one depicting the descent of the English kings. The family tree shows the ultimate descent of the kings as deriving from God himself, passing through Adam and Eve, Noah, and other Old Testament figures down to the English monarchs. The placement of the two timelines together, moreover, shows the rhetorical integration of the Tewkesbury genealogy with that of the royal descent.⁸² A similar representation of typological genealogy is also present in the stained glass. Alongside the

⁸² We might compare this to another Gloucestershire genealogical roll, New York Public Library, MS Spencer 193, which presents the descent of the Botelers of Sudeley from Edward the Confessor (see Carol M. Meale, "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. Griffith and Pearsall, pp. 201–38 (p. 215)). The important difference, however, is that while Spencer 193 remains entirely secular the Tewkesbury roll merges the historical and the religious, showing the royal genealogy as something legitimated by its ultimate descent from God. For other chronicles with similar propagandistic functions in the fifteenth century see Linne Mooney, "Lydgate's 'Kings of England' and Another Verse Chronicle of the Kings," *Viator*, 20 (1989), 255–90.

representations of the Lords of Tewkesbury, noted above, are four other windows (southeast, south, northeast, and north), each with five lights, depicting numerous Old Testament kings and prophets including David, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Daniel. Most prominent, however, is the east window, which depicts the Coronation of the Virgin above the Last Judgment, where Christ the Judge is enthroned.⁸³ The concepts of history and noble lineage that were implicit in the depictions of secular lords also come to bear in these religious windows.⁸⁴ The placement of the Lords of Tewkesbury within this biblical framework acts as a rhetorical device similar to the armorial roll, suggesting that their line of descent is not merely a secular one, but rather part of a continuous line from the Old Testament prophets to the end of the world. It is more than likely that the patrons of Tewkesbury saw the importance of such a narrative in legitimating their own noble descent.⁸⁵ The implied inclusion of the Despencers within this sequence of biblical history, moreover, indicates that the family saw the importance of such a narrative in legitimating their own familial descent, which reflects the motivations behind the Trinity annals. One might also draw parallels here with the general scope of *Piers Plowman*, in which the final few passūs lead the reader from an encounter

⁸³ Sarah Brown has noted a particular emphasis on the wounds of Christ in the Tewkesbury windows, a motif which, she speculates, may have been inspired by the abbey's proximity to Hailes Abbey, which possessed the relic of the Holy Blood" ("The Medieval Stained Glass," p. 191). This would be a particularly interesting consideration for the *p*-group, especially in light of the note at the back of British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian B.XVI.

⁸⁴ The East window depicts the angel St Michael standing at the left hand of Christ bearing a shield with the *Arma Christi*, a pseudo-heraldic device that displayed the instruments of Christ's passion (Brown, "The Medieval Stained Glass," p. 193). The presence of the *Arma Christi* here among the copious secular arms places Christ himself as the summit of nobility, and merges the conceptions of the secular and the religious.

⁸⁵ As Martyn Lawrence notes, the Tewkesbury windows "are designed to lead the eye from founder to earl to Despenser and thence to the figures of prophets and Old Testament kings. Ultimately, the observer arrives in the east window at the Last Judgement, where Christ rewards the faithful and delivers the unjust to eternal death. The entire series of windows is important, for it supplies a chronology in glass of successive lords of Glamorgan" (Martyn Lawrence, "Secular Patronage and Religious Devotion: The Despencers and St Mary's Abbey, Tewkesbury," in *Fourteenth Century England, Vol. 5*, ed. Nigel Saul (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 78–93 (p. 83)).

with the Old Testament prophets through to an apocalyptic conclusion. This may, at least, suggest an audience with an interest in *Piers Plowman*'s subject matter and an understanding of its typological importance. This motive to include the family in a historical and biblical timeline may also underlie the annals of Trinity 212, which merge a religious narrative with local secular history to create one seamless temporal line.

The books and windows of Tewkesbury may also give some context for why the scribe of the annals placed historical records at the back of a manuscript of *Piers Plowman*. Tavormina and Matheson note that the annals are ordered thematically rather than chronologically, highlighting themes such as violence, death, political strife, and natural disasters. These grim subjects, they argue, reflect the apocalyptic tone of the siege of Unity in *Piers Plowman*, especially in the violent scene with which the text of Trinity ends, observing, "It is a plausible hypothesis that the writer of the annals was seeking to provide historical instances of the kinds of moral and natural catastrophes described at the poem's end as he had it."⁸⁶ The annals thus act as a continuation of *Piers Plowman*'s apocalyptic ending; and as historical records of the Lords of Tewkesbury, even including Langland's own affiliation with the Despencers, they integrate this narrative into both the thematic structure of the poem and the history of its composition.

If, as it has here been suggested, we can plausibly speculate that Tewkesbury was the site of Trinity 212's production, and perhaps the annals as well, we might also consider

⁸⁶ Tavormina and Matheson, "Largeliche a legyon'," p. 5. They go on note that the figures mentioned in the annals may all share in common "the vices of Pride and Wrath, the ready use of violence, and not a little Covetise. In history, they were arguably driven by the forces released by Antichrist in the poem, and Antichrist's depiction as a rampaging, tyrannical leader of an armed retinue bears significant resemblances to the kinds of political factions and leadership that could be seen in England throughout the 1310s and '20s. ... though there is no explicit reference to contemporary political events of the late 14th and early 15th centuries, such events might well have called to mind those of the 1290s to 1340s" (p. 5).

Tewkesbury as a possible source of other *p*-group manuscript production. We might even imagine a monastic scriptorium, as Tewkesbury would most likely have possessed, where collaborative editing and the sharing of exemplars could have taken place with local copies of the C text. The production of the *p*-group would thus also offer an important context to a discussion of the Despensers' possible role in *Piers*'s historical narrative. Perhaps we could imagine not only Trinity 212, but also the related manuscripts in the *p*-group as being a part of what Stella Pates calls a "network of interrelated aristocratic families" in this area of Gloucestershire.⁸⁷ And if the *p*-group in this region was given its impetus by wealthy landowners in the area, the regional production was perhaps centered at local religious houses like Tewkesbury Abbey under the patronage of families such as the Despensers. Of course, an identification of Tewkesbury as a source of production for the *p*-group does not necessarily make a connection to the Despensers explicit. Beyond their patronage of their Abbey, there is little evidence that the Despenser family spent much time in the vicinity of Tewkesbury.⁸⁸ Nor do the *p*-group manuscripts (save perhaps for Clopton) bear the self-promoting signs of patronage found in other West Midland manuscripts produced at the bequest of noble families. The connection to Tewkesbury would, however, place the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman C* in the nexus of noble families and religious houses that has been the subject of so much recent discussion.

This also raises questions about the poet's own possible connections to this family or group of families. Adams and others have noted the political force that would be necessary to popularize a potentially dangerous poem such as *Piers Plowman* in the tense social

⁸⁷ Pates, "Trinity College: Dublin 212," p. 340.

⁸⁸ Hicks notes, "The Despensers seem to have visited Tewkesbury seldom and briefly" ("The Later Lords," p. 29).

environment at the turn of the century.⁸⁹ This may indicate that Langland had some powerful connections that could ensure the continued promulgation of his work. So these findings encourage us to rethink how we approach the study of the *Piers* manuscripts. In order to understand how *Piers Plowman* was produced in the early years of its circulation we must consider the networks of affiliation and collaboration within which it was transmitted, which may open up new avenues for understanding the historical circumstances of the poem and perhaps even the poet himself.

IV. Beyond the Regional: The Afterlife of the *P*-Group

Throughout this chapter, it has been argued that the manuscripts of the *p*-group were transmitted and edited within a close-knit regional coterie of provincial scribes in the Southwest Midlands. Despite the obvious regional affiliations of the *p*-group, however, the text of this subgroup did not always stay within its immediate environment, but rather, appears to have been brought to London in various capacities in the fifteenth century. Evidence for the *p*-group in London may be found in the fragmentary copy of the poem in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 669/646 [Ca], a manuscript copied by John Cok (c. 1393–c.1468), a prolific copyist as well as an Augustinian canon and brother of St Bartholomew’s Hospital, London. The Gonville and Caius manuscript is primarily a devotional miscellany, containing the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a translation of Rolle’s *Emendatio vitae* and Rolle’s *Form of Living*. At the back of the manuscript, however, on a single folio, is an extract from Passus 16 of the C text. Another added text is a *Pater Noster* in Latin, which appears at the beginning of the manuscript.

⁸⁹ Adams, *Langland and the Rokele Family*, pp. 97–105.

Throughout the various texts, Cok employs different scripts; the three primary texts are written in a fine fere-textura, while the added texts are written in anglicana. Cok is identifiable as the copyist of all of the texts, however, as he signs his name after each one. The manuscript was owned by John Shirley (c.1366–1456), containing his distinctive mark of ownership on the first flyleaf, a motto-inscription that reads “ma ioye . Shirley.”⁹⁰ Shirley acted as an esquire to Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, throughout the fifteenth century and appears to have had a strong literary interest, having avidly copied and collected books.⁹¹ Despite John Shirley’s prolific copying of authors such as Chaucer and Lydgate, however, he is, intriguingly, never found copying *Piers Plowman*. It is plausible that John Shirley may have acquired the manuscript through his connections with the Beauchamp family’s extensive network, though there is no concrete evidence to support this.

The extract of *Piers Plowman* in Gonville and Caius 669*/646 is, as many have noted, not integral to the rest of the manuscript and may have been added in later. It is also left off of the manuscript’s table of contents written on f. 4v, also written in John Cok’s hand. Yet, this cannot be taken as definitive proof that the C-text fragment was an afterthought. The *Pater Noster* is similarly left off the contents list and this may merely indicate that Cok

⁹⁰ Shirley’s motto also contains a crowned “A” before the name “Shirley”; several have attempted to identify what this character is, from simply a heavily decorated “a” to a monogram of “amor” or “Maria” (see Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 102–03).

⁹¹ For a thorough analysis of John Shirley’s life and activities see Connolly, *John Shirley*. His scribal career is also discussed more recently in Linne Mooney, “Locating Scribal Activity in Late-Medieval London,” *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Connolly and Mooney, pp. 202–03. Some scholars have argued that Shirley oversaw a professional scriptorium that copied manuscripts for the commercial book trade, while others hold that his literary interests were amateur and that he copied books only for personal use or dissemination among friends. These competing theories are summarized in Connolly, *John Shirley*, pp. 2–4. In either case, Shirley’s books appear to have remained available to London scribes after his death. Linne Mooney discusses a network of scribes who inherited Shirley’s manuscripts and copied his texts (“John Shirley’s Heirs,” *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33, (2003), 182–98).

simply did not see them as substantial enough to include in the contents list. The extract, however, makes no mention of *Piers Plowman*, attributing it instead to Augustine and Isidore, Langland's sources for this passage in the poem. Simon Horobin has recently argued, however, that Cok did indeed take the extract from a full copy of *Piers Plowman*, as it includes in the margin of the *Form of Living* another excerpt from C.16.199–200a.⁹² Of the small amount of text excerpted from *Piers Plowman* there are a number of variations from the archetypal text, which, as Horobin observes, consistently agree with the *p*-group, and in particular CUL Ff.5.35.⁹³ Given the agreement of Shirley's fragment with F's readings in every lection it is apparent that John Cok was copying either directly from Ff.5.35 or an extremely close copy that is no longer extant. The shared variation between F and Ca is, however, highly intriguing, particularly in light of the codicological histories discussed above and the fact that it occurs in John Shirley's possession. Ff.5.35 also contains a note of ownership by Thomas Jakes, who Doyle suggests may have been the Thomas Jakes admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1465;⁹⁴ and as Horobin notes, "While there is no reason to suspect that the two men knew each other, it is striking that these two textually related copies can be located within a mile of each other in the middle of the fifteenth century."⁹⁵ Regardless of what the historical circumstances of the manuscript were, however, it is clear that a text of the *p*-group was available for copying in London in the mid fifteenth century, which means that the

⁹² Simon Horobin, "John Cok," pp. 51–53.

⁹³ In two instances, it agrees with F and one other manuscript (189 my furste name is] þan am I WFCa; 201a *est*(10)] *est &c*] QFCa) and in 4 readings it agrees with F alone (185 knowe] eke knowe FCa; *mens*] þouzt FCa; 194 telleth] me tellith FCa; 197 flessh] flesch FCa). There is one variation in which Ca agrees solely with N (201 *line om.* NCa), though they agree in the omission of a line, which cannot be taken as a reliable indicator of genuine agreement.

⁹⁴ Doyle, "Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*," p. 45.

⁹⁵ Horobin, "John Cok and His Copy of *Piers Plowman*," p. 51.

subgroup had expanded—in this one instance at least—beyond the boundaries of its otherwise insular circulation in the Southwest Midlands.

While there has been a good deal of discussion around Cok's fragmentary copy of *Piers*, there is another instance of the *p*-group showing up in London that has received almost no attention whatsoever. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102 is an early fifteenth-century manuscript on parchment, copied by a scribe that Simon Horobin has identified as a clerk of the Brewers' Guild in London.⁹⁶ The C text of *Piers* in Digby 102 belongs to the *i*-group, which was discussed above as being localizable to the London book trade. In the bottom margin on folio 53v, however, is an addition by another slightly later hand, probably datable to the middle of the fifteenth century.⁹⁷ The annotator adds the following lines after C.XIV.193, during Imaginatif's discussion of the salvation of the righteous heathen:

Iob was a paynym & plesede god at prys
 And arystotle also sewed þe same secte
 And ful holy lyf ladde after lawe of kynde
 Wherfor it semeth soþely by sundry skeles to schewe
 That he is saf as was Iob y can not wete þe soþe

In the original text, Imaginatif initially leaves the question of the righteous heathen undecided, saying, “Ne of Sortes ne of Salamon no scripture can tell / Wher that they ben in hell or in heuene, or Aristotel the wyse” (C.XIV.192–93). In response to Will's doubts several lines later, Imaginatif does affirm the legitimacy of the “salvation of the righteous heathen,” using Trajan as an example (ll. 205–10). The added passage, however, has Imaginatif assert that, although no written authority can attest to the salvation of Sortes, Solomon, and Aristotle, an experiential understanding (“it semeth soþely”) confirms that

⁹⁶ Horobin, “The Scribe of Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102.”

⁹⁷ The annotator uses a proficient anglicana that would suggest training as a professional scribe. After consulting a number of London manuscripts and documents, however, I have not been able to identify this hand anywhere else.

Aristotle is “saf as was Iob.” Although the C text in Digby 102 belongs to the *i*-group, this added passage is only found in manuscripts QSZW,⁹⁸ texts which generally conform to the *p*-group. The text in Digby 102, however, contains several variations from the QSZW text: 195 sette] secte Y. 196 ladde ful holy lyf] ful holy lyf ladde Y. 198 sauyd] saf Y. These variations suggest that the Digby annotator was not copying from one of the other extant manuscripts attesting this passage. The Digby annotator also adds another portion of text not found in any other manuscript after C.XVI.89, discussing the spiritual harm brought on by the poor envying the rich, which may derive from some lost C-text exemplar or perhaps be an original composition by the scribe.

So what all of this evidence tells us is that in this region, *Piers Plowman* appears to have been transmitted within an even more well-defined and closed network of affiliation than in East Anglia. In this Gloucestershire coterie, the scribes of *Piers Plowman* quite obviously shared the same exemplars and passed around their own manuscripts for consultation and emendation by other scribes. These copyists also appear to have been actively engaged with and interested in the text they were copying and were concerned with the correct transmission thereof. Yet rather than being interested in achieving the authorial text, as we modern editors would value, these scribes were more concerned with preserving the textual integrity of the *p*-group itself. This network of collaboration, moreover, may have had its impetus from the landed gentry in this area, whose wealth and connections could have helped *Piers Plowman* reach the fifteenth-century popularity that it did. Despite the pronounced regionality of the *p*-group, there is also evidence from the later *p*-group additions that the subgroup did have connections with London. Thus, if the primary production of the

⁹⁸ Russell-Kane, *C Version*, p. 185.

subgroup was indeed provincial, it also found its way to the city through various lines of movement, which would not be surprising considering the evidence of book trade between Gloucestershire and the capital. What we find in this geographical grouping is a remarkable insight into the historical circulation of the poem. These findings encourage us to rethink how we approach the study of the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts. As the *p*-group case study shows us, we must not only consider material but also textual evidence in uncovering the poem's transmission history. In order to understand how *Piers Plowman* was produced in the early years of its circulation, moreover, we must consider the networks of affiliation and collaboration within which it was transmitted, which may open up new avenues for understanding the historical circumstances of the poem and perhaps even the poet himself.

Chapter 3

East Anglian Book Production and the Circulation of *Piers Plowman A*

Scholarship on the circulation of *Piers Plowman* is largely focused on two geographical areas, the Southwest Midlands and London, the two regions mentioned in the poem. While both areas saw a profusion of *Piers* manuscript copying, the attention given to these areas often neglects the other prominent area of the poem's fifteenth-century transmission, East Anglia. As the evidence of the extant manuscripts suggests, East Anglian manuscript production was key to the transmission of the A text of *Piers Plowman*. A significant number of A-text manuscripts are copied in dialects characteristic of East Anglia, and most commonly, the county of Norfolk. This chapter will examine the circulation of these A-text manuscripts in Norfolk and its surrounding counties, contextualizing it within a broader manuscript tradition in that area.

The county of Norfolk was one of the wealthiest and most heavily populated in the country, and was a vibrant source of religious and cultural life in the later Middle Ages.¹

¹ For discussions of the history and culture of Norfolk in the Middle Ages see *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005). Also see Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, Pontifical Institute Studies and Texts, 66 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984); Mancroft P. Lasko and N. J. Morgan, eds., *Medieval Art in East Anglia 1300–1520* (Norwich: Jarrold & Sons, 1973); *A New Historical Geography of England*, ed. H. C. Darby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 186–247; Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North-East Norfolk and Norwich* (London: Penguin, 1962); D. C. Douglass, *The Social Structure of Medieval East Anglia*, Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, ed. P. Vinogradoff, 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927); H. Arthur Doubleday and William Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Norfolk*, Vol. 2 (London: Constable, 1906); and Francis Blomefield and

Norfolk was also a rich source of literary production, often supported by local patronage.² The importance of Norfolk as a center for manuscript production was explored in extensive detail in a seminal article by Richard Beadle, in which he surveyed the production of manuscripts localizable to this area.³ This chapter will build upon Beadle's work to examine further the circulation of *Piers* in this region, examining the dialectal affiliations of the extant copies and the material evidence for localization. Like the previous chapter, this case study will discuss the poem's unique manifestations within a discrete regional environment, shedding light on *Piers*'s role in a complex network of manuscript circulation in this area. As it will argue, *Piers Plowman*'s largely undiscussed circulation in Norfolk and the collaboration of book producers in this area offers a new perspective on the poem's fifteenth-century transmission and further establishes the importance of regionality for its late-medieval development. While this chapter is largely focused on providing historical and material evidence of an East Anglian tradition of *Piers Plowman*, the following chapter will continue this line of enquiry to explore what implications the literary contexts of this tradition have for the poem's fifteenth-century reception.

Charles Parkin, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Containing a Description of the Towns, Villages, and Hamlets, with the Foundations of Monasteries, Churches, Chapels, Chantries, and Other Religious Buildings*, 11 vols. (London: Miller, 1805–1810).

² Carol M. Meale discusses a possible network of literary patronage in Norfolk connected to the house of Miles Stapleton and his wife Katherine in the fifteenth century ("Katherine de la Pole and East Anglian Manuscript Production in the Fifteenth Century," in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A. S. G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 132–49). Also see Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450," *PMLA*, 27 (1912), 188–207, and 28 (1913), 79–105.

³ Richard Beadle, "Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Riddy, pp. 89–108.

I. *Piers Plowman* in East Anglia: Manuscripts and Evidence

Of the extant manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, six are copied in a dialect localizable to the region of East Anglia. Five of these six are multi-text manuscripts; only one, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1468 was originally a single-text version of the poem. Almost all of the East Anglian *Piers* manuscripts, moreover, are copies of the A text, with the exception of only one B text, Cambridge University Library, Ll.4.14. These manuscripts, most of which can be dated from the second quarter to the middle of the fifteenth century, show a remarkable consistency of appearance and organization. What is particularly intriguing, however, is that many of the A-text manuscripts using East Anglian dialects also relate to each other textually, belonging to a branch of the A tradition which A. V. C. Schmidt called subgroup **m**.⁴ We see here, then, a surprising similarity to the circulation of the C text in the Southwest Midlands discussed in Chapter 2. Both instances witness a group of manuscripts that not only closely agrees in dialect, but also preserves a specific textual subgroup within a close-knit regional environment.

One of the most important, and yet least studied of the East Anglian *Piers* manuscripts is London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687 [M], a bilingual religious codex usually dated to around 1425, based on paleographical evidence.⁵ Antiquaries 687 divides into two booklets, the contents of which are as follows:

Booklet I⁶

1. 3: *Pater Noster*, *Ave* and Creed (in English)
2. 5–358: *The Prick of Conscience* (interpolated version)
3. 359–81: A form of confession

⁴ Schmidt, *Parallel-Text*, II, p. 92; pp. 100–110.

⁵ The manuscript is a thick volume, containing 279 folios and measuring 215 x 145mm. The manuscript is generally plain and undecorated and decoration is sporadic and inconsistent.

⁶ It should be noted that the manuscript is paginated rather than foliated. This description, therefore, will use page numbers in place of folios.

4. 383–411: *A Litol Tretyz on the Sevene Dedly Synnys*, by Richard Lavynham
5. 412–30: *Decem Precepta Diuercis* (English Decalogue treatise)
6. 431–68: *Speculum Sacerdotis Secundum Visionem Sancti Edwardi Regis et Confessoris*

Booklet II

7. 470–549: *Piers Plowman* (A text)
8. 552–8: “A Treatise on Excommunication”
9. Legal notes relating to Healing, Lincolnshire in a later hand (probably 17th century)

The majority of the manuscript is copied in one hand (Hand 1) using a variable anglicana script. A second hand (Hand 2) copies only four pages in the *Prick of Conscience* from page 20 to 23, after which Hand 1 resumes.⁷ A third hand (Hand 3) copies the final text in the manuscript, the “Treatise on Excommunication.”⁸ The manuscript is collated in regular groups of twelve, with some variation in the second booklet.⁹ The second booklet begins on page 470, corresponding with the beginning of *Piers Plowman*. This gathering’s status as a booklet is shown by the presence of several blank flyleaves at the end of the *Speculum Sacerdotis* (the final text of Booklet I), the last of which is slightly dirty, suggesting that it was uncovered for a period of time. The second section also introduces a slightly different

⁷ Hand I employs a fairly generic anglicana script, with very little secretary influence. The scribe uses a two-compartment <a>, sigma <s>, and round <e>, and both long and short <r>. Some later features do exist, such as the stem of <t> rising above the crossbar. Hand II appears only at the beginning of the *Prick of Conscience*, copying only about the first twenty folios. This hand employs an anglicana very similar to Hand I, though with a heavier influence from secretary features, such as single-compartment <a> and kidney-shaped <s>. Hand II’s <w> uses elaborate, rounded ascenders, giving it a much different aspect than that of Hand I. Hand II generally uses sharp, angular letter forms in his script, as opposed to the rounded anglicana of Hand I.

⁸ Hand III is a fluid, informal, and heavily abbreviated anglicana. The script is messy and unevenly spaced, indicating that it was scrawled hastily and with less care than the rest of the manuscript.

⁹ The collation may be expressed as such: (1 [original] flyleaf) I–XIV¹², XV¹¹ (1 leaf wanting), XVI–XIX¹², XX⁸, XXI¹², XXII–XXIII¹⁴, XXIV⁴ [2 leaves added later]. Quire signatures are present throughout the manuscript, though there are some inconsistencies. Quire 1 is not included in the numbering; the scribe begins with “i” at the beginning of quire 2. In his numeration, moreover, the scribe skips both “ii” and “iii,” proceeding from “i” on page 27 to “iiij” on page 73. This situation is, however, easily explained; having neglected to number the first quire and erroneously numbering quire 2 as “i”, the scribe compensated for this by skipping “iii” and proceeding to “iiij” at the beginning of the fourth quire. The omission of “ii” is probably not an omission at all, but rather the signature has simply been trimmed off (as has very nearly happened for signature “v”).

system of collation and uses a separate sequence of quire numbering (I–iii).¹⁰ It should not necessarily be assumed from quiring, however, that Booklet II was originally conceived of as separate from Antiquaries 687. *Piers Plowman* is copied by the same scribe as that of Booklet I, and its presentation and aspect are in no way distinguishable from the rest of the manuscript, containing the same general layout as well as the same style of rubrication.¹¹ Thus, while the separate quiring system indicates that *Piers* was most likely copied separately from the other texts, its production seems generally consistent and contemporaneous with the other items in Antiquaries 687.

Throughout the various texts within Antiquaries 687, a consistent East Anglian dialect is present, mainly characteristic of Norfolk. The majority of the dialect is localizable to somewhere around the border between southern Norfolk and northern Suffolk. The dialect, however, is highly varied, and for any single given word there may be as many as eight different forms attested in the text by what is undoubtedly the same scribe. Although an East Midlands dialect is consistently present, there is also evidence of dialectal contamination from other regions. Throughout the seven English texts, the scribe occasionally uses dialect forms more characteristic of London, the North, and the southwest Midlands. The *Linguistic Atlas* divides the dialect of Antiquaries 687 between what the editors identify as four

¹⁰ *Piers Plowman* is copied over one quire of twelve and two of fourteen. Orietta Da Rold mentions in passing the production of Antiquaries 687, noting, “the scribe who copied Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687... establishes a rather interesting quiring technique, perhaps an indication of the fact that he is not used to copying books” (“Materials,” in *The Production of Books in England*, ed. Gillespie and Wakelin, pp. 12–33 (p. 27)). Da Rold does not, however, offer further comment on why the quiring is interesting, nor how the quiring system correlates to the scribe’s level of experience.

¹¹ There are very few decorated initials in any of the texts, and those that do exist are comparatively plain. The rubrication is inconsistent; most though not all of the Latin is written in red, sometimes in the same anglicana as the rest of the script and other times in a dressier anglicana formata. There is also an attempt to shade the first letter of line-initial words with red, though this too is inconsistent. No marginal annotation is present anywhere in the MS, except for occasional numbering, manicules, and nota marks.

different hands.¹² Hand A is attributed with the *Prick of Conscience*, Hand B with the *Form of Confession* and *Piers Plowman*, Hand C with the *Litil Tretys* and *Decem Precepta*, and Hand D with the *Treatise on Excommunication*. Only Hands A and D, however, are given linguistic profiles and plotted on the *LALME* dot maps. Hand A is the only one identified as having a Norfolk dialect, while the dialects of Hands B, C, and D are all placed in Suffolk. Hand B is further divided into “language 1” and “language 2,” referring to the dialects of the *Form of Confession* and *Piers Plowman* respectively. The dialect of *Piers* is specifically located in NW Suffolk, and compared to the dialect of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 18, which contains the *Speculum Vitae*. Hand C, however, while still placed in Suffolk, is considered to be “less distinctively East Anglian, probably more southerly.”¹³

Although *LALME* is, for the most part, accurate, I will here offer a more thorough analysis of the manuscript’s dialect. In order to make sense of these strangely diverse dialect features, it is necessary to break down the manuscript into its parts. The copy of *Piers Plowman* in Antiquaries 687 most frequently uses forms characteristic of East Anglia, particularly the county of Norfolk, the most significant of which are as follows:

Word	Form	Localization
give (pl)	zeuen	Mostly Southwest Norfolk; some Midlands
might	mught	2 North (Yorks. WR and NR)
	migth	1 East Norfolk; 1 border of Norfolk and Ely
	mygthe	2 in Norfolk; 1 in Warwicks.
	myth	Mostly Norfolk/Suffolk
said (pl.)	seydyn	2 in Norfolk (one on the border); 1 in Suffolk
seven	seue	1 East Norfolk
shall (pl.)	scholyn	1 in West Norfolk; 1 in Essex
should	schuldyn	East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambs.)
such	sweche	Mostly SW Norfolk
thither	peder	1 in NE. Nor., 1 NE. Suff; 2 <i>PP</i> MSS in S. Herfs.

¹² *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, p. 137.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

	bidyre	1 in Suffolk
were	wern	Mostly Norfolk and Suffolk
when	quan	Mostly SW Norfolk; 3 NE Suff. (on the border)
	qwan	Mostly Norfolk/Suffolk (esp. SW Nor.)

The second text, the *Form of Confession*, uses one of the most diverse sets of features, which may reflect several further layers of dialect relics from previous copyings. The text uses some spellings characteristic of London, the Southwest Midlands around the border between Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, and others scattered around the northern counties. Most pervasive, however, are its East Anglian spellings, which center predominantly in Norfolk:

Word	Form	Localization
eighth	eythe	One in SW Norfolk
father	fadere	4 attested: 1 NW Norfolk, 2 Lincs., 1 Leics.
has (3sg)	hat	Mostly Norfolk; 1 in Cambs and 1 Ely
might	mighte	3 in Nor.; 2 in London; 2 Lincs.; dispersed W Mids.
	myth	Mostly Norfolk and N. Suffolk
	mithe	3 in Norfolk; 1 in Worcs.
	mytht	3 in Norfolk; 1 in Essex; 1 in Worcs.
ninth	nynthe	2 in Norfolk; 2 in Warwicks.; 1 in S Shropshire
not	nouth	Mostly W Norfolk; Some in Suffolk/ Cambs./Ely on the Norfolk border; Some scattered elsewhere
	nowth	Mostly Norfolk; 2 Suffolk; 1 Cambs.; scattered elsewhere
	noughth	2 in Norfolk; 1 NW Suffolk on the Norfolk border
seventh	seuenthe	2 Norfolk, 1 Cambs.; 4 in the Midlands
third	thredde	Mostly W Norfolk; some in Suffolk on the Nor. border; some in the north

The *Litil Tretys on the Sevene Dedly Synnys* contains fewer localizable forms than the other texts in the manuscript, though, of the more distinctive spellings, most are characteristic of East Anglia, showing a density of attestation from the East Midlands through Norfolk:

Word	Form	Localization
enough	Inowe	1 in Cambridgeshire
father	fadyr	East Anglia; dense grouping in W Norfolk (esp NW) and NW Suffolk

say (3sg)	seþe	1 in Ely
seven	seue	1 in E Norfolk

As we know, the *Litil Tretys* was composed in Lavenham, Suffolk and most of the manuscripts appear to have circulated locally in this area, which strongly suggests that this copy is also of an East Anglian provenance.

LALME similarly places the dialect of Antiquaries 687's *Prick of Conscience* in south Norfolk, near the Suffolk border, a localization that accords with the general Norfolk character of the manuscript's dialect. This identification is generally accurate, though it does also contain some demonstrably Southwest Midland forms. The Decalogue text has perhaps the most difficult dialect to localize, though its use of the word *seyne* ("say") and *douter* ("daughter") are generally characteristic of the Norfolk/Suffolk border. It also contains a number of spellings that are localizable to the Southeast Midlands, around the area between Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire, which may indicate that this text was sourced from an area slightly further west. Taken together, therefore, it seems that while there are some variant dialect features, which may indicate a diversity of sources, the texts are all generally associated with a Norfolk dialect. There are also specific East Anglian spellings that occur across all or many of the English texts in manuscript, which indicates that the scribe was most likely writing in a dialect of southwest Norfolk. While he carried over variant dialect forms from his exemplars, he appears to have been a Norfolk-trained scribe who had access to exemplars of alternative origin, particularly with connections to the Southwest Midlands.

The second *Piers Plowman* manuscript copied in a distinctly Norfolk dialect is British Library, Harley MS 3954 [H³/H], a high-grade holster book on fine vellum copied

throughout by one scribe in a highly proficient gothic textualis.¹⁴ Like Antiquaries 687, Harley 3954 is predominantly a religious miscellany, placing *Piers Plowman* alongside a number of catechetic and devotional texts. It does, however, also contain a copy of *Mandeville's Travels*, complete with dozens of illuminations depicting various scenes from the *Travels*. The contents of Harley 3954 are as follows:

1. 1r–79v: *Mandeville's Travels*
2. 70r–74r: *The Infancy of Christ* (NIMEV 250)¹⁵
3. 74r–76r: *The Merit of Hearing Mass* (NIMEV 1986)
4. 76r–78r: *The Virtue of the Mass* (NIMEV 1988)
5. 78v–81r: *The Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices* (NIMEV 2059)¹⁶
6. 81r–82v: *The Seven Works of Mercy* (NIMEV 2062)
7. 82v–85v: *The Seven Sacraments*
8. 85v–86v: *The Seven Principal Virtues* (NIMEV 2045)
9. 87r–88r: *ABC Poem on the Passion* (NIMEV 1523)¹⁷
10. 90r–91v: *Lament of the Blessed Virgin* (NIMEV 404)¹⁸
11. 92r–123v: *Piers Plowman* B, Prologue–5.127; *Piers Plowman* A, 5.105–end

The book's high-grade decorations, illustrations, script, and parchment suggest that it was most likely made to order for a wealthy patron or buyer. Harley 3954's copy of *Piers Plowman* is a unique conjoint text. Unlike other conjoint texts, which almost always use C to

¹⁴ The manuscript is collated as such: I–VI⁸, V¹⁰, VI⁹, VII¹⁰, VIII⁸, IX¹⁴, X–XII⁸. This is made evident by the consistent use of catchwords at quire breaks, which are found on folios 8v, 16v, 24v, 32v, 40v, 48v, 58v, 67v, 77v, 85v, 99v, 107v, and 115v. The manuscript also contains a consistent set of quire signatures found on folios 1v, 2r, 3v, 9v, 10r, 11v, 12v, 17v, 18r, 20v, 33r, 34r, 35r, 36r, 41v, 42r, 43r, 44r, 49r, 56v, 57r, 59r, 60r, 61r, 62r, 63r, 70r, 71r, 72r, 78v, 79r, 80r, 86r, 87r, 88r, 94r, 95r, 100r, 101r, 102r, 103r, 108r, 109r, 111r, 116v, 117r, 118r, and 119r.

¹⁵ See “Kindheit Jesu” in *Sammlung altenglischer Legenden*, ed. C. Horstmann (Heilbronn, 1878), pp. 101–10. This text also appears in London, British Library, Add. MS 31042 (the “London Thornton MS”), f. 163v–68v, and London, British Library, Harley MS 2399, ff. 47v–61r.

¹⁶ Items 5–8 also appear in another manuscript localizable to Norfolk, Cambridge University Library, Ii.4.9 (LP 4621). For editions of items 5–7 see W. L. Braekman, “‘The Seven Virtues as Opposed to the Seven Vices’: A Fourteenth-Century Didactic Poem,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 74 (1973), 247–68; “A Middle English Didactic Poem on the Works of Mercy,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 79 (1978), 145–51; and “‘Of ye Sacramentys Seuen’: A Middle English Didactic Poem,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 82 (1981), 194–203.

¹⁷ This text also appears in another Norfolk manuscript, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ 18.7.21 (LP 4041).

¹⁸ This text also appears in another manuscript localizable to Norfolk, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C.86.

complete the A text, Harley's *Piers* uses a B text from Prol. 1 to V.105 and an A text from V.106 to the end of Passus XI.¹⁹ The A texts in Antiquaries 687 and Harley 3954 also show an intriguing similarity, together sharing 60 textual agreements.²⁰ In fully understanding Harley 3954's relationship to Antiquaries 687, it is also useful to look forward to another Norfolk manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Ii.4.9, a devotional miscellany dated to the third quarter of the fifteenth century.²¹ Like the other manuscripts under consideration above, Ii.4.9 is consistently copied in a Norfolk dialect.²² The manuscript shares four texts with Harley 3954, all of which are only extant in these two manuscripts: *The Seven Principal Virtues* (DIMEV 3339); *The Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices* (DIMEV 3355), *The Seven Works of Mercy* (DIMEV 3358), and *The Seven Sacraments* (DIMEV 3099).²³ In the *Linguistic Atlas*, the dialects of *Mandeville* and *Piers Plowman* in Harley 3954 are localized to the border of Norfolk and Suffolk, in particular, around the town of Thetford (LP 4103).²⁴

While the dialects of the minor catechetical texts are not analyzed in *LALME*, they also

¹⁹ Exceptions to this are Bm, Bo, Cot (respectively, BL Additional 10574, Bodley 814, and BL Cotton Caligula A XI), which use C/A/B, and Hm 114, which makes complex use of all three versions.

²⁰ See Kane, *A Version*, p. 75.

²¹ For a full description see Ryan Perry's "Geographies of Orthodoxy" entry: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/geographies-of-orthodoxy/resources/?section=manuscript&id=29>. Also see A. S. G. Edwards's brief discussion of the manuscript in "Journeyman Manuscript Production and Lay Piety: The Hopton Hall Manuscript," in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 113–21 (pp. 114, 117).

²² A Norfolk provenance is also suggested by a document found in the binding of the manuscript. A note from 1920 on a front flyleaf reads: "From beneath the bookplate was removed a fragment of a document relating to Norwich and Sedgeford, circa 1300, now Doc. 799." A. S. G. Edwards also draws a connection between CUL Ii.4.9 and the Hopton Hall manuscript, a Norfolk codex which, as Edwards argues, was composed for a lay readership ("Journeyman Manuscript Production," p. 117).

²³ In discussing the dialects of the three verse texts, W. L. Braekman proposed that they displayed a "'mixed' Midland dialect," noting "several Northern or North Midland elements" and "traces of a Southern or South Midland influence" ("The Seven Virtues as Opposed to the Seven Vices," p. 254). Braekman, however, provides no convincing evidence of this dialectal identification, and upon consultation of the texts, they seem rather to display a consistent Norfolk dialect.

²⁴ The closest linguistic profile in *LALME*, as Simon Horobin points out, is a manuscript with links to southern Norfolk, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 99, which will be discussed further below ("Harley 3954 and the Audience of *Piers Plowman*," in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 68–84 (p. 77)).

consistently reproduce the same Norfolk dialect forms as are found in the two longer texts.

The treatise “Of þe Sacramentys Seuene” uses the following spellings:

Word	Form	Localization
either	eyther	Groups in the Central Midlands and East Anglia (SW Norfolk); Several <i>Prick</i> MSS in the East.
might	myth	Mostly Norfolk and N. Suffolk
shalt	xalt	Norfolk and N. Suffolk
should (sg.)	xuld	Norfolk and N. Suffolk
should (pl.)	xuldyn	1 on the south border of Norfolk (Harley 2390)
through	thour	Norfolk
what	quat	Norfolk
when	quan	S. Norfolk
why	qwy	Mostly Norfolk
which	qwych	Mostly S. Norfolk and N. Suffolk
whether	qweþer/qweber	Mostly Norfolk; 2 SE Lincs.; 1 Yorks. WR
world	werd	Mostly Norfolk (esp. SW border)

A number of the same characteristically Norfolk forms are reproduced in the “Seven Works of Mercy”:

Word	Form	Localization
are (3pl.)	arn	Mostly Norfolk, Suffolk, and Ely
give	ʒyf	7 attested; Mostly Norfolk (esp. south)
go	goth	2 attested; Southern (Essex and Wilts.)
might	myth	Mostly Norfolk and N. Suffolk
shalt	xalt	Norfolk and N. Suffolk
what	quat	Norfolk
when	quan	S. Norfolk
which	qwych	Mostly S. Norfolk and N. Suffolk

Finally, “The Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices” also consistently attests distinctive Norfolk dialect features:

Word	Form	Localization
have	han	Only 1 attested on the border of Norfolk/Suffolk near Mundford
how	Quow	Only 2 attested on the border of Norfolk/Suffolk around Thetford (1 in Digby 99; the other, Lambeth Palace Lib. 192, is placed directly in Thetford)
might	myth	Mostly Norfolk and N. Suffolk
prayed	prayid	Mostly northern, 2 in Norfolk (1 near Thetford)

shall (3sg.)	xalle, xal	Norfolk and Suffolk
shall (1pl)	xullyn	2 in S. Norfolk (1 very near Thetford)
should (2sg.)	xuldyst	Norfolk/Suffolk forder
should (3sg.)	xuld, xulde	Norfolk and Suffolk
thither	þeder	2 on the Norfolk/Suffolk border; 2 in S. Worcs.
when	quan	S. Norfolk (inc. Harley 2390)
what	quat	Norfolk
while	qwyl	Mostly Norfolk
who	qwo	Mostly Norfolk; 2 Suffolk
young	3yng	4 in Norfolk (2 along the Suffolk border)

As these texts demonstrate, the entirety of Harley 3954 is copied in a very distinctive Norfolk dialect, and many of the same dialect forms are shared between the various items. The textual relationships between Harley 3954 and other manuscripts localizable to Norfolk, moreover, strongly suggest that the manuscript's dialect is not relict, but rather reflects its place of origin. Such connections also place Harley 3954 within a wider context of manuscript copying in this area of Norfolk.

Another manuscript that can be linked directly to this circle of East Anglian manuscripts is Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1468 [A], which contains another A-text manuscript of *Piers Plowman* from I.142 to XI.313. The manuscript is copied on paper in a hand datable to the third quarter of the fifteenth century and is currently a combination of three separate manuscripts, which were bound together later in its life.²⁵ The *Piers Plowman* section thus appears to have originally been a single-text manuscript. Like the other A-text manuscripts discussed above, the dialect of Ashmole 1468 can be linked back to East Anglia, being placed by *LALME* in northwest Suffolk (LP 4568). The text of *Piers* in Ashmole 1468 is also another member of the **m** subgroup and bears a substantial textual relationship with

²⁵ According to Kane, the manuscript was bound as such in the seventeenth century, though he gives no indication of how he arrived at this conclusion (*A Version*, p. 1).

Antiquaries 687 and Harley 3954.²⁶ Beyond this textual affiliation to the other A-text manuscripts of the Norfolk area, Ashmole 1468 can be linked to Antiquaries 687 through a watermark that appears on the paper of both manuscripts. In Antiquaries 687, two watermarks appear quite regularly. The first watermark (A) is found consistently in the earlier part of the manuscript, which depicts a mons similar to Briquet 11695 (c. 1423).²⁷ On pages 331–32 a second, and possibly earlier, watermark (B) becomes visible, depicting a mons in a circle similar to Briquet 11854 (c. 1388). The scribe, however, appears to have continued to use paper from both stocks until the end of the first booklet. In Booklet II, only paper from the B stock appears, and this watermark is consistent throughout both *Piers Plowman* and the *Treatise on Excommunication*. The consistent use of the same two paper stocks in both Booklets I and II stands as further evidence of their continuity. The same watermark, however, also appears in Ashmole 1468. Kane identifies two watermarks in Ashmole, one a mons like Briquet 11689 or Zonghi 1276 and 1277,²⁸ and the other a horn like Briquet 7666. He notes that both watermarks were in use from the last quarter of the fourteenth century, which belies the late date of the script, and suggests that the paper must have been quite old when the Ashmole scribe came to write down *Piers Plowman* on it.²⁹

Piers Plowman's presence in East Anglia was not, however, limited to the **m** subgroup. Also similar in dialect is Oxford, University College, MS 45 [U], a highly disjointed miscellany, which contains the A text of *Piers Plowman* alongside a variety of

²⁶ Kane, *A Version*, pp. 69, 70, 86–87.

²⁷ *Les Filigranes: Dictionnaire Historique des Marques du Papier dès Leur Apparition vers 1282 jusqu'en 1600* ed. Charles-Moïse Briquet (Amsterdam: Paper Publications Society, 1968).

²⁸ Aurelio Zonghi, *Le marche principali delle carte fabrianesi dal 1293 al 1599* (Fabriano: Gentili, 1881).

²⁹ Kane, *A Version*, p. 2, n. 2.

ecclesiastical Latin texts, including a tabular outline of the septenary.³⁰ There are six (possibly seven) different scribes at work in the manuscript, all with quite different scripts. The manuscript's constituent items seem highly miscellaneous and are stitched together largely from booklets, giving the manuscript the appearance of having been assembled over time. University College 45 is, however, still bound in its original fifteenth-century wooden binding, indicating at least that its assembly was not post-medieval. The manuscript's copy of *Piers Plowman*, the only English text in the manuscript, is divided into two separate gatherings, copied by two different scribes (Hands A and B). Both parts of the poem use a plain, undecorated layout (on paper, in the case of Hand B) with red lombardic initials, which generally reflects the design of the other East Anglian *Piers* manuscripts. Both of the scribes that copy the A text in University College 45 use an East Anglian dialect, though only the first has been profiled in the *Linguistic Atlas* (LP 698). The dialect of this scribe, who copies folios 1r to 31v, is located in *LALME* to Cambridgeshire. The second scribe, who picks up where Hand A leaves off, uses the following dialect forms:

Word	Form	Localization
against	aʒen	Widespread in the South
ask	axe	Scattered around the midlands; Grouped in Beds./Hunts./Cambs.
father	fader	Widespread in East Mids., East Anglia, and Northern
give	ʒeue	Mostly East Anglia (excluding Suffolk); extends over into the West Mids.
might	myʒte	Widely spread; but groups in East Mids. and West Mids.
much	mochel	Scattered in the south; groups in London and S. Worcs.

³⁰ In a similar instance, MS Bodley 851 includes its copy of *Piers Plowman* (the so-called "Z text") next to a variety of Latin texts: Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium* (ff. 7–77) and a series of Latin poems (ff. 78–123), including the *Speculum Stultorum*. Bodley 851 has ties to Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire, and is thus on the periphery of the East Anglian circulation of *Piers Plowman*. Its textual links to the East Anglian tradition, however, may suggest at least a marginal connection.

not	meche nowt	Widely spread, but grouped in Nor./Suf. Mostly Norfolk; some Suffolk; some scattered elsewhere
shall (sg.) such	schul swyche	Mostly East Anglian; mostly W Norfolk Widely scattered in the south; concentration in West Norfolk/Suffolk
why without	siche qwy <i>with-oute</i>	Mostly east Mids. Beds./Hunts./Cambs./Ely Mostly Norfolk; and north Groups in W Norfolk/Ely and North Midlands

As this profile suggests, the scribe's dialect in the manuscript is heavily mixed. It does, however, show a consistent affiliation to East Anglia and the East Midlands, especially west Norfolk. So it seems that both the scribes of *Piers Plowman* were writing in a generally East Anglian dialect, characteristic of the region around Ely and western Norfolk. While the dialect is very similar, however, it is not exactly the same, which strongly suggests that the scribes were copying in their native dialects and not simply reproducing the dialect of an exemplar. The evidence of two separate scribes both copying in a very similar East Anglian dialect and generally conforming to the design of other Norfolk *Piers* manuscripts strongly suggests that this manuscript was copied in East Anglia and was part of the network of religious manuscripts in this area.

Another East Anglian *Piers* manuscript that has received very little attention is New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 818 [J]. Morgan 818 is a paper manuscript containing the A text alongside *The Pistill of Susan* and Rolle's *Form of Living*. The manuscript is bound in its original vellum wrapper and is composed of two booklets, both written by the same scribe.³¹ The paper within the codex bears numerous watermarks, all of which sit in the

³¹ Kane dates the manuscript to the mid-fifteenth century, though the script may be slightly earlier, particularly given the frequent use of round <e> and the short stem of <t>, which very rarely rises above the crossbar. The script does contain several secretary features, such as a single-compartment <a> and round <r>, though there seems insufficient evidence to place it in the middle of the century.

gutters.³² The first booklet (ff. 1–15) contains *The Pistill of Susan* and the *Form of Living*, while the second (ff. 16–54) contains *Piers Plowman* alone. Morgan’s copy of *Piers* contains part of the John But addition to the end of the A text, found elsewhere only in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetry 137 and Oxford, University College, MS 45.³³ The manuscript contains little decoration apart from *The Pistill of Susan*, which contains rhyme bracing and some minimal rubrication, including red paraphs and touches of red on the first letter of line-initial words. The *Form of Living* also contains red paraphs throughout, and contains two initials in red. *Piers Plowman*, on the other hand, though written in the same hand, contains no rubrications or decoration whatsoever. Even passus breaks are often unmarked or simply indicated by a note in the margin citing the new passus number.

LALME identifies the dialect of Morgan 818 as mid to south Lincolnshire (LP 510), a localization which is usually assumed to reflect the manuscript’s origin. What is often overlooked or forgotten, however, is the fact that *LALME*’s dialect analysis only covers folios 5v–15v, ten folios out of the manuscript’s fifty-four. This analysis also covers only one text, Rolle’s *Form of Living*, offering no dialect insight into the other two items. To

The manuscript’s collation, as printed in the Corsair catalogue, is as such: a⁶; b¹⁰⁻¹; c¹²⁻¹; d-e¹²; f⁴⁻². Though Morgan library does not allow any further collation, the catchwords and other superficial indications suggest that this is accurate.

³² Watermarks can be seen on the following folios: 3, 4, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 44, 51, 52, 54. Although the watermarks are too obscured by the binding to make any definitive identifications, there appear to be two different paper stocks that are used in the manuscript. Watermark 1, mons surmounted by cross, appears on folios 4, 24, 25, 27, 35, 36, 37, 44, 51, 52, 54 and resembles Briquet 11726 (c. 1428–29). The watermark, which is imprinted horizontally, is divided into two parts, top and bottom. Watermark 2, which appears on folios 18, 20, 21, 32, 33, and 34, is too obscured in the margin to be distinguishable beyond speculation.

³³ The last line of *Piers Plowman* in Morgan 818 is line 88 of the appended Passus 12: “Myht I se quod he god wote 3oure gatys wold I holdyn.” This is not the last line of the passus, however, which is continued to line 117 in Rawlinson 137. In the manuscript, this line is written as the first line at the top of 54v. There is no explicit to the text, and the fact that the scribe carries this single line over onto the next page may suggest that he was expecting more to follow.

supplement *LALME*, the dialects of *The Pistill of Susan* and *Piers Plowman* are analyzed

below. The most significant dialect forms in *The Pistill of Susan* are as follows:

Word	Form	Localization
height	heyght	Very few in the SE and NE Mids.
not	nouth	Very densely grouped in W Norfolk; very lightly scattered elsewhere
shall	sal	Mostly North and East Mids. (a few scattered in West Norfolk and south)
such	swyche	Grouped in East Anglia (scattered elsewhere in south)
their	hyre	Very lightly scattered on southern coast; 3 Norfolk/Suffolk border
who	qwo	Mostly Norfolk, 1 S. Lincs.; 2 Suffolk
world	werld	Norfolk through East Mids. to North

Although the text's brevity precludes a very detailed dialect analysis, already noticeable here is a high attestation in East Anglia, especially Norfolk. The three most geographically significant forms here are *nouth* ("not"), *swyche* ("such"), and *qwo* ("who"). While *swyche* is mostly grouped in Norfolk, it also is attested in 7 Lincolnshire manuscripts. On the other hand, *nouth* and *qwo* are almost exclusively Norfolk forms.

The most significant forms in Morgan 818's copy of *Piers Plowman* are as such:

Word	Form	Localization
brother	brodere	Scattered from the East Mids. to North
each	icchone	East Anglia to lower Mids.
love	lof lofffe	Attested in 6 MSS from East Mids. to North Only 1 other MS in S. Lincs. (Lincolnshire Archives Office: Maddison Deposit 2/11)
may	luffe	NE Mids. to North; 1 Norfolk
might	mow mowht myht (myht)	Mostly Norfolk and western East Anglia Closest form: 'mowghte'; 1 in Norfolk [CUL Ff.5.40] Groups in East Anglia and southwest Mids.) Almost entirely Norfolk and North Suffolk
not	nouth	Very densely grouped in W Norfolk; very lightly scattered elsewhere
saw	sayhe	1 in Yorkshire WR (BL Egerton 614, Psalter)
she	che	Scattered very lightly around south; 3 in Norfolk (2 in different texts of Digby 99)
should(pl) together	schuldyn to gyder	5 Norfolk; 1 Soke of Peterborough; 1 Leics. Mostly Norfolk through East Mids. to North

	togydyr	2 in Norfolk; group in London
	to gidere	3 in the SE Mids.
what	qwat	Almost entirely Norfolk and Suffolk; 1 S. Lincs.; 1 Glos./Monmouths.
when	qwan	Almost entirely Norfolk, Suffolk, and S. Lincs.
	qwen	Norfolk through the East Mids. to North
where	qwere	7 in Norfolk/Nor./Suff. border
while	qwyls	4 in West Norfolk; 1 in Suffolk
	qwylis	1 in Suffolk (Lavynham)
	qwyl	Almost all Norfolk; 1 S. Lincs.; 3 North
why	qwy	Norfolk and South Lincs.; Some NE Mids. and North

In this selection, there is an obvious focus on East Anglia throughout all of the forms. In ten of these spellings, in fact, the form is limited to Norfolk and Suffolk alone.³⁴ Though many of these forms are shared between both counties, there is a much higher concentration in Norfolk. While the word forms include some LPs in extreme south Lincolnshire, they are almost entirely unattested in the rest of the county. This is quite strong evidence that the dialect of *Piers Plowman* in Morgan 818 is of Norfolk, and not of Lincolnshire. The <qw> form for <wh> words and the <th> ending to replace words ending with <t> are particularly characteristic of Norfolk. In *The Pistill of Susan*, such forms are very rare, with *nouth* (“not”) and *qwy* (“why”) both appearing only once. In the *Form of Living*, moreover, these forms are completely unattested; the scribe consistently uses the standard <wh> and final <t> forms.³⁵

As we have seen, however, the Norfolk spellings are very frequently used in *Piers Plowman*,

³⁴ These are: *mou* (“may”); *myth* (“might”); *nouth* (“not”); *schuldyn* (“should”); *qwat* (“what”); *qwan* (“when”); *qwere* (“where”); *qwyls/qwylis/qwyl* (“while”); *qwom* (“whom”).

³⁵ In Morgan 818’s *Form of Living*, the characteristic Norfolk forms that are consistently used in *The Pistill of Susan* and *Piers* are never used. There may be evidence, however, that the Lincolnshire dialect forms in the *Form of Living* are preserved from the exemplar and not the scribe of Morgan 818. Similar south-Lincolnshire spellings are found in copies of the *Form of Living* (as well as the *Ego Dormio*) in Westminster School MS 3, a manuscript which was very likely copied in London (see Ralph Hanna, “The Origins and Production of Westminster School Ms. 3,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 41 (1988), 197–218 (p. 206)). The Lincolnshire spellings in Morgan 818, therefore, may simply reflect the scribe’s willingness to reproduce the dialects of his exemplars. While this tendency makes it very difficult to determine what dialect the Morgan scribe himself used, the contextual evidence of the other Norfolk A-text manuscripts in this area give us good reason to suspect a Norfolk origin.

with the “qw” form being used almost ubiquitously. One of the most interesting forms is *qwom* (“whom”) recorded in a correction that appears to be by the main scribe (I.47). This spelling is attested in only three manuscripts, one from Suffolk and two from Norfolk; the two Norfolk manuscripts are, in fact, Harley 3954 and the southern portion of Bodleian Library, MS Digby 99, which *LALME* places directly next to Harley 3954 in southern Norfolk.³⁶ Similarly interesting is *schuldyn* (“should”), which is found in seven manuscripts, five of which are placed in Norfolk. Of the five Norfolk manuscripts, one is Harley 3954, one Digby 99, and one the *Prick of Conscience* in Antiquaries 687. Another manuscript attesting this form is London, Lambeth Palace Library, 192 (LP 4636), a manuscript which *LALME* places in the southern-Norfolk town of Thetford. While there is no material evidence in Morgan 818 that allows us to localize the production of the manuscript in Norfolk, there is good evidence that the exemplars of two of the Morgan scribe’s texts were composed in Norfolk dialects. Thus, whether Morgan 818 was copying in Norfolk or Lincolnshire—and there appears to be no way of knowing for certain—its copy of *Piers Plowman* seems very likely to be of a Norfolk descent, a fact which would support the notion of a centralized distribution of the A text of *Piers Plowman* from this county in the fifteenth century.³⁷

³⁶ *LALME* similarly notes a second linguistic layer in Digby 99’s copy of the *Prick of Conscience* characteristic of south Lincolnshire, though the actual production of Digby 99 (as will be discussed below) almost undoubtedly took place in Norfolk. Since the scribe otherwise appears to copy in a Norfolk dialect, it seems that the south-Lincolnshire dialect must be left over from the *Prick of Conscience*’s exemplar, which was subsequently translated into a Norfolk dialect.

³⁷ There is at least one piece of evidence, however, which might lend support to a Lincolnshire localization. Throughout the manuscript, several vellum stubs have been inserted in quire breaks (between ff. 22/23 and 28/29), some of which contain visible writing in Latin of a generally religious and ecclesiastical nature. On the 28/29 stub there is a reference made to the parish of “Swineshede,” presumably referring to Swineshead, Lincolnshire. According to Ker, there are three extant manuscripts known to have been produced at Swineshead Abbey: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 150 (s.xiii), Cambridge, St John’s College, 100 (s.xiii), and Oxford, Balliol College, 213 (s.xiii/xiv) (*Medieval Libraries*, p. 184). Due to the brevity of the visible text and the lack of context, however, the reference to Swineshead alone is not sufficient evidence of a Lincolnshire production.

Like the manuscripts of the *p*-group discussed in the previous chapter, there is also evidence to suggest a concern with the correctness of the text in Morgan 818's copy of *Piers Plowman*. The manuscript contains numerous annotations and corrections to the texts in the margins, especially in *Piers Plowman*. The annotations, which generally point out significant themes or characters in the poem, are undoubtedly in the hand of the main scribe. It is unclear, however, whether the corrector is the same or different scribe. While the corrector's ink is different, the script is extremely similar to the main scribe, save for several features, which do seem generally uncharacteristic of his script. Kane also appears conflicted about whether the corrector is the same or a different hand; when recording the emendations in his textual apparatus, Kane vacillates between calling it the same or a different hand. There are seven instances in which the original reading agrees with the majority of witnesses, while the correction alters the reading to a unique variant:

- I.103: And crist knyttene kyng knyttid ~~tene~~ \pat tyme/
 (tene] *most MSS*; \pat tyme *unattested*; somtyme H; in tyme K. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)
- I.175: for I ~~dele~~ \gyff/ 3ow alle quod he \pat is \pe lok of loue
 (dele] *all MSS*; gyff *unique*. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)
- II.93: Wel 3e wytyn ~~wernardis~~ \& witterly/ but 3oure wyt faile
 (wernardis] *most MSS*; & witterly *unique*. *Original reading agrees with majority; Correction unique*)
- V.33: Let ~~no wynnynge for wanyyn hem~~ \hem want no wande /whiles \pei ben 3onge
 (no wynnynge for wanyyn hem] *most MSS*; hem want no wande *unique*. *Original agrees with majority; correction unique*)
- V.55: To makyn mercy \mene/ for his mysdedis
 (mercy] *all MSS*; mercy mene *unique*. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

X.56: For whan blood is bremere þanne brayn \ne/ bowdyn is Inwitte
(bounde] ne bowedyn *unique*. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction unique*)

XII.79: [original] “~~He~~ \I/ ~~haysyd~~ haylsyd ~~me~~ \hym/ hendely I \&/ axid him after.”
(*All original readings agree with R. Since RJ are the only manuscripts attested in this section, all corrections are unique*)

There are also two readings in which the original text agrees with a minority group of A manuscripts, but is altered to a unique reading:

ProL. 100: Taillours, and ~~Taucheris~~ \and thackers/ & tolleris boþe
(tokkeris] and towkers H²; & toucherys M; and Taucheris J. *Original reading agrees with (H²)M; correction unique*)

I.48: And to hem þe Image ~~k lykyth~~ \was/ þat þerin stodid
(k lykyth] ilike UNA; y lyke W; was *unique*. *Original reading agrees with UNAW; correction unique*)

In the latter of these lines, there is also an instance of a unique reading being altered to another unique reading:

I.48: “And to hem \wat/ þe Image ~~k lykyth~~ \was/ þat þerin ~~stodid~~ \standis/”
(And] And to hem *unique*; wat *unique*; *Original reading unique; correction unique*)

There are also another nine instances where the corrector has emended a unique reading in the original copy text to agree with the majority reading:

I.47: And God axed of hem as \of qwom/ spekyth þe lettire
(whom] *all MSS*; as *unique*. *Original reading unique; correction agrees with majority*)

I.48: And to hem þe Image k lykyth þat þerin stodid \standis/
(standis] *most MSS*; stodid *unique*. *Original reading unique, most likely a mistake; correction agrees with majority*)

I.175: for I dele gyff 3ow alle ~~quod he~~ þat is þe lok of loue
alle] alle quod he *unique*. *Original reading unique; correction agrees with majority*)

I.177: þat letiþ out my grace to comforthe þe carful \& cumberid in synne/
(acumbrid] & cumberid. *Original reading missing the end of the line; correction generally agrees with majority, but changes “acumbrid” to the unique “& cumbered”*)

I.174–77: Corrects original line division to fit the majority of the MSS.

VII.213: I wolde not greuyn god quaþ peris for al þe gold \o grounde/
(on grounde] *all MSS. Original omission unique; correction agrees with majority*)

X.56: For whan blood is bremere þanne brayn bow\ne/dyn is Inwitte
(bounde] *most MSS. bowdyn unique. Original reading unique; correction agrees with majority*)

XI.12: þ\an/ þe precioucest perre þat in paradis waxith
(þanne] *all MSS. Original omission unique; correction agrees with majority*)

XI.166: I seide graunt mercy \ma/dame & meekly hire grette
(madame] *all MSS; dame unique. Original reading unique; correction agrees with majority*)

Finally, and most interestingly, there are five instances in which the corrector has altered a majority reading to a minority variant attested in one or more A-text manuscripts:

I.103: And crist ~~knyttene kyng~~ \kyng of knyhtys/ knyttid tene
(kingene king] *most MSS; kyng of kny3tes DK; kyng of kny3tus H. Original agrees with most MSS; correction agrees with DKH*)

I.138: Ther þou art myri þin mete ~~yif~~ \& men/ men bidde þe 3eddyn
(3if] & men M; men All MSS. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction agrees with M*)

I.139: For in kynde knowyng herte ~~þer comsyt aryt~~ \þou conseyuys a myrth/
(a mi3t] a merthe R; alle merthe M; al myrth E. *Original reading unique; correction agrees with REM*)

I.157: 3e haue no more meryt in matynes no in ~~oures~~ \masse/
(houres] *most MSS; masse TChH². Original reading agrees with majority; correction agrees with TChH²*)

I.177: þat letiþ out my grace to comforthe þe carful \and cumberid in synne/
(wiþ synne] in synne HLW. *Correction agrees with HLW*)

VII.213: I wolde not greuyn god quaþ peris for al þe ~~gold~~ \goode/
(gold] gode ChHLWN. *Original reading agrees with majority; correction agrees with ChHLWN*)

The diversity of textual traditions from which the scribe draws shows a surprising level of access to variant readings in the poem. It should also be noted that in six of these lines (I.48,

I.103, I.175, I.177, VII.213, and X.56) multiple kinds of emendations appear within the same line. This corrector does not, however, appear to be concerned with maintaining a particular textual tradition in the same way as the *p*-group scribes in Gloucestershire. Yet, what it does suggest is a similar concern with textual accuracy and the ability to check his manuscript against other copies of the poem.

The final East Anglian *Piers* manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Ll.4.14 [C²], is somewhat of an anomaly among the others discussed in this chapter. As was noted above, while all of the other East Anglian manuscripts contain the A text, Ll.4.14 is unique in preserving the B text in this dialect. Also unlike the other codices, moreover, the manuscript does not contain devotional or catechetic items. It pairs *Piers Plowman* with the only surviving copy of *Richard the Redeles* (ff. 107v–119v), followed by a variety of practical and educational texts, including *A Treatise on Arithmetic* (ff. 127r–148v), *The Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy* (ff. 153r–156v), and *The Book of Physiognomy* (ff. 156v–159v).³⁸ As Andrew Galloway notes, the items in Ll.4.14 “may roughly be described as science and pseudo-science,” and give the codex a “distinctly ‘school-book’ quality.”³⁹ The *Linguistic Atlas* places the dialect of Ll.4.14’s copy of *Piers Plowman* in Ely, and Hanna similarly confirms a “Cambridgeshire language.”⁴⁰ The *Treatise on Arithmetic* that follows *Piers* is also noted in *LALME*, though it is characterized as using a “mixed language” and is not given

³⁸ Although there are other texts following the *Book of Physiognomy*, occupying folios 161r–74v, these two parts of the manuscript appear to have originally been separate. For a detailed description of the manuscript see C. David Benson and Lynne Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of Piers Plowman: The B-Version* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 44–48.

³⁹ Andrew Galloway, “*Piers Plowman* and the Schools,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 6 (1992), 89–107 (p. 100).

⁴⁰ Hanna, *William Langland*, p. 39. The manuscript was localized to Ely in M. L. Samuels, “Dialect and Grammar,” in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John Alford (London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 201–21 (p. 206).

a linguistic profile. Upon further dialect analysis, the *Treatise* displays similarly East Anglian forms:

before	be-fore	2 in Norfolk [1 is Society of Antiquaries 687]; 1 in Northumberland
not	nouth	Heavily grouped western Norfolk; some Ely; some N. Suffolk border; others lightly scattered elsewhere
	notth	Mostly Norfolk; some Ely; some N. Suffolk border; others lightly scattered elsewhere
out	outh	5 Norfolk; 1 Ely; 2 N. Lincs.

All of these spellings, it should be noted, are grouped heavily in East Anglia, and Norfolk in particular. The forms for “not” and “out” are particularly characteristic of Norfolk, using the common Norfolk substitution of final <t> with <th>. Other East Anglian forms appear in the *Wise Book of Philosophy and Astronomy*, though it also contains several spellings more characteristic of the East Midlands:

before	biffor	4 in East Mids.; 1 Lincs.; a few north
laughing	laughynge	3 East Mids.; 1 Lincs.
though	thowh	3 in Suffolk; several others scattered in south
	thow	Grouped in East Anglia; scattered in south
through	thoruh	2 Suffolk; 1 Essex; 2 NE Mids

The Book of Physiognomy, which follows, contains spellings largely grouped in Norfolk:

enough	inow	3 in Norfolk; 1 in Hunts.; 1 in Warwicks.
eye	eie	3 in Norfolk; 1 Lincs.; 2 YWR; 1 Surrey
gives	ʒeuyth	Heavily grouped in W Norfolk, Ely, and Cambs.

As these profiles indicate, all four of the English texts in Ll.4.14 use spellings characteristic of East Anglia. The spellings that persist across two or more of Ll.4.14’s English texts, moreover, including *biffor* (“before”); *inow* (“enough”); *eie* (“eye”); and *ʒeuyth* (“gives”), are all East Anglian. As these spellings indicate, not only do all three texts use East Anglian dialects, but there are also certain characteristically East Anglian spellings that are used consistently throughout the manuscript, which would suggest that the scribe was copying in

an East Anglian dialect from East Anglian exemplars. While there is no explicit historical evidence to locate the production of the manuscript, the consistency of its dialectal affiliation to East Anglia may place its production among the other A-text copies discussed above.

II. The Historical Contexts of *Piers Plowman*'s East Anglian Circulation

Having outlined the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts copied in East Anglian dialects, we may now turn our attention to the historical contexts surrounding the poem's distribution in this area. In discussing Harley 3954 and the other members of the EAMH³ subgroup of the A version, Simon Horobin suggests the possibility that *Piers Plowman* was "available within a restricted East Anglian network" and that "the production and circulation of these copies of *Piers* may have taken place within a group of religious houses situated within a small area of south Norfolk and north Suffolk."⁴¹ Although Horobin does not pursue this possibility further, there may be ways of providing more concrete evidence for an East Anglian network and for its association with religious houses. To fully understand the circulation of *Piers Plowman* in East Anglia, however, we must contextualize the poem within a much larger tradition of religious manuscript production in this region. In the Norfolk area, there appears to have been a dense network of textual and bibliographical association, with manuscripts continually repeating and re-hashing material. Many of these manuscripts include the same or similar texts to those in the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* discussed above, particularly those relating to religious devotion, the catechetical syllabus, and the septenary. One of the most interesting of these large East Anglian miscellanies is University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, MS 501, which contains items such as *Prick of Conscience* (ff. 1r–58v),

⁴¹ Horobin, "Harley 3954," p. 81.

Lavynham's *Litil Tretys on the Sevene Dedly Synnys* (ff. 68r–74r) “A tretys of the ten comaundementis” (ff. 74v–81r), “A declaracion of the vij dedis of mercy” (f. 81rv), a form of confession (ff. 82r–86r) and numerous other religious and exemplary texts.⁴² It should be noted that these texts bear a particular resemblance to the kinds of texts found in Antiquaries 687 and Harley 3954. Similar in focus to Brotherton 501 is the Hopton Hall Manuscript, another large, Norfolk-based miscellany of devotional texts, which has been treated at length by A. S. G. Edwards.⁴³ The manuscript, again, contains several of the same and many similar texts to Antiquaries 687, including two forms of confession (ff. 1r–3r), Gaytryge's *Lay Folk's Catechism* (ff. 3v–9v), and an “Exposition on the Ten Commandments” (ff. 29r–37r). Another Norfolk manuscript containing similar items is Cambridge University Library, Ii.4.9, which uniquely shares four texts in common with Harley 3954, as well as other similar devotional and catechetical material such as: *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* (f. 55v), “Reflections on the Ten Commandments” (f. 60v), “On the Deadly Sins, Christian virtues and works of mercy” (f. 61v), “The Lord's Prayer,” “Ave Maria,” and “Apostles' Creed” (f. 63v), “On the Nine Virtues” (f. 63v), “A treatise on Shrift and the Seven Deadly Sins” (f. 142v), “The Five Bodily Wits, with a Form of Confession” (f. 163v), and other septenary texts, including “*Hec sunt virtutes septem*” (ff. 165r–173r), “*Septem facta elemosine*” (f. 173r), “*Vij sacramenta ecclesie*” (f. 177r), “*Septem virtutes principals*” (f. 185r), and “*Hec sunt vij sancti spiritus*” (f. 188v).⁴⁴

⁴² For more on this manuscript see O. S. Pickering, “Brotherton Collection MS 501: A Middle English Anthology Reconsidered,” *Leeds Studies in English*, 21 (1990), 141–65; Ralph Hanna, “Leeds University Library, MS Brotherton 501: A Redescription,” *Manuscripta*, 26 (1982), 38–42; K. W. Humphreys and J. Lightbown, “Two Manuscripts of the *Pricke of Conscience* in the Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds,” *Leeds Studies in English*, 7 (1952), 29–38.

⁴³ Edwards, “Journeyman Manuscript Production.”

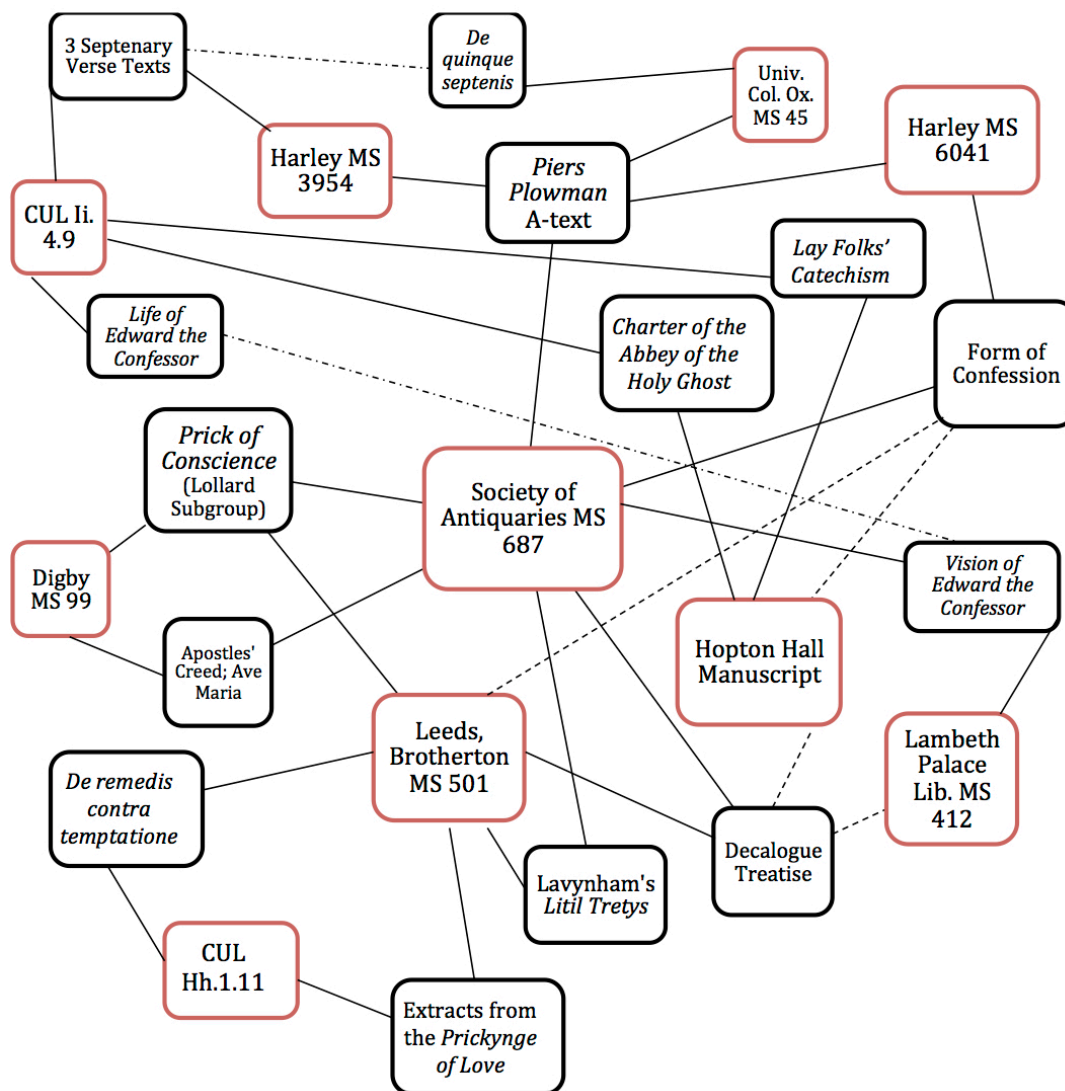
⁴⁴ Other Norfolk manuscripts of interest include Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 23, Bodleian Library, Harley 211, and Cambridge, Trinity College, B.14.19, all of which contain the *Litil Tretys* as

To better understand the regionalized textual contexts in Norfolk, we may sketch a rudimentary diagram of the textual associations as they appear in this network. The diagram below uses as a base manuscript the *Piers* miscellany Antiquaries 687, which is perhaps most closely tied to the wider literary context under discussion. It should be noted that this representation is not meant to encompass the entirety of the East Anglian textual community, but rather to show the dense associations surrounding *just one* manuscript in this tradition.⁴⁵ In the diagram, all of the manuscripts boxed in red are East Anglian (all from Norfolk, save for Harley 6041), and the lines of connection indicate texts that are shared between manuscripts; solid lines indicate where manuscripts share the exact same text, while dotted lines indicate shared texts of an equivalent subject (e.g., two different Decalogue texts):

well as Decalogue tracts, septenary material dealing with the rules of seven, various other confession formulas, and expositions on the *Pater Noster*, as well as Cambridge University Library Hh.1.11.

⁴⁵ This diagram should not be confused with recent attempts at more quantitative graphing of the *Piers Plowman* manuscript associations, which often complicate rather than simplify the information with little regard for social or geographical context. The diagram here seeks, rather, to simply represent the density of textual affiliation within one contained region.

Fig. 6



This diagram shows a dense network of textual affiliation associated with just one codex; and similar networks could be mapped between numerous other East Anglian miscellanies. Most importantly, the diagram shows the importance of decentralizing *Piers Plowman* from a study of its regional affiliations. Rather than simply examining the manuscripts in which the poem appears, we can see it as simply one text within an expanding network of texts, all of which circulated closely in this area of Norfolk. All of the manuscripts in this network are devotional miscellanies, many of which are large, compendious volumes containing both

English and Latin. These East Anglian codices continually recopy the same or similar material, perpetuating a tradition of devotional manuscripts in a discrete geographical region. As we can see here, moreover, *Piers Plowman* is given no perceivable precedence over the other devotional and instructional texts in this area.

As this chapter has shown, then, the East Anglian A-text manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* were circulating in a dense textual network, which, based on dialect, was largely centered in southern Norfolk around the Norfolk/Suffolk border. What then, were the historical circumstances around the distribution of these manuscripts? There are several religious houses in this area with significant means, the most prominent of which is Bury St. Edmunds around the border of northern Suffolk. Bury St Edmunds was one of the wealthiest and most important monasteries in late-medieval England.⁴⁶ Bury appears to have also been a hub of literary activity and manuscript production; it is known to have possessed a well-resourced library as well as a large and prolific scriptorium, of which a significant number of manuscripts are still extant.⁴⁷ The Bury manuscripts, however, often display a distinctive style and are usually large and highly decorated monastic volumes, often of scriptural,

⁴⁶ Of Bury St. Edmunds, Rodney M. Thompson notes, “by the twelfth century it was one of the half dozen richest and most important monasteries in the country. . . . The abbey enjoyed an income which was among the highest of all the Benedictine communities; by c.1200 it numbered upwards of 90 monks; before its eclipse by the cult of St Thomas at Canterbury, popular veneration for St Edmund, whose body rested in the great conventual church at Bury, made it the most sought-after pilgrim shrine in England” (“The Archives of Bury St Edmunds Abbey 1020–1539,” in *The Archives of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1980), pp. 1–40 (pp. 1–2)). For more on the Abbey and the veneration of St Edmund in East Anglia, see Rebecca Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ E. P. McLachlan, “The Scriptorium of Bury St. Edmunds in the Third and Fourth Decades of the Twelfth Century: Books in Three Related Hands and Their Decoration,” *Mediaeval Studies*, 40 (1978), 328–48; Rodney M. Thompson, “The Library of Bury St Edmunds Abbey in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 617–45. For the extant manuscripts attributable to Bury St. Edmunds see Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, pp. 16–22. The majority of extant Bury manuscripts are, however, datable to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is unclear if scribal activity at Bury dropped off in the fourteenth century or if the paucity of surviving Bury manuscripts from this period is simply a result of chance.

patristic, and other Latin religious texts. There seems to be little evidence that Bury was producing the kind of plain devotional codices of vernacular texts in which *Piers* circulated. About twelve miles north of Bury St. Edmunds was the Cluniac priory at Thetford in southern Norfolk. As A. I. Doyle notes, “Thetford was an important centre of ecclesiastical life in the later Middle Ages in Norfolk...having two monasteries, a nunnery, two friaries, a college, and six hospitals, as well as many churches and chapels.”⁴⁸ Although there are few surviving manuscripts known to have been copied at Thetford, an establishment with the size and financial means of Thetford Priory is likely to have possessed a respectable library and to have engaged in at least some copying. As it will be argued below, Thetford was of particular importance for the East Anglian network under discussion here and may have been responsible for some of the distribution of *Piers Plowman* and the texts circulating around it.

The first possible association with Thetford is found in Antiquaries 687, the first manuscript discussed above. The Antiquaries manuscript opens with a short English tract on the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, and Apostles’ Creed. This particular tract can also be found in another manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 99, which also contains the synodal statutes of William Raleigh along with another copy of the *Prick of Conscience*.⁴⁹ In

⁴⁸ A. I. Doyle, “A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and Early 16th Centuries with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy therein,” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge, 1954), Appendix 56, n. 26. Also see David Drymond, ed., *The Register of Thetford Priory*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995–96); William Dunn Macray, *The Manuscripts of the Corporation of Thetford, Norfolk*, Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (London: Hereford Times, 1914); and Francis Blomefield, *The History of the Ancient City and Burgh of Thetford in the Counties of Norfolk and Suffolk* (Fersfield: Francis Blomefield, 1739).

⁴⁹ For a description of this manuscript see Robert E. Lewis and Angus McIntosh, *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of the Prick of Conscience*, *Medium Ævum* Monographs, New Series 12 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1982), pp. 98–99. For an edition of the statutes see F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, eds., *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205–1313*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I,

Digby 99, the text is copied on a small flyleaf, written in the same hand as the main scribe, which has been inserted mid-way through the *Prick of Conscience* on folio 139a. Although tracts such as this are common, particularly at the beginning of devotional manuscripts, these two tracts in Digby 99 and Antiquaries 687 appear to be exactly the same text, which is, as far as I am aware, extant only in these two manuscripts. The two texts are as follows:

London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687

Owre fader wich art *in heuen* blessed be þi holy name *and* þy kyndom mote come *and* be ful forthed bothe *in heuene and* in erthe eche days bred grawnte vs day be day and for-zeue vs owre dettes *and* owre trespass *and* lat þou lede vs *in to non temptacioun* but delyuere vs from al euel. Heyl marye ful of grace god is with þe . I blessed be þow among alle women *and* i-blessed be þe frut þat cam of þi wombe Ihesu Amen. Credo in deum I be-leue *in god fader al-myȝty makere of he[ue]ne and* of erthe *and in* cryst Ihesu hys sone only owre god [þat] is conseuyed of þe holy gost I borne of þe *virg[in]* [...] vnder pownce pylat I crucefixed *and* ded *and* beryed *and* zede to helle *and* þe iii^{de} day he ros from deth to [li]ue *and* stey up to heuen *and* syt on his fader right hand al mighty *and* is come for to deme þe queke *and* þe dede at þe day of dome after þey haue deserued I be-leue *in* þe holy gost *and* in þe comenyng of holy kirks *and* of al halewen *and* in for-zeuenesse of syn *and* in rysyng of flesch *and* of bon a-ȝen to euere lastyng lyf Amen

Digby 99

In þe name of þe fader *and* þe sone *and* holy gost . Amen. Ovre fadyr þat art in heuenys ale-wyd be þi name þi kyndam come to þi wyl to be don in erthe as it is in heuene ȝif vs to-day oure euery days bred and for-ȝif vs oure dettis as we forȝiuen to oure dettourys and leed vs not in to temptacioun but delyuere vs of euel . Amen

Heyl marie ful of grace þe lord is with þe blissyd be þou in wymmen and blissyd be þe frount of þin wombe Iesus Am[e]n

I be-leue in god þe fadyr almyhty makere of heuene and of erthe and in ihesu crist only sone oure lord þat was conceuyed of þe holy gost born of marye \þe/ mayde pyned vndyr pylat of pounce don on þe cros deyde and beryed he wente doun to hellys þe thridde day he ros fro þe deth he stey to heuenes he setteth at þe ryht side of god þe fader almyhty thenes he is to come to demen þe quyke *and* þe dede I beleue in þe holy gost al holy chirche *communyng* of seyntes for-zeuenes of synnes aȝen rysyng of flesch and lyf with-uten ende . Amen

pp. 342–64. Also see Daniel Sawyer, “‘He That No Good Can’: An Unrecorded Copy of a Middle English Proverb,” *Notes and Queries*, 63 (2016), 15–17.

Although there are minor textual differences between the two tracts, it is possible that the scribes were either copying from a similar exemplar, into which one (or both) introduced variations.

This connection to Digby 99 has particular importance for a localization of Antiquaries 687. Digby 99 contains an inscription relating to John Stanys, a monk of Thetford Priory, which reads “Frater Johannes stanys, canonicus Thedfordie constat istum librum” (f. 156v). A second inscription records the bequest of the book to “margarete salis de methwolde,” placing the owner of the manuscript in Methwold, Norfolk, a town about twelve miles northwest of Thetford.⁵⁰ The dialect of Digby 99 is generally of a Norfolk character, and the majority of the manuscript (ff.8v–17v; 27v–78v; 117r–125r) is written in a south-Norfolk dialect from the Mundford area just north of Thetford. There are, however, a number of dialectal variations, even within the text of the *Prick of Conscience*. According to *LALME*, folios 79r–116v and 126r–156v use a central Norfolk dialect, and 18r–27r a dialect characteristic of south Lincolnshire. Discussing this linguistic variation, Lewis and McIntosh note, “The presence of at least three kinds of language in a single hand suggests either that the MS was copied from at least three separate exemplars or that it as copied from a single

⁵⁰ Margaret Salis is presumably a devout member of the local parish, possibly a patron of some kind. For more on female devotional reading and patronage see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “‘Cest livre liseez ... chescun jour’: Women and Reading c.1230–c.1430,” *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 239–53; Carole M. Meale, “‘...alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch’: Laywomen and Their Books in Late Medieval England,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. Carole M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 128–58; Adelaide Bennet, “A Book Designed for a Noblewoman: An Illustrated *Manuel de Peches* of the Thirteenth Century,” in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1990), pp. 163–81; David Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series 158 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995). For female religious in Norfolk specifically see Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich 1350–1540* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998).

exemplar written by three different scribes.”⁵¹ Although neither scenario can be definitively proven, it is apparent that the Digby scribe was content to accept various dialectal forms in his copy text. This scribal tendency (roughly McIntosh’s Type A) makes any localization based on this dialect unreliable.⁵² The placement of John Stanys at Thetford, however, offers an important contextualization of the dialect. If the manuscript were situated at Thetford, then the south Norfolk language, which occupies most of the manuscript, may suggest that the majority of the exemplar was copied in a dialect from the local area around Thetford. Given the shared use of the *Pater Noster* text, which is apparently unique to Antiquaries 687 and Digby 99, as well as the close dialectal similarity between the two manuscripts, it will be useful to investigate them for other possible connections. Based on script alone, Digby 99 is considerably earlier than Antiquaries 687. The inscription by Stanys, moreover, dates the manuscript to somewhere between 1380 and 1400.⁵³ Any comparison of the two manuscripts, therefore, must ultimately be limited. Yet there are several shared features that are worth remarking upon. Both manuscripts are written on paper and show a similar simplicity of presentation and rubrication for Lombardic initials. Regardless of their temporal discrepancy, the shared use of the *Pater Noster* text may suggest that both manuscripts were copied at Thetford Priory.

The association of *Piers Plowman*’s Norfolk circulation with Thetford is further reinforced by the relationship between Harley 3954 and CUL Ii.4.9, which uniquely share four catechetic texts. On a flyleaf, Ii.4.9 contains a fifteenth-century note of ownership: “This

⁵¹ Lewis and McIntosh, *Descriptive Guide*, p. 99.

⁵² Angus McIntosh, “Word Geography and the Lexicography of Mediaeval English,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 211 (1973), 55–66.

⁵³ W. D. Macray, R. W. Hunt, and A. G. Watson, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues: IX, Digby Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), I, p. 113 and II, p. 55.

is the boke ser Robert Hawe” (f. 195v). In discussing this note, Ian Doyle points to a Robert Hawe who was rector of Thetford Priory from c.1473–1481, who may have been in possession of this manuscript.⁵⁴ Doyle also points to another note on the same page, “This is the boke of *Sir* Will Trew I[n] wisse where-for I Thomas bareyle hauyng knowlage there off haue putt to myn signe,” suggesting that Hawe, Bareyle, and Trew may all have been local priests.⁵⁵ Doyle’s theory was more recently supported by Nicole R. Rice, who similarly argued that the manuscript was in the possession of Norfolk clerics.⁵⁶ Rice argues for the appropriateness of CUL Ii.4.9’s content to Thetford’s religious community, especially in the context of the six hospitals in the Thetford precinct, noting, “This book’s particular combination of devotional and catechetical contents [...] would have been well suited to an institution founded on a shared code of religious conduct and communal prayer and dedicated to the salvation of clerical leaders, lay inmates, and patrons.”⁵⁷ Although Rice presents a valid argument, it does remain ultimately speculative, and could apply to any number of religious contexts. Yet, the possibility of a clerical readership connected with Thetford Priory seems particularly apt given Ii.4.9’s connection to Harley 3954, and thus, indirectly to Antiquaries 687. Considering that the manuscript itself was copied around the same time as Hawe was prior at Thetford, there is a distinct possibility that the manuscript was copied at Thetford for the rector’s personal use.

⁵⁴ Doyle, “Survey,” p. 433.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56. A similar argument regarding this note was earlier put forward by Frances Foster in *The Northern Passion: French Texts, Variants, and Fragments* (London: Trübner & Co. and Oxford University Press, 1913–16), p. 13.

⁵⁶ Nicole R. Rice, “Lay Spiritual Texts and Pastoral Care in Two Fifteenth-Century Priests’ Collections,” in *Middle English Religious Writing in Practice: Texts, Readers, and Transformations*, ed. Nicole R. Rice (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 149–77 (pp. 165–69).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

What, then, is the role of Harley 3954 in this context? There is no internal evidence explicitly linking the manuscript to Thetford Priory. The evidence of dialect, however, especially its close dialectal affinity to Digby 99, suggests that the Harley scribe was probably a native of the area in or around Thetford. From here, inferential assumptions can be made from its connections to a network of manuscripts circulating around Thetford, including a close textual affiliation with the copy of *Piers Plowman* in Antiquaries 687 and shared texts with CUL Ii.4.9, both of which, as has been observed above, have plausible internal connections to Thetford Priory. The temporal proximity of Harley 3954 and Antiquaries 687, both datable to around the second quarter of the fifteenth century, is also suggestive. If we are to posit that Antiquaries 687 was indeed copied by a scribe in the vicinity of Thetford Priory and the Harley scribe was copying a very similar text of *Piers Plowman* around the same time, it is not at all too far a stretch to assume that they may have been working together in some capacity, either in the same religious house or in ones nearby. Although there is not enough evidence to say that Harley 3954 was actually copied in Thetford Priory, we might safely say that it was in some way connected to a network associated with Thetford manuscript production.

III. East Anglia and Beyond: The Broader Reach of the Norfolk Network

Although this chapter has focused largely on regional insularity, there is also evidence that this East Anglian network of textual production extended beyond the immediate vicinity of Norfolk and its adjacent counties. Chapter 1 discussed the well-known and ever-controversial Z text of *Piers Plowman*. This text is contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851, a manuscript which contains an *ex libris* assigning ownership to John Wells of Ramsey

Abbey in Huntingdonshire. While this is still proximate to the East Anglian circulation, it is slightly outside of the usual reach of the East Anglian network in which *Piers A* is commonly found. While the dialect of the Z text is localizable to Worcestershire, there is, as Simon Horobin observes, “an East Midlands overlay which would fit with copying in Ramsey” and the continuation by Hand Q on ff. 139r–140v is characteristic of East Anglia.⁵⁸ As we know, the Z text shares a number of readings with the EAMH³ textual subgroup, which has already been shown to have clear links to Norfolk and East Anglia. Ralph Hanna notes that Z’s relationship to the East Anglian EAMH³ group “would imply that Z was derived from an offbeat neighborhood archetype, a version of Langland’s text of peripheral and restricted circulation for most of the fifteenth century.”⁵⁹ Hanna further observes that the continuation by Hand Q, which adds lines 93–189 of A, Passus 8 to the end of the Z text, consulted an exemplar of A which “agreed most often with that surviving A version copy made closest to Ramsey—University College 45, an early fifteenth-century Cambridgeshire text—and with the somewhat more removed but still proximate New York, Morgan Library, MS. M 818 (J) from south Lincolnshire.”⁶⁰ This textual relationship between the Z text and two more of the East Anglian manuscripts discussed above suggests that the scribes of Bodley 851 may have been marginally involved with the dense East Anglian network in which the other *Piers A* texts were situated. As Horobin notes, moreover, the connections between Bodley 851 at Ramsey Abbey and the EAMH³ group provides further support for the theory that the circulation of this exemplar and its copying took place in religious houses, perhaps belonging

⁵⁸ Horobin, “Harley 3954,” pp. 78–79.

⁵⁹ Ralph Hanna, *Pursuing History*, pp. 200–01.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

to the Benedictine order.”⁶¹ This kind of transmission from East Anglia to the East Midlands would be supported by the evidence presented here of a network of texts being passed around between East Anglian religious houses, which could easily have shared such texts with nearby religious establishments such as Ramsey.

A less obvious instance of *Piers*'s connection to the extended reach of the East Anglian textual network is the well-known manuscript Cambridge University Library, Dd.1.17 (often referred to as the *Liber Glastoniensis*). While this Vernon-scale anthology primarily contains Latin (mainly historical) texts, it concludes with a booklet of English items, including *Mandeville's Travels*, *Piers Plowman*, the *Seven Sages of Rome*, and other minor prose texts.⁶² While the manuscript was first thought to have been copied in Glastonbury, it is now generally thought to have had a northern provenance based on dialect. Ralph Hanna has suggested that its origin lies “among regular clergy,”⁶³ and, as Whitelock points out, the manuscript's Latin texts are “similar to those known to have been in volumes of the Austin Friars' library at York.”⁶⁴ The theory of northern provenance is a convincing one, and all of the texts in the manuscript do display some traits of northern—and specifically Yorkshire—spellings, as shown below:

⁶¹ Horobin, “Harley 3954,” p. 79.

⁶² For an in-depth account of this manuscript and its English texts see the introduction to Jill Whitelock, ed., *The Seven Sages of Rome (Midland Version)*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 324 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁶³ Hanna, *William Langland*, p. 35.

⁶⁴ Whitelock, *Seven Sages*, p. xxxii. The Glastonbury attribution was based on John Josceline's 1568 edition of *Gildas*, in which he claimed that the manuscript had once been in the possession of Glastonbury Abbey. Kane and Donaldson (*B Version*, p. 3, n. 25) and A. I. Doyle (“Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*,” p. 42) both argue that the dialect of the English texts in Dd.1.17 suggests a northern provenance.

Piers Plowman

daughter	dougtre	1 Rutland; 1 Yorks. ER
laughed	lauȝte	3 in E Mids; 1 in Yorks. WR
	schoe	1 in YWR; 1 in Devon
which	whilch	2 Yorks. WR

Mandeville's Travels

much	mykille	1 in YW; 1 in Lancs.
	nowther	1 in YWR
such	sylke	1 YER; 1 YWR
two	twa	North Lincs. up to North; heavily grouped in Yorkshire
was	whas	Lightly scattered in SE Mids; 1 N. Lincs.; 1 YER
world	warld	Mostly North Lincolnshire; scattered in the North; 2 in Norfolk; 1 in London

The Seven Sages of Rome

between	by twen	1 YER; 1 YWR; 1 Norfolk; 1 N. Suffolk; 1 Cambs.; 1 S. Lincs.; 1 Isle of Man
high	hee	Scattered in Lincs. and the North
	sal	1 YWR [Sloane 983]; 1 S. Northants.
shall (2 nd)	sal	1 border of N. Notts. and N. Lincs.; 1 Northumberland
she	schoe	1 in YWR [Ox. Bod. Selden Supra 52]; 1 in Devon [Harley 2386, Mandeville]
two	twa	North Lincs. up to North; heavily grouped in Yorkshire
was	whas	Lightly scattered in SE Mids; 1 N. Lincs.; 1 YER

The final prose texts, including “How men that ben in hele sholde visite sike folk,” are too short for any accurate dialect analysis, though they do attest the Yorkshire spelling *whilch* (“which”), also used in the manuscript’s copy of *Piers Plowman*. As this dialect evidence shows, however, the exclusively northern spelling forms are seldom attested in more than one or two manuscripts, and the quantity of these spellings is not overwhelming. Throughout all of the English texts, moreover, mixed with the northern forms, is a layer of East Anglian dialect features, particularly associated with Norfolk, as in the following spellings:

Piers Plowman

much	mekel	Heavy grouping in Norfolk/Ely; 5 in YWR; lightly scattered in Mids.
not	nouth	Exclusively Norfolk
	nouthe	Exclusively Norfolk
	thourth	1 Norfolk; 1 Devon
	thurugh	One on the border of Essex and Suffolk [Harley 7333]

Mandeville's Travels

much	mykyl	East Anglia up through East Midlands to North
such	swilk	Heavily grouped from Norfolk, through Lincs., to North
through	thourgh	5 in Norfolk; 1 Suffolk; 5 scattered in SE; 2 in Mids.

The Seven Sages of Rome

between	by twen	1 Norfolk; 1 N. Suffolk; 1 Cambs.; 1 S. Lincs; 1 YER; 1 YWR; 1 Isle of Man
through	thourgh	5 in Norfolk; 1 Suffolk; 5 scattered in SE; 2 in Mids.
	thourth	1 Norfolk; 1 Devon

How men that ben in hele sholde visite sike folk

through	thourgh	5 in Norfolk; 1 Suffolk; 5 scattered in SE; 2 in Mids.
between	bitwixe	Very contained group in Beds./Hunts; 1 N. Notts.; 1 N Derbys.; 1 Staffs.
earth	herth	3 in Norfolk; 1 in Leics.; small group in N. Lincs/N. Notts./Yorks.

It is difficult to know what to make of these more southerly East Anglian dialect forms. As most of the codicological evidence points toward the North as the origin of the manuscript's production, it seems unlikely that Dd.1.17 was actually copied in East Anglia. Yet the layer of characteristically East Anglian dialect features in its English texts suggests the possibility of some lines of textual communication between Yorkshire scribes and the Norfolk textual community. Although Dd.1.17 uses the B version rather than the A, its pairing of *Mandeville* with *Piers Plowman*, as in Harley 3954, may reinforce this theory. One might also point to other similarities between Yorkshire miscellanies and the religious compilations noted in East Anglia. Of particular interest is a northern Carthusian anthology of the later fifteenth century, London, British Library, Additional 37049, which also contains a copy of

Mandeville's Travels, *The Prick of Conscience*, and numerous other religious texts. The compendiously devotional and catechetic nature of Additional 37049 reflects the East Anglian devotional miscellanies discussed above, such as Brotherton 501, Hh.1.11, or the Hopton Hall Manuscript, and collects many of the same texts that were prominent in the East Anglian book trade. While connections cannot be proven, such manuscripts may suggest a wider northern radius for the community of scribes associated with religious houses in East Anglia. Indeed it seems perfectly plausible that religious scribes in more remote northern locales might have sourced texts from the profuse textual supply in Norfolk. While the possibility of textual exchange between Norfolk and the Northern counties is far too big a topic to broach here, it is hoped that this possibility will be explored in future scholarship.

What has become clear throughout this chapter is that in the fifteenth century the A version of *Piers Plowman* was circulated within a discrete regional environment in Norfolk and wider East Anglia through networks associated with local religious houses. The poem's transmission in this area appears to have been part of a wider network of manuscripts, which were produced centrally in Norfolk and remained available for local use. These manuscripts consistently reproduce the same or similar texts, which appear to have been copied and re-copied by a coterie of East Anglian scribes (most likely in religious orders), similar to the one discussed in the Southwest Midlands. In situating the A version of *Piers Plowman* in this wider East Anglian tradition of catechetic and devotional texts, we may also gain an insight into the way the poem was understood and presented in this area, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The textual treatment of *Piers Plowman* in East Anglia may also raise questions about *Piers Plowman's* earliest history and the possible secular or religious patrons who may have

had some hand in the dissemination of this network, for which there is not space here. Robert Adams has demonstrated that the Rokele family—possibly Langland’s kin—had a strong presence in East Anglia, having important land holdings in both Norfolk and Essex.⁶⁵ Adams also discusses William de la Rokele, a possible candidate for the real William Langland, noting his sojourn as the parson of Redgrave, Suffolk in the mid fourteenth century, about sixteen miles from Bury St Edmunds and about twelve miles from Thetford. Redgrave was a grand and decadent parish church built largely for the use of the abbots of Bury St Edmunds, who held a hunting lodge nearby, and is, Adams postulates, where Langland may have had cause to reflect on the clerical abuse of wealth and the necessity of patient poverty.⁶⁶ If Adams’s William de la Rokele was, in fact, William Langland, moreover, then the author of *Piers Plowman* would have had historical connections to this specific area of East Anglia. While there is no evidence of a causal relationship between the poem’s author possibly living at Redgrave and the later association of the poem with this area, it may at least provoke some thought and encourage us to consider further this possible influence on *Piers Plowman*’s circulation in East Anglia. Regardless of these speculations, however, the elucidation of *Piers*’s presence in Norfolk can further our understanding of one of the most important and under-discussed regions of *Piers Plowman*’s material history, which had an important effect on the early popularization and dissemination of Langland’s poem.

⁶⁵ Adams, *Langland and the Rokele Family*, pp. 50–52.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 87–96.

Section III

Reception and Literary Contexts

Chapter 4

Piers Plowman's Pastoral Contexts

The reception of *Piers Plowman* throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries took a variety of forms as diverse audiences across the country read and engaged with the poem. The responses of readers to *Piers* that survive in annotations, revisions, and adaptations show the diversity of interpretations through which the poem could be understood. There has been a good deal discussion in *Piers Plowman* scholarship as to who the poem's audience would have been and how they would have interpreted the poem.¹ This chapter will extend the consideration of East Anglia in the previous chapter to examine what this regional coterie of scribes can tell us about the nature of *Piers's* reception. As it will argue, *Piers Plowman's* interpretations were often shaped by the specific contextual influences on its production in manuscript environments. In order to discern how *Piers's* contemporary readers understood the poem, therefore, we cannot simply look to the evidence of individual manuscripts, but to the larger patterns of its circulation and the transformative effects of geographical distribution on the poem's reception.

The question of medieval literary reception is a notoriously problematic one, particularly with regards to a poem as widely read as *Piers Plowman*. In determining the reception of texts in the Middle Ages, many critics have employed bibliographical resources such as scribal and readerly annotations to determine how texts were engaged with and understood by those who encountered them. Perhaps most controversial, however, has been

¹ See Middleton, "Audience and Public"; John Burrow, "The Audience of *Piers Plowman*," in *Essays on Medieval Literature*, ed. J. A. Burrow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 102–16; Traugott Lawler, "The Secular Clergy in *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 16 (2002), 85–117.

the consideration of miscellaneous manuscripts, which have been used to examine the associations that scribes and compilers made between texts that appear in the same codex.² In the corpus of roughly fifty-five *Piers Plowman* manuscripts that survive, there are twenty that place *Piers* alongside other texts. The miscellanies of *Piers Plowman* were first considered in Anne Middleton's seminal essay, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," where she notes, "A sense of the generic limits within which the poem was regarded is evident in its range of associations with other works in manuscript."³ Indeed, in a brief survey of the *Piers* miscellanies, one cannot help but be slightly puzzled by the array of texts with which it circulates. It is found most often with *Mandeville's Travels*, a text that seems bizarrely dissimilar from *Piers*, and also frequently appears with *The Siege of Jerusalem*, a wildly anti-Semitic text that again seems contradictory to *Piers's* relatively tolerant attitude toward Jews. As Middleton points out, the poem's audiences often seem to interpret *Piers Plowman* in ways that are antithetical to the poem's own inherent system of values.⁴ The question is how much miscellanies can actually tell us about the audience of a text and the generic applicability that they envisaged for it. As it was noted in Chapter 3, all but one of the East Anglian manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* contains more than one text, and thus, the question of the miscellany and its usefulness for reception studies will play an important role in this chapter's analysis of *Piers's* readership in this area. Questions of

² For a comprehensive study of late-medieval miscellanies see Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson, "Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. Griffith and Pearsall, pp. 279–315. Also see Margaret Connolly, "Compiling the Book," in *The Production of Books in England*, pp. 129–49. Derek Pearsall notes, "The methods of compilers and manuscript editors of all kinds, whether professional or amateur, need to be studied, if we are to understand the reception and readership assumed for the literary works contained in their collections" ("Introduction," in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Pearsall, pp. 1–2 (p. 1)).

³ Middleton, "Audience and Public," p. 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

miscellaneity will also play an important role in the following chapter, which will explore *Piers*'s connections to a wider body of popular literary works.

I. Theorizing the Multi-Text Manuscript

Since the publication of Middleton's article in 1982, the subject of the miscellany has risen to become a prominent and highly contentious subject of debate in medieval criticism.⁵ As it was outlined in the introduction, critics are divided on the question of whether such collections of texts should be viewed as "anthologies" or "miscellanies"; that is, should we understand these codices as random assortments of texts or deliberately arranged and intertextually rich volumes? As it will be argued in this chapter, there is some truth to both arguments. On one hand, there is reason to doubt the notion that scribes intended to create complex and sophisticated literary cohesion in their miscellanies, particularly with regard to the practicalities of late-medieval scribal activity. On the other hand, however, it is fair to say that scribes, more often than not, do show a desire to facilitate textual and codicological unity, even if they were often limited by the uncertain conditions of late-medieval book circulation. We might consider, as a parallel example, the circulation of the *Canterbury Tales*. As we know, Chaucer's work did not circulate as a whole, but rather as a series of fragments, which are collated in various permutations. In discussing the transmission of the *Tales*, Simon Horobin notes scribes' apparent desire "to impose a sense of order and consistency upon Chaucer's unfinished work."⁶ As I would argue, this impulse to create

⁵ See Nichols and Wenzel, "Introduction," in *The Whole Book*, ed. Nichols and Wenzel, pp. 1–6; Hanna, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity," pp. 1–6; and Seth Lerer, "Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology," *PMLA*, 118 (2003), 1251–1267.

⁶ Simon Horobin, "Compiling the *Canterbury Tales* in Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts," *The Chaucer Review*, 47 (2013), 372–89 (p. 387).

order within fragmentary textual records characterizes the scribal treatment of a number of miscellaneous manuscripts.⁷ In order to understand these motivations, however, we cannot look solely to single codices, but rather to the larger textual cultures that surround any given codex. A case study of a miscellany without any reference to larger trends of manuscript production will almost always fall short of capturing the full picture.

One of the most problematic issues that scribes faced in pursuing compilational unity, however, is what Ralph Hanna has called “exemplar poverty,” that is, the difficulty of acquiring texts to copy. As Hanna argues, this exemplar poverty forced scribes to copy whatever they had to hand while it was still available, thus producing the common appearance of miscellaneity in late-medieval manuscripts.⁸ While this was certainly true, there were also ways around this pervasive problem, most notably through the use of booklets (or fascicles), which could either circulate independently or be bound together into a codex.⁹ The use of booklets as a medium for collecting texts would allow a greater amount of flexibility of production by giving the scribe or compiler the ability to delay the determination of the codex and thus better facilitate deliberate organizational choices. Thus,

⁷ A somewhat similar argument has recently been put forward by Arthur Bahr in his *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London*, where he argues that manuscript collections should be seen as both fragmented and unified (*Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)). Bahr, however, sees these assemblies as constituting works of literary merit, which can be close-read in the same way as a literary text, a sentiment that is often unsupported by the historical and material circumstances of manuscript production. The issues with this theory have been observed in Joseph A. Dane’s review of Bahr’s book (*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 36 (2014), 279–83).

⁸ See Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 47.

⁹ See Ralph Hanna, “Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 39 (1986), 100–111. The use of booklets had numerous practical benefits in the production of miscellanies. Boffey and Thompson observe that “the units or booklets were a convenient device for apportioning work, enabling the scribes to use the ‘leap-frogging’ system of copying” (“Anthologies and Miscellanies,” p. 281).

booklets could potentially mitigate the problems that exemplar poverty posed to deliberate compilation in late-medieval book production.¹⁰

While it is certainly true, moreover, that many provincial scribes had a great deal of difficulty acquiring copy-texts, there are also exceptions to the rule. The availability of large libraries and other repositories of texts, particularly those associated with religious houses in the provinces, would have given more opportunity for organizing and anthologizing manuscript collections. Such availability of supply outside the capital, however, is not merely constrained to learned Latin books; certain contexts of book production also allowed for a greater supply of vernacular texts.¹¹ In the case of *Piers Plowman*'s circulation, I have argued in Section II that the poem was transmitted among local coteries of copyists and book producers and often contextualized with other texts that were commonly circulated in those discrete areas. Such localized book production and textual distribution, which seems to be supported by other corpora of late-medieval texts, would further alleviate the problem of supply, ensuring that certain texts were available for extended periods in a local community.

¹⁰ There is some evidence of this notion of scribes having used booklets to facilitate the organization of their materials. As John Thompson has recently observed, Robert Thornton, in copying his famous miscellany, copied texts into booklets whenever possible, which meant that “Thornton had the advantage of *not* actually committing himself to any specific plan of organization” (John J. Thompson, “The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton and the ‘Thornton Romances’ in Lincoln Cathedral MS 91,” in *Robert Thornton and His Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts*, ed. Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 113–24 (p. 118)). Boffey and Thompson also discuss the case of NLS MS Advocates’ 19.3.1, noting that the scribe appears to have used booklets “as a simple aid to his own editorial methods as he went about the task of anthologizing clusters of religious material, romance narratives, and short lyric and comic items as they became available locally” (“Anthologies and Miscellanies,” p. 296). Another example may be Yale University Library, MS 365 (the “Brome Manuscript”). As Boffey and Thompson note, the Brome scribe displays some organizational principles within his booklets even though the manuscript was copied over a protracted period (p. 294).

¹¹ Pearsall notes that some vernacular miscellanies produced in monasteries may have shared the resources of Latin collections (“The Whole Book,” in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Kelly and Thompson, p. 27). Boffey and Thompson have speculated that although Robert Thornton was copying in a relatively remote area of Yorkshire, he “could have had access to a considerable range of reading material without leaving his own area” through various local networks (Boffey and Thompson, “Anthologies and Miscellanies,” pp. 299).

Yet, in order to understand the motivations behind the compilation of late-medieval manuscripts we must also consider the traditions that underlie scribal practice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In his most recent discussion of late-medieval miscellanies, Ralph Hanna argues that vernacular texts

sit within a much larger and more fully developed tradition of Latin book production. Behind this stretch centuries of development and consequently, of conventions of presentation. Professional scribes compiling fifteenth-century English books are likely to have been aware of these and to have seen them as models for emulation. [...] it is difficult to see how one might intelligently address ‘vernacular miscellanies’ without some immersion in those Latin books that provided both their translated texts and their production models.¹²

This tradition of Latin book production may have provided a model of *ordinatio* and literary assemblage for later miscellanies, which navigated the emergence of vernacular instruction.

Malcolm Parkes, in a famous essay, observes the growth of the *compilatio* tradition in the thirteenth century as a form of writing and as a kind of book, which had profound implications for the development of manuscript production.¹³ In his often-quoted account of the stages of writing, Bonaventure describes the action of the compiler: “Aliquis scribit aliena addendo, sed non de suo; et iste compilator dicitur.”¹⁴ The compiler arranges what others have written, but adds nothing of his own; thus, the compiler is deprived of any *auctoritas*, but is also freed of responsibility for his texts. As Alastair Minnis has argued, this

¹² Ralph Hanna, “Making Miscellaneous Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Sloane 2275,” *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 18 (2015), 1–28 (p. 14). Although late-medieval vernacular book production is rooted in a Latin tradition, however, there are also many ways in which it departs. As Wendy Scase observes, “it seems clear that in many ways vernacular manuscript production did not fit seamlessly into the structures and processes used for the production of Latin books” (Wendy Scase, “Afterword: The Book in Culture,” in *The Production of Books in England*, pp. 292–98 (pp. 294–95)).

¹³ Malcolm Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,” in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 115–41.

¹⁴ “Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler” (Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia, Vol. 1: Commentarium in primum librum sententiarum* (Quaracchi: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882), 14, col. 2).

tradition of *compilatio* came to influence vernacular poets such as Chaucer and Gower, both in their compendious writings and in their rhetorical effacement of themselves as authors from the text.¹⁵ Yet the impact of *compilatio* was not limited to literary tropes. The practical implications of these theories for manuscript production continued to affect how books were being produced, particularly for the miscellany, for which such traditions offered an advantageous mode of assembling and unifying a disparate textual supply.¹⁶

What this unification consisted of, however, needs some further discussion if we are to fully understand how to approach miscellaneous manuscripts. Often the unity of late-medieval miscellanies is considered through an analysis of how their constituent texts are generically or thematically similar, and thus, suitable to be presented together in a coherent anthology. With reference to the Latin, however, it is apparent that this is not necessarily the case; unity, in medieval literary theory, cannot be conflated with similarity.¹⁷ We can take as an example the compilational practices of Vincent of Beauvais in composing the *Speculum*

¹⁵ See Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar, 1984). The material aspect of *compilatio* was notably discussed in Malcolm Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 115–41. Bernard Guenée has also discussed the use of *compilatio* among medieval historians and chroniclers, "Lo storico e la compilazione nel XIII secolo," *Aspetti della letteratura latina nel secolo XIII*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Giovanni Orlandi (Perugia: Regione dell'Umbria, 1983), pp. 57–76. The arguments by Minnis, Parkes, and Guenée about the growth of *compilatio* as a literary concept have been questioned by Richard and Mary Rouse in "Ordinatio and Compilatio Revisited," in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 113–34, and Neil Hathaway, "Compilatio: From Plagiarism to Compiling," *Viator*, 20 (1989), 19–44. Also see Minnis's response to these criticisms: "Nolens Auctor Sed Compilator Reputari: The Late-Medieval Discourse of Compilation," in *La méthode critique au Moyen Âge*, ed. Mireille Chazan and Gilbert Dahan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 47–63.

¹⁶ In describing the process of compilation Parkes notes, "A writer organized his work for publication, and if he did not do so then a scribe would, for inside many a scribe there lurked a compiler struggling to get out ("Ordinatio and Compilatio," p. 138).

¹⁷ In the Latin tradition, *compilatio* was not about creating sophisticated literary links between sources, but was rather, as Parkes notes, "a means of making material easily accessible" and to present it in a "more convenient form" ("Ordinatio and Compilatio," p. 127).

maius. As Minnis has observed, Vincent does not attempt to harmonize his sources, but rather demonstrates an awareness that the authorities he brings together may differ fundamentally.¹⁸ Instead, he appeals to the distinction between *assertio* and *recitatio*; the *compiler* merely “recites” his sources, and thus, is under no obligation to present a consistent thematic whole. Yet, the act of compilation is itself an attempt to foster unity, to bring together diverse and potentially contradictory sources into a unified compilation, from which readers can extrapolate what they will.¹⁹

As I would suggest, this compilational tradition underlies the development of late-medieval vernacular miscellanies, whether directly or indirectly. The act of manuscript compilation, then, should be understood as an attempt to bring texts into a suspended unity that could be in some way useful for its intended readers, something we consistently see in the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*.²⁰ Thus, one cannot attempt to understand the processes of production that underlie the construction of a miscellany without first meticulously examining the contexts and social motivations that may have governed its compilation.²¹ Rather than seeing miscellanies as sophisticated literary-critical anthologies, therefore, we

¹⁸ Alastair Minnis, “Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Role of the *Compiler*,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 101 (1979), 385–421 (p. 389).

¹⁹ Theories of *compilatio* thus offer an interesting perspective on the question of intentionality in collocation. There is evidence that the question of planned unity in the arrangement of a collection was indeed considered in this period in much the same way as it is today. Nicholas of Lyre makes the distinction between *collectiones*, which are randomly assorted collections gathered over time, and *compilationes*, which are deliberately organized “anthologies.” As Minnis notes, “This distinction is probably a fourteenth-century refinement” (Ibid., p. 417).

²⁰ Benson makes a similar observation, noting, “If the scribes of *Piers Plowman* on occasion function as authors, they are more commonly found in the role of compiler” (*Public Piers Plowman*, p. 66).

²¹ As Barbara Shailor argues, “The historical context for a volume . . . provides invaluable insight into the function of each volume within the culture that produced it” (“A Cataloger’s View,” in *The Whole Book*, ed. Nichols and Wenzel, pp. 153–67 (p. 167)). Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie suggest that codicological features may “allow for a partial reconstruction of cultural and social layers which made possible the making of texts as ‘acts of communication’” (“Introduction,” in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1–9 (p. 2)).

should instead understand the interaction of texts within them as layers of cultural and social discourse. In this way, we can better appreciate the ways in which these codices were adapted to their contexts and to the demand of their intended audiences.²² In understanding *Piers Plowman*'s generic applicability within the schema of a collection, therefore, we must also understand the various contextual determinants on the *ordinatio* of its miscellanies.

These contexts must be textual as well as historical, positioning the poem within a network of texts that circulated around it. As this section will argue, multi-text manuscripts and their social and textual contexts can open up a range of possibilities for understanding how *Piers*'s medieval readers interpreted the poem and shaped its literary potential.

II. Catechesis and Devotion: *Piers Plowman* and the Pastoral Tradition

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, *Piers Plowman*'s historical circulation in East Anglia was largely governed by regional networks of manuscript production, apparently associated with local religious houses. But what can this closely-knit textual environment tell us about the reception and interpretations of *Piers Plowman* in this context? When we consider *Piers*'s East Anglian miscellanies together as a geographical grouping, we can begin to better understand the purposes behind their compilation. While we might hope to find some aesthetic literary agenda behind the poem's textual associations, however, all of the East Anglian *Piers* miscellanies consistently place it in relatively ordinary religious contexts. There is particular emphasis on the practicalities of religious practice, especially catechesis and religious devotion, everything a good Christian would need for pious daily devotion.

²² In discussing Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24, A. S. G. Edwards suggests the importance of considering the "transitional" aspects of manuscript collections, that is, the ways in which manuscripts adapt to their cultural and literary environments ("Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24: A 'Transitional' Collection," in *The Whole Book*, ed. Nichols and Wenzel, pp. 53–67).

One such example, which was discussed at length in the previous chapter, is London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687. As a collection of texts, Antiquaries 687 is a remarkably interesting manuscript that has received surprisingly little attention. The manuscript is focused on conveying the fundamental aspects of the faith and the basics of Christian practice, such as the *Pater Noster*, *Ave*, Creed and Ten Commandments, as well as septenary themes, such as the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues, and the Seven Works of Mercy.²³ Also given prominence throughout the texts are the sacraments of penance and confession. In the small amount of scholarship that exists on Antiquaries 687, the manuscript is most commonly associated with the reformist movement, an assumption based on John Bowers's assertion that, of all the *Piers Plowman* manuscripts, Antiquaries 687 "may be the strongest surviving candidate for a Lollard book."²⁴ Bowers's argument for the manuscript's heterodoxy is based primarily on his claim that "[t]he volume assembles vernacular works on suspect or condemned subjects."²⁵ Though Bowers's claim has gained general acceptance, there has been no further examination of this purportedly "Lollard" content. As it will be argued below, on closer examination the manuscript appears, instead, to be demonstrably

²³ Catechetical texts such as these were extremely common in devotional manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Latin and the vernacular, and often appeared with other texts of the same kind. A good example is the *Speculum Christiani*, a Latin treatise in verse on the various aspects of the catechesis such as the Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Seven Deadly Sins, which was later translated into Middle English (see Gustaf Holmstedt, ed. *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the 14th Century*, Early English Text Society, O.S., 182 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933)). It is clear that parts of the *Speculum* could be extracted for use as single texts, as we see in the case of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, where the *Speculum*'s section on the Decalogue is used as a stand-alone text. It is common for certain treatises on the Ten Commandments to be reused, like *Decem Mandata*, in multiple different manuscripts. One such Decalogue text appears in Harley 2398 (ff. 1r-4r), Cotton Titus D.xix (ff. 120r-146v), Harley 211 (ff. 47r-65r) and St. Albans Cathedral Library Catechetica (S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, *The Index of Middle English Prose: Manuscripts in the Laudian Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 3). Another version appears in BL Add. 17013 (ff. 2r-85v), BL Add. 2283 (ff. 92r-115v), and Huntington HM 147 (ff. 1r-113v).

²⁴ John Bowers, "Piers Plowman and the Police: Notes Toward a History of the Wycliffite Langland," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 6 (1992), 1-50 (p. 28).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

orthodox and seems to have participated in a wider tradition of pastoral instruction in the East Anglian textual and religious community.²⁶ Through this case study of Antiquaries 687, it will be suggested that *Piers Plowman*'s inclusion in this miscellany, and in this wider network of texts, demonstrates its perceived usefulness in this area as a practical guide to the faith, one that was perfectly suitable to be placed alongside other didactic treatises for religious instruction.

The first text of Antiquaries 687 is a short tract, occupying less than the recto of the first folio, which relates the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, and Apostles' Creed in the vernacular. As an introduction to the manuscript, it offers a brief guide to the very basics of the faith, and is perhaps meant to be recited by the reader before continuing to the other texts.²⁷ The first major text following the introductory tract is the Main Version of the *Prick of Conscience*.²⁸ The version of the *Prick* in Antiquaries 687 falls into the textual subgroup that Hope Emily Allen first labeled as a "Lollard interpolation," which adds passages to the poem in Latin prose criticizing the clergy.²⁹ While the inclusion of this subgroup contributed to Bowers's

²⁶ Thorlac Turville-Petre includes this manuscript among those which were "evidently owned by the clergy" (*The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1977), p. 46).

²⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, this particular tract can also be found in another manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 99, which also contains the *Prick of Conscience*.

²⁸ *Richard Morris's Prick of Conscience: A Corrected and Amplified Reading Text*, ed. Ralph Hanna and Sarah Wood, Early English Text Society, O.S. 342 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. xxxvii. In its overall character, the *Prick of Conscience* does seem appropriate in the context of the manuscript. It uses a catechetical schema, conventional in devotional works of the period, to structure the poem, which provides an overview of such subjects as heaven, hell, purgatory, the conditions of humanity, and the final judgment.

²⁹ Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle* (New York: D.C. Heath & Co., 1927), pp. 374–394. In this subgroup, there are two different interpolations, of which Antiquaries 687 only contains the second. The second interpolation consists of substantial additions of Latin prose, along with 563 lines of English verse. The interpolated version is also found in another East Anglian manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 60 (Norfolk/Ely: *LALME* LP 557). The other manuscripts to attest this subgroup are Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 76 (Essex: *LALME* LP 6080) and Manchester, John Rylands University Library, Eng. 90 (Shropshire: *LALME* LP 4218). East Anglia appears to have been a particularly important area of distribution for the *Prick of Conscience* more generally. The Main Version of the *Prick* was copied primarily in the upper Midlands, with heavy

assessment of the manuscript's Lollard content, recent scholarship has suggested that the interpolations do not, in fact, contain any demonstrably heterodox material.³⁰ As Allen herself admits, "the earlier attacks on the clergy are not necessarily Lollard, since complaints of abuses among the clergy have been frequent in all ages, even among the orthodox."³¹ On the whole, the interpolated passages are simply warnings to priests of the dangers of falling into hypocrisy and failing to lead their flock well. The Latinity of the interpolations, moreover, suggests their usefulness as instruction for learned clerics rather than Lollards, who privileged the use of the vernacular. The inclusion of the interpolated version in *Antiquaries 687*, then, may give us an entirely different understanding of the text's intended use. Rather than demonstrating an "anticlerical" agenda, it may have been included among other catechetical texts for the simple purpose of pastoral instruction.

Following the *Prick of Conscience* in *Antiquaries 687* is a confessional manual, which guides the reader through the practice of confession. Written in the first person, the text systematically confesses to a multitude of generic sins, providing a virtual script for the penitent to follow during confession. In the process of confession, the text provides a comprehensive treatment of sin in relation to the basic principles of the faith, spending a large portion of text treating the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Sacraments, and other catechetical items.³² Although Middle English forms

groupings in both the West Midlands and East Anglia, the latter being the densest. See Robert E. Lewis and Angus McIntosh, ed., *A Descriptive Guide*, p. 171.

³⁰ See Ann Killian, "Bilinguality and Hermeneutics in an Interpolated Version of *The Prick of Conscience*: Re-evaluating the Lollard Sub-group" (Paper read at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, 2014). I am grateful to Ann for allowing me to consult an early draft of her paper and for offering her informal thoughts on the interpolations.

³¹ Allen, *Writings*, p. 392.

³² There are numerous texts within the Form of Confession genre, usually surviving in only one manuscript. The particular text in *Antiquaries 687*, however, is attested in one other manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 60. The Douce manuscript, coincidentally, also contains

of confession were adaptable for a wide array of users, there is evidence that this particular version may have been suitable for (and perhaps written by) a member of the clergy. One of the confessional statements reads, “And ofte aȝens haue ben inobedient aȝens þe reule of myn ordere & of my professioun, ofte shewynge me holier þan I was in worde & in dede & in contenance” (ll. 25–9). The reference to being disobedient to “þe reule of myn ordere” suggests the possibility of the text being used for confession by a member of a religious order. At the end of the *Form of Confession*, the first-person voice gives way to a didactic one, which offers more practical advice as to the process of confession itself, emphasizing in particular the role of the priest and outlining how he is to administer the sacrament. The didactic rhetorical structure with which the text ends suggests that it was designed not only for guiding confession, but also for religious instruction. For a clerical audience, moreover, it would provide a practical guide to the administration of confession and how to guide penitent laypeople in the process of their own contrition.

The *Form of Confession* is followed by a traditional catechetical sequence of English texts, on the Seven Deadly Sins and the Ten Commandments, which form a logical progression from the confessional manual, which covers the same topics. The first text is the

Lavynham’s *Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins*, and, like Antiquaries 687, places these two texts directly together, though in reverse order. The geographical localizations of the Douce and Antiquaries manuscripts, however, do not seem to bear any relation to each other. While Antiquaries 687 bears a decidedly East Anglian provenance, Douce 60 has connections to the Hereford-Wales border. See J. P. W. M van Zutphen, *A Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins* (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1956), xlii–xliii. The dialect of Douce 60 has been very generally identified by C. Horstmann as “southern,” though even this is based merely on the use of the pres. ind. pl. ending –(e)th. See C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden* (Heilbronn, 1881), p. cxix. This may have an intriguing relation to the strange mix of dialect features in Antiquaries 687. It was noted in the previous chapter that the Antiquaries scribe consistently integrates south Herefordshire/north Gloucestershire dialect features, a localization very near the Douce scribe. This may further suggest that the scribe had a southwest Midland source for his exemplars.

popular *Litil Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins* by the Carmelite friar Richard of Lavynham.³³ Having been composed in Suffolk, the *Litil Tretys*'s manuscripts appear to have generally been copied and circulated quite locally in East Anglia. The manuscripts in which the *Litil Tretys* is found are fairly consistent in their thematic structures, all bearing a pastoral focus similar to Antiquaries 687. The *Litil Tretys* outlines each of the Seven Deadly Sins, elaborating on all of the various branches of each sin.³⁴ Rather than simply expounding the nature of the seven sins, the text also uses examples in scripture, mainly from the Old Testament, of instances where the sins are manifest. The *Litil Tretys*' study of the seven sins also seem to be more "academic" than devotional; its pedantic treatments of the subtle differences between the sub-groups of each sin seem more appropriate for one with a certain level of theological knowledge, rather than a lay parishioner, who, in practice, would only need to know the basic principles of each sin and how to avoid committing them. The *Tretys* appears to have been largely used by clerical readers for didactic and pastoral purposes. J. P. W. M. Van Zutphen notes that the text "was of use to friar and parish priest as material for study, but could at the same time help them in the carrying out of their duties for preaching and confession."³⁵ The inclusion of the *Litil Tretys* in Antiquaries 687, therefore, seems to lend credence to the idea that the manuscript was directed toward pastoral aid. In the text of the Antiquaries manuscript, the scribe seems to have revised the text slightly, in order to better fit the envisioned audience. Throughout Lavynham's text, all Latin quotations are

³³ For an edition of this text see Van Zutphen, *A Litil Tretys*, p. xlvi. Van Zutphen, however, does not include Antiquaries 687 in his collation, and makes no mention of it. Most likely, he was unaware of the manuscript, especially as it was in private hands at the time of the edition's publication.

³⁴ For a history of the Seven Deadly Sins and their prevalence in medieval literature see Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1952).

³⁵ Van Zutphen, *A Litil Tretys*, p. xii

directly followed by English translations. The Antiquaries text, however, while it otherwise follows the majority readings quite closely, omits most of these translations. Although there is no evidence of whether this is a product of the Antiquaries scribe or his exemplar, in either case this text, and perhaps its textual tradition, is unique in assuming a Latinate readership, which would further suggest a clerical audience.

Following the *Litil Tretys* is a Decalogue text, referred to in the incipit as *Decem Precepta Diversis*. John Bowers includes this text among the potentially Lollard, noting that “commentaries on the Ten Commandments had been banned because Lollards used the prohibition against worshipping images as part of their general assault on statues, shrines and paintings of saints.”³⁶ Yet treatises on the Ten Commandments were by no means banned, nor even considered suspect unless explicitly proven so; rather, Decalogue texts were ubiquitous in pastoral manuals containing either orthodox or heterodox material (or both). This particular treatise, in fact, seems to deliberately steer away from the common pitfalls of Decalogue treatises. It does not address the worship of images at all, instead discussing a less literal interpretation of idolatry in the first commandment, showing that the objects of the Seven Deadly Sins may become “false idols” to be placed before God.³⁷ In this way, the

³⁶ Bowers, “*Piers Plowman* and the Police,” p. 28. Indeed, the Decalogue was extremely important for the Lollards, and was a common vehicle for Wycliffite polemics. Fiona Somerset notes, “The part of the bible in which its moral instruction is most ‘open’ is ‘God’s commandments’ or ‘hestis’: they are the epitome of biblical truth, and all truths about moral conduct may be derived from their exposition. So it is that no lollard work of religious instruction or devotion with any sort of scope is complete without an extended exposition of the commandments” (Fiona Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 64). As Anne Hudson has observed, Decalogue tracts in this period were quite frequently condemned as heretical. The reason for this, she notes, is that the first injunction, proscribing the making of graven images, “offered such an obvious place...for Lollard views,” as the commandment “gave opportunity for disquisitions on the evils of images” (*The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 484).

³⁷ For more on Lollards and the problem of images see Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), and James

lecherous and gluttonous person worships the flesh, the covetous person worships worldly good, and the prideful person worships the self. Throughout the following injunctions, the text continues this mapping of the Seven Deadly Sins onto the Ten Commandments, often making tenuous interpretive stretches to do so. In the fifth commandment against manslaughter, for instance, the text disregards the obvious deadly sin (Wrath), instead drawing links between Envy and manslaughter. Firstly, and more literally, the sinner may kill the one he envies, and secondly, he may simply hold envy in his heart and thus commit “manslaughter” by slaying his own soul. The text is thus both a treatise on the Decalogue and an exposition of the Seven Deadly Sins, making it a very fitting follow-up to the *Litil Tretys* and furthering the manuscript’s prevailing interest in the septenary. While the text also incorporates some Latin, unlike the *Litil Tretys* it also offers a direct vernacular translation of each Latin quotation similar to the *Prick of Conscience*, allowing for use by the unlearned.³⁸ It offers highly orthodox instructions for laypeople to confess their sins and to say the *Pater Noster* and other devotions, and to “aske counseyle of a wyse preste” if one is afflicted with any great sin.³⁹ Conversely, the text also addresses clerical readers, encouraging them to fulfill their duties of teaching the laity: “ʒif þou bee a prest *and* haste kunnyng *with* god lyuyng preche *and* teche goddis wordis to hem þat ben vnkunnyng *and* ʒe þat heren to wiþ gode deuocioun.”⁴⁰

Simpson, “Orthodoxy’s Image Trouble: Images in and after Arundel’s *Constitutions*,” in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 91–114.

³⁸ Also similar to the “fire and brimstone” style of the *Prick of Conscience*, the Decalogue treatise incorporates elements of style from the penitential tradition. Repeatedly, it refers to the body as “stenkyge flesshe” (l. 36) and “wormes mete” (ll. 113–4) and references the three dangers: “þe flesche þe worlde *and* þe fende” (l. 26), all tropes of penitential literature.

³⁹ Society of Antiquaries, MS 687, p. 419.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

The final text of Booklet I, and the first Latin text in the manuscript, is the “Prophecy of Edward the Confessor,” extracted from the *Speculum Sacerdotis*. The brief, apocalyptic vision of Edward on his deathbed outlines the dangers of sinfulness for priests and the punishment that may result from their iniquity. Like many of the other texts in the manuscript, it also evidences a penitential attitude, describing in detail how “*impij et male viuentes in inferno sunt puniti.*”⁴¹ While the text’s criticisms of sinful priests might be construed as appealing to an anti-clerical, Lollard ideology, the text from which it is drawn is in fact a manual for priests which “deals with the priest’s way of life and duties, preaching, prayer, the administration of the sacraments” as well as “denunciations of clerical abuses and numerous moral anecdotes.”⁴² The longer text also appears to have circulated commonly in manuscripts containing texts of religious instruction, as in British Library, MS Burney 356 (begins f. 105v), which contains a number of didactic and catechetical texts specifically suitable for clerical use. In its clerical moralization and its Latinity, then, this text is perhaps the best evidence of Antiquaries 687’s usefulness for the edification of an educated clerical audience concerned with the role of the priest and the ramifications of sin.

Booklet II of Antiquaries 687 consists of only two texts, *Piers Plowman*, in the hand of the main scribe, and the “Treatise on Excommunication,” in a different (possibly later) hand. The “Treatise” is a small text, apparently unique to the manuscript. It comprises a legalistic outline of all the offences that will lead to being cursed by the Church, emphasizing that the power of cursing is the “*sword of holychurch.*”⁴³ The text is highly penitential, giving warning that “*wat tyme þat he trespasyt azens þe lawe of g[od] þat he ys worthy to be*

⁴¹ “The godless and wicked will be punished in hell” (Society of Antiquaries, MS 687, p. 431).

⁴² William Abel Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century, Based on the Birkbeck Lectures, 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 278.

⁴³ Society of Antiquaries, MS 687, p. 553.

a corsid of holychurch þene he ys departyd fro god *and* all goode werkes *and* ys delyueryd...to þe fend of helle.”⁴⁴ It cautions the reader specifically about the dangers of breaking the sacraments and dying while in deadly sin, suggesting that all the saints of heaven “mowe not þorw preyre of hem all delyuere þe sowle of on þat dezyth yn any dedly syn.”⁴⁵ The text also evinces the same pastoral quality as many of the other items in Antiquaries 687, instructing “any þat hat power by lawe of holychurch” (i.e., priests) to “amende þe soull þat þey hawe to helpyn and all þat falsly flen away from hem” lest they themselves be chastised.⁴⁶ This again emphasizes the clerical duty to instruct the laity and reform the sinful soul, specifically stressing the priestly administration of the sacraments and suggesting the punishment that will result if priests fail to uphold this responsibility. It seems likely that this text was added after the original stages of production, though there is no great temporal disparity between the two hands. Its similarity of content to many of the other texts in Booklet I, moreover, specifically its penitential style and focus on practical instruction, may evidence the manuscript’s evolution through continued reading as a pastoral tool and guide for priests.

The manuscript context of Antiquaries 687 is also important for gaining a better understanding of the thematic function of *Piers Plowman A*. *Piers Plowman* does, indeed, address the catechetical and pastoral themes that we have thus far observed in the other texts of Antiquaries 687. The A text of *Piers Plowman* ticks all the boxes, so to speak, for a

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 553.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 553. The “Treatise” goes on to list the offenses which might warrant a curse, such as committing a crime against one’s fellow Christian or the community, doing violence to any man or woman of religion, stealing the possessions of Holy Church, and disobeying the Church’s commandments.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 554.

conventional devotional treatise, including all of the elements of the *pastoralia*.⁴⁷ The penitential structure of the second vision forms the backbone of the A version and would have made it appealing for pastoral instruction. The A text's progression from sermon to eventual pardon follows the proscribed path for the penitent layperson, and is precisely what the pastoral manuscripts are trying to convey. In keeping with the context of the Antiquaries manuscript, *Piers Plowman* is also strongly associated with the catechetical tradition; the presence of basic Christian catechesis and sacramental devotion throughout the poem is undoubtedly apparent, including the Seven Deadly Sins, the Ten Commandments, and the *Pater Noster*.⁴⁸ One of the most important themes in the A text is the sacrament of Confession, the most obvious manifestation being the "Seven Deadly Sins" scene, in which each of the seven sins confesses its own innate culpability.⁴⁹ This episode in *Piers Plowman*

⁴⁷ Although *Piers Plowman* is not traditionally penitential in the same way as a poem like the *Prick of Conscience*, it does position the act of plowing in the *Visio* as an act of penitence (see John Burrow, "The Action of Langland's Second Vision," *Essays in Criticism*, 15 (1965), pp. 247–268). For more on *Piers* and penitential literature see Nick Gray, "Langland's Quotations from the Penitential Tradition," *Modern Philology*, 84 (1996), 53–60, and Sarah Wood, "Penitential Texts and Vernacular Conscience in B 13–14," in *Conscience and the Composition of Piers Plowman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 45–69. The poem also offers moments of affective response characteristic of penitential literature, as in the moments of weeping. For weeping in *Piers* see Stephanie Trigg, "Langland's Tears, Poetry, Emotion, and Mouvance," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 26 (2012), 27–48, and Katherine K. O'Sullivan, "Tears and Trial: Weeping as Forensic Evidence in *Piers Plowman*," in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 193–207.

⁴⁸ On the importance of the *Pater Noster* for Langland see Vincent Gillespie, "Thy Will Be Done: *Piers Plowman* and the *Pater Noster*," in *Middle English Religious Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of Ian Doyle*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 95–119.

⁴⁹ Emily Rebekah Huber discusses the presence of wanhope in Langland's confessional sequence as a device to expose the insufficiency of pastoral teaching in late-medieval England ("Langland's Confessional Dissonance: Wanhope in *Piers Plowman* B," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 27 (2013), 79–101). Arvind Thomas similarly argues that the confession of the Seven Deadly Sins stresses the necessity of proper jurisdiction in the administration of confession and the criticisms of the friars for disregarding canon law ("The Subject of Canon Law: Confession Covetise in *Piers Plowman* B and C and the *Memoriale Presbiterorum*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 24 (2010), 139–68). Larry Scanlon discusses Langland's Seven Deadly Sins as demonstrating an interest in the relationship between personification and penance and the "semiotic instability" that they embody ("Personification and Penance," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 21 (2007), 1–29 (p. 2)).

is particularly important for the manuscript context of Antiquaries 687, as it encompasses both overriding themes of Confession and the Seven Deadly Sins, both of which feature prominently throughout the texts in the manuscript. Also important in Langland's depiction of the Seven Deadly Sins is the fact that several of the Sins not only confess their inherent sinfulness, but also proceed to adopt a virtuous life that is opposite to each of their semiotic functions.⁵⁰ Langland thus evokes a common motif, which contrasted each of the Seven Virtues with the Seven Vices. Traditionally, the Seven Virtues are seen as *remedia* to the Deadly Sins, and thus, by adopting their opposing virtues, the sins in *Piers Plowman* complete the process of self-effacement.

The relationship between *Piers Plowman* and confessional texts is reinforced by another *Piers* collection, London, British Library, Harley 6041, where *Piers Plowman* A is again placed alongside a confessional manual.⁵¹ This manuscript, however, is placed outside of the immediate vicinity of Norfolk; several coats of arms drawn into the manuscript indicate that it was probably owned by the Hoo family of Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire.⁵² The fact that *Piers* is here paired solely with a confessional manual in a manuscript that was most

⁵⁰ In this scene, Pride adopts humility, saying that she "Schal nere hey herte me hente, but holde me lowe" (A V.50), Gluttony vows to adopt "Abstinence" (ll. 207–09), and Sloth resolves to undertake a pilgrimage to Truth (ll. 228–29). In describing the path to Truth in Passus VI, Piers also makes reference to the Seven Virtues, personified as seven sisters (VI.103–08), which are established as necessary for gaining entrance to the castle of Truth (ll. 111–13). The contrasting of the Seven Virtues with the Seven Sins is also the subject of a number of septenary texts, including one of the minor texts of Harley 3954, known as *The Seven Virtues and the Seven Vices* (see Braekman, "The Seven Virtues as Opposed to the Seven Vices").

⁵¹ The form of confession in Harley 6041 is unique to the manuscript. For more on this manuscript and its relationship to *Piers Plowman* see Michael E. Cornett, *The Form of Confession: A Later Medieval Genre for Examining Conscience* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2011).

⁵² As an eastern manuscript involving the same general concern it is at least worth considering as part of the wider reach of the East Anglian network. The confessional manual in Harley 6041, like that of Antiquaries 687, also encompasses other catechetical themes, offering "confessions of the seven deadly sins, sins committed through the five bodily senses, violations of the Commandments, neglect of the physical works of mercy, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of the four cardinal and three theological virtues, and of the seven virtues opposed to the deadly sins, sins committed with parts of the body, and failure to believe in the articles of the faith" (Cornett, *The Form of Confession*, p. 160).

likely commissioned indicates that there must certainly have been some perceived similarity between the texts, and some sense that they belonged together in one codex. This again attests the idea that the presence of confession in *Piers Plowman* was considered as useful for instruction about religious confessional practice.

In assessing the possible use of Antiquaries 687 as a pastoral manual, however, it is possible to go further than simply pointing to the arrangement of texts. There is also evidence of textual emendations that suggests the texts were specifically copied with such a context in mind. The A text of *Piers Plowman* in Antiquaries 687 displays numerous unique editorial interventions which seem to affect the meaning of their respective lines, and which, on the whole, appear to make the text more suitable for reading in a pastoral context.⁵³ The scribe's emendations tend to show a concern with catechetical themes such as are present in the rest of the manuscript. He also shows an interest in the subject of grace and emends certain lines to make them more in line with orthodox belief. In A VI.75, the line originally reads, "And butrased with Lef-so-or-thou-best-not-saved." In M the line is emended to "Ibotrasde wip beleue longe to stonden." This alteration may reflect a concern with the soteriological simplicity of this line: believe or you will not be saved," perhaps seeing this as drifting toward a theology of faith alone. In another intriguing variation, M omits a key line in the Pardon scene, A VIII.96, in which the priest, having read the pardon, says, "Peter! Quod the prest tho, 'I can no pardoun fynde'." The omission of this important line renders the scene far simpler, eliminating the problematic idea in this episode that the pardon is not really a true pardon and turning the priest's following lines—"But do wel and have wel, and God shal

⁵³ It is unclear whether these variants were introduced by the present scribe or if they were already present in the exemplar, as no evidence of revision or correction is visible. Both of these possibilities are intriguing, however, and if the readings were already present, it would indicate that the Norfolk exemplar that the scribe used was already corrected for inclusion in other pastoral environments.

have thi soule; / And do evyl and have evyl, trust thou non other” (A VIII.97–98)—into a simple translation of the Latin.⁵⁴ The omission also removes the doubt from the priest and reaffirms him as a doctrinal authority. In removing any doubt from the pardon, moreover, the scene affirms the necessity of “doing well” to achieve salvation as opposed to an overreliance on faith, a recurring concern for the scribe of Antiquaries 687.⁵⁵ Perhaps most interesting in this regard are the six lines uniquely added to the end of the poem in this manuscript after the final line (XI.314–19):

For-þey I rede alle men þat on crist be leuyn
 Asken mercy of god for here misdedes
 And coueiten non clergie ne catel on þis erþe
 But alwey to *seruen* god *and* hendyn in hise werkys
 And þat he graunte vs þe Ioie þat euere schal lastyn
 With pers þe plowman to wonyn in his blysse Amen Amen

Like the emendation at VI.75 above, the scribe was evidently dissatisfied with the traditional ending of A, which places a great emphasis on faith and grace for salvation, suggesting that the poor may attain heaven “Wipoute penaunce at here partyng” (A.XI.313). The added lines, rather, urge the Christian to follow the standard formula for salvation, confessing one’s sins and actively serving God. Such a revisionary strategy would also be in accordance with the penitential themes present in many of Antiquaries 687’s texts.

There is also evidence that M, like some of the other EAMH³ manuscripts, censors material that is particularly condemnatory of clerics, as shown by the following examples:

⁵⁴ The impulse to simplify this complex part of the poem is also present in the closely related manuscript Harley 3954. In the Pardon scene, next to a reference to the character of Truth, the scribe notes “*id est* God” (f. 106v). Although this is obviously a problematic interpretation, on a superficial level it makes the text far simpler and irons out the complex allegory to a simple devotional reading.

⁵⁵ Other instances of possible censorship are more uncertain, but present interesting possibilities. In the Gluttony episode, V.189 originally reads, “He pisside a potel in a *paternoster* while,” whereas in M “*paternoster*” is altered to “litel.” This variant may be a simple clarification for a line that could seem slightly nonsensical; yet it may also show a scribe reacting to the irreverent reference to the *Pater Noster* as the length of time during which Gluttony urinated into a pot.

- A Prol.78–9 Ac þe parish prest & þe *pardonere* parte þe siluer
 þe pore peple of þe parish shulde haue 3if þei ne were.
 M Prol. 79 *om.*
- A III.33 þere cunnyng clerkis shuln klokke behynde
 EAM *om.*
- A III.47–52 ‘We haue a wyndowe in werching wile stoned vs wel hieze;
 Woldist þou glase þe gable, *and graue þere þin name*,
 Siker shulde þi soule be heuene to haue.’
 ‘Wiste I þat,’ *quaþ* þe woman, ‘þere nis wyndowe ne auter
 þat I ne shulde make or mende, *and* myn name written
 þat iche segge shal se I am sister of 3our hous
 M We han a wyndowe in hom wele stondyn
 ‘Siker shulde þi soule ben heuene to hauen
 woldyst þou helpyn þerto a pound or tweyne.’
 ‘Wiste I þat,’ *quaþ* Mede, ‘I schulde it so makyn
 And amendyn auters, *and* myn name written
 þat men schulden seyn I were sister of 3our hous

The revision of III.33, which is shared by EA, is fairly straightforward, omitting the reference to “cunnyng clerkis.” The revision of III.47–52, however, which is unique to M, shows a more sophisticated emendation. In III.47–52, a friar asks Meed for a financial donation in exchange for engraving her name on the church window. In the original passage the Friar is portrayed as selling his absolution for a new window to the Church. Line 48 references a common practice of donors inscribing their names on the Church window to be prayed for,⁵⁶ which Langland uses to satirize the vanity and self-serving nature of such donation. The text of *Antiquaries* 687, however, omits line 48 and inserts a unique extra line after line 49: “woldyst þou helpyn þerto a pound or tweyne.” The omission of line 48 keeps the Friar from the implicit culpability of suggesting that Mede “glase þe gable, *and graue þere þin name*,” instead simply asking her to help the church with “a pound or tweyne” (though even this is a substantial request). Following this, Meed’s response is also altered in *Antiquaries* to the

⁵⁶ See Pearsall, *Piers Plowman*, n. to ll. 51–54.

unique “I schulde it so makyn,” which places the agency of corruption solely with Mede, who determines to use the donation opportunity for her own glorification.

As Simon Horobin has shown, such editorial behavior is also present in Harley 3954, the other Norfolk *Piers* manuscript closely related to Antiquaries 687, in which “the Harley scribe was deliberately editing his text to remove or tone down passages of an antifraternial nature.”⁵⁷ Horobin further argues that the scribe’s revisions demonstrate the manuscript’s “ongoing concern with confession and particularly with penance.”⁵⁸ Between Antiquaries 687 and Harley 3954, moreover, the same ideologically weighted revisions sometimes agree across the A and B versions. The Antiquaries scribe, for example, omits A Prol.79, which is also omitted in Harley’s B text (B Prol.82). In this line, Langland asserts that pardoners and parish priests share silver between them, which “þe pore peple of þe parish schulde haue 3if þei ne were.” In regards to Harley 3954, Horobin cites this omission as evidence of the censorship of antifraternial sentiment, as it “removes the reference to the fact that the money was really intended for the poor parishioners.”⁵⁹ Harley 3954 and Antiquaries 687, moreover, are the only two manuscripts to omit this line in either the A or B texts. Thus, although the two scribes are working with entirely different versions at this point in the text, they still choose to omit the same ideologically weighted line, giving reason to suspect that the

⁵⁷ Horobin, “Harley 3954,” p. 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76. Horobin observes the same trend in the Norfolk ancestor of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 201, noting that “the F redactor incorporates a number of editorial interventions” which show “a desire to promote the concept of the religious rule” (“Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201,” p. 30. Manuscript F has been localized in *LALME* to Essex (LP 6110) and may have participated in the fringes of the East Anglian textual community. In the Electronic Archive edition of CCC 201, moreover, the editors also revealed certain dialect relics in the text from a previous stage of copying, which are characteristic of central Norfolk (*The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive. Vol. 1, Corpus Christi College, Oxford MS 201 (F)*, CD-ROM, ed. Robert Adams, Hoyt N. Duggan, Eric Eliason, Ralph Hanna, John Price-Wilkin, and Thorlac Turville-Petre (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000)).

⁵⁹ Horobin, “Harley 3954,” p. 73.

omissions were intentional, rather than due simply to a copying error or to exemplar corruption. In this context, therefore, the Antiquaries scribe, like the scribe of Harley 3954, seems to be emending his text of *Piers Plowman* to tone down its more overtly anticlerical critique, but also to highlight the text's usefulness for pastoral instruction.⁶⁰ The temporal and geographical proximity of these two codices, moreover, offers an even more convincing reason to suspect that these two south-Norfolk scribes may have shared a similar agenda in the copying of their manuscripts.

III. The History and Theory of the Pastoral Miscellany

The confessional and catechetical instruction present in these East Anglian manuscripts was part of a tradition of lay education in the basics of the faith that arose out of the ecclesiastical reforms of the thirteenth century. Particularly important for this emphasis on pastoral instruction was the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which established a new focus on auricular confession in the Church, with emphasis on the basics of the faith, such as the Decalogue, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Sacraments, and the Creed.⁶¹ The impact of the Fourth Lateran Council on late-medieval religious writing was significant and occasioned the

⁶⁰ It is unclear why this censorship seemed necessary, especially amongst other texts that are already critical of the clergy; perhaps these were seen as somehow expressing more demonstrable anticlericalism, rather than the “constructive criticisms” seen elsewhere in the manuscript. In his introduction to the A version, Kane includes such minor scribal censorship as a common category of variation by scribes, who “regarded themselves as responsible in various senses for what they wrote, and accordingly departed from their copy to censor or to bowdlerize it” (*A Version*, p. 137).

⁶¹ See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Leonard E. Boyle, “The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology,” in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. T. J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature, 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), pp. 30–43; and E. A. Jones, “Literature of Religious Instruction,” in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–1500*, ed. P. Brown (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp. 406–22.

production of numerous pastoral manuals in the vernacular.⁶² The same ideas were again reinforced in 1281 at the Council of Lambeth, where John Pecham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, drafted the *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*, which decreed that priests should teach the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues and the Seven Sacraments to the laity at least four times a year in the vernacular.⁶³ The idea of teaching in the vernacular would be important for later religious instruction, and is precisely the idea argued for in the *Prick of Conscience*'s interpolated version. The Lambeth Council later came to influence and be repeated by later fourteenth-century reformist thinkers, who used the decrees as a precedent by which to criticize the laxity and inadequate knowledge of contemporary clerics.⁶⁴ Later, in the fourteenth century, the continued emphasis on catechetical religious instruction by the clergy is witnessed by the writings of Archbishop John Thoresby, who composed the *Lay Folks' Catechism* in Latin,

⁶² As Helen Deeming observes, the effect of the Lateran reforms "was an atmosphere of creativity and enthusiasm towards pastoral duties, leading those involved in preaching and ministry to explore new texts and new kinds of texts to serve their purpose, whomever they were instructing ("French Devotional Texts in Thirteenth-Century Preachers' Anthologies," in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne, pp. 254–65). Also see Beth Allison Barr, "Pastoral Vernacular Literature," in *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 21–35; Richard Newhauser, "Religious Writing: Hagiography, *Pastoralia*, Devotional and Contemplative Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100–1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 37–57; Vincent Gillespie, "Anonymous Devotional Writings," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 127–49; Michael G. Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 147–75; and Jones, "Literature of Religious Instruction."

⁶³ See H. Leith Spencer, "The Preaching of *Pastoralia*," in *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 196–227, and Majorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 376–406 (p. 395). Also see Geoffrey F. Bryant and Vivien M. Hunter, eds., *'How thow schalt thy paresche preche': John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests*, Part 1 (Barton-on-Humber: Workers' Educational Association, 1999).

⁶⁴ Margaret Deansley, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 193. For the subject of pastoral reform in *Piers Plowman* see Nicholas Watson, "Piers Plowman, Pastoral Theology, and Spiritual Perfectionism: Hawkyng's Cloak and Patience's *Pater Noster*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 21 (2007), 83–118.

which was later translated into English verse by John Gaytrick, a Benedictine monk of St Mary's, York.⁶⁵ Thoresby, like Pecham, believed that priests should regularly instruct the laity, in the vernacular, in the same fundamentals of the faith. In 1357, Thoresby decreed that priests must receive a more thorough education in Church doctrine and increased the frequency with which they were to teach this knowledge to the laity.⁶⁶ The thirteenth century also saw the growth of the pastoral manual as a tool to meet this need for lay instruction. Such texts arose as the *Manuel des Péchés* (which would later be a source for Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*), Thomas of Chobhom's *Summa Confessorum*, and Robert Grosseteste's *Templum Domini*.⁶⁷ This literary model was also reflected in the production of manuscripts, which arranged similar compilations of practical catechetical material for use in such religious instruction. As Vincent Gillespie observes,

in the fourteenth century the most striking development in pastoral aids is the emergence of manuscripts in which a number of distinct vernacular texts have been brought together to form a sequence providing instruction in the fundamental beliefs and disciplines of the Church; in effect an *ad hoc* manual of pastoral and catechetical material.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ T. F. Simmons and H. E. Nolloth, eds., *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 118 (London: K. Paul Trench Trübner, 1901). See Anne Hudson, "A New Look at the Lay Folks' Catechism," *Viator*, 16 (1985), 243–58, and "The Lay Folks' Catechism: A Postscript," *Viator*, 19 (1988), 307–09. Also compare *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, a Middle English translation of the *Somme le roi*. See W. Nelson Francis, ed., *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

⁶⁶ Simmons and Nolloth, *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, pp. xii–xvii.

⁶⁷ See Fritz Kemmler, 'Exempla' in Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne' (Tübingen: Narr, 1984), p. 35. E. J. Arnould, *Le Manuel des Peches*, Etude de litterature religieuse anglo-normande (Paris, 1940).

⁶⁸ Vincent Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of Religion," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 317–344 (p. 318). For other discussions of pastoral manuals see Vincent Gillespie, "Doctrina and Predicacio: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 11 (1980), 36–50; and "Lukyng in haly bukes: Lectio in some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies," *Analecta Carthusiana*, 106 (1984), 1–27; Helen Deeming, "French Devotional Texts in Thirteenth-Century Preachers' Anthologies," in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne, pp. 254–65, and Laurie Postlewaite, "Eschue peché, embracer bountee: Social Thought and Pastoral Instruction in Nicole Bozon," in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne, pp. 278–89; Jill C. Havens, "A Narrative of Faith: Middle English Devotional Anthologies and Religious Practice," *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 7 (2004),

Given the content of the texts in Antiquaries 687, this seems a fitting description of the manuscript's aims and functions, compiling all of the tenets of the faith into one place for the purpose of pastoral instruction. In order to understand the manuscript tradition in which *Piers Plowman* participates in East Anglia, therefore, it is important to consider the long history of religious instruction that stretches back well before the fifteenth century and its impact on later-medieval book production.

The catechetical tradition surrounding Antiquaries 687, especially in light of the emendations in *Piers Plowman*, also offers an important insight into the Antiquaries scribe's particular ideology. Although many texts in the manuscript are critical of false clerics, the scribe is careful to steer them away from overt anticlericalism. This evidence contradicts John Bowers's claim that Antiquaries 687 is a "Lollard book." The texts that Bowers finds particularly Lollard, the Decalogue treatise and the translation of the *Pater Noster* and Creed, are commonly re-produced texts in the pastoral tradition; and although, in post-Arundelian England, any writings on such subjects are *potentially* heretical, these particular texts show no signs whatsoever of being unorthodox. In a recent discussion of two Norfolk miscellanies, Carol M. Meale has pointed to the strong push against heresy in the region of East Anglia in the fifteenth century, which makes it even less likely to find a Lollard book in mid-fifteenth century Norfolk.⁶⁹ The manuscript's texts suggest it was more likely compiled in the tradition

67–84; George Russell, "Vernacular Instruction of the Laity in the Later Middle Ages in England: Some Texts and Notes," *Journal of Religious History*, 2 (1962–63), 98–119; and C. A. Martin, "Middle English Manuals of Religious Instruction," in *So Meny People Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. M. Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh: Middle English Dialect Project, 1981), pp. 289–98.

⁶⁹ Carol M. Meale, "Amateur Book Production and the Miscellany in Late Medieval East Anglia: Tanner 407 and Beinecke 365," *Insular Books*, pp. 157–73 (p. 172). See also Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich 1428–31*, Camden Society, 4th ser., 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

of orthodox reform, seeking to amend any cleric who was failing in his responsibilities to his flock, much in the same way as the interpolated version of the *Prick of Conscience*.⁷⁰ The orthodox clerical criticism that pervades the texts of Antiquaries 687 also seems to suggest that the manuscript was most likely designed for a clerical audience. The manuscript acts as both a pastoral manual for religious instruction and as a moral check for clerical readers, who are forced to take heed of their own piety and remember their obligations to the laity.

The evidence of Antiquaries 687 and its related East Anglian manuscripts, therefore, can offer an important insight into the regional reception of *Piers Plowman*. The poem, in this context, is used in a highly purposeful way; rather than a text valued for its literary merit, it is arranged for practical use in religious instruction. The implicit perception of *Piers Plowman* as appropriate to a practical didactic context is further supported by the colophon to Harley 3954, which reads, “Explicit tractus de perys plowman.” The same colophon is found in the former the Duke of Westminster’s Manuscript, now in private hands, which reads, “Explicit tractatus piers plowman nominatus.” The dialect of the latter manuscript is too mixed to place and is most likely a London production based on its set secretary script, which Doyle observes is “of the kind employed by Privy Seal and some other official scribes at the beginning of the fifteenth century.”⁷¹ The manuscript’s spliced AC text of *Piers*, however, does descend from the East Anglian subgroup in the latter half of its A text, and it is possible that this colophon was passed down from one of these manuscripts. The categorization of a

⁷⁰ This kind of orthodox reform is also witnessed in the *Speculum Christiani*, the prologue to which cites Gregory as saying, “Prestes been dampned for wykydnes of the pepil if thei teche not hem other the vncunynge men or reprove not synners of her myslyuyng” (Gustaf Holmstedt, ed., *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the 14th Century*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 182 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 6, ll. 9–14). See Vincent Gillespie, *The Evolution of the Speculum Christiani* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), and “The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual with Particular Reference to the *Speculum Christiani* and Some Related Texts” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1981).

⁷¹ Doyle, “Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts,” p. 46.

text as “tractatus” was extremely common among didactic religious texts as well as other practical treatises of science and medicine. Yet, it is seldom used for what we might think of as “literary” texts, which must bring into question how we understand the contemporary perception of *Piers Plowman*.⁷² One interesting parallel is the *Prick of Conscience*; almost all of the *Prick* manuscripts that use either a title or a colophon, use a variation of “*liber*” or “*tractatus*,” which are also used in English as either “book” or “tretys.” A significant number of the *Prick* manuscripts, including others in Norfolk, use the colophon “Explicit tractatus qui vocatur Stimulus consciencie” (Brotherton MS 501, f. 58v). Some *Prick of Conscience* manuscripts use an English variation, as in the case of Bodleian Library, e Musaeo 88, which reads, “Here endeth the tretys that ys called the prykke of concience” (f. 92r).⁷³

Such a generic attribution for *Piers* and the *Prick of Conscience* is also highly Latinate, particularly evocative of Latin religious literature, and does not attempt to approach the poems as products of vernacular poetry. This may, in fact, reflect the wider condition of vernacularity in this period, in which Classical theories of form competed with newer modes of poetic practice and shifting ideas of literary texts.⁷⁴ Here we may see scribes attempting to

⁷² Eight manuscripts of A and C conclude with “Explicit liber petri plouman.” A texts include: Bodleian Library, MS Douce 323 and Rawlinson Poetry 137 (no explicit, but begins with “Hic incipit liber qui uocatur pers plowman”). C texts include: Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104, London, British Library, MS Additional 35157, and Liverpool University Library F.4.8 (an AC splice). In the A text in Harley 3954, which refers to *Piers* as “tractus,” the passus headings also make reference to the poem as a book, with each rubric referencing the various “parts” of “þis book perys plowman.” These categorizations are particularly interesting in comparison with the manuscripts of the *Prick of Conscience*; almost all of the *Prick* manuscripts that use either a title or a colophon use a variation of “*liber*” or “*tractatus*,” which are also used in English as either “book” or “tretys.”

⁷³ Interestingly, Leeds University Library, Brotherton MS 501, which seems to have been involved in the network of East Anglian textual transmission (see Chapter 3), uses “*tractatus*” as a title or colophon for the *Prick of Conscience*, Lavynham’s *Litil Treatise*, and the exposition of the Ten Commandments.

⁷⁴ Helen Cooper notes that it is “notoriously difficult to square medieval generic theory, with its classically-derived categories, with actual poetic practice” (Helen Cooper, “Generic Variations on the Theme of Poetic and Civil Authority,” in *Poetics: Theory and Practice in Medieval English*

reconcile vernacular texts with the more recognizable generic frameworks inherited from Greek and Latin authorities. Yet, the genres of vernacular texts are much less rigidly defined than in the Latin,⁷⁵ and thus, these attempts at categorization prove extremely difficult, particularly for a poem like *Piers Plowman*, which both accumulates various genres and subverts their traditional functions.⁷⁶ Most importantly, then, these features of assembly direct the reader in how to read the texts.⁷⁷ The *ordinatio* of these manuscripts thus reflects the scribal intervention in these materials in order to make them more sensible and accessible for their audiences.⁷⁸ Here again we return to the notion of scribal compilation, annotation, and apparatus as practical, audience-focused tools, informed by the conventions of Latin *ordinatio* and *compilatio*, which help make texts in a miscellany more open to understanding and more applicable to the specific demands of their readers.

In considering the Latin influences on *Piers Plowman*'s circulation in East Anglia, we might consider its use in Oxford, University College, MS 45, also discussed in the previous

Literature, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 83–103 (p. 86)). Building upon this notion, Caroline D. Eckhardt suggests, “One reason for the divergence derives from the theorists’ reliance on classical models, while authors were also absorbing influences from non-classical sources and popular forms” (“Genre,” in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 180–94 (p. 182)).

⁷⁵ See J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature 1100–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 59–89. Ralph Hanna observes that the shift from Latin to English could not simply be a “bland transmutation of the sense,” but was rather “an opening out” to a “free play of meaning” (*Pursuing History*, p. 256).

⁷⁶ For genre in *Piers Plowman* see Steven Justice, “The Genres of *Piers Plowman*,” *Viator*, 19 (1988), 291–306.

⁷⁷ In his discussion of the *mise-en-page* of Wycliffite Bible manuscripts, Matti Peikola argues that “*mise-en-page* silently guides the reader towards a certain reception—for example concerning his or her assumptions about the genre of a text or the interpretation of its argument structure” (“Aspects of *mise-en-page* in manuscripts of the *Wycliffite Bible*,” in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 28–67 (p. 28).

⁷⁸ Renevey and Caie remark that the presence of glosses in late-medieval vernacular texts “suggests that writers such as Gower or Chaucer, their scribes and readers, considered these works to have *auctoritas*, the standing and prestige previously awarded to clerical texts in Latin” (“Introduction,” p. 4). Thus, the seemingly mundane use of gloss and apparatus on the manuscript page may, consciously or unconsciously, tap into a long-standing Latinate tradition.

chapter. This fragmented manuscript appears to be a genuine miscellany, which brings together a number of booklets in different hands and with widely differing styles of decoration.⁷⁹ As noted in Chapter 3, however, the binding on University College 45 is almost certainly medieval, suggesting that the textual compilation was not a post-medieval assemblage. *Piers Plowman* is the only English text in this manuscript, which predominantly consists of miscellaneous Latin items, including Hugh of St Victor's *De Quinque Septenis* ("On the Five Sevens"), which outlines the nuances of the septenary and is illustrated with a diagram of the five sevens in columns, and a Latin metrical exposition of the *Pater Noster*.⁸⁰ Again, these texts suggest some interest in the catechetical syllabus, yet without the emphasis on the vernacular found in other local East Anglian manuscripts. While the miscellanies of *Piers Plowman* are almost always considered from the perspective of vernacularity, University College 45 presents the poem in a predominantly Latinate and instructional context. While we cannot assume any compilational intentionality in the codex, the manuscript suggests, at the very least, that the A text in East Anglia was circulating in networks of learned and didactic texts with little apparent emphasis on aesthetic literary reception. In discussing this tradition of vernacular manuals of the faith, therefore, it is important to situate their production not only within the history of religious instruction, but also within the trajectory of Latinate culture that shaped their development.

IV. Conclusion

⁷⁹ For a description of this manuscript see Kane, *A Version*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ For more on the septenary tradition as well as a translation of the *Pater Noster* tract see *The World of Piers Plowman*, ed. Edward H. Peters and Jeanne Krochalis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 170–79.

In this East Anglian context, we see the text of *Piers* and its generic presentation arising out of a Latinate tradition of religious instruction and being shaped for a specific purpose and audience. In so doing, the poem is imagined as a useful text, one that is suitable for use in the practice of devotion and confession and in teaching the basics of the faith. Regardless of the generic possibilities inherent to the poem, the scribes have directed its meaning toward the fulfillment of a decidedly practical agenda. East Anglia is, of course, only one small manifestation of *Piers Plowman*'s reception; there are numerous other contexts that display markedly different literary attitudes to the text, for which there is not room here for extended discussion. The poem's metropolitan circulation, for instance, shows a far greater influence from popular literary trends and is adapted to meet the demands of commercial book production. In recent years, there has been a great deal of work done on the London book trade, with particular focus on the scribes associated with the Guildhall.⁸¹ These various studies have shown a high level of collaboration among the London scribes, despite a lack of centralized coordination or physical proximity. *Piers Plowman* is commonly featured in this metropolitan context and is found in several manuscripts copied in the hands of scribes identified as being associated with the Guildhall.⁸² In Chapter 2, brief mention was made to

⁸¹ See A. I. Doyle and Malcolm Parkes, "The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century," in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. John Scattergood and Andrew Watson (London: Scolar, 1978), pp. 163–210; Linne R. Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, *Scribes and the City: London Guildhall Clerks and the Dissemination of Middle English Literature, 1375–1425* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2013); Graham Pollard, "The Company of Stationers Before 1557," *The Library*, 18, 1 (1937), 1–38; Paul C. Christianson, "Evidence for the Study of London's Late Medieval Manuscript-Book Trade," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain*, ed. Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 87–108; Erik Kwakkel, "Commercial Organization and Economic Innovation," and Linne R. Mooney, "Vernacular Literary Manuscripts and Their Scribes," in *The Production of Books in England*, pp. 173–91; 192–211.

⁸² For more on the circulation of *Piers Plowman* in London see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Stephen Justice, "Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380–1427," in *New Medieval Literatures*, 1, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 59–84. *Piers* is copied in three manuscripts which have been identified as

the circulation of the *i*-group of *Piers Plowman* manuscripts, the circulation of which Simon Horobin has localized to London.⁸³ This group in particular seems to have been produced within a small, collaborative community of London scribes, much like the one discussed in East Anglia. What is different, however, is the audience for whom the manuscripts are produced and the textual resources with which the scribes were working. Given the high traffic of texts passing through the capital, *Piers Plowman*'s literary contexts in London show a much greater degree of influence from emerging trends of literary consumption associated with the cosmopolitan book trade. While we should, as always, be wary of reading too far into internal textual associations, we may observe pragmatic attempts at generic unity based on the influences, availability, and demands of their various environments. Just as the thematic concerns of East Anglian manuscript production reflect local tastes and textual availability, so might we understand the association of texts in the capital as reflecting the desires of a more metropolitan readership and as facilitated by the profusion of texts available in the London book trade.

What these various contexts show us is that while categorical choices were frequently being made in multi-text manuscripts, our modern generic perceptions of literary works like *Piers Plowman* often get in the way of understanding its actual historical reception. As the manuscript witnesses suggest, *Piers Plowman*'s generic applicability in East Anglia was

being copied in the hands of London Guildhall scribes, one by Richard Osborn, San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 114, another by John Marchaunt, London, University Library, MS SL V.88 (the "Ilchester manuscript"), one by Adam Pinkhurst, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17, which contains *Piers Plowman* alongside Rolle's *Form of Living* (ff. 131r–147r) and a short poem on the love of Christ (ff. 147rv), and another with corrections in Pinkhurst's hand, London, British Library, Additional MS 35287.

⁸³ The manuscripts of this textual tradition include San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 143 (X), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 102 (Y), Yale, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn fa.45, formerly known as the "Holloway Fragment" (H), University of London, Senate House, Sterling Library MS V.88, the "Ilchester manuscript" (I), and London, British Library, Additional MS 35157 (U). See Russell and Kane, *C Version* (pp. 13–15).

adapted to the context in which it circulated. Regardless of the generic possibilities inherent to the poem, the scribes have directed its meaning toward the fulfillment of a decidedly practical agenda, imagining it as suitable for placement in pastoral manuals and other repositories of knowledge, and even, perhaps, used as a text for teaching the basics of the faith. What we can see, moreover, is that scribes do possess a unique creative talent, but perhaps not in the same way as we might hope. Rather than compiling based on keen literary sensibilities, scribes were eminently practical; yet, in an effort to sort out the manuscript mess they continually faced, they had to be creative problem solvers, and it is here that we can find their most ingenious practices.

Chapter 5

Salvation History, Nationhood, and the Popular Reception of *Piers Plowman*

As Langland's work began to achieve a national readership in the fifteenth century, what can we gather about the way its audience understood the poem's place within a larger body of contemporary vernacular literature?¹ This chapter will seek to broach the unavoidably slippery question of literary reception, demonstrating the ways *Piers's* readers sought to categorize this generically multivalent poem and delimit its literary applicability. As it will suggest, by stepping back from a regional focus and considering *Piers's* audience more broadly, we can discern a remarkable consistency in the poem's interpretation, which has been hinted at in previous scholarship but never fully explored. As the previous chapter demonstrated, *Piers Plowman* was specifically adapted for various historical contexts and regional audiences. Yet, as I will suggest here, there are also ways in which more reflexively literary understandings of the poem's generic function affect its associations in manuscript environments and contributed to a broader and more unified understanding of the poem. As the chapter will argue, however, in order to understand this reception, we must again turn to the evidence of *Piers's* manuscript contexts. While the previous chapter discussed the

¹ The broader appeal of *Piers Plowman* in the fifteenth century appears have been influenced by the unique quality of its composition. Thorlac Turville-Petre observes that, while other alliterative poems are composed for a more localized audience, "Langland set out to attract a wider readership than that enjoyed by other alliterative poets. To this end he modified the alliterative line, writing in a less tightly controlled style and avoiding the vocabulary restricted to alliterative poetry. He was certainly successful in his attempt, since *Piers Plowman* survives in over fifty manuscripts" (*Alliterative Revival*, p. 45).

poem's textual relationships within the contained region of East Anglia, the following chapter will expand to consider where the poem lies in relation to larger textual networks and trends of consumption across the country. In illuminating the contexts of *Piers*'s popular reception, the chapter will seek to demonstrate the ways in which readers understood the poem's applicability to a range of social and religious issues in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In so doing, we may better understand the poem's importance to its late-medieval readers and further illuminate the reasons for its immense and enduring popularity in this period.

The subject of genre has been much discussed in relation to *Piers Plowman*. Morton Bloomfield, in 1962, noted the poem's "confusion and even clash of genres."² Steven Justice expanded upon and nuanced Bloomfield's discussion, noting the profusion of genres that occupy the *Visio*.³ The three works with which *Piers Plowman* circulates most commonly are *Mandeville's Travels*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and *The Pistill of Susan*. In addressing the reception of *Piers Plowman* we must question whether these associations are simply a coincidental product of exemplar supply or if there is some discernible reason for their frequent collocation. The association of *Piers Plowman* with *Mandeville's Travels* has been considered at some length; David Benson considers *Piers*'s similarities to *Mandeville* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*, through what he refers to as "public writing."⁴ The relationship between these texts was also treated more recently by Karrie Fuller in an ongoing Ph.D.

² Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 8.

³ Steven Justice, "The Genres of *Piers Plowman*," *Viator*, 19 (1988), 291–306.

⁴ *Mandeville's Travels* was first considered in relation to *Piers* in Benson, *Public Piers Plowman*, pp. 113–56.

dissertation (which I have not yet had the opportunity to read).⁵ Since the reception of *Piers* and *Mandeville* together has already received a good deal of attention I do not intend to retread these steps, though this textual association will have some important bearing on the texts discussed in this chapter.

Less attention, however, has been paid to *Piers*'s association with *The Siege of Jerusalem* and *The Pistill of Susan*. The simplest explanation of the impulse to put these texts together in codices is their shared use of alliterative verse. Miscellanies pairing *Piers* with these texts might be simply compiling popular alliterative poetry.⁶ Such associations based on poetic form were very likely a motivating factor in the pairing of these texts in multi-text manuscripts. As this study will suggest, however, there may be other ways of understanding the circulation of these texts together based on broader patterns of literary transmission in the fifteenth century. By recognizing these patterns and the motivations for their formation, we may further illuminate the contemporary understanding of the poems' literary potential. The previous chapter has already outlined problems of approaching miscellanies from an anachronistically literary-critical perspective. Yet it was also argued that scribes do frequently seek to create unity where possible, and it may, at times, be possible to draw rough conclusions about the literary assumptions made by scribes in compiling multi-text manuscripts. As this chapter will argue, by expanding our focus beyond *Piers Plowman*'s

⁵ Karrie Fuller, "Reading Beyond the Borders: Visions of Christendom and the Shared Reception of *Piers Plowman* and *The Book of Sir John Mandeville*," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2016).

⁶ Turville-Petre suggests that, while *Piers Plowman* is in many ways very different from other alliterative poetry, "By the fifteenth century, in fact, the same man might be reading *Piers Plowman* as well as other alliterative poems. Indeed, in several manuscripts Langland's poem appears in company with other alliterative works: twice with *The Siege of Jerusalem*, twice with *The Pistill of Susan*, once with *The Wars of Alexander*" (*Alliterative Revival*, p. 46).

associations with *individual* literary works to consider the wider body of texts that circulated around it, we may gain further insight into the poem's reception in the fifteenth century.

In a cursory discussion of *Piers Plowman*'s manuscript associations, Anne Hudson observed, "the most that can be perceived by way of identifying mode amongst the other items is an interest in pseudo-historical romance —works such as *The Wars of Alexander*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, *Kyng Alisaunder*, *The Sege or Batayle of Troy*."⁷ Hudson's generic characterization of "pseudo-historical romance" was repeated and affirmed by Anne Middleton in her discussion of *Piers Plowman*'s associations in miscellaneous manuscripts.⁸ Middleton suggests that both the poem and the texts with which it circulates tend to address moral questions "in historical rather than metaphysical or doctrinal terms, referring them back to their precedents and origins in Scriptural and Christian history."⁹ As Hudson and Middleton both observe, for many of its readers the poem appears to have occupied that uncertain space between popular romance and exemplary biblical narratives or hagiographies.¹⁰ Building upon Hudson and Middleton's important work, this chapter will

⁷ Anne Hudson, "Epilogue: The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*," in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John A. Alford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 251–66 (p. 253). Numerous other commentators on *Piers* have noted its thematic evocation of the tropes of popular romance. See Marie Turner, "Guy of Warwick and the Active Life of Historical Romance in *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 28 (2014), 3–27; Nicolette Zeeman, "Tales of Piers and Perceval: *Piers Plowman* and the Grail Romances," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 22 (2008), 199–236; and Stephen H. A. Shepherd, "Langland's Romances," in *William Langland's 'Piers Plowman': A Book of Essays*, ed. Kathleen M. Hewett-Smith (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 69–81. There is also precedent for the poem's circulation with romances in manuscript context. The most prominent example of *Piers Plowman* associated with popular romance is in London, Lincoln's Inn MS 150, which includes *Piers* alongside *Libeaus Desconus*, *Arthur and Merlyn*, *Kyng Alisaunder*, and *The Battle or Sege of Troy* (see Simon Horobin and Alison Wiggins "Reconsidering Lincoln's Inn MS 150," *Medium Ævum*, 77 (2008), 30–53). For other discussions of *Piers*'s circulation with romance see Middleton, "Audience and Public," pp. 106–07; 109–10.

⁸ Middleton, "Audience and Public," p. 105.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

¹⁰ We may relate this blurring of romance tropes and biblical history with the famous image of the jousting Christ in *Piers Plowman*, in which Jesus is depicted as a knight riding into Jerusalem to joust with the devil (B XVIII.10–35). For more on the Christ-knight motif in *Piers Plowman* see Anna

suggest ways of understanding *Piers*'s reception more precisely, narrowing their largely broad-strokes discussions to consider more specifically the popular textual associations in the poem's extant manuscripts that appear consistently across wide gaps in time and space.¹¹ As it will suggest, the persistence of *Piers*'s association with a very specific category of texts suggests that its associations were largely guided by the categorical impulses of its various readers, which show a far more homogeneous interpretation of the poem than has been previously acknowledged. The aim of this study is not, however, to merely point out the similarities between *Piers Plowman* and the works that circulate around it, but to place it within an intellectual and literary milieu, which guided the popular reception of the poem. The texts that occupy this milieu demonstrate the ways in which fourteenth and fifteenth century readers imagined the relationship between the popular and the religious—here the literary tradition mirrors a larger conception of humanity's position within a religious and secular temporal space. The consistency of *Piers*'s circulation within this generic model allows that scribes need not have been making intentional literary choices in every instance, but may rather have followed a replicable interpretive convention that guided their selections and *ordinatio* in assembling the poem's multi-text manuscripts.

Marie Turner has recently discussed the presence of historical romance in *Piers Plowman*, comparing the poem to the highly popular *Guy of Warwick* (though *Piers* never

Baldwin, "The Double Duel in *Piers Plowman* B XVIII and C XXI," *Medium Ævum*, 50 (1981), 64–78; Wilbur Gaffney, "The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in *Piers Plowman*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 46 (1931), 155–68; Lawrence Warner, "Jesus the Jousting: The Christ-Knight and Medieval Theories of Atonement in *Piers Plowman* and the "Round Table" Sermons," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 10 (1996), 129–43; Nicole Clifton, "The Romance Convention of the Disguised Duel and the Climax of *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 7 (1993), 123–28.
¹¹ The chapter will also reflect on the problematic issue of supply and coincidence in discussions of the *Piers* miscellanies; as Hudson noted, the frequency of *Piers*'s association with certain texts "may tell us more about the relative popularity of these other works than about the medieval understanding of Langland's poem" (Hudson, "The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*," p. 253).

circulates with this poem), discussing the ways in which, in both poems, “historical romance models questions of salvation.”¹² Turner places *Guy of Warwick* “in a category of Middle English romance often called ‘exemplary romance’ or ‘secular hagiography’ due to its tendency to blur the lines between courtliness, historicity, and piety.”¹³ Particularly important for a consideration of *Piers Plowman*’s wider literary contexts and the motives for their contextualization is Turner’s argument that poems like *Piers Plowman* and *Guy of Warwick*, as pseudo-historical romances, theorize “the relationship between the individual subject and the production of national (or even universal) history.”¹⁴ In discussing *Piers Plowman*’s reception in later manuscript contexts, this chapter will suggest that the subject of national and universal histories was of the utmost interest to Langland’s readers. As it will argue, however, *Piers Plowman*’s romance qualities were merely incidental to its overall impact; it was understood more as history than romance, but more specifically, a history that illuminated the entire superstructure of eschatological time. While chivalric tropes shaped the lens through which *Piers Plowman* was received, its readers were ultimately interested in the poem’s ability to place contemporary society within a typological scheme of salvation history, which explores the relationship between the Old Law and the New and the impact of this relationship on the past, present, and future of the Church.

¹² Turner, “Historical Romance in *Piers Plowman*,” p. 7. Ralph Hanna has similarly suggested that *Piers Plowman* incorporates elements of both religious discourse and romance (*London Literature*, p. 258).

¹³ Turner, “Historical Romance in *Piers Plowman*,” p. 8. For more on exemplary romance in *Guy of Warwick* see Susan Crane “*Guy of Warwick* and the Question of Exemplary Romance,” *Genre*, 17 (1984), 351–74. Turner’s argument about history and romance builds upon the work of Rosalind Field, “Romance as History, History as Romance,” in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Jennifer Fellows, Carol Meale, and Maldwyn Mills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 163–73.

¹⁴ Turner, “Historical Romance in *Piers Plowman*,” p. 7.

I. The Literary Contexts of *Piers Plowman*

The notion of *Piers Plowman* as participating in historical and biblical narrative seems to have governed the poem's reception throughout much of its medieval circulation. In the Vernon manuscript, one of *Piers*'s earliest copies, the poem's surrounding context offers some insight into its literary perception, particularly given the Vernon scribes' deliberate thought toward the manuscript's internal thematic organization.¹⁵ *Piers Plowman* appears in sequence with three poetic retellings of biblical history, spanning the Old and New Testaments, which offer narratives around exemplary figures from the Bible:

393rv *The Life of Adam and Eve*¹⁶
 394v–401 *Piers Plowman*, A-text
 402–403r *Joseph of Arimathea*
 404v–405r *Judas & Pilate*

Piers's placement in this sequence falls after the origin story of Adam and Eve and before two New Testament stories from the gospels, which, if we can assume some measure of thought behind the arrangement, may imply that the A text of *Piers Plowman* was seen as standing in for the Old Testament that lies in between.¹⁷ Such an interpretation of *Piers* as exemplary Old Testament history, as it will be suggested below, may offer a plausible explanation for the poem's puzzling literary associations in later manuscripts. Using this frame of reference, we may return to some of the texts with which *Piers Plowman* is commonly circulated.

¹⁵ See N. F. Blake, "Vernon Manuscript: Contents and Organisation," in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 45–59.

¹⁶ For more on the *Life of Adam and Eve* see *The Apocryphal Lives of Adam and Eve*, ed. Brian Murdoch and Jacqueline A. Tasioulas (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002).

¹⁷ The relationship of the *Visio* of *Piers Plowman* with the Old Testament has been noted by numerous critics; Mary (Carruthers) Schroeder has discussed the pardon of Truth as representing the covenant of Moses, and the tearing of the Pardon as Moses's breaking of the tablets: "*Piers Plowman: The Tearing of the Pardon*," *Philological Quarterly*, 49 (1970), 1–18 (p. 17).

After *Mandeville's Travels*, the text with which *Piers* circulates most commonly is a lesser-known text, *The Pistill of Susan*.¹⁸ The association between these two poems appears to have been relatively persistent, found together in three extant manuscripts;¹⁹ and given that *The Pistill of Susan* is found in only five manuscripts it is in fact more frequently found with *Piers* than without.²⁰ *The Pistill of Susan* is a Yorkshire poem in thirteen-line stanzas usually attributed to an unidentified author named Huchown.²¹ The poem is very difficult to define in any categorical sense, and Ralph Hanna has noted the diversity of interpretations of the poem as it was adapted to fit various contexts and genres.²² The poem offers a vivid retelling of the apocryphal Chapter 13 of Daniel, which centers on the figure of Susan, the wife of Joachim. When bathing in her garden at noon one day, Susan is approached by two wicked judges who have been spying on her, who threaten to accuse her of adultery unless she satisfies them sexually. When Susan resolves to give up her name rather than her virtue, the judges bring her to trial, claiming they saw her with another lover in the garden, and she is subsequently sentenced to death. The conflict resolves, however, when the young prophet Daniel is inspired by God to question the word of the judges. After further cross-examination, the

¹⁸ Russell A. Peck, *Heroic Women from the Old Testament in Middle English Verse* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991), pp. 73–108.

¹⁹ Although *Piers* is never found with both *The Pistill of Susan* and the *Siege*, the two latter texts do appear together in one other manuscript, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii, a collection of popular romances. For a description of this manuscript see Hanna and Lawton, *Siege of Jerusalem*, pp. xxiv–xxvi. An extended study of the texts in this manuscript is carried out in a recent Ph.D. dissertation, Denise C. White, “BL Cotton Caligula Aii, Manuscript Context, the Theme of Obedience, and a Diplomatic Transcription Edition” (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 2012). *The Pistill of Susan*, like *The Siege of Jerusalem*, is never found copied alone, surviving solely in miscellanies with other texts.

²⁰ These include: the Vernon Manuscript (BodL Eng. Poet. a. 1); the Simeon Manuscript (BL Add. 22283; Huntington, HM 114; Morgan, M 818; and BL, Cotton Caligula, A ii (pt. I).

²¹ See the 13-line stanza and reference to *The Pistill of Susan* see Thorlac Turville-Petre, “‘*Summer Sunday*’, ‘*De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*’, and ‘*The Awntyrs off Arthure*’: Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza,” *Review of English Studies*, 97 (1974), 1–14. For Huchown see Henry Noble MacCracken, “Concerning Huchown,” *PMLA*, 25 (1910), 507–34.

²² Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 76.

judges' lies are soon found out and they instead are sentenced to death, dragged from carts through the city.²³

Surprisingly, given its persistent relationship with *Piers Plowman*, *The Pistill of Susan* has received very little attention in relation to Langland's reception. There is, throughout the two poems, some shared use of alliterative tropes, which may have influenced the perception of their association. Thorlac Turville-Petre has noted the problems with suggesting relationships between poems based on verbal parallels, which, he argues, "are a very uncertain guide to establishing relationships between alliterative poems,"²⁴ since alliterative poems were drawing from a common pool of stock-phrases. In thinking about the reception of the poems rather than their composition, however, it is at least worth gesturing at their parallels, which, for a medieval audience, may have placed them in a similar poetic milieu. Departing from the biblical text, *The Pistill of Susan* offers a detailed and vivid description of the garden in which Susan is found bathing.²⁵ In first introducing this section,

²³ While the poem is primarily a didactic narrative rooted in apocryphal biblical history, it also employs some of the conventions of medieval romance. Its vivid depiction of the garden, for instance, is suggestive of the fertile gardens of other courtly romances, in which enclosed gardens and female sexuality often go hand in hand. This is only further enhanced by the description of Susan resting "Under a lorere [laurel tree]" (l. 125), where "feole ferlys hire bifelle / Bi midday or none" (ll. 129–30), which evokes the prevalent trope in medieval romance, in which one is most likely to encounter marvels and other portentous events while resting under a tree at noon. As Stephen Shepherd notes, "Sitting under trees on or before noon is in a number of romances tantamount to inviting a supernatural visitation" (*Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen Shepherd (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 222, n. 1).

²⁴ Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival*, p. 29. Turville-Petre notes that "drawing upon well-established collocations is in the very nature of a poetic technique that works by associating groups of works that have the same initial sound. Alliterative poets made a virtue of necessity by creating a poetic style that exploited the use of such collocations" (p. 28).

²⁵ As Turville-Petre observes, the garden in *The Pistill of Susan* is generally indebted to the gardens of Genesis (the Garden of Eden), the Song of Songs, and the *Roman de la Rose*, noting that "By association with the song of Songs and its medieval interpretations, Susan in the garden is an emblem of a love that is pure and holy.... By association with the *Roman de la Rose*, the garden is a place of romantic love, and hence, in the minds of old men, inspires thoughts of lust" ("Three Poems," n. 126). Turville-Petre also draws attention to the associations here with the garden in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, the association of which is discussed at much greater length in Alfred L. Kellogg,

the poet employs what may be a reference to the first line of *Piers*: “*In the seson of somere, with Sibell and Jone / Heo greithed hire til hire gardin, that growed so grene*” (l. 66). Not only does the reference to the “summer season” resemble Langland’s memorable first line, but the vivid description of the garden that follows reflects the serene pastoral landscape evoked in the opening to *Piers*.²⁶ Another reflection of *Piers Plowman* is found shortly after; in describing the events that transpired, the wicked judges give a false explanation for why they were passing through the garden: “*Thorwout the pomeri we passed us to play, / Of preire and of penaunce was ure purpose*” (ll. 209–10). The reference to prayers and penance is used twice in *Piers Plowman*, first in the opening passage of the Prologue —“*In preires and penaunce patten hem manye*” (B Prol.25). The irony of this line in the mouth of the false judges is further highlighted by comparison with Piers’s pious (if slightly rash) claim following the pardon scene: “*Of preires and of penaunce my plough shal ben herafter*” (VII.120). The resemblance to *Piers* is reinforced several lines later. The judges go on to depict Susannah as a harlot dressed in red, noting, “*Heo com with two maidens al richeli that day, / In riche robes arayed, red as the rose*” (VII.211–12). Again, the wording of this description closely mirrors Langland’s depiction of Mede: “*Hire robe was ful riche, of reed scarlet engreyned*” (II.15). In this reversal, accusing the virtuous woman of harlotry and claiming the piety of penance and prayer for themselves, the judges take on the hypocritical

“Susannah and the *Merchant’s Tale*,” *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 275–79. As Lynn Staley notes, the emphasis on the garden’s description is similarly pronounced (departing from other Susannah texts) in what is likely the Middle English poem’s source, Alan de Melsa’s *Tractatus metricus de Susannah* (Lynn Staley, “Susanna and English Communities,” *Traditio*, 62 (2007), 25–58, p. 30).

²⁶ While the phrase “greithed hire til hire gardin” in the next line surely reads in the MED’s sense 5, “to betake oneself (to a place),” one might also wonder if it does not play on the multiple senses of the word, one of which being “To dress (sb., oneself), equip, arm; vest (for a religious ceremony)” (MED sense 2). This allusion to the act of putting on (especially religious) garments would support Susan’s implicit role as a religious archetype and would bear a resonance with Langland’s second and third lines, “*I shoop me into shroudes...In habite as an heremite*” (B Prol.2–3).

role of the false religious, who are so virulently critiqued in *Piers Plowman*. While these observations are admittedly tangential to the overall argument of this chapter, they offer, at the very least, some food for thought in considering the mutual reception of the two poems. While these literary echoes of *Piers* almost certainly reflect a stock of alliterative tropes rather than direct borrowings, they may still suggest some ways of understanding the literary traditions of these two poems and their shared circulation. If the association of the two texts was at least partly influenced by their shared alliterative meter, these literary echos between them may have strengthened this perceived connection.

Beyond the shared poetic form between *Piers* and *The Pistill of Susan* there are other more literary concerns that unite the two poems in their manuscript contexts. If we return to the Vernon Manuscript, *The Pistill of Susan* offers an important perspective on the exemplary Old Testament biblical history surrounding *Piers Plowman*. In Vernon, *The Pistill of Susan* does not appear proximate to *Piers Plowman*, instead placed earlier in Section III. Its context in Vernon, however, is still illuminating for the overriding theme of exemplary history in which *Piers* is elsewhere found:

296v: <i>Ypotis</i>	304v: <i>The King of Tars</i>
297v: Shorter hortatory poems & prayers	307r: <i>Proverbs of Prophets</i>
300r: <i>Robert of Sicily</i>	309v: <i>Distichs of Cato</i>
301r: <i>Dispute between Jesus & Masters</i>	314r: <i>The Stations of Rome</i>
301v: <i>Dispute between Christian & Jew</i>	315v: <i>Dispute between Mary & Cross</i>
302v: “How mon scholde here hys masse”	317r: <i>The Pistill of Susan</i>
303v: <i>The golden trental</i>	317v: <i>The Long Charter of Christ</i>
304r: <i>Sayings of St. Bernard</i>	

A number of the same texts from this section are also found in Vernon’s cognate, the Simeon manuscript (London, British Library, Additional MS 22283), which maintains the final sequence of texts with very little variation from their order in the Vernon manuscript. The Simeon manuscript’s only variation from Vernon in this sequence is in the final text; Simeon

omits *The Long Charter of Christ* and replaces it with *The King of Tars*, which in Vernon precedes the *Proverbs of Prophets*:

- ff. 118v-119v: *Proverbs of Prophets*
- ff. 119v-123r: *Distichs of Cato*
- ff. 123r-124v: *The Stations of Rome*
- ff. 124v-125v: *Dispute between Mary & the Cross*
- ff. 125v-126r: ***The Pistill of Susan***
- ff. 126r-128v: *The King of Tars*

While Simeon may here be simply reproducing the *ordinatio* of its mutual exemplar with Vernon, the consistency of this particular textual grouping may suggest some thought toward their categorical associations.²⁷ N. F. Blake observes some common motives in the texts collected in Section III:

Most of the pieces in this third part offer advice, explain Christian tenets of belief, or illustrate the power of God through examples of his intervention in human life. Inevitably several themes occur constantly. The seven deadly sins, and particularly pride, are prominent, but the Christian virtues of love and constancy are also emphasized. Articles of belief such as the ten commandments are explained. ... the relatively straightforward tenets of faith are reinforced by narrative exempla which are both pertinent and lively.”²⁸

What is particularly intriguing in Blake’s observations here is the crossover in Vernon’s conception of this genre between basic religious instruction and narrative exempla, a fact which will become increasingly important as we witness *Piers Plowman*’s later connection to this tradition.²⁹ What is even more interesting about this section in Vernon, however, which Blake does not mention, is that the texts it arranges together explore the place of the Jews in

²⁷ *The Pistill of Susan* also appears in British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ii., which contains a similar formulation of texts as appears in Vernon: f. 71r: *Emaré*; f. 77r: *Long charter of Christ*, B-text; f. 79r: *Ypotis*; f. 83r: *Stacions of Rome*. *The Pistill of Susan* is, however, placed much earlier in the manuscript (3r–5r), so it is difficult to establish any conscious association in this context.

²⁸ Blake, “Content and Organisation,” pp. 54–55.

²⁹ *The Pistill of Susan*’s applicability to questions of modern religious devotion may also be supported by the context of Pierpont Morgan Library, M 818, an East Anglian manuscript discussed in Chapter 3, which contains the A text of *Piers Plowman* (16r–54v) alongside (*Pistill of Susan* (ff. 1r–5r) and Rolle’s *Form of Living* (ff. 5v–15v).

the scheme of Christian history and their relationship to the contemporary Church. This preoccupation with Jewish identity falls under a broader interest in encounters with foreign cultures and religions, particularly those of the East, and their relationship to Rome as a representation of universal Christian identity.

The association of *The Pistill of Susan* with the kinds of exemplary narrative found in Section III of Vernon, as well as *Piers Plowman*'s relationship to this textual tradition, is illuminated by another manuscript of the mid fifteenth century, San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 114, one of the manuscripts in which *The Pistill of Susan* and *Piers Plowman* are found together:³⁰

1. ff. 1–130v: *Piers Plowman*
2. ff. 131–184: *Mandeville's Travels* Defective Version, subgroup B
3. ff. 184v–190v: *The Pistil of Susan*
4. ff. 190v–192v: *The Legend of the Three Kings*
5. ff. 193–318v: *Troilus and Criseyde*
6. ff. 319–325v: translation of Peter Ceffons, *Epistola Luciferi ad Cleros*

While this manuscript contains none of the same items that appear in Vernon or Simeon, it does maintain a similar internal thematic organization, arranging the poem with a variety of narrative-based texts dealing with pseudo-historical subjects, particularly relating to encounters with the East.³¹ Of particular interest is the *The Legend of the Three Kings* (or *Three Kings of Cologne*), a translation of John of Hildesheim's *Historia Trium Regum*, which

³⁰ The scribe of Hm 114 was identified by Linne Mooney and Estelle Stubbs as the guildhall clerk Richard Osborn; see *Scribes and the City*, pp. 17–37.

³¹ The compilation and organization of Huntington Hm 114 is discussed in a recent article by Noelle Phillips, "Compilational Reading: Richard Osborn and Huntington Library MS HM 114," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 28 (2014), 65–104. In her comprehensive treatment of the manuscript's contents, Phillips suggests that Richard Osborn, Mooney and Stubbs's purported scribe of Hm 114, compiled the texts in the codex with deliberate thought to their organization, first copying the longer works, *Piers*, *Mandeville*, and *Troilus*, and supplementing these with three shorter items (*The Pistill of Susan*, the translated *Epistola Luciferi ad Cleros*, and the excerpt from *The Three Kings of Cologne*), which complemented the themes of the earlier three. Phillips points to the similar depiction of a garden in *The Pistill of Susan* and *The Three Kings*, which, she argues, supplements the "Egypt-gap" in the Defective English version of *Mandeville*.

recounts the story of the three wise men from the East, taken from the Gospel accounts. Like *Mandeville's Travels*, the *Three Kings* offers detailed descriptions of foreign lands. Yet, as Julia Boffey notes, the *Three Kings* offers “points of identification or familiarity in its story” by providing “quotation from the Scriptures and reference to episodes familiar through biblical accounts.”³² The text thus situates the foreignness of the East within the traditional narrative of biblical history. This introduction of perceived alterity into the traditional eschatological narrative may be an important way of framing our understanding the larger genre in which *The Pistill of Susan* seems to have been understood. This focus on the East and the encounter with eastern cultures, particularly in relation to Rome as the embodiment of Western Christianity, also becomes, as we shall see, an important part of the literary tradition in which *Piers Plowman* circulated.³³

In considering the presence of religious alterity surrounding *The Pistill of Susan*, and possibly Langland's literary milieu, we may turn to another text that is found circulating around *Piers Plowman*, the popular alliterative poem *The Siege of Jerusalem*. One of the most popular alliterative texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the *Siege* is placed alongside *Piers Plowman* in two manuscripts, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 656

³² Julia Boffey, “‘Many grete myraclys in divers contreys of the eest’: The Reading and Circulation of the Middle English Prose *Three Kings of Cologne*,” in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan Browne, Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchinson, Carol M. Meale, Lesley Johnson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 35–47 (p. 37).

³³ Alison Wiggins notes a tradition in the West Midlands of romance narratives dealing with very foreign subject matter: “they provide exciting stories of distant and exotic places. Here are stories of Carthage, Libya, Tarsia, Sicily, Rome, Spain, Denmark, India, Babylon, Jerusalem, Troy, the Underworld. Whether read for entertainment or instruction, to a group or alone, in a household or school or convent, these are tales of far away; they are not stories about the West Midlands” (Alison Wiggins, “Middle English Romance and the West Midlands,” in *Essays in Manuscript Geography*, ed. Scase, pp. 239–55 (p. 252)).

and San Marino, Huntington Library, HM 128.³⁴ The *Siege* is a supremely anti-Semitic text, which revels in the horrific death and suffering of the Jews during the Roman siege of Jerusalem led by Titus in AD 70.³⁵ The poem positions this narrative in the scheme of Christian history, anachronistically Christianizing the Roman invasion and envisaging the destruction of the Jews as retribution for the death of Christ. Although it presents a pseudo-historical account of the events, the *Siege* frames the narrative within the conventions of historical romance and chivalric action. Based on the extent of both poems' manuscript survival and the fact that they only appear together twice, their association in these two manuscripts may very well be pure happenstance. After all, *The Siege of Jerusalem* is, for all appearances, a text very different to *Piers Plowman*. In regarding the wider manuscript

³⁴ The Laud 656 text is the earliest version of the *Siege* to survive, and is the sole witness of the *alpha* strand, which appears to be closest to the original archetype. For descriptions of Laud Misc. 656 see Russell-Kane, *C Version*, p. 4 and Hanna and Lawton, ed., *The Siege of Jerusalem*, pp. xiii–xiv. For descriptions of Hm 128 see Kane-Donaldson, *B Version*, pp. 9–10 and Hanna and Lawton, *Siege of Jerusalem*, pp. xxiii–xxiv; a more detailed description of the manuscript is also found in Michael Calabrese, Hoyt N. Duggan, and Thorlac Turville-Petre, eds., *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 6: San Marino, Huntington Library, MS Hm 128 (Hm and Hm2)* (CD-ROM: Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer for the Medieval Academy of America and SEENET, 2008). While the Laud manuscript, as we saw in Chapter 4, includes a series of catechetical treatises, HM 128 contains the B text of *Piers Plowman* alongside the *Prick of Conscience* (Southern Recension, IMEV 3429/DIMEV 5399), Commentaries for Sundays and Feastdays, and *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter* (IMEV 671/DIMEV 1098). For a contextual reading of the contents of HM 128, see Michael Calabrese, "HM 128 as a Medieval Book," in *Yee? Baw For Bokes: Essays on Medieval Manuscripts and Poetics in Honor of Hoyt N. Duggan*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd and Michael Calabrese (Los Angeles: Marymount Institute Press, 2013), pp. 127–64.

³⁵ A. C. Spearing notes the poem's "horrible delight in the suffering of the Jews" (*Readings in Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 167). Ralph Hanna has drawn a possible connection between the poem's vicious treatment of the Jews to the particularly virulent anti-Semitism prevalent in Yorkshire, where the poem was composed, and the massacre of Jews in York in 1190 ("Contextualizing *The Siege of Jerusalem*," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 6 (1992), 109–21 (pp. 114–15)). In another historicized reading of the poem, Mary Hamel suggested that the poem can be read as a propaganda piece in support of the increasing crusade rhetoric that was ramping up at the end of the fourteenth century ("*The Siege of Jerusalem* as a Crusading Poem," in *Journeys toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, ed. Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), pp. 177–94).

contexts surrounding both *Piers* and the *Siege*, however, their association in these instances does become clearer.

Like the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, the miscellanies in which the *Siege* is contextualized can offer some insight into the diversity of its medieval reception, suggesting that the poem, as a literary work, was, as Hanna and Lawton note, “capable of polyvocal recuperations.”³⁶ The *Siege* offers an important means of reflecting on the category of “historical romance” proposed by Hudson and Middleton.³⁷ Though the poem situates itself as a legitimate part of Christian history, the Roman soldiers are also portrayed as chivalric medieval knights. The extant manuscripts, moreover, show that the poem was equally available for interpretation as popular romance, as in Lambeth Palace Library, MS 491, and factual history, as in the London scribe Richard Frampton’s copy, Cambridge University Library, Mm.5.14, which contains Guido delle Colonne’s *Historia destructionis Troiae* and the prose *Historia de preliis Alexandri Magni*.³⁸ The text with which the *Siege* circulates most frequently is the *Three Kings of Cologne*, which, as it was noted above, appears with *The Pistill of Susan* and *Piers Plowman* in Hm 114. The two texts appear together in three of

³⁶ Hanna and Lawton, *Siege of Jerusalem*, p. xxvii. Of the *Siege*’s manuscript transmission, Hanna notes, “In such an investigation, the text itself might dissolve into a local manuscript context, at least as polyvocal as the number of items the book contains. Moreover, the particularities of the individual witnesses to *The Siege*... might be aligned with treatment of texts everywhere else in the manuscript. One might seek to define precisely what textual content an audience wanted to see” (Ralph Hanna, “Middle English Books,” p. 164). Hanna elsewhere notes that “the manuscripts of the alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem* read the text as, variously, biblical history (Bodleian, MS Laud misc. 656), a romance (Caligula a.ii), specifically a crusader romance (British Library, MS Additional 31042), or learned secular history (Cambridge University Library, MS Mm.5.14)” (Hanna, “Miscellaneity and Vernacularity” p. 47, n. 35).

³⁷ Hudson, “Epilogue,” p. 253; Middleton, “Audience and Public,” p. 105.

³⁸ Of this manuscript Hanna notes, “Here *The Siege* appears with solidly alliterative materials, the sources of *The Destruction of Troy* and *The Wars of Alexander*.... But one should emphasize that these are the sources, Guido delle Colonne and *De preliis Magni Alexandri*, not the alliterative poems themselves. What effect does the recuperation of the work in the company of learned Latin history have on the notion that *The Siege* participates in a specifically English national literary history?” (Hanna, “Middle English Books,” pp. 164–65).

the *Siege*'s eight complete copies, twice arranged directly adjacent to each other.³⁹ The association between the two texts offers further support to the notion of the *Siege* as fitting into this genre of biblical narrative. It also shows the *Siege*'s connection to a genre of travel literature and "eastern-encounter" text, which navigate conceptions of geographical and cultural alterity.

In further defining this generic grouping of texts, we may expand beyond those included in Vernon and Simeon, but still related to the general literary contexts of the items it does contain. Of particular interest is *The Seven Sages of Rome*, an extremely popular text in various versions, with eight manuscripts of the Middle English poetic version surviving,⁴⁰ one of which appears alongside *Piers Plowman* in the Middle English section of Cambridge University Library, Dd.1.17. *The Seven Sages* is primarily a collection of tales originating from an eastern tradition.⁴¹ The framing narrative, however, bears a striking resemblance to the story of *The Pistill of Susan*. Diocletian, the emperor of Rome, sends his son away at age seven to be educated by seven sages in the seven liberal arts. While he is away, the emperor's wife dies and he remarries a younger woman. The new empress plans to kill the emperor's son using sorcery and, bringing him back to Rome, curses him to die if he should speak within seven days. The seven sages, however, learn of her plan and, at their council, the emperor's son remains silent. In an attempt to make him speak, the empress attempts to

³⁹ The association between the poems is particularly emphasized in British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian E.xvi, in which the *Siege* and the *Three Kings* are the only two major poetic texts in the manuscript, copied together in a booklet, and followed by another booklet of miscellaneous scientific items.

⁴⁰ Jill Whitelock, ed., *The Seven Sages of Rome (Midland Version)*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 324 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For descriptions of the poem's extant manuscripts see pp. xx–xxxviii.

⁴¹ For a discussion of English engagement with this eastern identity see Jill Whitelock, "*The Seven Sages of Rome* and Orientalism in Middle English Literature, with an Edition of the Poem from Cambridge, University Library, Dd.1.17," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998).

seduce him; unsuccessful, however, she tears her clothes and accuses him of rape. Hearing her accusation, the emperor sentences his son to death; yet in an attempt to postpone his execution, the seven sages tell seven tales, which distract from the sentence. When the seven days are up the son can finally speak and exonerates himself through a final tale. The empress confesses and is executed, after which the emperor remains chaste for the rest of his life. The narrative, which involves a false accusation of sexual misconduct, an unjust trial, and a final judgment, directly mirrors *The Pistill of Susan*. Particularly important for both tales is the hypocritical use of power and the inability to speak against this power. Both stories also highlight the young boy, whose testimony is able to see through the lies of the false accuser and resolve the legal proceedings to reveal the truth.

The Seven Sages does not, however, appear in any manuscripts with *The Pistill of Susan*. In its eight manuscript collections, it is most commonly associated with other historical romances.⁴² It also appears with other eastern-encounter literature, found in two manuscripts with *Mandeville's Travels* (Cambridge University Library Dd.1.17 and British Library, MS Arundel 140), as well as prophetic and proverbial literature, such as the Middle English *Ypotis*, which precedes *Mandeville* in Arundel 140.⁴³ Particularly significant is the poem's placement in CUL Dd.1.17, a compendious historical anthology, where it is found alongside both *Piers Plowman* and *Mandeville's Travels*, giving the English section of this manuscript a very similar thematic character to Hm 114. Its association with *Mandeville* and

⁴² Its earliest appearance is in the romance section of the Auchinleck Manuscript, appearing between *Sir Degare* and *Floris and Blancheflour*. It also appears in Cambridge University Library, Ff.2.38, a miscellany of romance, including, among others, *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*. *Sir Eglamour*, it may be worth noting, appears directly next to *The Pistill of Susan* in British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ii.

⁴³ *Ypotis* also appears in the Vernon/Simon sequence, as well as the similar sequence in British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ii, and is found once with *Piers Plowman* in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 323, which will be discussed further below.

Piers Plowman further suggests the pairing of these two texts as fitting into this wider genre of exemplary, pseudo-historical and eastern material. Yet the *Seven Sages* also has strong ties to religious and devotional texts; it appears in three manuscripts with the *Prick of Conscience*, one of which, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Poet. 175, contains a range of other minor devotional texts. Like *The Pistill of Susan*, then, the poem seems to be applicable to orientalism and foreignness, but also to religious moral instruction.

The association of *Piers Plowman* with this amorphous tradition of pseudo-romance and biblical history appears to have carried on, and perhaps increased, well into the fifteenth century. The final *Piers* manuscript to be considered in this regard is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 323.⁴⁴ The origins and provenance of Douce 323 remain obscure, though Doyle suggests dialect links to the East Midlands.⁴⁵ The manuscript, however, is very likely to be a product of the commercial book trade and a London origin seems likely, particularly due to its features of design and layout. Douce also appears to have been commissioned for a wealthy buyer, as indicated by the coat of arms that follows the end of the *Brut* on f. 101v, which bears the name “Johannes Tubantisville”; yet neither the arms nor Tubantisville himself have yet been identified. Douce 323 contains four texts copied throughout by one scribe, including a *Brut* chronicle (ff. 1r–101v), the A version of *Piers Plowman* (ff. 102r–140r), the *Abbey and Charter of the Holy Ghost* (ff. 140v–159v), and *Ypotis* (ff. 160r–167v). The constituent texts, three of which (*Piers*, *Abbey*, and *Ypotis*) are also found in the Vernon

⁴⁴ This manuscript has been variously dated from the mid to very late fifteenth century. The manuscript is copied on paper with a unicorn’s head watermark, which Kane compares to Briquet 15841–43 and Zonghi 783–91, dating the paper’s production after 1410. The dating of the manuscript’s copying to the very late fifteenth century has been primarily based on the secretary content of the scribe’s hand, which appears to be characteristic of the third quarter of the fifteenth century, though I see little evidence in the script to place it any later than 1475.

⁴⁵ A. I. Doyle, “Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*,” p. 38. Douce 323 is not analyzed by Samuels nor is it profiled in *LALME*.

manuscript, are arranged with a deliberate precision and uniformity, and again seem to show a consistency with the literary tradition under discussion. All of the texts deal largely with historical subjects, from mythic narratives to biblical apocrypha and salvation history.

The Middle English prose *Brut* chronicle with which the manuscript begins was one of the most popular vernacular texts in Britain based on its manuscript survival and exists in several forms and stages of revision.⁴⁶ The prose *Brut* is a historical chronicle of England from its mythic foundation by Albina and Brutus's supposed colonization of Britain up to the most recent medieval kings. In recording the history of Britain, the text intermingles historical fact with myth, legend, and prophecy, and in so doing, employs many of the tropes of courtly romance and the conventions of chivalry.⁴⁷ Following the prose *Brut* and the A text of *Piers*, Douce 323 also contains a copy of the *Abbey and Charter of the Holy Ghost*, which offers a similar perspective on the considerations of biblical history and romance. The *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* and its companion text, the *Charter*, were also extremely popular texts in the later Middle Ages, surviving together in eighteen manuscripts and separately in another eleven.⁴⁸ The two texts appear together in the Vernon manuscript (ff. 359v–363v),

⁴⁶ The prose *Brut* appears to have been first composed in Anglo Norman around the late thirteenth century (as it concludes at 1272) and later updated up to 1333. The prose *Brut* was translated into English sometime between 1380 and 1400 and later updated in the fifteenth century. See Friedrich W. D. Brie, ed., *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, 2 Vols., The Early English Text Society, O.S. 131 and 136. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906, 1908). For an extremely valuable study of the *Brut* tradition see Lister Matheson, *The Prose 'Brut': The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Text Studies, 1998). Also see a recently published collection of essays: *The Prose Brut and Other Late Medieval Chronicles: Books Have Their Histories: Essays in Honour of Lister M. Matheson*, ed. Jaelyn Rajsic, Erik Kooper, and Dominique T. Hoche (York: York Medieval Press, 2016).

⁴⁷ For more on this see Tamar Drukker "Vision and History: Prophecy in the Middle English Prose *Brut* Chronicle," *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 25–49.

⁴⁸ The *Abbey* and *Charter* are extant together in eighteen manuscripts. For more on the relationship between these two texts see Julia Boffey, "The *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost* and Its Role in Manuscript Anthologies," *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 120–30. The two texts are often copied together, and in some cases presented as two parts of the same text. One such case is

where they are situated with other devotional texts in the same section as the A text of *Piers Plowman* (ff. 394v–401v). Like many of the other texts discussed above, the content of the *Abbey* and *Charter* reflect the biblical-historical and typological focus of *Piers Plowman*. At the end of the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, the abbey that has been newly established is attacked by the devil and his four daughters, who are defeated and banished. The *Charter*, however, expands on this encounter by the devil and his daughters and “develops the notion that they pose a permanent threat to the individual Christian soul which the abbey represents.”⁴⁹ The text proceeds to recount episodes of biblical history from Adam through to the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell, which ultimately brings about the restoration of the Abbey and, implicitly, the renewal of the soul. At a very cursory glance, then, there are several features of the *Charter* that distinctly mirror the *Vitae* of *Piers Plowman*. What is particularly interesting about the copy of the *Abbey and Charter of the Holy Ghost* in Douce 323, however, is the peculiar textual version in which it exists. As Boffey notes, this version

opens with words that begin the *Charter* in a number of witnesses [...] it continues with a text of the *Charter* similar to the version in the Vernon MS, with the difference that discussion of the Four Daughters of God is given extra prominence earlier in the treatise. At the end of the narrative of the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell (the point where the text usually begins to wind itself up), most of the *Abbey* is inserted [...] The concluding section of this conflated version returns to the *Charter* for its closing paragraph.⁵⁰

This rearrangement and emendation of the two texts emphasizes the order of *Piers Plowman*. In following *Piers* with the beginning of the *Charter*, it provides the Crucifixion and Harrowing of Hell, which occupies Passus 18 of *Piers Plowman*, including the dialogue of the Four Daughters of God (ll. 112–262). By bringing in the *Abbey* at this point, moreover,

Cambridge University Library, Ii.4.9, which was discussed in Chapter 3. The two texts could and did circulate separately.

⁴⁹ Julia Boffey, “*Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*,” p. 122.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

the text moves from the Harrowing to the establishment of a holy order, much like the establishment of Unite, and subsequently sees an attack on this enclosed community by a demonic figure (Satan/Antichrist). It may, then, be significant that this conflated version of the *Abbey* and *Charter* follows directly after the A version of *Piers Plowman*, and thus, in many ways, completes the full version of Langland's poem. It is entirely possible that the scribe was unable to access to a copy of B or C (or perhaps considered these versions too complicated for the context), but was aware of their general narrative trajectories, and noticed the shared features in the *Abbey* and *Charter*. While this can only remain as speculation, the coincidence of this placement and the exactness with which this revised version mirrors *Piers Plowman* must present some cause for suspicion. So here we may indeed have a genuine example of the anthologistic impulse, bringing two unrelated texts together in a material context to create a literary continuity between the two items. If true, this would offer an excellent insight into the level of cultural penetration that *Piers Plowman* had reached by the end of the fifteenth century.

The third text in Douce 323, following the *Abbey* and *Charter*, is the Middle English *Ypotis*, which also appears in Section III of Vernon. *Ypotis* is a rather peculiar text, sourced from the French *L'Enfant sage*, which presents the dialogue between the young child Ypotis and the Roman emperor Hadrian.⁵¹ The text is mostly concerned with providing basic miscellaneous knowledge on a range of subjects; as George Shuffelton notes, the text

⁵¹ For a more detailed treatment of this poem see *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffelton (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), pp. 505–08. The text is also widely popular, surviving in fifteen extant manuscripts. See Tanya Gardiner-Scott, "The Missing Link: An Edition of the Middle English *Ypotis* from York Minster MS XVI.L.12," *Traditio*, 46 (1991), 235–59; Josephine D. Sutton, "Hitherto Unprinted Manuscripts of the Middle English *Ipotis*," *PMLA*, 31 (1916), 114–60; Walter Suchier, ed. *L'enfant sage (Das Gespräch des Kaisers Hadrian mit dem klugen kinde Epitas)* (Dresden: Niemeyer, 1910).

contains a “mishmash of biblical facts, pseudo-scientific lore, and proverbs.”⁵² *Ypotis*, in this context, is a key example of the ways in which the manuscript contexts of the exemplary romances that have been discussed in this chapter show their association with proverbial lore. Alongside the Old Testament exempla in Vernon’s Section III, for instance, are several works of proverbial wisdom, including *Proverbs of Prophets* and the *Distichs of Cato*.⁵³ Yet *Ypotis* also fits well into a pseudo-biblical context; in a strange narrative turn, the poem ends with the emperor enquiring as to the child’s true identity. Ypotis replies, “I ame he that thee hath wrought / And on the rode dere have bought” (ll. 473–74) and proceeds to ascend into heaven. This revelation that the young boy was in fact Christ all along makes overt reference—similar to Daniel at the end of *The Pistill of Susan*—to the story of the boy Jesus who teaches the doctors in the temple, placing the dialogue within a distinctly biblical tradition. This is reinforced in the last lines of the poem, in which the text purports to have been written by John the Evangelist:

Seynte John the Wangelyst,
That was in erth with Jhesu Cryst,
Thys tale he wrote in Latyn.
In holy wryte and in perchemyn (ll. 481–84)

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 505. Shuffelton goes on to note, “The questions posed by the emperor concern the kinds of information that lay beyond the basic articles of faith and the Creed, but which any curious believer might want to know: the number of heavens and angelic orders, the sequence of the six days of creation, the reasons for fasting on Friday, and so forth” (pp. 506–07).

⁵³ Similarly, in the case of Harley 4733, a manuscript apparently owned by a John Penyngton, schoolmaster of Worcester, the romance *Titus and Vespasian* is presented alongside Cato’s *Distichs*. Alison Wiggins observes that in this instance *Titus and Vespasian* “seems to have been regarded as appropriate for the purpose of instruction” and goes on to suggest that the “sensational content of the story perhaps helped to hold his pupils’ attention” (Wiggins, “Middle English Romance,” p. 251).

In so doing, as Shuffelton observes, the text “masquerades as a piece of quasi-biblical apocrypha,”⁵⁴ and thus, falls into the genre of pseudo-biblical literature with which *Piers Plowman* is so heavily associated.

Also important is the poem’s use of a riddling, dialogic structure. As the context of Vernon’s Section III suggests, this loose generic category also appears to have been associated with the dialogue and debate tradition. Vernon includes, in close proximity, the *Dispute between Jesus & the Masters*, the *Dispute between a Christian & a Jew*, and the *Dispute between Mary & the Cross*. Such texts, which often provide easily accessible didactic content and proverbial lore, are commonly found in manuscripts of biblical exempla and other texts associated with the tradition under discussion. The dialogue was a long-established literary form, passed down from the Greeks and brought into the Middle Ages through figures like Augustine, later coming to underlie the thirteenth-century scholastic culture of disputation.⁵⁵ It seems possible that dialogues were grouped in this milieu through their association with Old Testament wisdom literature and the Solomonic tradition, as well as their common association with the *Adversus Iudaeos* genre in demonstrating the triumph of Christian reason over that of the Jews. This offers an important way of contextualizing *Ypotis* and other debate literature that circulates in these contexts.⁵⁶ As Curtis Gruenler

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 506. In his discussion of Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, Stapleton makes a connection between *Ypotis* and the *Stimulus Consciencie Minor*; as he argues, both of these texts “are hodgepodge collections of important religious information that expand upon the basic facts presented in works like *The Ten Commandments* (item 6) and *The Wounds and the Sins* (item 38)” (p. 507).

⁵⁵ See Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Also see E. C. Ronquist, “Learning and Teaching in Twelfth-Century Dialogues,” *Res Publica Litterarum*, 13 (1990), 239–56 and W. A. Davenport, “Patterns in Middle English Dialogues,” in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, Joseph S. Wittig (Wolfeboro, NH: D. S. Brewer, 1988), pp. 127–45.

⁵⁶ Curtis Gruenler has drawn connections between *Ypotis* and other riddling dialogues with reference to the riddle tradition in *Piers Plowman*: “How to Read Like a Fool: Riddle Contests and the Banquet

suggests, when Ypotis reveals himself to be Christ, “the revelation of his real identity, along with the whole extension of the riddling form in the direction of doctrinal mysteries, might be seen as a humiliation of pagan learning by the greater marvels of Christianity.”⁵⁷

Similar to other texts in this amorphous category, moreover, *Ypotis* may also have had associations with the romance genre, as suggested by the following passage from Chaucer’s *Tale of Sir Thopas*, where Ypotis is named as one of several romance heroes, including King Horn, Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, and Libeaus Desconus (VII.897–902).⁵⁸ While this may well be a Chaucerian joke, particularly given the self-mocking character of *Thopas*, it is not implausible that the poem was, in some circles at least, perceived as having connections to popular romance.⁵⁹ There are, indeed, some implicit tropes within the poem that suggest its connection to romance conventions, such as the anachronistic reference to Hadrian as “Syr Adryan” (l. 10) and the description of Adam’s sin taking place at “myd-dey” (l. 212), again referencing, as in *The Pistill of Susan*, the common association of midday in romance with marvelous or portentous events, and particularly those associated with trees.

If we are to connect the poem to the romance tradition, however, it must be the sort of pseudo-romance and apocryphal biblical history that has been discussed throughout this chapter. Contradictory to Shuffelton’s characterization of the text as a “mishmash” of practical lore and proverbial wisdom, moreover, the poem is in fact quite comprehensively

of Conscience in *Piers Plowman*,” *Speculum*, 85 (2010), 592–630 (pp. 598–600). For more on riddling in *Piers* see Andrew Galloway, “The Rhetoric of Riddling in Late-Medieval England: The ‘Oxford’ Riddles, the *Secretum Philosophorum*, and the Riddles in *Piers Plowman*,” *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 68–105 (pp. 86–94).

⁵⁷ Gruenler, “How to Read Like a Fool,” p. 600.

⁵⁸ This naming of romance figures is discussed in Yin Liu, “Middle English Romance as a Prototype Genre,” *The Chaucer Review*, 40 (2006), 335–53.

⁵⁹ That Chaucer’s reference to the poem is meant as a joke is suggested by Dorothy Everett, “A Note on ‘Ypotis,’” *Review of English Studies*, 6 (1930), 446–48.

organized around a (mostly) chronological account of biblical history, beginning with the creation and proceeding from a description of heaven and the orders of the angels through to the Fall of Adam and Eve, the Harrowing of Hell, and the fall of the angels. What is unique about the poem's structure is that it weaves its practical instruction into this narrative; rather than simply listing the Seven Deadly Sins, for instance (as many didactic treatises do), it describes them in its account of the Fall as the seven sins of Adam (ll. 219–55). Unlike other collections of proverbial wisdom, moreover, *Ypotis* frequently offers extended narrative sequences;⁶⁰ even the dialogic form of the poem seems, in many ways, to become merely a medium for conveying this descriptive biblical history. The biblical account is brought to a close with an exhortation to “Thynke on Chrystys Passyon” (l. 420), which completes the standard sequence of salvation history, from Old to New Law. The final question in the dialogue addresses “Why men fast the Frydey commonlyke, / More than other deys in the weke” (ll. 425–26), a question which brings the poem and the cycle of biblical history back around to contemporary Christian practice. The thirteen reasons that are given for fasting on Fridays, moreover, offer a concise recap of salvation history from Creation to the Final Judgment, establishing each major event in history as happening on a Friday, beginning with, “On the Frydey God made man” (l. 430) and concluding, “That God on efter dey schall gyff jugement” (l. 458).⁶¹ In so doing, contemporary Christian devotion is situated in a fluid

⁶⁰ While the narratives presented are primarily intended to frame the accounts of biblical lore and practical knowledge, there are also some thoughtful literary moments in the text, as in God's questioning the motivations of Adam and Satan in sinning in the garden (ll. 261–66) and Satan's almost Miltonian response, “For I had to hym envye, / That thei schuld have that blysse; / Therfor I tyled them to do amysse” (ll. 268–70).

⁶¹ The thirteen events noted as taking place on a Friday are as follows: 1. the creation of Adam; 2. the creation of Eve from Adam's rib; 3. Cain killing Abel; 4. the Annunciation; 5. the birth of Jesus; 6. Jesus's circumcision; 7. the stoning of Saint Stephen; 8. the death of John the Baptist; 9. the death of Jesus on the cross; 10. the Assumption of Mary; 11. the martyrdom of Saint Andrew; 12. Saint Helen

timeline that encompasses both the exemplary history of the Church from the Old Testament to the New and its inevitable apocalyptic future.

Ypotis's rough association with a tradition of biblical history and pseudo-romance narratives may be supported by its contexts in the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts. While, in both anthologies, the poem is contextualized proximate to other debate literature, it is also consistently placed directly after the *Castle of Love*, the Middle English translation of Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'amour*, an allegory of love as a castle under siege, which draws heavily on the courtly romance tradition.⁶² In conveying a religious allegory as an architectural space under siege, the *Chateau d'amour* (and by implication the *Castle of Love*), has strong connections to the siege of Unite in *Piers Plowman* (as well as the debate between the Four Daughters of God), the attack on the abbey in the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, and perhaps, the semi-allegorical nature of the siege in *The Siege of Jerusalem*. In their shared use of the trope of the stronghold under siege, all of these texts employ obvious romance motifs, thus straddling the line between popular romance, exemplary biblical history, and moral allegory. Whether *Ypotis* was seen as somehow associable with this tradition or if its placement after the *Castle of Love* in Vernon and Simeon was purely random is impossible to know, though its placement in Douce 323 next to the prose *Brut*, *Piers Plowman*, and the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* may support such an interpretation. It is

(mother of Constantine) finding the relic of the cross under the Temple of Venus; 13. the Final Judgment (ll. 428–60).

⁶² C. Horstmann, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS*, I, Early English Text Society, O.S. 98 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892). Also see Kari Sajavaara, *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's Chateau d'Amour* (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1967). For more on the common "stronghold of virtue" motif see Winthrop Wetherbee, "Chivalry under Siege in Ricardian Romance," in *The Medieval City under Siege*, ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), pp. 207–23; Abigail Wheatley, *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2004); and Roger Sherman Loomis, "The Allegorical Siege in the Art of the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 23 (1919), 255–69.

also telling that in both Vernon and Simeon, *Ypotis* is closely followed by *Robert of Cisyle*, an exemplary penitential narrative heavily rooted in biblical, and specifically Old Testament, sources.⁶³ *Robert of Cisyle* follows a popular medieval story, deriving from the Nebuchadnezzar tradition and Solomonic legend, of the proud king cast out and made a fool and finally restored when he learns true humility. The text straddles the uneasy boundary between romance and religious treatise; Lillian Herlands Hornstein notes in the text a “skillful synthesis of themes from folklore, Biblical commentary, and history,” which “provides fresh evidence of the process by which Biblical exegesis was transmuted into legend and into romance.”⁶⁴ Even more interesting, however, is its style, which as Radulescu argues, “resembles more a debate or dialogue,”⁶⁵ a fact which further links *Robert of Cisyle* to *Ypotis* and suggests that the categories of association between them were more flexible than it might first appear. Both texts contain elements of conventional didacticism and dialogic qualities while also referencing a pseudo-romantic tradition of religious exempla.

Through these varied manuscript contexts, therefore, despite the variety of texts that are collected we can begin to see patterns of literary reception that manifest across the

⁶³ Edward E. Foster, ed., *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007). Also see Andrea Hopkins, “Roberd of Cisyle,” in *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 179–95; and Joan Baker, “*Deposuit potentes*: Apocalyptic Rhetoric in the Middle English *Robert of Sicily*,” *Medieval Perspectives*, 12 (1997), 25–45. For eastern connections in *Robert of Cisyle* see John Simons, “A Byzantine Identity for *Robert of Cisyle*,” in *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance*, ed. Phillipa Hardman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), pp. 103–11 (p. 103).

⁶⁴ Lillian Herlands Hornstein, “*King Robert of Sicily*: Analogues and Origins,” *PMLA*, 79 (1964), 13–21 (p. 13). Raluca Radulescu has argued that the text contains none of the traditional elements of romance and “resembles more an exemplum” (“John Northwood’s Miscellany Revisited,” *Insular Books*, ed. Connolly and Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 101–20 (p. 133)), an opinion shared by Derek Pearsall, who has also suggested that *Robert of Cisyle* should not be categorized as a romance (“The Development of Middle English Romance,” *Medieval Studies*, 27 (1965), 91–166 (n. 56)). Alexandra Hennessey Olsen notes, “The author of *Robert of Sicily* seems to be aware of the reactions of his audience to the story-type he is relating, and he fulfils some of their expectations but fails to fulfil others, thereby making his Christian message startlingly clear” (“The Return of the King: A Reconsideration of *Robert of Sicily*,” *Folklore*, 93 (1982), 216–19 (p. 217).

⁶⁵ Radulescu, “John Northwood’s Miscellany Revisited,” p. 131.

country. While this category of texts may not represent a “genre” in the modern sense, the consistency of repeated texts and the similarity of content across numerous multi-text manuscripts do suggest that it was recognized as a replicable tradition. While there were several recurring tropes, such as Old Testament exempla, Roman power, Jewish tradition, and salvation history, it was also a tradition with porous thematic boundaries, incorporating into its purview elements of both romance and devotional literature. One especially clear example of this crossover between exemplary romance and devotional literature (which does not include *Piers Plowman*) is British Library, Additional 36983, dated to around the second quarter of the fifteenth century, the contents of which are as follows:

ff. 1r–2v: <i>Cursor Mundi</i> : Prologue	ff. 263r–v: <i>ABC of Aristotle</i>
ff. 3r–174v: <i>Cursor Mundi</i>	f. 263v: <i>In praise of Our Lady</i>
ff. 118r–27r: <i>Meditaciones Vitae Christi</i>	ff. 264r–68r: <i>Ypotis</i>
f. 154va: <i>Assumption of Our Lady</i>	ff. 268r–75r: <i>Speculum Gy de Warewyke</i>
ff. 159r–74v: <i>Prick of Conscience</i>	ff. 275r–79v: <i>Debate btwn God and Man</i>
ff. 175r–79v: Chaucer, <i>An ABC</i>	f. 279v–80r: Verse Life of St. Erasmus
ff. 179r–215v: <i>Three Kings of Cologne</i>	f. 280r–v: The sufferings of St. Erasmus
ff. 216r–55r: <i>Titus and Vespasian</i>	ff. 281r–97v: <i>Abbey of the Holy Ghost</i>
ff. 255r–61v: <i>Jesus Mercy, Lady Help</i>	ff. 298r–305r: <i>The Mirror of Mankind</i>
f. 262r: Chaucer, <i>Truth</i>	f. 305v: Lives of Sts. Dorotheus and
ff. 262r–263r: <i>Ballad</i>	Theodora

While Additional 36983 does not contain *Piers Plowman*, it does show a consistency with the tradition in which *Piers* seems to have circulated. The manuscript brings together exemplary romance, religious history, and devotional literature under what seems to be one overriding category. The manuscript opens with the *Cursor Mundi*, a compendious history of the world, from the creation to the apocalypse, written around 1300.⁶⁶ The codex goes on to

⁶⁶ Richard Morris, ed., *Cursor Mundi*, Early English Text Society, O.S. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Oxford University Press, 1879–93). For more on the contexts and contents of the *Cursor Mundi* see John J. Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts and Contexts*, Medium Ævum Monographs, 19 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1998) and Ernest Mardon, *The Narrative Unity of the Cursor Mundi* (Edmonton: Golden Meteorite Press, 2012).

offer various narrative accounts of the life of Christ and the events surrounding the Passion (*Meditaciones* and the *Assumption of Our Lady*). Additional 36983 also includes the siege narrative *Titus and Vespasian*, which brings the passion narrative through to a conclusion through the retribution for Christ's death. In addition to these pseudo-historical texts, the manuscript hints at the broader tradition of texts that we have noted in Vernon and elsewhere, such as *Ypotis*, exemplary narratives, including *Guy of Warwick* and several saints' lives, and a disputation between God and man. Yet these are also placed alongside a range of penitential and devotional texts, including *The Prick of Conscience* and *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, with a special emphasis on Marian devotion. This manuscript thus serves as an important way of showing both the consistency of textual associations within this tradition and the malleability of its generic structure.

Extracts from the *Cursor Mundi* also appear in another manuscript which may display some traces of the same literary tradition, British Library Additional 31042 (the "London Thornton Manuscript"), copied by the Yorkshire gentryman Robert Thornton in the early fifteenth century. The excerpts from the *Cursor Mundi* in the London Thornton Manuscript, which are largely taken from the life of Christ, are appended to a copy of the *Northern Passion* with a unique passage linking the two texts together.⁶⁷ While this manuscript is usually known for containing the "Thornton romances," our understanding of its contents can be nuanced somewhat in light of the specific tradition discussed in this chapter. The romances in the London Thornton are largely geared toward historical exempla—including

⁶⁷ See Michael Johnston, "Constantinian Christianity in the London Thornton Manuscript: The Codicological and Linguistic Evidence of Thornton's Intentions," in *Robert Thornton and His Books*, ed. Fein and Johnston, pp. 177–204. For more on the contexts of the London Thornton manuscript see John Finlayson, "The Contexts of the Crusading Romances in the London Thornton Manuscript," *Anglia*, 130 (2012), 240–63 and Susanna Fein, "Literary Scribes: The Harley Scribe and Robert Thornton as Case Studies," *Insular Books*, ed. Connolly and Radulescu, pp. 61–79.

items in the vein of Jewish history/eastern encounter, such as *Titus and Vespasian*—and frequently break down the boundary between romance and religious history. All of these, moreover, are framed by the biblical history in the *Cursor Mundi* with which the codex begins. The use of the *Cursor Mundi* in both Additional 36983 and the London Thornton, then, is of particular importance for reinforcing salvation history as the fundamental root of this literary tradition.

Another text of interest for this tradition in the London Thornton Manuscript is an “Infancy of Christ” text, which appears in two other manuscripts, British Library, Harley 2399 (ff. 47v-61r) and Harley 3954 (ff. 70r-74r).⁶⁸ It should be recalled from previous chapters that Harley 3954 is one of the Norfolk manuscripts containing *Piers Plowman* in a largely catechetical context. The incipit of this text, however, shows the varying scribal interpretations of the text’s generic possibilities. Harley 3954’s Latin incipit, “Hic incipit *infancia saluatorum*,” seems to establish an authoritative biblical import to the text, which justifies its inclusion among the manuscript’s other more conventional catechetical texts.⁶⁹ Robert Thornton’s copy, however, firmly establishes the text in the romance genre, beginning: “Here bigynnys the Romance / of the childhode of Ihesu Criste þat / clerkes callys

⁶⁸ The dialect of the text in these three manuscripts is also wide ranging; in addition to the East Anglian dialect in Harley 3954 (LP 4103), it is also copied in a North Yorkshire dialect in the London Thornton manuscript, compiled by the Yorkshire gentryman Robert Thornton, and a Cornwall dialect in Harley 2399 (LP 5010), which bears an inscription at the end of the *Infancy of Christ* localizing it to the Benedictine priory of St Petroc in Bodmin, Cornwall: “Quod dominus Johannes architenens canonicus Bodminie et natus in illa. Deo gratias” (f. 61r). The wide dissemination of the text indicates that it may have been more popular than the extant attestations suggest.

⁶⁹ The incipit to the text in Harley 2399 similarly reads “Pueritia vel Infancia Christi” and the explicit, “Et sic finitur pueritia domini nostri Jesu Cristi.” Though most of the incipit in this manuscript has been lost to damage, it is certainly in Latin, as the visible “*ihesu christi*” implies, and is written in *textura* in contrast to the scribe’s usual *anglicana*.

Ipokrephum” (f. 163v).⁷⁰ Thornton’s interpretation of the text as “romance” in contrast to the didactic historicism of the other manuscripts suggests the malleability of such texts for various aims; and the fluidity of this text’s generic applicability may be a useful way of understanding *Piers Plowman*’s own diverse reception. One should, of course, be cautious to assume that the compiler of Harley 3954 was at all conscious of the romance tropes in the Infancy of Christ (though he may well have been). Rather, what is more illuminating is *Piers*’s ubiquitous association with texts that also transcend the boundary between religious treatise and historical romance. Just as this text crosses the boundary between historical romance and didactic biblical narrative, therefore, so should we understand the fifteenth-century contexts of *Piers Plowman* more broadly.⁷¹

This notion of the texts in Harley 3954 as both didactic and influenced by the traditions of biblical history and popular romance may give us some way of reconciling the placement of *Mandeville’s Travels* in this manuscript, and perhaps, for *Mandeville*’s common placement with *Piers Plowman* more generally.⁷² Such contexts may also help to explain further the assembly of other large anthologies, such as British Library, Additional

⁷⁰ Julie Nelson Couch argues that the poem is tied to “the particular romance world found in the manuscript, where the enemy is always an enemy of Christ and the hero is always Christ’s special avenger,” relating this romance trope to texts such as *The Siege of Jerusalem*, the *Sege of Melayne*, *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain* and *Richard Coer de Lyon* (“Apocryphal Romance in the London Thornton Manuscript,” in *Robert Thornton and His Books*, ed. Fein and Johnston, pp. 205–34 (p. 207)).

⁷¹ Marie Turner has recently suggested that “romance” in *Piers Plowman* should be understood not as a set of generic conventions, but rather “a mode of thought that Langland harnesses in his attempt to theorize the relationship between the individual subject and the production of history” (“Historical Romance in *Piers Plowman*,” p. 7). Turner proceeds to set *Piers* within the context of historical romance, such as the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*, connecting this tradition to the character of Haukyn in *Piers Plowman*, who, she argues, synthesizes the various elements of the romance genre.

⁷² Noting the five manuscripts in which *Piers* and *Mandeville* appear together, Michael Seymour remarks on the relationship of the two poems, observing that “in both works a serious didactic intent is presented in a popular form” (“The English Manuscripts of *Mandeville’s Travels*,” *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions*, 4 (1966), 167–210 (p. 172)).

37049, which was mentioned in Chapter 3 as containing *Mandeville's Travels* alongside the *Prick of Conscience* and other catechetical and devotional literature. Yet it is also important that this manuscript contains seven different dialogues, which, considering the placement of *Mandeville*, may suggest some influence from this exemplary and instructional tradition under discussion.

Within this difficult-to-define genre, therefore, we do indeed find the kind of fluid relationship between biblical history and popular romance that has been noted by previous critics of *Piers Plowman*. Yet in order to fully understand why *Piers* circulates in these environments, we need to decentralize the poem from our critical line of enquiry, seeing its place within a much wider tradition of texts. What is particularly interesting in texts like *Mandeville's Travels* and the *Seven Sages of Rome*, however, is that these categories also seem to have had important interactions with devotional and catechetical texts. The diversity of this literary tradition suggests that diverse categories such as exemplary biblical romance, eastern-encounter texts, dialogue and debate literature, and proverbial wisdom should be understood as forming one fluid and multifaceted discourse.

II. *Piers Plowman* and the Universal History of Salvation

The manuscript contexts in which *Piers Plowman* circulated on a national level, as we have witnessed, suggest that the poem was seen as part of a fluctuating tradition that consistently brought together texts from across several generic modes. But what are the literary implications of *Piers Plowman's* circulation in this loose literary tradition, and what does it mean for our understanding of *Piers Plowman's* reception? To best illuminate *Piers's* place within this tradition, we may return to consider the two poems with which it circulated most

commonly, *The Siege of Jerusalem* and *The Pistill of Susan*. It was noted above that the works in the milieu around *Piers* showed a pronounced interest in Old Testament, Jewish history. In this context, as it will be argued here, the Jews and other non-Christian groups offer ways of understanding the place of the medieval Church within a dynamic history of salvation.

The most obvious place to begin in discussing the treatment of Jews in *Piers Plowman*'s literary contexts is *The Siege of Jerusalem*. Criticism on the *Siege* has been split in its interpretation of the poem's attitude towards the Jews. The traditional opinion sees the poem as a noxious anti-Judaic poem that revels in the slaughter of the Jews at Jerusalem. An alternative interpretation of the *Siege* was offered by Elisa Narin van Court, who argued that the poem is not, in fact, anti-Judaic, but rather, "exhibits a tenuous, but fully articulated sympathy toward the Jews."⁷³ Narin van Court argues that the *Siege* followed the doctrine of toleration, as found in the writings of Augustinian historians, in portraying the Jews in a sympathetic light. This argument, however, is not entirely convincing; there is little to support the notion that the author of the *Siege* intends for the Jews to be understood as sympathetic or that the poem was received in this way by later readers.⁷⁴ While Narin van

⁷³ Elisa Narin van Court, "The *Siege of Jerusalem* and Augustinian Historians: Writing about Jews in Fourteenth-Century England," *The Chaucer Review*, 29 (1995), 227–248 (p. 233). Such a view was also supported by Bonnie Millar, "The Role of Prophecy in the *Siege of Jerusalem* and Its Analogues," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 13 (1999), 153–78, and *The Siege of Jerusalem in Its Physical, Literary and Historical Contexts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

⁷⁴ In a review of Millar's book, David Lawton remarks, "there is no point... in trying to argue that 'opposition to Crusades' (164) translates into sympathy for Jews," and goes on to say, "I admit that I cannot read anything but prurient glee in the poem's account of the tortures of Caiaphas and his gang of Christ" ("Review of Bonnie Millar, *The Siege of Jerusalem*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), 235–237 (p. 237)). Similarly, Michael Johnston has argued that in British Library, Additional 31042 (the "London Thornton Manuscript"), copied by the Yorkshire gentryman, Robert Thornton, the *Siege of Jerusalem* is deliberately copied alongside other texts that present the poem as "a wholesale endorsement of medieval Christian anti-Judaism" ("Robert Thornton and *The Siege of Jerusalem*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 23 (2009), 125–62 (p. 157)).

Court demonstrates some instances wherein the Jews are portrayed with positive language, overall this pales in comparison to their overwhelmingly and undeniably negative portrayal through the poem, particularly the frequent references to the Jews as “þe fals men” (l. 551) and “þe folk faiþles” (l. 481), which dominate the poem. One of the episodes most commonly cited as expressing sympathy for the Jews is the shocking scene in which a starving Jewish mother cooks and eats her own child (ll. 1081–88). Narin van Court sees this scene as offering a more sympathetic portrayal of the mother than the poem’s source texts, an interpretation that may be supported by the latent Christian imagery used throughout. Before the episode, it is noted that the Jews have been starving “For fourty dayes” (l. 1071), which may make implicit reference to Jesus’s fasting in the desert. The woman, moreover, named “Marie,” seems to reflect the biblical Mary, who must ultimately sacrifice her son for Eucharistic consumption. Yet despite these sacramental undertones, the Christian references are empty and unfruitful; they seem not to depict the Jewish woman as sympathetic, but rather to show her more poignantly as a perversion of her Christian parallels.⁷⁵

Regardless of one’s interpretation of this scene, however, it is particularly important for understanding the poem’s underlying concerns, that is, using a poetic representation of the Jews to reflect not on Judaism itself, but rather on the typological connections between salvation history and contemporary Christian practice. This understanding of the Jews in the scheme of Christian history may also further illuminate the reception of *The Pistill of Susan* and the mode through which it was understood in the Vernon/Simeon sequence and in the context of *Piers Plowman*. There are certainly hints that the Old Testament story about

⁷⁵ As David Lawton notes, “I cannot fail to read satisfaction in a Jewish Mary who is forced to eat her unproductively dead and unmessianic Jewish child” (“Review of Millar, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, p. 237).

Susan, a Jewish heroine, should be understood within the scheme of salvation history.⁷⁶ Particularly revealing is the repeated association between Susan and Mary. In both the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts, as shown above, *The Pistill of Susan* follows directly after the *Debate between Mary and the Cross*, a pairing which may reveal a perceived connection between the two, even if only from the perspective of exemplary female figures from the Bible.⁷⁷ In her discussion of the texts in Hm 114, Noelle Phillips also discusses the text's treatment of Susan as an exemplary female figure, drawing parallels with Criseyde in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. In Hm 114, she argues, the scribe attempts to "neutralize the sexual and intellectual agency of Susannah, linking her instead to the passivity of the Virgin Mary."⁷⁸ While Phillips suggests that this motive to associate Susan with Mary may be understood as connected to the silencing of women, it may also be understood more broadly as related to the scheme of Christian history and the role of the Jews in this timeline, drawing connections between an exemplary Old Testament Jewish female and Mary, the paragon of New Testament female virtue. Beyond this figural association, Juan Manuel Castro Carracedo has pointed to the structure of the poem as a possible reference to salvation history. As Carracedo argues, in presenting the narrative of Daniel 13, the poem deliberately emphasizes and elaborates upon three key moments in biblical history, Eden and the creation (the garden), the Passion and Crucifixion (Susan's trial), and the Final Judgment (the punishment of the false judges).⁷⁹

⁷⁶ For a further study of Susan as a typological figure see Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Susanna as a Type of Christ," *Studies in Iconography*, 20 (1999), 101–53.

⁷⁷ For a recent edition of this text see "The Dispute between Mary and the Cross," in *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. Susanna Greer Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998).

⁷⁸ Phillips, "Compilational Reading," p. 87.

⁷⁹ Juan Manuel Castro Carracedo, "Eschatological Meaning in *The Pistill of Swete Susan*," *English Studies*, 89 (2008), 125–140 (p. 136). Carracedo goes on to note, "there seems to be an artificial

Like the poets of *The Pistill of Susan* and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, Langland's concern with history is inextricably rooted in scripture and exegetical thought. While Passūs 18–20 of *Piers Plowman* presents biblical history as a fairly straightforward and linear narrative of Christ, this narrative in the poem also stretches much further back, situating the Passion within a larger framework of biblical time that spans the Old Testament and the New. This consideration is rooted in a typological understanding of the bible, similar to that found in *The Pistill of Susan*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and other biblical history poems of this milieu. In fact, if anything can be said towards a larger structuring of *Piers Plowman*, it is that the poem itself mirrors the structure of the bible and its transition from Old to New Testament. Within this larger thematic framework, however, Langland plays with and problematizes the linearity of time, representing characters and events in continually impermanent and transitional temporal states. This interest in biblical time begins in the *Visio* with the pilgrimage of folk, where we are presented with the image of a people in many ways subject to the laws of the Old Testament.⁸⁰ In his instructions to the pilgrims, Piers Plowman outlines the way to Truth as mediated by the Ten Commandments, each of which is described as an allegorical landscape on the journey to Truth (B V.563–84); the road to salvation is thus imagined through the lens of Mosaic law. The notion of the pilgrims as Old Testament Christians is reinforced by their inability to access Christ; they do not simply seek Truth, but are seeking, rather, “To haue grace to go to truþe” (V.512). This concern with the acquisition of grace remains the overriding focus of the poem's motivation and guides its narrative of

inclination to repeat this design, more or less overtly, in contemporary biblical paraphrases, such as *Joseph of Arimathea* or *The Siege of Jerusalem*” (p. 138).

⁸⁰ Mary C. Schroeder argues, “The folk of the field are in fact just as badly off as the men of the Old Law, subject only to an exact measured justice unsustained by redeeming, changing grace and thus inevitably cut off from any effective moral and spiritual order by sin” (“The Tearing of the Pardon,” p. 17).

salvation history, situating the poem as a bridge between the typological space of the New Law and the Old, between grace and gracelessness.

It is the pardon from Truth of Passus 7 which should resolve this pursuit of grace, though, as numerous commentators have observed, it does not bring the resolution that Piers and the pilgrims have been searching for. If the Pardon were to be seen as analogous to Christ's sacrifice and the introduction of grace into the world, as some have suggested,⁸¹ it seems glaringly obvious that the word "grace" is, in fact, found nowhere in the Pardon scene. It is clear from the wording of the Pardon ("*qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam; Qui vero mala in ignem eternum*") that it actively grants nothing; it is simply a statement of theological truth.⁸² The reason that this moral law fails to satisfy, however, is that the *qui bona* clause of this statement presumes a pre-existent state of grace; those who do well can only achieve salvation if the grace of Christ's sacrifice has allowed this to be possible. In recognition of this, Will, at the end of Passus 7, counsels all Christians to ask "That god gyue vs grace er we go hennes / Swiche werkes to werche, while we ben here" (VII.201–04). As subjects of the Old Law, therefore, Piers and the others do not have the grace necessary to do good enough works to achieve salvation.

The major turning point in the poem's structural representation of salvation history comes about in the "Tree of Charity" scene of Passus 16, an episode that is still fundamentally rooted (quite literally) in Old Testament Christian history. The fruits of the

⁸¹ While Schroeder sees the *Visio*, as representative of the Old Law, she also suggests that "the *Visio* can be seen to stand in the same relation to the *Vitae* as the world of the Old Testament does to that of the New" (p. 17). This view is also held by Margaret E. Goldsmith, who argues that the Pardon "signals the sealing of the New Covenant which destroys the 'letter' of the Old Covenant and at the same time makes the 'testament' effectual" (*The Figure of Piers Plowman: The Image on the Coin* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), p. 45).

⁸² As John Lawlor points out, "The Pardon is no more and no less than a statement of universal Moral Law" ("*Piers Plowman: The Pardon Reconsidered*," *Modern Language Review*, 45 (1950), 449–58 (p. 452)).

Tree of Charity are described as “Adam and Abraham and Ysaye þe prophete, / Sampson and Samuel and Seint Iohan þe Baptist” (XVI.81–82). All of these figures precede the passion of Christ, and when they drop from the tree, are snatched up and brought to “*limbo Inferni*,” the waiting ground for the virtuous patriarchs.⁸³ In response to the Devil stealing the fruit, Piers takes up the pile called *filius* supporting the tree and chases after him, and it is here that the incarnation, and subsequently the entire narrative of biblical history, begins (XVI.90–94). In picking up the *filius*, therefore, Piers himself embodies the typological transformation from the prophets in Limbo to their awaited prophetic fulfillment, the incarnation of Christ.⁸⁴ Thus, we must understand the sequence of biblical history in Passūs 16–18 as inextricably bound to a larger consideration of typology and salvation history that pervades the entire poem, demonstrating the importance of grace in the fulfillment of the Christian narrative. The interaction between Abraham, Moses, and the Good Samaritan (Christ) collapses the history of salvation into itself, demonstrating the supersession of the Jewish faith, both pre- and post-Mosaic.⁸⁵

This, of course, culminates in the second pardon, perhaps the poem’s most important turning point. After Christ has completed the Harrowing of Hell and the Resurrection, Piers is granted another Pardon (IX.183–90), which appears to be far more successful, granting

⁸³ Margaret Goldsmith observes that “the main significance of the dropping of the fruit must inhere in the allegory of the consequences of sin under the Old Law . . . only by comprehending the whole sacred history can Will begin to understand the boundless depth of *charite*” (*The Figure of Piers Plowman*, p. 67).

⁸⁴ The phrase *plenitudo temporis* in line 93 is particularly significant, having been taken from Galatians 4:4–6. This verse is commonly used in typological exegesis; in Paul’s conception, Christ was sent to earth when all the time preceding him was full and complete, thus fulfilled all of Christian history leading up to the Incarnation.

⁸⁵ In discussing *The Siege of Jerusalem*, Narin van Court similarly shows the *Siege*-poet’s contrasting of two tropes, that of the Old Testament Exodus and Christ’s Passion in the New, observing that in the poem “the Jewish narrative is fulfilled and superseded by the Christian” (“*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Augustinian Historians,” p. 231).

Piers the power “to assoille of alle manere synnes” (IX.185). What is different here is not the pardon itself, but rather, the presence of grace. After the pardon is given, the character of Grace is introduced: “Quod Conscience, and knelede, ‘This is Cristes messenger, / And cometh fro the grete God – Grace is his name...And thanne bigan Grace to go with Piers Plowman” (IX.208–14). This scene, then, accomplishes what the Pardon of Passus 7 could not—redemption through grace. Although we are not told what this pardon says, it may, presumably, remain the same as the first. Piers Plowman, however, is a new recipient, reformed by the presence of grace brought with the Incarnation of Christ in the world.⁸⁶ The figure of Piers Plowman thus links the two parts of the poem together in a kind of typological temporality.⁸⁷ It is in the process of time transpiring between two typological figures that salvation history is realized.⁸⁸

In depicting the transition from Old Law to New, *Piers Plowman* thus wrestles with the complex issues surrounding the Church’s relationship to biblical history and, implicitly, a Jewish heritage. As Suzanne Conklin Akbari notes, *Piers Plowman* does not offer a single

⁸⁶ It is clear, however, that Langland is not advocating a theology of grace alone. As James Simpson argues, “if Langland foresees a Protestant theology of grace alone, wholly dependent on God’s prior election, so too does the narrative of his poem swerve away from that belittling possibility to affirm human initiative” (“Grace Abounding: Evangelical Centralization and the End of *Piers Plowman*,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 14 (2000), 49–73 (p. 62)).

⁸⁷ In order to understand Piers’s multivalent symbolism one must see him as participating in a complex temporal structure that stretches from the Old Testament to the New and links past to present. By representing the “whole Christ,” Piers, in Augustine’s conception, is also embodying the Psalter in its entirety. Through the “figural interpretation” described by Auerbach, Langland situates Piers the Plowman as fundamentally bound to both testaments, forging bonds across history. See Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1984), pp. 11–76.

⁸⁸ Through this kind of typological literary method, Langland eschews notions of linear time, weaving a complex temporal structure that blurs the lines between past and present, the Old Testament and the New, evoking what Fredric Jameson calls the “fundamental narrative” of Scripture as embodied by humankind throughout all time (*The Political Unconscious* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 28). As Mary Clemente Davlin puts it, “Christ pierces all history and unites all times” (Mary Clemente Davlin, “*Petrus, id est, Christus*: Piers the Plowman as ‘the Whole Christ’,” *Chaucer Review*, 6 (1972), 280–92 (p. 289)).

clear statement of orthodox theological positions on Jews, Muslims, or other non-Christians,” instead presenting a range of possible interpretations without explicitly settling on any particular one.⁸⁹ It is important to recall, however, that the sequence of biblical history in *Piers* is positioned in relation to the Jews, whose displacement is a fundamental and necessary part of the Christian timeline. At the beginning of Passus 19, the dreamer witnesses Piers the Plowman as Jesus, coming before the people “peynted al bloody” (B XIX.6). Here Conscience explains to Will that Christ should be considered knight, king, and conqueror. As a conqueror, Christ is responsible for the subjugation of the Jews: “The Jewes, that were gentil men, Jesu thei despised— / Bothe his loore and his lawe; now are thei lowe cherles” (34–35).⁹⁰ Langland’s position on the Jews in relation to Christianity does seem to have shifted over time. Eliza Narin van Court has argued that the C text “systematically excises Judaism from the trajectory of Christian history in a revisionary historiography where all tends toward the singularity of Christ.”⁹¹ The B text, however, is heavily invested in a typological schema, showing the Jews as a necessary part of the eschatological timeline.⁹² In considering the full range of *Piers*’s literary contexts, it would seem that the reception of the

⁸⁹ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, “The non-Christians of *Piers Plowman*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 160–76 (p. 163). An important part of Langland’s subtle treatment of non-Christians is his consideration of the question of the “righteous heathen”; for more on this see Frank Grady, *Representing Righteous Heathens in Late Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Derek Pearsall, “The Idea of Universal Salvation in *Piers Plowman* B and C,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39 (2009), 257–81; and George H. Russell, “The Salvation of the Heathen: The Exploration of a Theme in *Piers Plowman*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 29 (1966), 101–16.

⁹⁰ As Emily Steiner notes, the move from the hermeneutic model of fulfillment to that of replacement of the Jews in *Piers Plowman* “is the price that must be paid for narrative progress, if the poem is to move forward from biblical history to the Church Militant” (*Reading Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 220).

⁹¹ Eliza Narin van Court, “Hermeneutics of Supersession: The Revision of the Jews from the B to the C text of *Piers Plowman*,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 10 (1996), 43–87.

⁹² Ruth M. Ames argues that one of the primary themes in *Piers Plowman* is the fulfillment of scripture through the characters of Piers Plowman, as well as the Old Testament patriarchs, Moses and Abraham: *The Fulfillment of Scriptures: Abraham, Moses, and Piers* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

poem remained largely focused on the B text's supersessionist model of fulfillment rather than the model of replacement that Narin van Court finds in the C revision. The texts with which *Piers* circulates seem to stress the typological nature of pre-Incarnation Jewish identity and its importance for the present and future of the Christian faith.

The mutual importance of typology in *Piers Plowman* and *The Siege of Jerusalem* may be put into further perspective through one of the manuscripts in which they appear together, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 656, one of the *p*-group manuscripts discussed in Chapter 2. In addition to *Piers* and the *Siege*, which appear together in one booklet, Laud 656 also contains a second booklet (copied in the same hand) containing some minor religious prose texts. These items make up a traditional catechetical and instructional sequence, as we saw commonly in East Anglia, beginning with an "Exposition on the Creed" and proceeding to a Decalogue text entitled *Decem Mandata* and a catalogue of sentences from the books of wisdom entitled *Proverbia Salomonis*.⁹³ The unique character of this sequence, however, which stresses the typological nature of the Old Testament exempla and their importance for the pastoralia, may offer a helpful way of situating the reception of *Piers* and the *Siege* together.⁹⁴ Ralph Hanna very briefly notes the occurrence of *Piers* with these prose texts, which he refers to as "biblically oriented prose)—perhaps what passed in some circles as

⁹³ As I have argued elsewhere, the idiosyncratic style of these three texts suggests that they were composed and circulated as a textual unit, though the Decalogue text was elsewhere excerpted for independent use (Madrinkian, "New Findings in a Late-Medieval Catechetical Prose Sequence"). Although Laud Misc. 656 has connections to the Southwest Midlands and the *p*-group of *Piers Plowman*, the circulation of these prose texts seems to have been predominantly eastern.

⁹⁴ Where the present sequence differs from other devotional literature is in its employment of scripture alone, using no authorial voice or non-biblical didacticism. The three texts are composed solely of translated scriptural quotations and paraphrase, borrowing predominantly from the Old Testament, especially the books of history, the prophetic books, the wisdom books, and the Pentateuch. The authorial silence in the texts fosters a deliberate unoriginality; they speak *through* scripture rather than about it, thereby adopting its incontrovertible authority.

poeticized gospels.”⁹⁵ Beyond their didactic function, the unique character of these texts offers an important insight into the ways in which *Piers* was understood in relation to *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and elsewhere *The Pistill of Susan* and *Mandeville’s Travels*, as part of an exemplary and typological biblical history, principally occupied with an Old Testament perspective on contemporary Christian practice. The prose texts in Laud 656 bear important links to *The Siege of Jerusalem* and *Piers Plowman*, not simply in the context of this single manuscript, but in a wider discussion of their reception. The typological emphasis of the “Exposition on the Creed” and the exemplary nature of the Old Testament narratives in the Decalogue treatise demonstrate the intimate relationship between basic principles of the faith in the contemporary Church and the superseded law of the Old Testament.

In considering the importance of typology and the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, it is important to consider one prevailing theme that continually binds *Piers Plowman* with *The Pistill of Susan* and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, the subject of the law. The judicial themes and legal terminology used in *Piers Plowman* have been documented extensively, and it has even been speculated that Langland at some point had legal training.⁹⁶ *The Pistill of Susan* also displays a similarly pronounced interest in civic law, particularly in the courtroom scene, wherein Susan is formally tried for her crimes, and the skillful description of Daniel’s cross-examination of the judges demonstrates a sophisticated

⁹⁵ Hanna, “Middle English Books,” p. 165.

⁹⁶ Victoria Thomas, “*Piers Plowman*, Legal Authority and the Law of Subject Status” (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University, 2012); Andrew Galloway, “*Piers Plowman* and the Subject of the Law,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 15 (2001), 117–140; Anne Middleton, “Acts of Vagrancy,” in *Written Work*, ed. Justice and Kerby-Fulton, pp. 208–317; Lawrence M. Clopper, “Need Men and Women Labor? Langland’s Wanderer and the Labor Ordinances,” in Barbara Hanawalt, ed., *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 110–29; John A. Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1988); Myra Stokes, *Justice and Mercy in Piers Plowman: A Reading of the B Text Visio* (London: Croon Helm, 1984); William J. Birnes, “Christ as Advocate: The Legal Metaphor of *Piers Plowman*,” *Annale Mediaeval*, 16 (1975), 71–93.

understanding of legal processes. As it was noted above, *The Pistill of Susan* continually contrasts the faithful Susan and Joachim with the false judges, who, in the end, are subjected to deserving punishment with much the same relish as the killing of the Jews of Jerusalem in the *Siege*. Like *Piers Plowman*, moreover, the poem uses a range of legal vocabulary, which further suggests the poet's interest in the law as a framing device for the poem.⁹⁷ A similar, though less overt interest in law can also be seen in *The Siege of Jerusalem*. Hanna notes, for instance, a strong legal discourse in Vespasian's vow, which takes on "the language of contract."⁹⁸ More broadly, however, the *Siege* positions the law and legal justice as directly related to religion, contrasting "þe lawe and þe lore þat our byleue askeþ" (l. 206) with "Moyses lawe" (l. 484), upheld by Caiaphas and the other learned Jewish people. The morbid punishment for the improper use of the law that is found at the end of *The Pistill of Susan* also acts as the *Siege*'s justification for its cruel punishment of the Jews. Since they abide by the superseded Law of Moses and not the New Law of Christ, they deserve the same legalistic justice that was doled out on the false judges of *The Pistill of Susan*. The implied typological implications here in *The Siege of Jerusalem* are made particularly clear in the torture of Caiaphas and the other Jews, wherein it is said "The lered ledes of the lawe a litel bynyep / Weren tourmented on a tre, topsailes walten" (l. 709–10). The torture of the Jews by hanging them from a tree offers a heavy-handed allusion to the Crucifixion, specifically noting that they were hung upside down, and thus, stressing their corrupt relationship to the sacred Christian event. Given the interest in *Piers Plowman*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and *The*

⁹⁷ For a discussion of this language and its precedent in its source text, *Tractatus metricus de Susanna*, see Lynn Staley, "Susannah and English Communities," pp. 52–57. The focus on the law and the court in *The Pistill of Susan* also positions the poem as a disputational work. The general understanding of *The Pistill of Susan* as part of the dispute/debate genre is potentially corroborated by its placement in Vernon, directly following the *Disputation between Mary and the Cross*.

⁹⁸ Hanna, "Contextualizing *The Siege of Jerusalem*," p. 110.

Pistill of Susan in the relationship between Jews and Christians, the complex engagements with the law in all three poems may thus function symbolically for the issues of divine law that underlie the Old and New Covenants. Thus, the treatment of law and legal practice in these poems has important implications for our understanding of the texts' treatment of Jewish history and Christian eschatology.

The theological position in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, however, is not simply a Romans-are-good/Jews-are-bad allegory. While the poem leaves little room for sympathy for the Jews, there may be reason to suspect a less-than-positive attitude toward the Roman aggressors. Although the *Siege*-poet depicts the Romans as justifiable *miles Christi*, there are numerous instances throughout the poem wherein the Romans fail to uphold the standards of Christian piety. In many ways, the Romans embody the perceived moral failures of fourteenth-century society, particularly when considered through a socially minded moral lens like Langland's. While the hanging scene described above in many ways shows the supersession of the Jews by the Christians, the Romans are also ironically backward-thinking in their approach to legal justice; the hanging of the Jews from a tree, which functions as a form of retribution for their purported killing of Christ, uses the Old Testament "eye-for-eye" legal principle of Exodus 21:24, which was specifically denounced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:38–39). Another such instance of this moral corruption is evident when the Romans grant refuge to a group of Jews who are seeking truce. It is discovered, however, that the Jews, in their starvation, have eaten the city's treasure: "Ful þe gottes of gold ilka gome hadde; / Lest fomen fongen hem schold, here floreyne þey eten" (ll. 1167–68). When the Romans learn of this, in their desire for the gold within the refugees they break their promise and slaughter the Jews to retrieve the treasure: "ledes hem slowen, / Goren euerche

a gome and þe gold taken” (ll. 1170–71). From a Langlandian perspective the Jews’ action of eating the treasure is a poignant reminder of the transience of material wealth, and its insufficiency for the practical necessities of existence.⁹⁹ The Romans’ desire for gold, moreover, outstrips their capacity for mercy, contrasting sharply with Langland’s repeated injunction to forsake wealth and live in patient poverty. Discussions of greed and exhortations to seek poverty over material wealth were, of course, becoming increasingly prominent in this period through reformist criticisms of the excess of the institutional Church, which may have influenced the reception of the two poems in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.¹⁰⁰

In this reading of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, therefore, both the Jews and Christian Romans are portrayed as representing sinfulness, the contemporary downfall of the institutional Church and the punishment that must follow. In discussing *The Siege*, Suzanne Yeager observes the dual role of the Romans in the poem: “Although literal and typological interpretations of the Romans of the poetic siege place them in the role of Christians who do battle for their faith, the exegetical applications demonstrate that the Romans also occupied

⁹⁹ *Piers Plowman* emphasizes the importance of cultivating patient poverty, both in the spiritual and the material sense. For more on poverty in *Piers Plowman* see Anne M. Scott, *‘Piers Plowman’ and the Poor* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004); Derek Pearsall, “Poverty and Poor People in *Piers Plowman*,” in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. 167–85; Geoffrey Shepherd, “Poverty in *Piers Plowman*,” in *Social Relations and Ideas*, ed. T. H. Aston, P. R. Coss, Christopher Dyer, and Joan Thirsk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 169–89. For an argument that such issues of wealth were recognized by readers of *Piers Plowman*, see Maura Nolan, “The Fortunes of *Piers Plowman* and its Readers,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 20 (2007), 1–47 (p. 35).

¹⁰⁰ See Lawrence, M. Clopper, “Franciscans, Lollards, and Reform,” in *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 177–96; Margaret Aston, “Caim’s Castles: Poverty, Politics, and Disendowment,” in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. B. Dobson (Gloucester: St Martin’s Press, 1984), pp. 45–81; rpt. in Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350–1600* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 95–131; and Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 343, 405–06. For a discussion of poverty as understood by both Wyclif and Langland, as well as *Piers Plowman*’s later tradition, see David Aers, “John Wyclif: Poverty and the Poor,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 55–72.

an antagonistic role, that of the Antichrist.”¹⁰¹ This problematizing of the Christian Romans and their relationship to the Jews is key to understanding the function of typology in *The Siege of Jerusalem*, as well as *The Pistill of Susan* and *Piers Plowman*. Yeager observes *The Siege of Jerusalem*’s relationship to the tradition associated with the writings of Joachim of Fiore, who established a typological connection between the Jews of Jerusalem and contemporary Christianity, comparing the desolation of the Church he perceived in his own time to the historical destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁰² Thus, the poem’s depiction of the Roman siege of Jerusalem encompasses a complex typological reading of the historical events in the continuum of biblical history. Such a reading also precludes any easy moralization of the Jews in the poem, as their depiction is variable, they are both the Jews responsible for Christ’s death (and thus deserving punishment in the medieval sense) and the representative precursors to medieval Christians. In the same way, the Romans are both Christian crusaders carrying out the will of God and the forces of Antichrist, bringing about the inevitable destruction of the holy city. Thus, the city of Jerusalem and the battle that takes place transcend the limitations of the historical context and take on a much more densely moral and allegorical connotation.¹⁰³

The Joachimist typologies that may well underlie the action of the *Siege* could also be an important way of interpreting the final passus of *Piers Plowman* B and C, in which the

¹⁰¹ “*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Biblical Exegesis: Writing about Romans in Fourteenth-Century England,” *The Chaucer Review*, 39 (2004), 70–102 (71).

¹⁰² As Yeager notes, “in a Christian medieval exegetical sense, the tribulations of Jews and Christians alike are bound across time, so that events and individuals form part of a pattern set to repeat itself until the Last Judgment” (Ibid., p. 86).

¹⁰³ As Yeager notes, “According to the exegetes, hope for attaining the physical Jerusalem is so far gone that an eternal ideal of the city is evoked instead.... In replacing the material with the spiritual goal, the physical city no longer matters, and its annihilation inaugurates a period of renewal for western Christendom” (“*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Biblical Exegesis,” pp. 93–94).

castle of Unite is besieged by the forces of Antichrist.¹⁰⁴ Joachimist associations with *Piers Plowman* have a long history in modern criticism, which has been outlined by Richard K. Emmerson, though he ultimately argues against any such reading. While Emmerson is right to question the extent to which *Piers Plowman* contains references to Joachimist prophecy, as is his essay's focus, Joachim's typological interpretations, particularly of the city of Jerusalem, may be an important way of understanding the siege of Unity. The final passus of *Piers* presents the downfall of Unite as the result of its internal corruption when its occupants are no longer penitent. Just as the Jews in the *Siege* are punished, Langland presents the downfall of the corrupt Church through the destroyed city of Unite. Nor does *Piers* allow for much sympathy for the occupants of Unite, as we are made fully aware that their destruction was brought on by their own corruption. The only sympathy the reader is encouraged to feel for the people of Unite, as with the Jews in the *Siege*, is sorrow at the downfall of a chosen people, who were once blessed, but are now shown as deserving the judgment that befalls them. Emmerson argues that the ending of *Piers* is traditionally apocalyptic, depicting the final judgment at the end of time, rather than any other; yet he also stresses the poem's dissimilarity to the Book of Revelation, which, if this were true, must cause us to wonder why Langland would omit any reference to the most obvious source for biblical apocalypticism. The finality of the Last Judgment, moreover, seems not to cohere with the open-ended conclusion of the poem, wherein Conscience sets back out to find Piers Plowman, and "gradde after Grace" (B XX.387). Such searching brings the poem into a loop;

¹⁰⁴ Richard K. Emmerson, "'Yernen to Rede Redels?': *Piers Plowman* and Prophecy," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 7 (1993), 27–76. Notable proponents of the theory include Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse*, and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 162–203.

it ends where it began, searching for truth and grace.¹⁰⁵ By understanding this scene through Joachimist typology, we may position the Siege of Unity not as a final conclusion, but rather as a representation of the fall of Jerusalem, which continually repeats until the judgment day. Such an interpretation would have also offered Langland's readers a way of reflecting on the parallels between the contemporary ills of the medieval Church discussed throughout the poem and the Jews of Jerusalem, seeing their own society as leading up to an eventual apocalyptic rebirth.

For both Langland and the *Siege*-poet, then, this apocalyptic exegetical tradition of siege and destruction offers a convenient topical commentary on the contemporary corruption of the Church and the inevitable downfall that this will bring about. This commentary seems to have appealed to medieval readers of the poems, illuminating the relationship between salvation history and contemporary social and religious issues.¹⁰⁶ This offers an important way of understanding the final sequence in *Piers Plowman* and its relevance for medieval readers, offering not just a standard depiction of salvation history, but also a way of reflecting on the contemporary issues of late-medieval English society. Such typological treatments of the relationship between Jews and Christians, then, were very topical for fourteenth-century audiences, for whom the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of the contemporary Church was a way of interpreting the perceived degradation of the

¹⁰⁵ As Emily Stenier observes, "That the poem ends with a present-day apocalypse, rather than with Judgement Day, points not to finality but to revision" (*Reading Piers Plowman*, p. 222).

¹⁰⁶ Ralph Hanna notes an overriding theme of biblical history in Laud Misc. 656 ("Miscellaneity and Vernacularity," pp. 37–51; 47, n. 35). Of the character and reception of the *Siege*, Ralph Hanna writes, "All the other witnesses appear to categorize the poem in terms of what moderns would call 'theme' or 'subject matter'. At the broadest, this is simply 'biblical' and perhaps responsive to hagiographical expectations, a generally unnoted subset of 'alliterative historical' interests, an effort at mapping the continuing presence of the grace bestowed in the Incarnation. Yet equally, the Bible is a learned historical text with rather shaky outlines, and the poem might be perceived, following on the source used at the opening, *Vindicta salvatoris*, as a necessary, if apocryphal, completion of Gospel narrative" ("Middle English Books," p. 167).

Christian world. As Andrea Ruddick has discussed, the tradition of identifying the English nation with that of Israel was long established in medieval writings, and came to be used more prominently in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in sermons and political rhetoric.¹⁰⁷ This period had seen a good deal of political and religious uncertainty and conflict, including the papal schism, the threat of heresy, the looming possibility of French invasion, and, in the fifteenth century, the destructiveness of internal political conflict. In this unstable period there seems to have been an increasing desire to compare the trials of England to the Old Testament Israel, suggesting not only the potential for destruction should the nation continue on its destructive path, but also the possibility of redemption in the light of God's special favor for the English nation.

Such topical engagement can also be seen in *The Siege of Jerusalem*. Ralph Hanna suggests a possible Lancastrian reading of the *Siege*, noting the potential association between Jews and Lollards in the early fifteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Through this perspective, therefore, the eating of the baby episode discussed above may in fact have been understood by a Lancastrian audience as a direct critique of the Wycliffite denial of transubstantiation, and thus, perversion of the sacrament of the Eucharist. We see here a Mary-like figure eating her

¹⁰⁷ Andrea Ruddick, "National Sentiment and Religious Vocabulary in Fourteenth-Century England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 60 (2009), 1–18.

¹⁰⁸ Hanna, "Contextualizing *The Siege of Jerusalem*," pp. 119–20. David Lawton also notes "the connection made at least in Richard Frampton's copy [CUL Mm.5.14], Hanna and I would argue, between Jews and Lollards," which may suggest that such associations were being made by the poem's fifteenth-century audiences ("Review of Millar, *The Siege of Jerusalem*," p. 237). For another argument for the association between Jews and Lollards in this period see Cecilia Cutts, "The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 5 (1944), 45–60. Hamel offers another possible interpretation of the Jews representing the Saracens ("*The Siege of Jerusalem* as a Crusading Poem," pp. 187–89). It should be noted, however, that this view is contradicted by Narin van Court, who argues that the impulse to see the Jews as representing other heretical groups such as Lollards or Saracens "elides the very real issue of Jewish presence in Christendom that continues to concern the Christian community even in the absence of the Jews," referencing other fourteenth-century texts that "directly address the issues of Jews *qua* Jew" ("*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Augustinian Historians," p. 228).

baby in a quasi-Eucharistic act, which is deprived of any divine presence, and is thus perverse and cannibalistic. The focus of the poem's representation of Jews, therefore, is self-reflexive; it is concerned not with the disadvantaged state of the Jewish people, but rather with how the Jews could illuminate the moral state of Christendom in the later Middle Ages and all of the internal strife that this entailed. So while this is, indeed, a poem about Jews, it is, more specifically, about what Jewish history can reveal about the future of Christianity in an age of ecclesiastical uncertainty, following the Great Schism in Rome and the Lollard controversies. Whether the corruption of the Church was perceived as the growth of the heretical groups, or, conversely, the hypocrisy of the Church hierarchy, *The Siege of Jerusalem* could be applicable to both Lollards and orthodox alike.¹⁰⁹

It is in this topicality, perhaps, that we can situate *Piers Plowman's* place in the wider literary tradition that was discussed in the first part of this chapter, which, as it was noted, are concerned not only with the Jews, but also with alterity more generally. We might here return to Douce 323, which was noted above as containing *Piers* alongside the prose *Brut*, the *Abbey and Charter of the Holy Ghost*, and *Ypotis*. This manuscript is particularly important for understanding the relationship between a history of salvation and an exploration of an English national identity. The manuscript opens with the prose *Brut*, a secular history that emphasizes the intimate relationship between the salvation history of the bible and the social history of England and gives further credence to the relevance of such pseudo-biblical texts to the issues of contemporary medieval society. Not only does it deal with exemplary historical figures, it also tackles issues of foreignness and strife, as well as the relationship

¹⁰⁹ This notion is affirmed by Middleton, who suggests that *Piers Plowman* "afforded both to reformers and orthodox men of affairs a particularly powerful idiom for thought about the contemporary community in a way at once historically concrete and Scripturally universal" ("Audience and Public," p. 108).

between the past and the present and the relevance of this temporal structure to the future of a Christian nation. In establishing a distinctly English historical identity, the *Brut* is forced to deal with the presence of otherness, exploring its own sense of national identity through cultural and religious encounter.¹¹⁰ In a particularly revealing passage, the prose *Brut* expresses a concern about the state of cultural diversity in late-medieval England:

þe grete lordes of Engeland were nouzt alle of o nacioun, but were mellede wiþ oþere nacions, þat is forto seyn, somme Britons, somme Saxones, somme Danois, somme Peghtes, somme Frenchemen, somme Normans, somme Spaignardes, somme Romayns, some Henaudes, some Flemyngus, and of oþere diuerse naciouns, þe whiche nacions acorded nouzt to þe kynde bloode of Engeland. And if þe grete Lordes of Engeland hade bene onelich wedded to Englysshe peple, þan shulde pees haue bene, and reste amongus ham, wiþouten eny envy.¹¹¹

This uneasiness with the mixing of various races and cultural groups with the “kynde bloode of Engeland” may offer a useful way of understanding the navigation of otherness throughout the texts discussed in this chapter. As in texts like *Mandeville’s Travels* and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, the encounter with foreign nations and religions causes the Middle English prose *Brut* to reflect on the relationship of a Christian nation to other non-English and non-Christian groups. Just as the salvation history in *The Pistill of Susan*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and *Piers Plowman* must be understood through the Church’s fraught relationship with its

¹¹⁰ For more on England and national identity see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Also see Gerald Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England, 1360–1461* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); and *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: Leeds Texts and Monographs, 1995).

¹¹¹ Friedrich Brie, *The Chronicles of England, Early English Text Society*, O.S. 131 (London: Oxford University Press, 1906), p. 220. For other discussions of this passage see Margaret Lamont, “Becoming English: Ronwenne’s Wassail, Language, and National Identity in the Middle English Prose *Brut*,” *Studies in Philology*, 107 (2010), 283–309 (pp. 308–09), and Raluca Radulescu, “Talkyng of Cronycles of Kinges and of other Polycyecz’: Fifteenth Century Miscellanies, the *Brut*, and the Readership of *Le Morte Darthur*,” in *Arthurian Literature*, 18 (2001), 125–41. As Lamont argues, in its representation of cultural diversity in England, the prose *Brut* seeks to create “a composite history of England, one that encompasses the multiplicity of peoples on the island and in the process creates Englishness itself” (“Becoming English,” p. 294).

Jewish heritage, the *Brut* positions the history of Britain as navigating the uneasy formation of an identity built upon cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity.

The exploration in the prose *Brut* of English nationalism and the nation's place in a wider world may also suggest another dimension to the topicality and social impact of the literary tradition discussed in this chapter. The second quarter of the fifteenth century brought a number of changes for the English church and society, with the coronation of Henry V in 1413 and the appointment of Henry Chichele as Archbishop of Canterbury following the death of Thomas Arundel in 1414. Vincent Gillespie has noted, in this period, “a fundamental paradigm shift in the English church's view of itself, and of its relationship to the rest of the Universal Church.”¹¹² This shift was largely related to the Conciliar movement in the first part of the fifteenth century, a major effort across Europe to address the concerns of the Universal Church.¹¹³ England's increasing contact with the rest of Europe during this period allowed the *ecclesia anglicana* to gain a wider perspective of its place in a pan-European church and, consequently, an increasing sense of national identity.¹¹⁴

In asserting England's position in this wider European perspective, the English church sought to establish its own legitimacy by asserting its antiquity in the Christian faith. Gillespie discusses Thomas Polton's diplomatic defense of the *ecclesia anglicana* at the Council of Constance in 1417, in which he “asserts the greater antiquity of the faith in England; the higher Christian dignity of the English dynasty and the larger size of the church

¹¹² Vincent Gillespie, “1412–1534: Culture and History,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 163–94 (p. 165). For a similar argument by Gillespie, see “Chichele's Church: Vernacular Theology in England after Thomas Arundel,” in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 3–42.

¹¹³ See J. H. Burns and Thomas M. Izbicki, eds., *Conciliarism and Papalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Thorlac Turville-Petre notes “how easily the concept of the universal Christian community co-existed and overlapped with that of the national community” (*England the Nation*, pp. 27–28).

in England, as well as stressing the size and linguistic diversity of the British dominions.”¹¹⁵

This supranational perspective, however, was not limited to diplomatic rhetoric like that of Thomas Polton. Turville-Petre highlights the attitudes of the clergy to issues of Church and nation, pointing to Robert Manning’s *Handlyng Synne*, which demonstrates “how the small community of the priest in his parish was able to draw on the larger concepts of region and nation.”¹¹⁶ Turville-Petre also stresses the role of history, arguing that *The South English Legendary*, the extremely popular collection of saints’ lives, shows “how the Church interpreted its role throughout its history in support of the nation and people.”¹¹⁷ This emphasis on the antiquity of the English faith is particularly important, and may provide some context for the flourishing of Old Testament literature in England in this period. The growing awareness of the place of the *ecclesia anglicana* within the Universal Church and its relationship to English national identity may also give a way of better understanding the specific textual tradition that has been discussed in this chapter.¹¹⁸ While the history of salvation in these texts is related to contemporary events in England, it is continually mingled with an encounter with foreignness, especially in the relationship between Rome and the East, which further established the nation’s connection to contemporary Church history.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Gillespie, “Culture and History,” p. 168. For the text of this response see C. M. D. Crowder, *Unity, Heresy and Reform, 1378–1460: The Conciliar Response to the Great Schism* (London: Arnold, 1977), pp. 60–78. Also see J.-P. Genet, “English Nationalism: Thomas Polton at the Council of Constance,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 28 (1984), 60–78.

¹¹⁶ Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. 28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹¹⁸ It is important to recognize the tensions that underlie the negotiation of national and supranational identities. As Turville-Petre points out, “It is commonly supposed that a sense of national identity was held in check by membership of the universal Christian Church. . . . Such views reflect the fundamental misconception that one identity must exclude or diminish another. . . . It is in the interest of the individual that these identities exist on different planes and so overlap and co-exist, more often reinforcing one another than conflicting” (*Ibid.*, pp. 40–41).

¹¹⁹ Gillespie points to Lydgate’s invocation of Roman emperors as models for Henry VI, suggesting, “That invocation of a Roman, imperial past is also part of the self-presentation engendered out of the

The prose *Brut* thus fits into this uneasy literary tradition, merging a social history of England with a biblical history of salvation and navigating the Christian people's relationship to other cultures and faiths. Yet the prose *Brut* also positions this tense interaction as being in some ways generative, reflecting on how transnationalism can offer a way of understanding the larger scheme of Christian history, and thus, help English Christians to look forward to their own future.¹²⁰ In so doing, the prose *Brut* also complicates the linearity of time, offering a polychronic temporality, similar to that discussed above in *Piers Plowman*'s typological structure,¹²¹ as a way to understand the present and future of contemporary Christianity in England. If we return to the final passūs of *Piers Plowman*, we may observe a similar concern with the nation in relation to Christian history. Emily Steiner notes that "in B.19–20, the poet creates a distinctly English version of the Church Militant, this time in opposition to the papacy and to the Holy Roman Empire."¹²² Although Douce 323 uses the A version, which does not contain the final apocalyptic sequence, it may be that the pairing of the *Brut* with *Piers Plowman* in this manuscript reflects an implicit awareness at the end of the fifteenth century of *Piers*'s applicability to issues of religious history and English national identity. Given the topicality of *Piers Plowman*'s apocalyptic ending to a nation beset with

English church's need for historical redefinition" ("Chichele's Church," p. 10). For more on the relationship between England and Rome in this period see Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome, 1362–1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and *England, Rome, and the Papacy, 1417–1464: The Study of a Relationship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹²⁰ Unlike *Mandeville's Travels*, however, which vividly depicts the monstrosity of foreignness, Lamont has suggested that the prose *Brut* instead attempts to assimilate the various nations and religions into one national identity ("Becoming English," p. 300).

¹²¹ In discussing the presence of prophecy in the Middle English prose *Brut*, Tamar Drukker suggests that the text "reflects a Christian conception of the past as something that is neither over nor complete. This perception rests upon the typological reading of the Old Testament, accepted as a narrative of historical events whose profound significance is revealed by their fulfillment in the New" (Drukker, "Vision and History," p. 25).

¹²² *Reading Piers Plowman*, p. 221.

social and religious uncertainty, moreover, it may be that *Piers Plowman*—as well as other texts like the *Siege of Jerusalem*—was understood in the fifteenth century not merely as a general salvation history and pseudo-historical romance, but one that is distinctly applicable to an English history, and implicitly, an English future.¹²³

III. Conclusion

In this survey of *Piers Plowman*'s literary contexts, what has become altogether clear is that the poem's popular reception is anything but simply defined. Yet by broadening our focus on its contextual relationships there are indeed patterns of literary transmission within which the poem was circulated, which offer some important insights into the history of its medieval reception. By decentralizing *Piers Plowman* as the crux of this analysis, this chapter has suggested that *Piers*'s initially peculiar relationships in multi-text manuscripts are explicable in relation to a larger literary tradition, the generic boundaries of which are constantly shifting and expanding. It is a tradition defined by a loosely related group of texts that are continually rearranged and reimagined. It is difficult to isolate a single set of motivations behind this tradition, which is far more diffuse than, for instance, the deliberately useful organization of pastoral literature in East Anglia. There may, however, be a way of situating this tradition within a wider cultural movement in the fifteenth century, of which *Piers Plowman* may have played some role, a movement that dealt with a universal history of salvation and the place of the English church within an eschatological timeline. The popular

¹²³ The reception history of the prose *Brut* shows its readers and producers engaging with the subject of history in a variety of ways. See Ryan Perry, "Making Histories: Locating the Belfast Fragment of the Middle English Prose *Brut*," *Digital Philology*, 3 (2014), 240–256 (p. 251), and Julia Marvin, "'It is to harde for my lernyng': Making Sense of Annotations in *Brut* Manuscripts," *Digital Philology*, 3 (2014), 304–322.

texts with which *Piers Plowman* was most commonly circulated, therefore, reflect what may have been a more consciously definable generic category in this period than we have yet realized, one which was implicitly recognizable to its contemporary readers, but is lost in our modern retrospection. Thus, our critical categories such as “pseudo-historical romance,” may limit rather than aid our understanding of *Piers*’s literary contexts.

While, in the Vernon manuscript, *Piers Plowman* appears in the much more traditional (and more expected) context of devotional texts, it would appear that over the course of the fifteenth century the poem’s exemplary and typological qualities brought about associations with the generic category that occupies Vernon’s third section. Yet as Blake noted of Vernon’s Section III, the texts in this category are also concerned with conveying basic religious instruction and elements of catechesis. This is a fact which may go some way toward a rough synthesis of *Piers Plowman*’s reception, suggesting that the reading of the poem in the context of basic catechetical devotion is not so contradictory to its interpretation as an exemplary biblical history. It is within this porous genre that we can more precisely understand its association with texts like *Mandeville’s Travels*, *The Pistill of Susan*, and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and what theoretical implications such associations might have implied for readers in this period. In this way, *Piers* is still, in many ways, participating in a didactic tradition, but one more inclined to educate through biblical example, proverbial wisdom, and typological understandings of the Church’s relationship to a Judaic history. The association of this literary tradition with the dialogue form, as noted above, may also offer some revealing evidence about the London reception of *Piers Plowman*. Eight of the B-texts, all of which can be localized fairly confidently to London, refer to the poem as “dialogus petri

plowman.”¹²⁴ As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, debate literature does indeed feature as a prominent part of *Piers*'s wider literary contexts, a fact which may indeed explain its association with this tradition in London.

It was argued in the previous chapter that *Piers Plowman*'s reception was, to some degree, shaped by the practical purposes of its specific regional audiences. What this chapter suggests, however, is that *Piers* was also understood within a wider, more pervasive genre that governed a great deal of its popular reception. Understood within this generic structure, *Piers* is revealed not merely as a didactic text suitable to practical aims, but also a deeply literary text, which both illuminated and was illuminated by the texts that circulated around it. This overriding category seems to have tapped into the profound relevance of the poem to some of the most pressing social concerns of the later Middle Ages and the place of humanity within a long history of Christian tradition, where it must face the otherness of its own complex identity and prepare for the arrival of an immanent apocalyptic future. Throughout *Piers Plowman*'s popular reception, as it has here been argued, this topical quality of the poem's treatment of salvation history appears to have resonated strongly with its readers. Its manuscript compilations show *Piers* alongside works which highlight its potential for illuminating the foundations of Christian practice and the roots of a long Judeo-Christian tradition, which pervades not only the Church's past but also its present and future. These issues of religious temporality, moreover, allowed *Piers Plowman* and its wider literary

¹²⁴ For a discussion of *Piers Plowman* as *dialogus* in London see Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 246–47, 258–88. This reference to *Piers* as *dialogus* is unique to the B version, and appears only in London-based manuscripts. Burrow and Turville-Petre argue that this explicit was most likely present in the archetype of all B manuscripts, though it is still difficult to know whether this was authorial or a scribal invention (“Introduction,” in *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive*, Vol. 9).

milieu to reflect on the most pressing cultural and religious issues in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, and to understand the nation's place in the trajectory of salvation.

Conclusion: Producing *Piers Plowman*

The history of *Piers Plowman*'s transmission and the audience that received it is not an easy story to tell. In attempting to draw a larger picture of the poem's late-medieval production, it is important to recognize that its popularization was not in any way centralized or coherent, and thus, diversity must be the cornerstone of understanding *Piers Plowman* as a whole. Like a myth or a fable, its origin cannot necessarily be isolated to a single progenitor or point in time, but rather springs out of the culture that surrounded it.¹ How, then, can an understanding of *Piers Plowman*'s material history help us to better approach the poem as a literary text? The best way of understanding the parallels between the poem's material transmission and its literary quality is to ask a very simple question: what is *Piers Plowman* about? The answer to this question is almost always different, and this diversity of response has characterized the poem's reception since the Middle Ages. It is also what makes the poem timeless, the ability to be interpreted and shaped according to the will of the reader. Like the poem itself, the narrative of *Piers Plowman*'s textual and material production is a jumbled and confusing mess of inconsistent elements that were generated out of the diversity of responses to the poem by those who encountered it.

The first chapter of this study shows us that scribal activity is fundamental to an understanding of textual transmission. Just as the compilational habits in miscellaneous manuscripts influenced the *way* in which people read the poem, the scribal influence at the level of textual transmission shaped the poem itself. This study demonstrates that scribes and

¹ This perspective on the poem departs from previous overviews of the poem, such as that by Malcolm Godden, who offers a neat, author-centric narrative of *Piers Plowman*'s development (*The Making of Piers Plowman* (London: Longman, 1990)).

book producers had an extraordinary impact on the way in which *Piers Plowman* was received. Here we see that at every level, the scribe had a fundamental role to play, even, in some cases, influencing how Langland himself revised his own poem. The authorial aspect in the first chapter shows that, like the production of manuscripts, the production of a literary text is similarly made up of “polyvocal and individuated voices,” to use Ralph Hanna’s words.² Following, and to some extent during, Langland’s successive revisions to his poem, *Piers Plowman* seems to have begun to circulate locally, possibly given its impetus by the support of some wealthy patrons in the provinces. As Section II demonstrated, the poem’s production was largely regionalized, transmitted within insular coterie of scribes and book producers who appear to have produced the text for a predominantly local readership. Although *Piers* seems to have been copied across the country, the scribal groupings in the Southwest Midlands and East Anglia (especially Norfolk) remained two of the most important centers of distribution outside of the capital. Much of the regional production appears to have been associated with local religious houses and benefited from their networks of textual exchange. In the case of the Southwest Midlands, the production of the *p*-group of *Piers Plowman C* seems to have been contained to a relatively small area of northwest Gloucestershire and may have had ties to Tewkesbury Abbey and the surrounding network of West Midlands religious establishments. In Norfolk, the poem similarly appears to have been connected with various religious houses, with particular connections to Thetford Priory in southern Norfolk. While these clusters of regional copying appear to be largely self-contained, in both instances they also occasionally radiated out into surrounding counties and to the capital.

² Hanna, *London Literature*, p. 3.

What is particularly interesting about the copying of *Piers Plowman* is the extent to which scribes were meticulous in presenting the text. Numerous manuscripts both in the provinces and in London show scribes taking extraordinary care to get the text right, a notion which suggests that many scribes, much like modern editors, believed in the existence of a “correct” text, even if that text frequently does not accord with what we might now consider to be authorial.³ While modern editors have largely sought to arrive at a text that is closest to the original authorial composition,⁴ the scribes of the *p*-group, for instance, were more concerned with preserving the integrity of their local textual tradition.

Along with this motivation to correct there seems to have been a corresponding and in some ways contradictory desire to extend and adapt the text. This tendency towards adaptation manifests itself in a variety of ways. Most conventional are the actual rewritings or extensions to the poem, as we see in the “Z text” of Bodley 851, the Ilchester Prologue, or the John But extension to the A text.⁵ Other forms of *Piers*’s adaptation may be seen in the appropriation of the title character by John Ball in the Peasants’ Revolt as a rallying cry for social and religious reform.⁶ The poem was also a favorite among the Wycliffites as a

³ On the scribal tendency to correct, see Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*.

⁴ One exception to this effort at authorial reconstruction is Burrow and Turville-Petre’s recent *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive edition, *The B-Version Archetype*, which deliberately preserved corrupt scribal readings in order to record the B version that was actually read in the Middle Ages (*Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 9*).

⁵ Rigg-Brewer, *Z Version*. For more on the Z text as a scribal response see Karrie Fuller, “The Craft of the ‘Z-Maker’.” For the John But extension see Kane, *A Version*, pp. 427–31. Also see Anne Middleton, “Making a Good End: John But as a Reader of *Piers Plowman*,” in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed., Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988), pp. 243–266. For the Ilchester Prologue, see Russell and Kane, *C Version*, pp. 186–94, and Derek Pearsall, “The ‘Ilchester’ Manuscript of *Piers Plowman*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 82 (1981), 181–93.

⁶ For a theory about the possible connections between Langland and John Ball see Michael Johnston’s forthcoming article on William Langland, John Ball, and the Peasants’ Revolt in *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 31 (2017).

commentary on the corruption and hypocrisy of the institutional Church.⁷ While Langland does not himself espouse a Lollard ideology, we here see an instance of the poem's expansive interpretation going beyond an original authorial intention.⁸ Perhaps the most obvious instances of this are the poems of the "*Piers Plowman* Tradition," several of which extended the Lollard interest in *Piers*'s reformist qualities.⁹ Yet as Section III demonstrates, there are other, less obvious ways in which the poem was adapted and expanded. Just as the transmission of *Piers Plowman* appears to have been heavily regionalized, so was its reception. Given the insularity of its circulation in the provinces, the interpretation and basic use of the poem were shifted in order to adapt to its peculiar surroundings in various environments. This study looked at two different manifestations of the poem's social reception, in both of which cases *Piers Plowman*'s literary potential is shaped beyond its authorial intention to suit the needs and interests of a reading public. In the first instance, we see a narrowing of the poem's interpretive potential, where the A text of *Piers Plowman* is utilized for practical instruction and basic devotional practice in pastoral miscellanies. This

⁷ For discussions of the interaction between *Piers Plowman* and Lollardy see Anne Hudson, "Epilogue: The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*," in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John A. Alford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 251–66; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 398–408; Derek Pearsall, "Langland and Lollardy: From B to C," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 17 (2003), 7–23; John Bowers, "*Piers Plowman* and the Police"; and Pamela Gradon, "Langland and the Ideology of Dissent," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 66 (1980), 179–205.

⁸ The obligatory reference here is to David Lawton's often-quoted distinction that Langland did not have Lollard sympathies, rather "the Lollards had Langlandian sympathies" ("Lollardy and the *Piers Plowman* Tradition," *Modern Language Review*, 76 (1981), 780–93 (p. 793)).

⁹ Helen Barr, *The Piers Plowman Tradition: A Critical Edition of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, Richard the Redeless, Mum and the Sothsegger and The Crowned King* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993). For more on Lollardy and the *Piers Plowman* Tradition, see John Scattergood, "*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*: Lollardy and Texts," in *The Lost Tradition: Essays on Middle English Alliterative Poetry*, ed. John Scattergood (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 160–78, and Christina Von Nolcken, "*Piers Plowman*, the Wycliffites and *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 2 (1988), 71–102.

motive, moreover, seems to have been governed by the context in which it circulated in East Anglia, where its interpretation was adapted to the demands of its reading audience.

The second instance of *Piers*'s reception shows the opposite effect, the widening of *Piers Plowman*'s meaning to fit into a genre of texts the poet may never himself have envisaged. In this generic expansion, we see the application of the poem to broader issues that evidence the changing concerns of its national audience. What is particularly important to note in all of the exemplary histories circulating around *Piers Plowman* is that they are not simply dealing with the history of the Church or its people; at their core, they are very much concerned with the issues of contemporary society and religious life and how an understanding of the larger scheme of salvation and its continually cyclic timeline can offer ways of dealing with these perennial problems. The increasingly consistent transmission of *Piers Plowman* within the contexts of Old Testament biblical exempla and the larger social and theological interpretations that seem to have accompanied such contexts, may express the political and religious concerns that weighed upon the English consciousness in this period.¹⁰ In this way, we can see *Piers Plowman*'s place more clearly within its fourteenth- and fifteenth-century reception. Its audience seems to have valued the poem's engagement with the complicated history of Christianity, particularly in its consideration of the typological relationship between the Old Law and the New and its application of this timeline to the contemporary issues of social and ecclesiastical corruption.

¹⁰ As Maura Nolan notes, in the fifteenth century "The social mobility, the increasing bureaucratization of government, and the growing power of the middle classes were combining to create an articulate, interested audience for literature that expressed their social and political concerns" (*John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 96).

The proliferation of literary texts in the capital and the growing emergence of a vernacular culture seems to have influenced what we might think of as a popular literary understanding of the poem in what has, in previous scholarship, been articulated as the “public sphere.”¹¹ The growing national readership of the poem, and the increasingly centralized distribution of the commercial book trade in London, moreover, may have contributed not only to the popularization of the poem, but also to the application of its themes to larger issues and concerns in fifteenth-century England.¹² One example of this may be the London miscellany, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102, a mid-fifteenth century manuscript which places *Piers* alongside the *Digby Poems* (ff. 98r–127v), Richard of Maidstone’s paraphrase of the *Seven Penitential Psalms* (ff. 128r–136r), and a *Debate between the Body and the Soul* (ff. 136r–139v).¹³ These items do in some ways reflect the religious and exemplary tradition discussed in Chapter 5, particularly in the debate tradition associated with it, and mirror some similar items in the Vernon manuscript. Its inclusion of the “Digby poems,” however, may demonstrate an increasing application of this tradition to contemporary political issues.¹⁴ While we have no way of knowing whether the codex was seen as thematically cohesive or not, this series of lyrics does offer an intriguing context for the discussion of a popularized *Piers Plowman*. What makes the Digby poems particularly important for placing *Piers* in such a context is their mutual treatment of political and

¹¹ David Lawton observes an “impressively homogeneous public voice of fifteenth-century poetry,” arguing that this public voice was engaged in “constructing a public sphere parallel to and connected with the structures of power” (“Dullness and the Fifteenth Century,” *English Literary History*, 54 (1987), 761–99 (p. 793)). For more on the public sphere see Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 93–97.

¹² Vincent Gillespie, “1412–1534: Culture and History.”

¹³ Simon Horobin, “The Scribe of Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102.”

¹⁴ The “Digby poems” have been extensively discussed in Helen Barr, *The Digby Poems: A New Edition of the Lyrics* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009).

religious issues as inseparably related, something which Langland does frequently, and a concept which seems to have largely impacted its popular circulation.¹⁵

The literary contexts in which the poem circulated, then, show both diversity and consistency in their understandings and uses of the poem. A consideration of the literary contexts of *Piers Plowman*'s circulation and the various modes of reception through which it was understood has important implications both for our understanding of *Piers Plowman*'s audience and of medieval reception theory more broadly. It demonstrates the impact of historical and social contexts on medieval reception and the production of meaning associated with a poem.¹⁶ Here we see a divide between text and meaning, while the text of the poem was composed by Langland the author (though even this was imprinted with scribal activity), the meaning of the poem is continually shaped and influenced by its social and material milieu, its reception being as much a product of its scribes and readers as it is of Langland himself. In regarding the meaning of a literary work such as *Piers Plowman*, therefore, one must also understand the cultural and historical circumstances of its production.¹⁷ This expanding of our focus to see the reception of *Piers Plowman* in its larger

¹⁵ As Barr observes, "time and again the Digby poet couches his declarative statements in diction that has a double valency. Yoked together in metaphor are the spiritual and the earthly, the theological and the political" (*The Digby Poems*, p. 50). These tensions between the religious and political realms, which are also reflected in the manuscript's body/soul debate, are particularly poignant in the mid fifteenth century and may shed light on the perceptions of *Piers Plowman*'s topicality in this period.

¹⁶ Stephen Shepherd notes that the manuscript contexts of *Piers Plowman* "will inevitably draw within their purview a spectrum of genres in related source/analogous material—and also in manuscript companion-texts" ("Langland's Romances," in *William Langland's Piers Plowman: A Book of Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 69–82, (p. 80)). Anne Middleton similarly remarks, "A sense of the generic limits within which [*Piers Plowman*] was regarded is evident in its range of associations with other works in manuscript" ("Audience and Public," p. 104).

¹⁷ Benson offers a similar argument in regards to the poem's composition, positing, "How different would our sense of *Piers Plowman* be if we were to conceive of its different forms not as successive attempts by the author to perfect his own personal vision, but as efforts to respond to and reach particular audiences? Thus C need not necessarily be the poet's final statement of what he meant, but instead a version of the poem influenced by the needs, request, or even collaboration of others"

literary and social contexts is an important methodological point, which can be useful for other corpora. By decentralizing the poem under consideration we are able to place a reception history within a thick context and address not just the reception of a single text, but of a range of other literature. This method thus sees reception as something that moves beyond the individual book or marginal gloss, dealing, rather, with the literary networks that surrounded a text, and how they can illuminate its broader impact on the people that encountered it.

***Piers Plowman*, Miscellaneity, and the Collaborative Construction of Meaning**

By way of concluding this study of *Piers Plowman*'s material contexts, it is important to reflect on the more theoretical implications of the poem's social production and its importance for our broader understanding of late-medieval textual culture. One of the most significant issues raised throughout the five chapters in this study is that of authorship. As it has been argued, the category of author is an extremely slippery one in the history of *Piers Plowman*'s development. By diversifying the origin of a text's production and recognizing all of the various factors that contribute to the development of its literary identity, we are, in some senses, destabilizing the notion of authorship itself.¹⁸ Such a problematic concept of authorship offers an important illustration of the evolution of medieval literary theory and the concept of authorial agency in vernacular literature. Throughout this study, multi-text

(*Public Piers Plowman*, p. 48). Whereas Benson is here considering the author's response to particular audiences, I have suggested that the poem's post-authorial production is adapted to meet the needs of particular audiences in various milieux.

¹⁸ This is not to deprive Langland of his due credit, as the great literary merit of *Piers Plowman* is surely the result of a skilled and laudable artist. Yet, as we have seen, the "poem," in a more abstract sense, is a text that expanded and evolved to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society in the later Middle Ages, and, in this capacity, cannot be pinned down to a moment in time or a single authorial identity.

manuscripts have played an important role in shaping our understanding of *Piers Plowman*'s circulation and its networks of social and literary relationships. In stepping back and considering the whole picture of *Piers*'s circulation, moreover, the concept of the miscellany, more abstractly, can be a useful way of framing the poem's literary and material development.

Chapter 4 discussed the importance of understanding theories of *compilatio* in late-medieval vernacular miscellanies. In assembling texts, scribes were often motivated by a desire to bring texts into a suspended unity, which could be in some way useful for the manuscript's reader. Compilation, therefore, must be understood through the contextual influences and practical demands that shaped their development. While the scholastic tradition emphasizes the compiler's lack of responsibility and authorial status, however, there are many ways in which this does not entirely hold up. Through the activity of compiling there are ways in which scribes were able to become generic facilitators, opening out their texts to new meanings or interpretations. We might consider as an example the Senecan model of authorship, which was often referenced in the Middle Ages. In the *Epistulae morales*, Seneca suggests that in reading and writing we should imitate bees who collect nectar from flowers and arrange it into cells in the hive.¹⁹ In the same way, we should

¹⁹ "nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congesimus separare (melius enim distincta servantur), deinde adhibita ingenii nostri cura et facultate in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat [We should imitate these bees and also separate whatever we have collected from different readings (for things that are separated are preserved better), then to combine with the care and ability of our mind having been applied these various offerings into one flavor, so that even now if it is apparent from where it was acquired, yet it is apparent that it is something other than from where it came]" (Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, ed. L. D. Reynolds; trans. R. M. Gummere (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), *epistula* 84). For a further discussion of this metaphor see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 237–38. Graham D. Caie discusses this image in relation to Gower as a compiler and briefly notes that the action is "akin to the manuscript compiler" ("The Manuscript Experience:

compile and compartmentalize the authorities we have read so as to better keep them in memory. We should then reconstitute the diverse sources in our mind into *unum saporem* (one flavor) just as a bee turns the collected pollen into honey. Although the Senecan model is an epistemological one, the concept of textual reconstitution as forming a new substance from old authorities is further developed in thirteenth-century conceptions of the *compilator*. Vincent of Beauvais describes his own work of compilation as, “Antiquum certe auctoritate et materia. Novum vero partium compilatione et earum aggregatione.”²⁰ So, while authority lies with his sources, the compiler still has the power to make something new. Yet in a compilation or miscellany, we must not confuse this newness with compilational *auctoritas*. As the scholastic tradition affirms, it is the *arbitrium lectoris*, the will or judgment of the reader, that is ultimately responsible for interpreting the constituent texts and creating meaning in a compilation.²¹ This is where we begin to see *collectiones*, and similarly, the miscellany, as shaping genre. In her discussion of medieval compendia, including Higden’s *Polychronicon* and Trevisa’s translation of this text, Emily Steiner suggests, “The tendency of compendia to exceed their own forms, to accrete information, and to generate more and more language was key to the ways in which Higden and Trevisa negotiated between

What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us About Authors and Text,” in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 10–27 (p. 20).

²⁰ “Old in its authority and materials, but new in its compilation and the joining of its parts” (Vincent of Beauvais, *Bibliotheca mundi Vincentii Burgundi, Vol. I: Speculum naturale* (Douai: Baltazar Bellerus, 1624, rpt. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964), col. 4 (prologue, p. 4).

²¹ Minnis goes on to point out a new development on the idea of the *compilator* in the fourteenth century by Richard FitzRalph, who makes a comparison with Baruch to discuss the relationship between *auctor* and *compilator* (Minnis, “Discussions of *Compilatio*, p. 419). FitzRalph indicates a multi-layered descending relationship between the *auctor* and the *compilator*, in which the compiler can, in fact, play the role of an author to another lower down on the chain of transmission.

genres.”²² It is in this opening out of the collected texts that we find the literary potency of *compilatio* and the miscellany.

As I would argue, this notion of new meanings arising out of a compilation may be understood more abstractly as underlying the social assemblage of literary texts like *Piers Plowman*. The diverse forms of the poem’s reception do not simply misinterpret some kind of original meaning in the poem, but rather refashion its authoritative status into “new flavors,” applicable to various audiences and contexts. But what is especially important about *Piers Plowman* as a literary text is its recognition and facilitation of this process. The generic diversity of *Piers*’s structure, which has received so much discussion, functions much like a miscellany. Indeed, John Alford notes that Langland’s own sources are most often received second-hand, probably through “florilegia, encyclopedias, commentaries, alphabetical reference books, and other compilations,” and this fragmentation of sources seems to characterize his own method.²³ We might compare the Latin *florilegia*, or collections of classical aphorisms, which involved, as Vincent Gillespie notes, a “systematic deprivation of context” from their original sources.²⁴ Similarly, *Piers Plowman* is a collection of diverse

²² Emily Steiner, “Compendious Genres: Higden, Trevisa, and the Medieval Encyclopedia,” *Exemplaria*, 27 (2015), 73–92 (p. 76).

²³ John Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Guide to the Quotations* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), p. 16. Anne Middleton argues that Langland’s “conceptual syntax” is modeled after the *compendia theologicae veritatis*, noting that “Clarity, explicit organization, and comprehensiveness of form were the entire purpose of the teaching compendia, and by Langland’s time their internal order and self-explanatory prologues had achieved a high degree of articulation, both in Latin and in the vernacular” (“Audience and Public,” p. 112). Yet she goes on to suggest that *Piers* departs from such compendia in that Langland’s poem “is insouciant and enigmatic where his purported sources are systematic and explicit” (p. 112).

²⁴ Vincent Gillespie, “The Study of Classical and Secular Authors from the Twelfth Century to c. 1450,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 2: The Middle Ages*, ed. A. J. Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 145–235 (p. 181). The *Florilegium gallicum* and *Florilegium angelicum* were remodeled and reformed in later permutations and were themselves used, as Gillespie observes, as an “evolving source of teaching material” (p. 180). For more on Latin *florilegia*, see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, “The *Florilegium Angelicum*: Its

fragments collated in a way that divests them of any original intention, and thus, allows its audience to construct new meaning out of old texts; and that, as we have seen from the poem's literary contexts, is precisely what its readers did.

This theory of *compilatio* as I have outlined here, can thus be useful as an extended metaphor for the kind of social authorship that has been discussed throughout this study. If the *compiler* can expand beyond the author's original intention by appending new meaning to the collected texts, so can the cultural processes by which a text is transmitted bring new meaning to the original authorial composition. To understand the full dynamic of *Piers Plowman*'s internal meaning, therefore, perhaps we must turn to the social impact of its manuscripts, and ultimately, their reception by a diverse readership. As this study has sought to demonstrate, the historical contexts of *Piers Plowman*'s material transmission, including the scribes who copied it, the manuscripts that conveyed it, the patrons who funded it, and the readers who engaged with it, all contributed to the collaborative development of its social impact.²⁵ The end of the medieval period, where this study ends, however, is only the beginning of the poem's post-medieval life, which continued to shape its potential.²⁶ The engagement of readers and critics of *Piers Plowman* throughout the centuries has changed to suit the time, and *Piers* continues to present a fertile ground for the application of new theories and interpretations.

In many ways, the methodological principles used in this study of *Piers Plowman* may be used as a precedent for other considerations of late-medieval literary production.

Origin, Content, and Influence," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 66–114.

²⁵ For a similar argument about manuscript culture, see Elizabeth J. Bryan, *Collaborative Meaning in Medieval Scribal Culture: The Otho Lazamon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

²⁶ For the post-medieval reception of *Piers Plowman* see Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities*, and Lawrence Warner, *The Myth of Piers Plowman*.

Such a model for socializing the textual and material tradition of a poem, for understanding all of the various actors that constituted its development in the Middle Ages, may allow us to move beyond our modern preoccupation with canonicity and authorship. The three perspectives on medieval literary production—the author, scribe, and reader—not only illuminate the material history of *Piers Plowman*, but also offer a set of bibliographical principles and practicable methods that may be applied to other manuscript corpora. This study's approach to the indeterminate networks of late-medieval manuscripts and the collaborative social production of literary works can thus offer new ways of understanding the early development and contemporary cultural impact of texts in the later Middle Ages.

Appendices

Appendix 1

A-Text Manuscripts

A	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1468
Ch	Liverpool, Liverpool University Library, MS F.4.8 (Chaderton MS)
D	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 323
E	Dublin, Trinity College, MS D.4.12
H	London, British Library, MS Harley 875
H ²	London, British Library, MS Harley 6041
H ³	London, British Library, MS Harley 3954
J	New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 818
K	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 145
L	London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150
M	London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687
N	Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 733B
R	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetry 137
T	Cambridge, Trinity College, R.3.14
U	Oxford, University College, MS 45
V	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a. 1 (Vernon MS)
W	<i>olim</i> Duke of Westminster's Manuscript (now in private hands)

B-Text Manuscripts

Bm	London, British Library, Additional MS 10574
Bo	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 814
C	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Dd.1.17
C ²	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ll.4.14
Cot	London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A XI
Cr ¹	London, British Library, C 71.c.29
Cr ²	London, British Library, C 71.c.28
Cr ³	London, British Library, C 122.d.9
F	Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201
G	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Gg.4.31
H	London, British Library, MS Harley 3954
Hm	San Marino, Huntington Library, MS 128
Ht	San Marino, Huntington Library, MS 114
L	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 581
M	London, British Library, Additional MS 35287
O	Oxford, Oriel College, MS 79
R	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 38
W	Cambridge, Trinity College, B.15.17
Y	Cambridge, Newnham College, MS 4 (Yates-Thompson MS)

C-Text Manuscripts

- A London, University of London, Sterling Library, V.17
 B Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 814
 Ca Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 669*/646
 Ch Liverpool, University of Liverpool Library, F.4.8 (Chaderton MS)
 D Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104
 D² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 145
 E Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 656
 F Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ff.5.35
 G Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Dd.3.13
 H New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn fa.1
 H² London, British Library, MS Harley 6041
 J London, University of London, Sterling Library, V.88
 K Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 171
 L London, British Library, Additional MS 10574
 M London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B XVI
 N London, British Library, Harley MS 2376
 N² Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 733B
 O London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A XI
 P San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 137
 P² London, British Library, Additional MS 34779
 Q London, British Library, Additional MS 4325
 R London, British Library, Royal 18 B XVII
 S Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 293
 T Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.14
 U London, British Library, Additional MS 35137
 V Dublin, Trinity College, MS 212
 W *olim* Duke of Westminster's Manuscript (now in private hands)
 X San Marino, Huntington Library, Hm 143
 Y Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102
 Z Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851

Appendix 2

A Prologue, B Prologue, C Prologue

B.Prol.2 shroudes (C.Prol.2 shroudes XP²UK): A.Prol.2 a shroud] schroudes DH²L(W)Z.

B.Prol.16/[C revised] diches: A.Prol.16 dikes] diches UH²JLM(VH).

B.Prol.22/C.Prol.24 And wonnen: A.Prol.22† Wonne] and wonnen UW.

B.Prol.26/C.Prol.28 ful: A.Prol.26 wel] ful RUCHH²ZVHJE.

B.Prol.31/C.Prol.33 chosen chaffare: A.Prol.31 chosen hem to chaffare] hem to *om*.
H²VHKLWMZ.

B.Prol.34/[C revised] synnelees: A.Prol.34 gittles] synneles RUDHJE.

B.Prol.37/C.Prol.38 they schulde/wolde: A.Prol.37 hem list] bei wolde HL.

B.Prol.41 breed ful (C.Prol.42 Bretful] bredful PA): A.Prol.41† bratful] bred ful RUDE.

B.Prol.42/C.Prol.43 Faiteden: A.Prol.42 Flite þanne] Fayteden HM(JZW).

B.Prol.44/C.Prol.45 risen wiþ: A.Prol.44 risen vp wiþ] vp *om*. DKMZ.

B.Prol.44/C.Prol.45 þo: A.Prol.44 as] tho H²LMZ(VH).

B.Prol.63/C.Prol.61 moneie and marchaundize: A.Prol.60 mony & here marchaundise] here
om. DH²JLM.

B.Prol.72/C.Prol.70 wordes: A.Prol.69 speche] wordys MZ.

B.Prol.73 bulles (C.Prol.71 bulles XP²OLBDPERMVAQSFN): A.Prol.70 bulle] bulles
RHKM.

B.Prol.76 bei: A.Prol.73 3e] bei TDChKE.

B.Prol.76 hire: A.Prol.73 3oure] here TDChKE.

B.Prol.84 parissches (paryschenes HmF) (C.Prol.82 parsches/parischenes
XURVQPLEMOBDS): A.Prol.81 parissch] paryschenes (H²)URHK.

B.Prol.213 poundes (C.Prol.163 XP²OLBUDPERMVASFG[N]): A.Prol.86 poundide]
poundes DH²VLWZM.

B.Prol.214/C.Prol.164 And: A.Prol.87† Ac] And TDChH²JLM.

B.Prol.217/C.Prol.223 bondemen: A.Prol.96 bondage] Bonde men VHLEM.

B.Prol.219/C.Prol.225 Brewesters and Bochiers: A.Prol.98 bocheris & breusteris] brewesteres & bocheres RE (brewers & breusteris W).

B.Prol.224/C.Prol.228 dedes: A.Prol.102 dede] dedes H²VHJEMZ.

B.Prol.228 vntil hem: A.Prol.106† to hem] on tyll hym EM.

B.Prol.231 seij I: A.Prol.109 I sau3] saw I RUW.

A Passus I, B Passus I, C Passus I

B.I.1 þe(1)] þis: A.I.1† þe(1)] þis RUVHEK.

B.I.25/[C.I.24 emended]: þow driest: A.I.25† þe dri3eþ] þou dryest RDHJM.

B.I.40 folwen þe: A.I.38 folewiþ] foloweþ þee HE.

B.I.41/C.I.39 seith: A.I.39 set] seith KH²(VH)Z.

B.I.43 Madame mercy: A.I.41 A madame] A *om.* EKWMZ.

B.I.44/C.I.42 of: A.I.42† on] of RH²JLEKWM.

B.I.48/[C revised] Wheiþer: A.I.46 3if] wethere EM.

B.I.49/C.I.46 god: A.I.47 he] god RH²JLEKWZ.

B.I.54 ri3tfully] ry3tfull: A.I.52 ri3tfulliche] rightful RE.

B.I.63/C.I.59 wight: A.I.61† wy] wi3t ChKWHRVJ(E)M.

B.I.73 asked: A.I.71 halside] askyd JM.

B.I.78/C.I.75 And to: A.I.76† To] And to VHL.

B.I.79 courbed: A.I.77 knelide] courbed WZ.

B.I.80/C.I.77 And preide: A.I.78† Preizede] And preied ChVEJK.

B.I.88 Who-so: A.I.86† For whoso] For *om.* JM.

B.I.89/C I.85 And dooþ: A.I.87† Doþ] & doþ H(EJ).

B.I.99 And dide (C.I.103 And dede OLBPERMVAQSFGN): A.I.97† Dide] & did RJK.

B.I.103/[C revised] ne for: A.I.101 ne] ne for RUEZ†.

B.I.103/C.I.101 siluer: A.I.101 zeftis] syluer RUE.

B.I.104 þe: A.I.102† his] þe VZ.

B.I.108/[C revised] his mene: A.I.106 his] his mene MZ.

B.I.114/[C revised] þat felawship: A.I.112 his felawis] his felaship EMZ.

B.I.152 plante] plente: A.I.137 plante] plente REKMZ.

B.I.182 yow sent (C.I.178 zou sent XOLBDGN[J]): A.I.156 sent] zou sent LZ(EA).

B.I.185/C I.181 Iugged: A.I.159† joynide] Iugyd RUJKLNW(A)M.

B.I.187/C.I.183 þe dedes/[dedes XJP²OLBUD]: A.I.161 þe dede] þe dedes E(AMZ).

B.I.191 no men: A.I.165 none] no men RDVJK (no man WN).

B.I.192/C.I.189 and to all: A.I.166 ek] *om.* VHANZ.

B.I.195/[C revised] hire bodies: A.I.169 *zour* body] heore bodies VM.

B.I.196/C.I.191 þei: A.I.170 ze(2)] þei VH(M).

A Passus II, B Passus II, C Passus II

B.II.3 þat blisful (C II.3 þat blissful JLDMN): A.II.3 þe] þat RHLAZ. blissede] blisful U(1)ChVHLANZH².

B.II.6/[C.II.6 emended] hire: A.II.6 hise] here A(H).

B.II.8 worþiliche: A.II.8 wonderliche] worthliche MZ.

B.II.10 wiþ (C.II.11 *with* XUDFGN): A.II.10† in] wiþ UDChVHLEAKNM.

B.II.20 quod she haþ (C.II.19 quath hue hath (PER)MVAQSFGN): A.II.16 haþ] *quad* he hath Z (*quop* heo þat haþ HV[M]).

B.II.74/[C revised] ful: A.II.56 wel] ful JZ.

B.II.113 I assele: A.II.77 is asselid] I asele RUNM.

- B.II.117 weddynges: A.II.81 weddyng] weddyngis NZ.
- B.II.123/[C revised] For *Dignus est operarius* his hire to haue A.II.86 α –87 86a runs together with 87 (*Dignus est operarius* his hire to haue) MZ.
- B.II.123/[C revised] hire: A.II.87 mede] hure VH.
- B.II.128 it boþe (C.II.144 hit bothe XJP²U): A.II.92 boþe] it boþe HKE.
- B.II.130/C.II.146 feiþlees: A.II.94 feyntles] feythles UHNKW.
- B.II.137/C.II.153 þou3: A.II.101 3if] though KWLZ.
- B.II.137/C.II.153 Iustices: A.II.101 þe iustice] iustices LWZ(N).
- B.II.140/C.II.156 with þe: A.II.104 wiþ] wiþ þe TRUDH²KNZ.
- B.II.160/C.II.176 bad hem alle: A.II.124 alle] bad hem alle MZ.
- B.II.163/[C revised] And Fauel fette forþ þanne: A.II.127 fette fauel] Fauuel fette forþ VHLE(UM).
- B.II. 164/[C revised] And sette: A.II.128† Sette] And sette VJHK.
- B.II.183/C.II.196 iotten] rennen: A.II.144 iotten] rennen RUDVJKLHWNMZ.
- B.II.185/C.II.198 þise men: A.II.146 þis mene] þese men AM(E).
- B.II.190 his: A.II.151† forþ on his] on his (VHJWNM).
- B.II.193/C.II.207 Now by: A.II.154 Be] Now by UVHN.
- B.II.193/C.II.207 I cache my@te: A.II.154 I mi3te cacche] I kacche mythe MZ.
- B.II.198 wol loke: A.II.159 lokis] wole loke H(A).
- B.II.200 þyng: A.II.161 tresour] þing AWM.
- B.II.202 and lat (C II.216 and lete PE): A.II.163† let] & let JNEA.
- B.II.223/C.II.233 cloutes: A.II.182 cloþis] cloutes VHJWNMEZ.
- B.II.224 chirches (C.II.234 churches PEVAQSFKN): A.II.183 chirche] chirches ChJKNZWV.
- B.II.227/(C.II.237) That he sholde: A.II.186 for to] þat he schuld H (þat he wolde L).
- B.II.231 helden: A.II.190† wiþheld] helden DNEK.

A Passus III, B Passus III, C Passus III

B.III.2/C.III.2 bifore: **A.III.2** to] befor AWN.

B.III.5/C.III.5 shal: **A.III.5** wol] schal EAMZ.

B.III.6 moolde: **A.III.6** world] moolde RUHEKW.

B.III.11 And: **A.III.11**† Ac] and RAM.

B.III.22/C.III.23 coppes: **A.III.21** pecis] coppes WZ.

B.III.30 to (**C.III.31** to XYJP²UDF): **A.III.29** hem(2)] to VJL.

B.III.31/C.III.34 do calle: **A.III.30**† callen] do callen NJK(W).

B.III.37/[C revised] ful: **A.III.36**† wel] ful TChH²VHEW.

B.III.38/C.III.40 bope: **A.III.37** ichone] bope HNM.

B.III.39 þeiȝ] And Falsnesse (**C.III.41** And Falshede): **A.III.38** And þeiȝ falshed] þeiȝ *om.* NM; falshed] falsness RUHJ.

B.III.63/C.III.67 euery: **A.III.52**† iche] euery JWN

B.III.63 seye (**C.III.67** sey DGN): **A.III.52** se] sey HVWM.

B.III.64/C.III.68 god] god to: **A.III.53**† god] god to VHJLEAKWNM.

B.III.73/C.III.75 half: **A.III.55** hond] half RUJAN.

B.III.71/[C revised] delen: **A.III.62** giue] dele JAM.

B.III.78/C.III.79 To punysshē: **A.III.67**† As to punisshen] As *om.* HAM.

B.III.78 and pynyngē (**C.III.79** and pynyngē P²SG): **A.III.67**† & on pynyng] on *om.* UNM.

B.III.82/[C revised] and: **A.III.71**† wel] and VH.

B.III.84/C.III.83 Wip: **A.III.73**† Of] with ChVHE.

B.III.87 hap: **A.III.76** heo] hat EM(AH).

B.III.90/[C revised] þe: **A.III.79**† þise] þe VJEKN.

B.III.94/[C.III.122 emended] kepen lawes: **A.III.83**† kepiþ þe lawis] þe *om.* JLEKWN

B.III.98 brenne (C III.126 brenne P²RAGF): A.III.87† forbrenne] brenne VHLJEAWM.

B.III.127/C.III.127 houses and the homes: A.III.88† hous and home] houses and homes VHJLAKNM (hous and homes TRUDChH²E).

B.III.104/[C revised] kyng þanne: A.III.93 king] kyng þan JAK(HM).

B.III.106/C.III.134 womman: A.III.95 wy] womman LNZ.

B.III.113 lat hange me soone/C.III.150 lat hange me elles: A.III.102 hongge me] lat hange me JLWNZVEAM.

B.III.117 To wite what (C.III.152 To wite what PERMVAQSFKGN): A.III.106 What þat] to wyte what HLW.

B.III.118 quod þe kyng if: A.III.107 3if] *quod* þe kyng 3if VJM.

B.III.122/C.III.159 For she: A.III.111† She] For sche UH²HM.

B.III.123/C.III.160 And: A.III.112† She] And EAM.

B.III.124/C.III.161 ful: A.III.113 we] ful TChVHEMZ.

B.III.125/(C.III.162) she techep: A.III.114† techip] sche techyth H²VHJENM.

B.III.130 in: A.III.119† &(2)] in DVHJN.

B.III.137 She: A.III.126† And] She WNM.

B.III.140/C.III.178 And: A.III.129 Heo] And EM.

B.III.140/C.III.178 top and: A.III.129† top] top and RUCVHJKLEWNM.

B.III.141 harme dede: A.III.130 harmide] harme dide HE.

B.III.146/C.III.184 sixe: A.III.135 seue] syxe JLKWNZ.

B.III.149/C.III.187 þei3: A.III.138 3if] þeigh LKNUVZ(RDM).

B.III.150/C.III.188 Prouendreþ: A.III.139 prouendrours] prouendreth ZKWNM.

B.III.156/C.III.194 hym þe gate: A.III.146 þe treuþe] hem the gate EMZ.

B.III.158/C.III.196 þe lawe: A.III.148† lawe] þe lawe VEKWN.

B.III.162 she (C.III.200 she YPERMVAQSFK): A.III.151† he] sche UChJWENM(VHL).

B.III.168/[C.III.14 emended] pleyne hem: A.III.155 pleyne] pleyne hem UZ.
 B.III.168/[C.III.14 emended] þei: A.III.155 hem] þei UEZ.

B.III.179 Ne deprae: A.III.166† Ne to deprae] to *om.* JE.

B.III.182/C.III.228 also: A.III.169† ek] also HWN.
 B.III.182 gold gyue: A.III.169† gold & gyue] & *om.* LN.

B.III.198/[C revised] his men murye: A.III.185 hym merþe] ys men murye EMZ.
 B.III.198/[C revised] lette: A.III.185 leue] lete VH.

B.III.210 mede to men: A.III.197 hise men mede] meede to men VH.

B.III.220/[C III.276 emended] myrþe: A.III.207 merþis] merþe RUVHEM.

B.III.223 *Divided after Mede*: A.III.210 *Divided after mede* DEM.

B.III.224 at þe meel tymes: A.III.211 also] atte mel tyme EM.

B.III.229 wel worþi: A.III.216† worþi] wel worþi WN.

B.III.232/[C revised] graunteþ: A.III.219 gyueþ] grantyt M(H).

B.III.233/[C revised] wel werchen: A.III.220 werchen wel] wel werchen HV.

B.III.251/[C revised] bittre: A.III.230 bitterly] bytter ULEM.

B.III.289 hem: A.III.265† vs] hem HM.

B.III.293/C.III.446 ayein: A.III.268 to] azeyne JW.

A Passus IV, B Passus IV, C Passus IV

B.IV.15/C.IV.15 And seide [hym] as þe kyng bad/sayde: A.IV.15 Seide] & seide as þe king bade HW.

B.IV.22/[C revised] And hange: A.IV.20† Hange] And hange NW.

B.IV.31/[C revised] harmes: A.IV.28 harm] harmes RUDJLAKWNMZ.

B.IV.44 ayeins: A.IV.31 in to] agayns EAMZ.

B.IV.46 wel wisely a gret while: A.IV.33 a...wisly] ful wysly a gret while EAMZ.

- B.IV.57/C.IV.60 and bereþ: A.IV.44† berip] and beryþ RHJUVEAW.
- B.IV.59/C.IV.62 mayde: A.IV.46 maiden] mayde DChH²HWNZ.
- B.IV.79 it woot: A.IV.65† wot] it wot EAM.
- B.IV.80/[C.IV.76 emended] knewen þe soþe: A.IV.66† kneuz wel þe soþe] well *om.* VH.
- B.IV.90/C.IV.86 And amende: A.IV.77† Amende] & amende VHJEW.
- B.IV.95/C.IV.91 pure: A.IV.82 purid] pure RUCHJKWNZ.
- B.IV.98/C.IV.94 Pitously Pees þanne: A.IV.85 Pees...pitousliche] Pytously þan pes EAM(Z).
- B.IV.106 liztly lauþen (C.IV.101 lihtliche lawen XYJP²UDRMVAQSFK): A.IV.93 liztly away lauþen] away *om.* UHWN.
- B.IV.107/C.IV.102 eft A.IV.94 ofte] eft VJL.
- B.IV.107/C.IV.102 hewen: A.IV.94 hynen] hewyn AK(Z).
- B.IV.108 my (C.IV.103 my XYJUD): A.IV.95† þe] my JANM.
- B.IV.115/C.IV.110 haten alle harlotrie to heren: A.IV.106 haten to here harlotrie] haten al harlotrie to heren EW.
- B.IV.131 Vpon (C.IV.128 Vp] Vpon RMN): A.IV.114† Vpe] Vppon HEKVA.
- B.IV.131 whoso (C.IV.128 ho] whoso DPERMVAQSFKN): A.IV.114† who] who so HJKNEAM.
- B.IV.140/C.IV.137 in: A.IV.123† at] in JEAKNM.
- B.IV.145/C.IV.142 þis: A.IV.128† it þe] þis VHEAM.
- B.IV.160/C.IV.155 Mekenesse: A.IV.136 resoun] mekenesse AMZ.
- B.IV.183/C.IV.177ful: A.IV.146† wel] ful RDA.
- B.IV.184 Alle: A.IV.147† And] *om.* UVA.
- B.IV.190/C.IV.184 ride: A.IV.153† raike] ryde RULEAKJWNM.
- B.IV.193/[C revised] oure: A.IV.156 þour] oure UVHM.

A Passus V, B Passus V, A Passus V

- B.V.213/C.VI.221 webbe: A.V.129 wynstere] webstere (H²)AWMH³.
- B.V.21 ful (C.V.123 ful YJUDERMVAQSFKGN): A.V.21† wel] ful VHEAM.
- B.V.28/C.V.130 Tomme Stowue: A.V.28 Thomas] Thomme Stoue JZ.
- B.V.31/C.V.133 half (half a CrGYC²CLMH): A.V.31 a] half NZ.
- B.V.34/C.V.136 chasten: A.V.32 Chasten RHVKZ.
- B.V.47/C.V.145 stewardus: A.V.39 stede] stedes JEKN.
- B.V.61 garte: A.V.44 made] gerte Z(A).
- B.V.72/[C revised] mysdedes: A.V.55 mysdede] mysdedis HJN.
B.V.72/[C revised] his soule: A.V.55 hym] his soule (V)LKEMZ.
- B.V.97/[C revised] maad: A.V.77 don] mad L(H).
- B.V.98/[C revised] ful: A.V.78 wel] ful DVEW.
- B.V.101/[C revised] hate: A.V.81 hatide] hate VJWN.
- B.V.108/[C revised] hem: A.V.88† hym] hem RVHAWN.
- B.V.113/[C revised] likeþ: A.V.93 li3tiþ] likeþ VHKJ.
- B.V.114/[C revised] for: A.V.94† of] for VHJW.
- B.V.126 þe beste: A.V.103 goode] þe best HEAM.
- B.V.190 *Divided after* baberlipped: A.V.109 *Divided after* baberlypped RDEAMH³.
B.V.190 eizen as a blynd hagge: A.V.109 eizen] eyn as a blynd hagge AMH³.
- B.V.200/C.VI.208 wayte: A.V.116 loke] wayte AMH³.
- B.V.208 liser (C.VI.216 lyser YJUPERVAQSFKGN): A.V.124 list] leser RNWH³.
- B.V.211 And putte: A.V.127 Putte] & putte HJEMH³†
B.V.211 presse: A.V.127 pressour] presse HW.
- B.V.213/C.VI.221 webbe: A.V.129 wynstere] webstere (H²)AWMH³.
- B.V.214 Spynnesteres (C.VI.222 spynnesteres XYJP²UPEVAQSFKGN): A.V.130 spynstere] spinsteres WNVHEAJMH³.

B.V.214/C.VI.222 oute: A.V.130 softe] out AM(EH³).

B.V.215 weyed: A.V.131 peisid] weied HW(R).

B.VI.227/[C revised] vse: A.V.143 make] vse HVA.

B.V.217 barly malt: A.V.133 barly] barly malt JN.

B.VI.227/[C revised] vse A.V.143 make] vse VHA.

B.V.303 Hastow ouzt in þi purs: A.V.153 Hast þou] hast þou ouzt in þy pors VHN(ULJA).

B.V.305/C.VI.360 A ferþyngworþ: A.V.156† And a ferþingworþ] And *om.* VHJEKWNM.

B.V.308/C.VI.363 warner: A.V.159† waffrer] warynere HV.

B.V.317/(C.VI.374) And: A.V.166† Of] And RUHJA.

B.V.342/C.VI.400 his: A.V.190† þe(2)] his LNM.

B.V.445/C.VII.59 synnes: A.V.217† synne] synnes VHJKLEANMH³.

B.V.453/C.VII.66 matins and masse: A.V.224 masse & matynes] matyns & messe
UH²VEKNM.

B.V.467 Robbere: A.V.241 robert] robber JH³.

A Passus VI, B Passus V, C Passus VII

B.V.513/C.VII.158 wizt noon A.VI.1 were fewe men] was non EAMH³(Z).

B.V.514 bankes (C VII.159 banckes RSFN): A.VI.2 baches] bankes EA.

B.V.515/C.VII.160 late was: A.VI.3† late] late was N(VHKW).

B.V.525/C.VII.170 first: A.VI.13 faire] furst ZH³.

B.V.526 oure lordes Sepulcre (C.VII.171 sepulcre of our lord XYJUD): A.VI.14 sepulcre]
sepulcre of oure lord KAH³Z.

B.V.531/C.VII.175 helþe: A.VI.19 hele] helthe JLN.

B.V.532 corsaint: A.VI.20 corsaint quaþ þei] quaþ þei *om.* VNMZ.

B.V.533 he (C.VII.178 he P²G): A.VI.21† wy] he RUDVHJW.

- B.V.541/C.VII.186 to sowe: A.VI.29† sowe] to sowe ChVHAWMH³.
- B.V.545/[C revised] Ido: A.VI.33 & do] Ido VM.
- B.V.552/C.V.196 hewe: A.VI.39 hyne] huwe NZ.
- B.V.555 þe wey: A.VI.42† ri3t] þe way DH²(TChUV).
- B.V.559/C.VII.204 lasse: A.VI.46 wers] lasse VLN.
- B.V.560/[C.V.205 emended] 3if 3e: A.VI.47 3e] if 3e. EM.
- B.V.567 Til (C VII.214 Til PERMVAQF): A.VI.54† Forto] Til WN(M).
- B.V.575 youre: A.VI.62† þin] 3our RU.
- B.V.584/C.VII.231 In-no-manere-ellis: A.VI.71 loke þat þou lei3e nou3t] in no manere elles EM(H³)Z.
- B.V.585/C.VII.232 as cler: A.VI.72† cler] as cler RUDJLWH³.
- B.V.586/[C revised] Manoir aboute: A.VI.73 Maner al aboute] al *om.* AWNMH³Z.
- B.V.587/[C.VII.234 emended] oute: A.VI.74† þeroute] oute AWH³.
- B.V.596/C.VII.244 men: A.VI.83 man] men RVLEM.
- B.V.604/C.VII.252 keye: A.VI.91 kei3es] key3e VJLEAWNMH³Z.
- B.V.609 þat is a: A.VI.95† þat] for he is a VA.
- B.V.610 He: A.VI.96† For he] He AN.
- B.V.612 bienfetes (C.VII.264 beenfetes XYJP²UDN): A.VI.98 bienfait] benefetys VJWH³Z.
- B.V.614/C.VII.266: wiþouten: A.VI.100 þeroute] withoute AMH³Z.
- B.V.621/C.VII.273 hise: A.VI.107† hire] his LENMH³.
- B.V.623/C.VII.275 ful: A.VI.109 wel] ful VEWMH³.
- B.V.628/C.VII.281 ful: A.VI.113 wel] ful VEKMH³.

A Passus VII, B Passus VI, C Passus VIII

B.VI.5/C.VIII.3 acre and sowen it after: **A.VII.5** akir] acre & sowen it after EAMH³(Z).

B.VI.6/C.VIII.4 wiþ yow and þe wey teche: **A.VII.6** til] & teche 3ow þe ri3te wey til HJ.

B.VI.20 to werche (**C.VIII.18** to worch DPERMVAQKGN): **A.VII.22**† werche] to werche EAH³.

B.VI.24/[C.VIII.296 emended] ye *profre* yow so faire: **A.VII.26** for þou *profrist* þe so lowe] for *om.* LW (lowe] fayre A).

B.VI.33 þanne comsed (**C.VIII.32** thenne comesed XYJP²UPERVAQSK): **A.VII.35** conseyuede] comsede TH²HNZ.

B.VI.44/[C revised] ful: **A.VII.43** wel] full EH³Z.

B.VI.66/C.VIII.67 haue leue: **A.VII.60** haue] haue leue MH³Z.

B.VI.76/C.VIII.78 tiþe: **A.VII.68** tiþes] tithe UVHJH³.

B.VI.76 take (**C.VIII.78** tak P²UD): **A.VII.68** asken] taken RV.

B.VI.89/C.VIII.98 telleþ: **A.VII.81** techiþ] telleth VZ.

B.VI.92 catel (**C.VIII.101** catel PERVAQSKGN): **A.VII.84**† my catel] my *om.* VEKW.

B.VI.94/C.VIII.103 his masse: **A.VII.86** mynde] his masse AMH³(Z).

B.VI.103/[C revised] pikstaf: **A.VII.95** pyk] pykstaf RUDJLEK(HN).

B.VI.103/[C revised] picche: **A.VII.95** putte] picche UJLZ.

B.VI.104/[C revised] clense: **A.VII.96** close] clense JLAKNM.

B.VI.105/C.VIII.112Perkyn: **A.VII.97** peris] perkyn AMZ.

B.VI.108/[C.VIII.115 emended] faste: **A.VII.100** 3erne] faste WZ.

B.VI.109/C.VIII.116 yerne: **A.VII.101** faste] yerne WZ.

B.VI.114/C.VIII.121 He sholde: **A.VII.106**† Shulde] He schulde VM.

B.VI.122/C.VIII.129 legges: **A.VII.114**† leg] legges VHJKLANMH³.

B.VI.128 not: **A.VII.120**† noþer] not TDCh.

B.VI.155 forpynede: **A.VII.142**† pilide] pyned (A)MH³.

B.VI.156 neltow] or neltow: A.VII.143† nilt þou] or nylt þou LAWMH³.

B.VI.157 and of: A.VII.144† and] and of VHJLAKNMH³.

B.VI.186/C.VIII.182 potful: A.VII.174† potel] potful VJLKWN.

B.VI.204/C.VIII.210 ful ille: A.VII.190† ille] ful ille VHWNH³.

B.VI.205 For mischief: A.VII.191† Meschief] For myschef NAMH³.

B.VI.210 of þee: A.VII.196 3if þou wistest] of the KW.

B.VI.244 it nedeþ: A.VII.228 nede is] it nedip HN.

B.VI.249/[C revised] Contemplatif lif or Actif lif: A.VII.233 Contemplatife lyfe or actife lyf AZ(MH³).

B.VI.262/(C.VIII.272) wiþ þi: A.VII.246 þi] wiþ þi UJMH³Z.

B.VI.266/[C revised] Leue: A.VII.250 Loue] Leue TUKW(RZ).

B.VI.268/C.VIII.289 eris: A.VII.252 armes] eres UV.

B.VI.286/[C revised] cole plauntes: A.VII.270 cole plantis] plante colis AMH³Z.

B.VI.291 And þanne: A.VII.275 þanne] And þanne TDCkK†.

B.VI.292/C.VIII.315 peple þo: A.VII.276† peple] peple þan WN.

B.VI.323 wiþ: A.VII.304 þoru3] wiþ WZ

A Passus VIII, B Passus VII, C Passus IX

B.VII.10/C.IX.10 Remes: A.VIII.10 reaum] rewwmes NMZ.

B.VII.17/[C revised] hi3e: A.VIII.19 here] hi3e (K)HMZ.

B.VII.26 myseise folk/C.IX.30 m. men: A.VIII.28 myseyse to] myseise men to LAZ.

B.VII.34/C.IX.37 sende 3ow: A.VIII.36 sende†] sende 3ow HVJKW(N)MH³Z.

B.VII.52 þe Sauter bereþ wittenesse: A.VIII.54 seiþ þe sauter] sauter wittenesseth LM.

B.VII.58/C.IX.53 ful: A.VIII.59 wel] ful ChHNNH³Z.

B.VII.67/C.IX.63 but if: A.VIII.69 but] but 3if RJZ.

B.VII.97 alle: A.VIII.79† alle oþer] oþer *om.* ChH²HNMH³.

B.VII.105/C.IX.185 hertes: A.VIII.87† herte] hertes VHAMH³.

B.VII.106 here on: A.VIII.88 vpon þis] here vpon (VHLAW[M]).

B.VII.106 þis erþe: A.VIII.88 þis pur erþe] pur *om.* VHLAWMH³.

B.VII.119/[C revised] atweyne: A.VIII.101† asondir] atwynen AWMH³.

B.VII.127/[C revised] seith so dide: A.VIII.109† seiþ & so dede] &] *om.* UVJN.

B.VII.129/[C revised] lereþ vs: A.VIII.111 lerip vs anoþer] lerip vs MH³(AN).

B.VII.129–30/[C revised] *Divided after foweles*: A.VIII.111–12 *Divided after fowles* LN.

B.VII.130/[C revised] we sholde nozt be: A.VIII.112† þat are not] we schuld not be TDChH²HJKLAWNH³(M).

B.VII.130/[C revised] to bisy: besy] to besy KChLNJWH.

B.VII.138 quod Piers myn: A.VIII.120† myn] quop he myne HW.

B.VII.139/[C revised] afterward: A.VIII.121† aftir] aftirward UJLANMZ.

B.VII.139/[C revised] muche moore: A.VIII.121 betere] moche more RU.

N.B. After.VIII.121, Brewer leaves off collating A and B. The symbol † will thus no longer be used, as it should be assumed that all further data is unattested in Brewer's thesis.

B.VII.151/C.IX.300 Piers þe Plowman: A.VIII.132 peris loue þ. p.] peris þe plouzman KM.

B.VII.173 And al: A.VIII.149 Al] And al KW.

B.VII.175 passed (C.IX.320 passed YUDPERMVQFKG): A.VIII.153 passiþ] passed UJKWNVAM.

B.VII.182 forbode (C.IX.328 forbode PVQFKGN): A.VIII.160 forbade] forbode JM.

B.VII.186 Is nozt (C.IX.332 Is nat PERMVAQFKGN): A.VIII.164 It is not] It *om.* UDVJAWN.

B.VII.189/C.IX.335 ye: A.VIII.167† þou] 3e ChVJWN.

B.VII.196/C.IX.342 And how: A.VIII.174 What] And how AM.

B.VII.198[C.IX.344 emended] of alle: A.VIII.176 among] of alle RWM(A).

B.VII.199 yow: A.VIII.177 þe] 3ou RDJNM.

B.VII.203/C.IX.349 here er: A.VIII.181 er] her er RDJAKN.

A Passus IX, B Passus VIII, C Passus X

B.VIII.18/[C revised] Menours: A.IX.14 maistris] menourys JAKVWM.

B.VIII.22/C.X.25 And: A.IX.18 Ac] and JRUDVAKW.

B.VIII.24 alwey amanges: A.IX.20 alwey at hom among] at hom *om*. UW.

B.VIII.39 to þe (C.X.45 to þe UP[P²DEMVAQZFKGN]): A.IX.35 þe(2)] to þe RUDAW(J).

B.VIII.45/C.XV.275 And þat: A.IX.41 þat] And þat TDChH²KW.

B.VIII.50/[C revised] þi soule: A.IX.46 þiseluen] þi soule RUK.

B.VIII.74 what þow art: A.IX.65 art þou] þou art (DM).

B.VIII.75 þee þis (C.X.73 the this XYJUDPERMVAQFKZ): A.IX.66 þe] þe þis RUDVK(A)W.

B.VIII.77/C.X.75 Where þat: A.IX.68 Where] wher þat VK.

B.VIII.86/C.X.83 and louelich: A.IX.77 louelich] and louelich RCh.

B.VIII.89/(C.X.86) and: A.IX.80 or] and RU.

B.VIII.102 or: A.IX.92 &] or DVAKM.

B.VIII.106/[C revised] And but if: A.IX.96 But] but 3if RVKW(UJ).

B.VIII.110 noon ooper: A.IX.100 oþere] non oþere WM.

B.VIII.119/C.X.115 And: A.IX.109 Ac] And RUDVJKW.

B.VIII.119 were war (C.X.115 were ywar PEMZFVAQSNR): A.IX.109 ywar were] were war UAV.

B.VIII.125/C.X.121 And: A.IX.115 To] and JM.

B.VIII.128 dowel dobet: A.IX.117 dowel & dobet] & *om.* DKH³.

A Passus X, B Passus IX, C Passus X

B.IX.3 is it (C.X.130 is hit XYUNN²): A.X.3 it is] is hit DKW.

B.IX.23/C.X.149 fyue A.X.22 sixe] fyue ChM.

B.IX.26 is a (C.X.152 is a DRMS): A.X.27 is] is a ChAWM.

B.X.31/[C.X.157 emended] shafte: A.X.32 shap] schaft MH³.

B.IX.34/[C revised] likkest: A.X.35 ymage] like AM.

B.IX.161/[C revised] mariages: A.X.184 weddyng] maryages ChH³.

B.IX.167/[C revised] welþe: A.X.188 wele] welþe ChVJAW.

B.IX.172/C.X.274 hem bitwene: A.X.193 betwene] hem bitwene VKWH³.

B.IX.178/C.X.280 togideres: A.X.199 ysamme] togeder ChH²KAWMH³.

B.IX.179/[C revised] Wydwes and wideweres: A.X.200 Wydeweris & wydewis] wydewys & wydoweris JH³.

B.IX.192 ilke derne dede (C.X.292 derne dede PERMVAQSZFKGN): A.X.205 dede derne] derne dede RUDJKW.

B.IX.198/[C revised] Wandren and wasten: A.X.212 wandriþ as wolues & wastiþ] as wolues *om.* TChH².

A Passus XI, B Passus X, C Passus XI

B.X.3 me þus (C.XI.3 me so [so me]): A.XI.3 so] me þus VJKMH³.

B.X.5/C.XI.5 quod she to wit: A.XI.5 wyt *quaþ* she] *quod* sche to witt KMH³.

B.X.9 *Noli*: A.XI.9 *Nolite*] *Noli* RVJKW.

B.X.18 if it: A.XI.18 it] 3if it AM.

B.X.21 is cleped: A.XI.21 ben yclepid] is callid MH³.

- B.X.21 is cleped: A.XI.21 ben yclepid] is callid MH³.
- B.X.55 and taken (C.XI.36 and taken PERMVAQSFG): A.XI.41 take] & take ChKJM.
- B.X.56 forþ a: A.XI.42 forþ] forþ a A(KW).
- B.X.72 founde: A.XI.58† founden vp] *om.* H²VM.
- B.X.129/[C revised] euere wilneþ: A.XI.82 euere eft wilneþ] eft *om.* RUAM.
- B.X.137/[C revised] But if: A.XI.90 But] but 3if RUK.
- B.X.138/[C revised] For I: A.XI.91 I] For I UJKWM.
- B.X.143 And: A.XI.96 Ac] And UH³.
- B.X.150 þe while (C.XI.88 þe while XYJUDPEVAQZKGN): A.XI.102 while] the while (TH²)KM.
- B.X.172/[C revised] þynges: A.XI.124 wyttes] þynges RUVJKAWMH³.
- B.X.202 For he: A.XI.151 And] He MH³.
- B.X.214/[C revised] ful: A.XI.157 wel] ful AH³.
- B.X.231/[C revised] frendloker: A.XI.174 frendliere] frendloker DChH²VJW.
- B.X.311/[C revised] Romere: A.XI.211 rennere] romer JAKWM.
- B.X.337/[C revised] but if: A.XI.225 but] but if K(W).
- B.X.338/[C revised] by: A.XI.226 for] be AWMH³.
- B.X.339/[C revised] heris: A.XI.227 3eris] heris KWMH³.
- B.X.352/[C revised] as] amonges (among HmCrGCB): A.XI.235 as] amonges K (among RUAWMH³).
- B.X.353/[C revised] þat: A.XI.236 so(2)] þat RU.
- B.X.376/[C revised] lette: A.XI.257 make] lette AWM.
- B.X.392/C.XI.219 sholde: A.XI.276 shal] schuld ChJ.

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Dd.3.13

Dd.6.29

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Ff.2.38

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Ll.4.14

Mm.5.14

Corpus Christi College

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Gonville and Caius College

MS 669/646

Trinity College

B.15.17

Dublin

Trinity College

MS 212

MS 213

olim Duke of Westminster's Manuscript (now in private hands)*

The Hopton Hall Manuscript*

Leeds

Leeds University Library

MS Brotherton 501

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Liverpool University Library

F.4.8

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MS Additional 35157
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MS Additional 37049
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MS Cotton Caligula A.II
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