

LA VIE DE UN VALLET AMEROUS (DIGBY 86):
A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE ON THE PRACTICE AND PITFALLS OF SEDUCTION IN
MEDIEVAL BRITAIN – BY RICHARD, AUTHOR OF THE *BESTURNÉ*?

To judge by the extant corpus of Anglo-Norman literature, the francophone audiences of medieval Britain must have been a pretty dour crowd. As Dean and Boulton's *vade mecum* amply attests, while grave and austere material such as Bible translations, saints' lives, and historical chronicles abounds, comic texts are conspicuously few and far between, limited in both their number and the extent of their transmission.¹ Nonetheless, as Legge admonishes us: «It is as well to remember that there existed in England a public for the *fabliaux*»,² for which compelling evidence is furnished by a remarkable 344-line poem which survives in a single copy in the renowned trilingual anthology that is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86: *La Vie de un vallet amerous* (ff. 114rb-116vb).³

Although the *Vie* is by no means well known, whether one can justify study of it by unchallenged recourse to the venerable «neglected text topos» is open to debate.⁴ The first reference in modern scholarship to the *Vie* was, to the best of my knowledge, provided by the indefatigable Thomas Wright, in a footnote to his edition of the Latin exemplum *De guloso*.⁵ In this tale, a glutton who habitually gorges himself on food while others attend church walks cheerfully toward a wood one day; blissfully unaware that he will, for the audience's edification, presently drop dead with his tongue lolling out like a dog's, he sings the only extant version of the Middle English verse: *Jolyfte, jolyfte, / Maket me to the wode the*.⁶ The fact that the *Vie* begins with the same noun leads Wright to mention our text, erroneously, as «a French song of the same period, beginning almost in the same words».⁷

The «neglected text topos» is further undermined by the fact that the *Vie* has already been edited a number of times. It first appeared in print courtesy of the lightly edited transcription included by Stengel in his description of Digby 86,⁸ while this publication ensured the text's

1.- The comic texts listed by R.J. DEAN-M.B.M. BOULTON, *Anglo-Norman Literature: a Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, London, ANTS, 1999 (henceforth ANL) are included in the sections «Lais, Fables, Fabliaux, & Dits» and «Satirical, Social & Moral» (nos. 176-253; pp. 103-42). While humour is very subjective, it would be difficult to deny that remarkably few of the texts in this already scant selection seem to have been composed with the intention of eliciting laughter from their audience.

2.- M.D. LEGGE, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1963, p. 298.

3.- ANL, no. 214; in the text extract for this entry, at line 4 read *qy* as *ay*.

4.- This term to denote one of the handiest tools at the philologist's disposal was coined by K. BUSBY, *French in Medieval Ireland, Ireland in Medieval French: the Paradox of Two Worlds*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, p. 257.

5.- London, British Library, MS Harley 2316, f. 54r; see *A Selection of Latin Stories From Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: a Contribution to the History of Fiction during the Middle Ages*, ed. by T. WRIGHT, London, Percy Society, 1843, p. 235.

6. IMEV 1799, DIMEV 2968; cf. R.M. WILSON, *More lost literature [in Old and Middle English] II*, «Leeds Studies in English», vi 1937, pp. 30-49, at pp. 46-47; R.M. WILSON, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, London, Methuen, 1952, p. 185; S. WENZEL, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 214-15.

7. The *Vie* is almost certainly intended to be recited rather than sung; furthermore, it is probably the influence of the Middle English verse which led Wright to read *ad pé* (v. 2) as *al pré*, thus creating an otherwise absent topographical similarity. His confusion is still less than that of C.J. HARVEY, *Macaronic techniques in Anglo-Norman verse*, «L'Esprit créateur», xviii 1978, pp. 70-81, who claims in respect of this «snatch from an Anglo-Norman and English composition [...] quoted in a Latin sermon», that «miraculously the whole poem is preserved in MS. Digby 86» (p. 70).

8. *Codicem Manu Scriptum Digby 86 in Biblioteca Bodleiana asseveratum*, ed. by E. STENGEL, Halle, In Libraria Orphanotrophei, 1871, pp. 40-49.

inclusion in most of the standard inventories,⁹ it was hardly free from blemish.¹⁰ A far more reliable edition, with intervention for sense and metre and accompanied by some useful textual notes, was provided in the DPhil thesis of Meier-Ewert, which, alas, remained unpublished.¹¹ Most recently, a non-interventionist transcription of the *Vie* was included by Gaggero in an appendix accompanying his study of tail-rhyme verse forms, but this text is also not without problems.¹² As a result, there is still no reliable critical edition of the *Vie* readily available to those who might wish to read the poem.

Of course, the mere fact of a text's existence does not automatically make it worthy of publication. In the case of the *Vie*, however, one's interest is inevitably piqued by the reputation that the poem has managed to garner for itself. In supplying for his transcription the sub-heading «obscœnum poema agn. ineditum», Stengel identified the salient characteristic which was to feature insistently in the judgements of subsequent scholars. Visings catalogued the *Vie* as «A series of obscenities ending with a prayer», while Dean recorded it as «A thirteenth-century series of obscenities».¹³ Corrie deemed it «categorically obscene», and «even more scurrilous» than the genital-laden fabliau which precedes it in Digby 86; Hines considered it «particularly salacious»; Barbieri judged it «plutôt humoristique et obscène que misogyne», with the speaker lapsing into «des tons franchement grossiers»; and no less an authority in comic literature than Busby concurred in terming it «an obscene *unicum*».¹⁴ Given such unanimity in the verdict of obscenity, the *Vie* is clearly not a text to be trifled with, such that it seems judicious to provide a brief summary of the poem before presuming to lead the unsuspecting reader any further down its path of depravity.

9. E.g. J. VISING, *Sur la versification anglo-normande*, Upsala, R. Almqvist & J. Wiksell, 1884, no. xxi, p. 82; G. NAETEBUS, *Die nicht-lyrischen Strophenformen des Altfranzösischen*, Leipzig, Hirzel, 1891, App. III.1, p. 190; A. LÅNGFORS, *Les incipit des poèmes français antérieurs au XVI^e siècle. Répertoire bibliographique établi à l'aide de notes de M. Paul Meyer*, Paris, Champion, 1917, p. 189.

10. Cf. the scathing review by P. MEYER, «Romania», I 1872, pp. 244-49, who accuses Stengel of lacking «une connaissance suffisante de la langue» (p. 249). Harsh as this judgement may seem, it is, leaving aside various dubious editing decisions and punctuation, supported by the presence in Stengel's edition of the *Vie* of the following transcription errors (here and in subsequent footnotes, line numbers refer to the edition in the present article): 22 *saint*, 26 *Cil*, 28 *Ben*, 28 *counsail*, 44 *alohér*, 59 *le*, 79 *peu soye*, 81 *oustur*, 134 *m'enuiay*, 137 *gousté*, 142 *luy om.*, 144 *i devs*, 165 *soy*, 168 *amiabes*, 192 *au meins ne*, 200 *meime mes*, 203 *dirai*, 288 *Deproue*, 328 *E ceme*.

11. C. MEIER-EWERT, *A Study and a Partial Edition of the Anglo-Norman Verse in the Bodleian MS Digby 86*, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1971; text of the *Vie* on pp. 228-37, with comments *passim*.

12. M. GAGGERO, *Per una storia romanza del rythmus caudatus continens*, Milan, Ledizioni, 2016, pp. 289-96. In addition to untenable resolutions of abbreviations and questionable editorial decisions, we find the following transcription errors: 19, 208 *Pour*, 26, 28, 71 *Et*, 50 *heure*, 106 *sovent*, 114 *eu*, 115 *vint*, 117 *voulonté*, 124 *mauuaise*, 125 *avoit*, 128 *tors*, 142 *lui*, 155 *dist*, 164 *vueil*, 165 *bonté*, 168 *aimable*, 180 *poet*, 184 *dely*, 188 *un*, 209 *chevalier*, 218 *courage*, 221 *si*, 223 *d'*, 231 *grant*, 238 *Dé ques*, 248 *A porter*, 251 *Sans*, 258 *fere*, 274 *enfant*, 294 *changereit*, 295 *Son*, 304 *Sanz*, 308 *soit*, 324 *pris*, 325 *maiesté*, *en*, 344 *puis*.

13. J. VISING, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature*, London, Oxford University Press, 1923, no. 270, p. 64; ANL, no. 214, p. 121.

14. M. CORRIE, *Harley 2253, Digby 86, and the circulation of literature in pre-Chaucerian England*, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Context of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by S. FEIN, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2000, pp. 427-43, at p. 434; M. CORRIE, *The compilation of Oxford Bodleian Library MS. Digby 86*, «Medium Ævum», LXVI 1997, pp. 236-49, at p. 240; J. HINES, *Voices in the Past: English Literature and Archaeology*, Cambridge, Brewer, 2004, p. 75; B. BARBIERI, *Le contexte manuscrit du 'Lai du cor' et la réception tardive des lais (avec une note sur 'Renart le Contrefait')*, «Etudes françaises», XLVIII 2012, pp. 115-25, at p. 122; K. BUSBY, «Esprit gaulois» for the English: the humor of the Anglo-Norman fabliau, in *The Old French Fabliaux: Essays on Comedy and Context*, ed. by K.L. BURR-J.F. MORAN-N.J. LACY, Jefferson-London, McFarland, 2007, pp. 160-73, at p. 165.

The *Vie* begins with a young man lamenting that his every waking moment is consumed by thoughts of love, but he is hindered by his ignorance of how to win the heart of the object of his affection. One day, he turns for help to his brother, who advises him to take his beloved tenderly in his arms, to declare that he dares to *foutre* her and shove his *vit* in her *coun*, and then to hug and kiss her, for this is the most reliable way to influence a woman's feelings. The speaker thanks his brother for such excellent counsel, which he resolves to put to the test as soon as possible – even though, in retrospect, his amorous obsession was most regrettable, as his beloved was the ugliest and foulest-smelling creature imaginable, but his judgement was so clouded that he nonetheless resolved to *foutre* her if he could. At night, he meets her in a secluded place and asks to be her lover, but she refuses; undeterred, he hugs and kisses her until she grants him her love and tells him to return the next night. Then and subsequently, he has his way with her, until the cooling of his ardour allows him to see how hideous and malformed she is, with thick shoulders, a dark back, and a mangy body which seems entirely overtaken by her *cul*. He curses himself for having wasted time with her, but swears not to make the same mistake again. As he does not like tall and skinny women, he will focus all his efforts on small women, who are more beautiful, gentle, good, worthy, seemly, and trustworthy than the rest, and more pleasant to fondle, hug, and kiss in bed. Such small women, as long as free of insurmountable imperfections, deserve acclaim, especially from the speaker. He is, he declares, lusty by nature, and will never desist from declaring his love to women in general; such declarations are an indispensable prelude to hugging and kissing in his many conquests. He will remain in love until he knows that the woman is pregnant, as he cannot abide children in any shape or form, in part because of their mangy appearance, and in part because they turn women against their lovers, encouraging them to argue and disobey, especially under the incitement of old women. He therefore wishes that a woman could conceive only with her husband. If he could find a sterile woman, he would stay with her and shower her with gifts. He undertakes to search amongst beautiful women until he finds one who matches his criteria, and then marry her. He prays to God to give him such a wife and to His saints for intercession, so that before his death he might confess and repent his sins and be granted remission before being granted access to everlasting joy.

Obscenity is, of course, in the eye of the beholder, and if its nature is hard to define in the present day, the same task is immeasurably harder in medieval contexts.¹⁵ This notwithstanding, if one considers obscenity to consist primarily in the inclusion of sexual content and explicit language, just how outrageous is the *Vie* in the context of Anglo-Norman literature, given that some of the Insular fabliaux are distinguished by «a peculiar kind of surreal and grotesque obscenity» which constitutes their «caractère par excellence»?¹⁶

15. For collaborative considerations, cf. e.g. *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, ed. by J.M. ZIOLKOWSKI, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, Brill, 1998; *Medieval Obscenities*, ed. by N.F. McDONALD, Woodbridge, York Medieval Press, 2006; *Obscène Moyen Âge?*, ed. by N. LABÈRE, Paris, Champion, 2015. On the tendency of some modern scholars to suppress material that they deem offensive, see especially R.G. ARTHUR, *On editing sexually offensive Old French texts*, in *The Politics of Editing Medieval Texts: Papers Given at the 27th Annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 1-2 November 1991*, ed. by R. FRANK, New York, AMS Press, 1993, pp. 19-64; J.-M. FRITZ, *Censures dans la réception moderne des fabliaux*, in *Lire les textes médiévaux aujourd'hui: historicité, actualisation et hypertextualité*, ed. by P. VICTORIN, Paris, Champion, 2011, pp. 117-30.

16. R.J. PEARCY, *Anglo-Norman fabliaux and Chaucer's 'Merchant's Tale'*, «Medium Ævum», LXIX 2000, pp. 227-60, at p. 235; N.v.d. BOOGAARD, *Le fabliau anglo-normand*, in *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium*, ed. by J. GOOSSENS-T. SODMANN, Cologne, Böhlau, 1981, pp. 66-77, at p. 77. Cf. BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*»,

Consider, for example, the evidence of London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, the partner in crime of Digby 86 as an Insular trilingual anthology containing salacious comic material.¹⁷ Here one finds Anglo-Norman copies of *Le Chevalier qui fist parler les cons* (ff. 122vb-124va),¹⁸ a parody of a courtly narrative in which an impoverished knight is granted the power to make vaginas and anuses talk, which includes sixteen instances of *coun* and four of *cul*, and *Les Trois Dames qui troverent un vit* (ff. 100ra-va),¹⁹ which uses the noun *vit* three times in telling of three female pilgrims who find a disembodied penis discarded by the side of road, only to lose it to an abbess whose arbitration they enlist in order to resolve their dispute over ownership. Harley 2253 also contains the only copy of the exclusively Anglo-Norman fabliau *La Gageure* (ff. 118rb-vb), which recounts in forthright terms the actions of a squire who, as a kindred spirit to the speaker in our *Vie*, seizes the opportunity for a more intimate encounter when a chambermaid lifts up her clothing so that he can deliver an anticipated kiss to her backside:

Yl sake avaunt son bon bordoun,
Si l'a douné enmy le coun:
Un gros vit long e quarré
Ly a enmy le coun doné (vv. 77-80).²⁰

Beside such Anglo-Norman comparators, the *Vie de un vallet ameraus* seems, frankly, rather tame. The entirety of its explicit sexual content and vocabulary – if this is, indeed, quite as offensive to a medieval audience as their modern counterparts are wont to assume²¹ – is squeezed into «Vous hos jeo foutre / E mun vit en toun coun boutre» (vv. 35-36) and «La foteray» (v. 80), and the eventual act of coitus is glossed over with the euphemism «de luy fis ma volonté» (v. 117). Meier-Ewert's judgement that the *Vie* «is not more offensive than many other fabliau-type products of the time»²² may dissent from the consensus, but appears an entirely reasonable assessment of it within an Insular context; and if one places it beside a Continental monologue such as *Le Pardon de foutre*, the *Vie* seems even further from passing

cit.: «Looking at the whole corpus of fabliaux, those contained in Anglo-Norman manuscripts are among the most shocking to modern sensibilities» (p. 161).

17. For the texts and a description of the manuscript, see *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. by S.G. FEIN-D.B. RAYBIN-J.M. ZIOLKOWSKI, 3 vols, Kalamazoo, MI, TEAMS, 2014; for studies, see *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: the scribes, contents and social contexts of BL MS Harley 2253*, ed. by S. FEIN, Kalamazoo, W Michigan Univ, 2000. Cf. also K. BUSBY, *Multilingualism, the Harley Scribe, and Johannes Jacobi*, in *Insular Books: Vernacular manuscript miscellanies in late medieval Britain*, ed. by M. CONNOLLY-R. RADULESCU, Oxford, Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 49-60; I. DELAGE-BÉLAND, *Des «bibliothèques personnelles». Copie, compilation et matière du livre anglo-normand: l'exemple des manuscrits London, BL, Harley 2253 et Oxford, BL, Digby 86*, in *Les Centres de production des manuscrits vernaculaires au Moyen Âge*, ed. by G. GIANNINI-F. GINGRAS, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2015, pp. 37-58; C. REVARD, *A Goliard's Feast and the metanarrative of Harley 2253*, «Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire», LXXXIII 2005, pp. 841-67. Transcriptions and English translations of the Harley 2253 fabliaux mentioned below are included in C. REVARD, *Four fabliaux from London, British Library MS Harley 2253, translated into English verse*, «The Chaucer Review», XL 2005, pp. 111-40.

18. ANL, no. 188. Edited in *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, ed. by I. SHORT-R. PEARCY, London, ANTS, 2000, pp. 25-28; cf. *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, ed. by W. NOOMEN-N.v.d. BOOGAARD, 10 vols, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1983-98, III 45-173.

19. ANL, no. 185. Edited in *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, ed. SHORT-PEARCY, cit., pp. 28-29; cf. *NRCF*, ed. NOOMEN-BOOGAARD, cit., VIII 269-81.

20. ANL, no. 197. Cited from *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, ed. SHORT-PEARCY, cit., pp. 30-31; cf. *NRCF*, ed. NOOMEN-BOOGAARD, cit., x 3-10, 124-27.

21. On this question, cf. D. BURROWS, «*Ele boute son doi en son con...*»: the question of Anglo-Norman obscenity, «*Reinardus*», XXVII 2015, pp. 33-57.

22. MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., p. 81.

muster as a «series of obscenities».²³ Yet while those lured to the *Vie* solely by the whiff of scandal fermented by previous scholarship may find their prurient proclivities frustrated, this does not mean that the text is bereft of interest, for, as Meier-Ewert observes, «although it is not great poetry [...] there is nothing else quite like it in Anglo-Norman literature».²⁴

GENRE

Part of the *Vie*'s claim to fame concerns its generic classification. While the poem's humour and sexual content might point in the direction of the fabliaux, it would not satisfy any of the common modern definitions of this text-type.²⁵ Instead, as a relatively short, non-strophic verse monologue presumably intended to be recited rather than sung, the *Vie* falls squarely into that no-man's land of literary history known as the *dit*, memorably described by Léonard as:

toute pièce rimée, non chantée, plutôt brève, souvent détentrice d'un enseignement ou d'un message à transmettre au lecteur, parfois simplement destinée à amuser un public et dont la «particularité» est... de n'appartenir à aucun «genre» précis!²⁶

As a taxonomic tool, this definition of the *dit* is a rather blunt weapon, as evidenced by the huge corpus that Léonard establishes on this basis – whilst still omitting the *Vie*. Yet the task of classification becomes less hopeless if one applies Jauss's principle of the «systemprägende Dominante»,²⁷ which in the case of the *Vie* is located in the very identity of its speaker. In describing the trials and tribulations of his love-life and holding forth so opinionatedly on his philosophies and ambitions, he rises above the amorphous mass of indistinguishable first-person voices to emerge as a more fully-rounded and identifiable character, such that the *Vie* can be recognised as a member of the much more intimate and close-knit historical family of dramatic monologues.²⁸ Clearly this identification is not a panacea for all our interpretative

23. E.g. «De male mort soit entechiez / Qui dit que foutre soit pechiez, / Et si viegne maus encombriers / Ceus qui ne foutent volentiers! / Et jeune dame soit maudite / Qui le foutre clamera quite. / Foutre se face sanz nul plet; / Por el ne furent li con fet» (vv. 11-18). *Two Old French Satires on the Power of the Keys: 'L'Escommenement au lecheor' and 'Le Pardon de foutre'*, ed. by D. BURROWS, Oxford, Legenda, 2005.

24. MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., p. 82.

25. If one, for example, accepts the definition of W. NOOMEN, *Qu'est-ce qu'un fabliau?*, in *Atti [del] XIV congresso internazionale di linguistica e filologia romanza, Napoli, 15-20 aprile 1974*, ed. by A. VARVARO, Naples-Amsterdam, Macchiaroli-Benjamins, 1981, pp. 421-32, and N.v.d. BOOGAARD, *Le Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, «Neophilologus», LXI 1977, pp. 333-46, the *Vie* would be excluded on the grounds of its versification and the extent and nature of its narrative component. This is not the place to revive the discussion of the manifold problems surrounding the definition of the fabliaux summarised in D. BURROWS, *The Stereotype of the Priest in the Old French Fabliaux: Anticlerical Satire and Lay Identity*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2005, pp. 32-41, but one can scarcely resist noting that just a few folios before the *Vie* (ff. 109va-110ra), the first-person non-narrative diatribe against the follies of jealous husbands bears the heading *Le fablel del gelous*: what a pity that this poor, benighted rubricator did not know the correct terminology!

26. M. LEONARD, *Le «Dit» et sa technique littéraire des origines à 1340*, Paris, Champion, 1996, p. 350; see pp. 10-32 for a discussion of previous attempts at defining the *dit*.

27. H.R. JAUSS, *Theorie der Gattungen und Literatur des Mittelalters*, in *Généralités*, ed. by H.R. JAUSS-E. KÖHLER, Heidelberg, Winter, 1972 (GRLMA, I), pp. 107-38; cf. the «predominant trait» discussed by P. ZUMTHOR, *Classes and genres in medieval literature*, in *A Medieval French Miscellany: Papers of the 1970 Kansas Conference on Medieval French Literature*, ed. by N.J. LACY, Lawrence, University of Kansas Publications, 1972, pp. 27-36.

28. This affiliation is also noted by S. MENEGALDO, *Les jongleurs et le théâtre en France au XIIIe siècle. Leurs activités et leur répertoire*, «Romania», CXXVIII 2010, pp. 46-91, at p. 80; GAGGERO, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

woes, as we do not know, for example, precisely how such monologues would be performed;²⁹ nonetheless, recognising the fictional persona created in the *Vie* as a worthy comic counterpart to, for example, the quack doctor in Rutebeuf's *Dit de l'herberie* or the downtrodden husband in his *Mariage Rutebeuf*³⁰ – both, perhaps not coincidentally, also composed in a tail-rhyme form – allows us to appreciate just how extraordinary our poem is in Anglo-Norman literary history, and, as we shall later see, is also potentially significant for how we interpret the speaker's expostulations.

LANGUAGE

That the *Vie* is of Anglo-Norman origin and not just an Insular copy of a Continental text is demonstrated most conclusively by the phonological evidence of the rhymes.³¹ Characteristically Anglo-Norman admixtures involving development to /u/ include *nous* : *Glorious* (vv. 331-32), *jour* : *amour* (vv. 112-13) (§§ 6.1-2), while the typical velarisation of /y/ to /u/ is confirmed by *plus* : *prus* (vv. 167-68) (§ 7). Reduction of final /-ieə/ to /-iə/, as also common in Normano-Picard, is attested by *amie* : *daunnie* (vv. 227-28) (§ 8.4). There is widespread levelling of diphthongs. Earlier /ai/ and /ei/ rhyme in final position: *soy* : *toy* (< **thâhi*) (vv. 66-67), *sofferay* : *may* : *vey* : *ley* (vv. 253-56), *dirray* : *purquay* (vv. 263-64), *Roy* : *purroy* (vv. 306-7), *foy* : *averoy* (vv. 320-21); before -s: *curteis* : *mauveis* (vv. 286-87); and before a nasal consonant: *peine* : *certeine* (vv. 290-91). Both rhyme with *e* from different sources: *tere* : *flere* (vv. 62-63), *aver* : *tencer* (vv. 277-78) (§§ 3, 4, 11, 12). Reduction of /ie/ to *e* before *r* is prevalent: *chever* : *cher* (vv. 25-26), *daunner* : *chevaler* (vv. 208-9), *tencer* : *ledenger* (vv. 278-79), *engendrer* : *mulier* (vv. 299-300), *enfaunter* : *cher* (vv. 304-5), *deners* : *fers* (vv. 312-13); and is also seen in *Jolifté* : *pé* (vv. 1-2) (§ 9). The admixtures of /oi/ < /ci/ with earlier /ei/ in *joye* : *soye* (vv. 261-62), *viveroye* : *joye* : *purroye* (vv. 301-3), *Roy* : *foy* : *coy* (vv. 324-26) seem to depend on a more typically Continental differentiation of /ei/ to /oi/ (§ 13.2). Earlier /ui/ undergoes the distinctive reduction to /u/: *fust* : *nuyt* (vv. 54-55), *pus* (< *POSTEA*) : *jus* (vv. 118-19), *lu* (= *lui*) : *aparceu* : *revenu* (vv. 120-22), *pus* (< *POSSUM*) : *plus* : *prus* (vv. 166-68); and also rhymes in /i/: *cy* : *quy* (vv. 84-85), *respit* : *nuit* (vv. 110-11), *dy* : *ly* (vv. 183-84); note also *amy* : *autresy* : *nuly* (vv. 296-98) (§ 15). The characteristic depalatalisation of /ɲ/ is seen in *loungeine* : *maine* (vv. 68-69). In preconsonantal position, we note the effacement of /r/ in *dos* : *cors* (vv. 127-28), *après* : *fers* (vv. 249-50), and of /v/ in *dire* : *descrire* (vv. 131-32, 164-65) (§ 22.1, 29.2).

As is clear in the preceding examples, the scribe's spellings confirm that he shares the author's Insular provenance. Further typically Anglo-Norman orthographical features include:

29. On the development of this text-type, see E. PICOT, *Le Monologue dramatique dans l'ancien théâtre français*, «Romania», xv 1886, pp. 358-442, xvi 1887, pp. 438-542, and xvii 1888, pp. 207-75; *Mimes français du XIIIe siècle: contribution à l'histoire du théâtre comique au moyen âge*, ed. by E. FARAL, Paris, Champion, 1910; J.-C. AUBAILLY, *Le Monologue, le dialogue et la sottie: essai sur quelques genres dramatiques de la fin du Moyen Age et du début du XVIe siècle*, Paris, Champion, 1976; A. YLLERA, *Los orígenes del monólogo dramático: el 'Dit de l'herberie de Rutebeuf'*, «Epos», vii 1991, pp. 395-407; S. DE LAUDE, «Non sarà forse un mimo?». *Teatro e racconto in alcuni testi del Medioevo francese*, «Moderna», iii 2001, pp. 55-67; S. DE LAUDE, *Il «monologo drammatico». Sul repertorio dei giullari nel Medioevo*, «Anticomoderno», v 2001, pp. 41-54.

30. Cf. *Œuvres complètes de Rutebeuf*, ed. by E. FARAL-J. BASTIN, 2 vols., Paris, Picard, 1959-60, I 547-51 and II 272-80.

31. Numbers in the main text preceded by § point to the relevant section in I. SHORT, *Manual of Anglo-Norman*, 2nd edn, Oxford, ANTS, 2013, to which, for the sake of brevity, references are restricted wherever possible.

the absolute dominance of *aun* over *an* (*devaunt*, *enfaunt*, *daunner*) (§ 1.6), and a marked preference for *oun* over *on* (*dounke*, *moun*, *ount*), beside occasional instances of *un*, as in *cunsail* (vv. 28, 46), *mun* (vv. 4, 36), *sunt* (v. 168), etc. (§ 6.6-7); velarisation of /a/ before preconsonantal /s/, as in *gausté* : *tausté* (vv. 137-38), *tauster* (v. 181) (§ 23.6), and closing of /ɔ/ to /u/, as in *toust* (v. 42) (§ 5.5); levelling of *ue*, as in *fer* (v. 6), *tref* (v. 176) (§ 10.3), and of *ieu*, as in *meuz* (vv. 25, 245), *lu* (vv. 81, 85) (§ 18); raising of countertonic /e/ after a palatal, seen in *gisir* (v. 256) (§ 19.13); retention of final unsupported *d* in prepositional *ad* (vv. 2, 8, 9) and verbal *ad* (vv. 46, 51, 107, etc.) (§ 24.2); *h* marking hiatus in *loher* (v. 44), but also appearing inorganically in *hos* (v. 35), *heuse* (v. 220) (§§ 19.3, 19.5); spellings suggestive of non-palatal *l* in *file* (v. 209) (§ 21.3) and of aphesis in *chever* (v. 25) (§§ 19.10, 30.1); and a treatment of preconsonantal *s* which combines both frequent adventitious inclusion, as in *fest* (v. 42), *dist* (v. 109), *moust* (v. 57), etc., and occasional effacement, as in *meitrie* (v. 275) (§§ 23.2, 23.9).

A further distinctive trait of the *Vie* – both phonological and orthographical, and with implications for morpho-syntax and versification – involves its treatment of final *-e*. The rhymes *une rue* : masc.nom.sg. *drue* (vv. 17-18) and *amie* : masc.obl.sg. *mercie* (vv. 31-32) appear, beneath the scribal spelling, to involve an admixture of masculine and feminine,³² while the rhymes of the apparent fem.pl. *petis* (v. 153 : *plevis*, v. 162 : *pris*), *rebel* (v. 172 : *pel*), *prus* (v. 168 : *plus*), *engendrez* (v. 61 : *veisez*), *cher* (v. 305 : *enfaunter*), *coy* (v. 326 : *foy*) seem to rely on the absence of feminine agreement; either of these explanations could account for *Roy* : *foy* : *espouse coy* (vv. 324-26) and *troverez* : *femmes enluminez* (vv. 160-61).³³ Metrical evidence for observance of feminine concord is limited by the possibility, discussed below, that regular line length may alternate between three or four and seven or eight syllables;³⁴ nonetheless, we can note, for example, that the apparently feminine *Gros e gras* (v. 148) scans as seven syllables, whereas *Grosses e grasses* would be hypermetric, while conversely the concord on *petite* (v. 187) is required to supply the seventh syllable. Amongst the epicene forms, etymological *graunt* is used consistently by the scribe (vv. 100, 158, 178, etc.), and the analogical form would create a hypermetric line in vv. 231, 290, but the treatment of *tel* is less clear-cut: the scribe writes *tel* and *tele* each four times; of these, *tele* (vv. 219, 307) does not scan, and *tel* (v. 283) does, but conversely *tele* could scan in v. 321, and is required in v. 319 as the line stands. In summary, Meyer's judgement that the author «n'avait aucune notion de la différence des formes du masculine et du féminin»³⁵ seems overly dismissive; it would rather appear that for the author of the *Vie*, the decision of whether to include feminine concord and to separate masculine and feminine rhymes was largely governed by poetic convenience, and that the scribe also allowed himself comparable flexibility.

The morphology also presents numerous typically Anglo-Norman traits. With the sole exception of *deners* : *fers* (vv. 312-13),³⁶ the rhymes confirm that the author does not mark

32. The same may apply in *l'anutere* : *chere* (vv. 82-83), unless one assumes either the development of a feminine form of *anuter* (rather than scribal addition of *-e* for an eye-rhyme; note that the only attestation of *anutere* – in *AND*, s.v. *anuiter* – is from Stengel's transcription of the *Vie*), or perhaps an underlying absence of feminine agreement on *chere*, obscured by the copyist's spellings.

33. There are numerous further instances of rhyme-words lacking a feminine *e*, but since they involve admixtures of same with same (vv. 197-98, 286-89) and on occasion would be dependent on observance of preceding direct object agreement (vv. 220-21, 318-19; cf. also Note to 224), they are inconclusive; conversely, the concord marked in *petite* : *ellite* (vv. 191-92) could be merely scribal.

34. E.g. *Tout la fin* (v. 21) does not confirm an absence of feminine concord, since *Tout[e]* would equally scan.

35. MEYER, rev. cit., p. 248.

36. The rhyme *jolifs* : *vifs* (vv. 206-7) is of same with same.

masculine nominative singular with flexional *s/z*: *rue* : *drue* (vv. 17-18), *chever* : *cher* (vv. 25-26), *longement* : *dolent* (vv. 70-71), etc.; the same applies to the scribe, who also does not use the definite article *li*, although there is an isolated instance of the masculine nominative singular possessive adjective *mi* (v. 18).³⁷ Pronouns of interest include the Western *el* (vv. 90, 194) suggested by the metre as underlying scribal *ele*, as well as oblique indirect *lu* (v. 120) and possibly northern *mi* (vv. 98, 144, 154 etc.)³⁸ (§ 32.1). In light of the preceding discussion of gender and the use of *e*, and given such agreements as in «Quaunt tele trovez averoy» (v. 321), little significance can be attached to *une estage* (v. 293). For the verbs, Insular extension of the first conjugation infinitive is confirmed by the rhyme *menter* : *pouer* (vv. 251-52); *foutre* : *boutre* (vv. 35-36) could involve a passage of *bouter* to the third conjugation or, beneath the scribal spelling, an assimilation of *foutre* to the first conjugation (§ 34.1).³⁹ The scribe writes the Western first-person ending in *preng* (v. 44), *vinc* (v. 115) (§ 34.3). The aforementioned authorial and scribal treatment of final *e* and the apparent admixture of masculine and feminine rhymes blurs the distinction between the future and conditional of the first-person singular: for example, while the rhyme and spelling *foteray* : pret.1 *trovay* (vv. 80-81), MS *voderray* : *delay* (vv. 114-15), and MS *voderray* : *palefray* (vv. 245-46) suggest future forms of the verbs, the context suggests the conditional, and the same also applies in *ameray* : *Roy* : *purroy* : *tendray* (vv. 305-8).⁴⁰ For the future, the metre supports the syncopated stems of *dorray* (v. 28), *jurray* (v. 314), *moustroye* (v. 104), *frez* (v. 29) beside *ferray* (v. 92 : *serray*) (§§ 19.6, 34.8), and suggests that the frequently appearing epenthetic *e* is purely scribal, as there is no instance where it would supply a required syllable, but there are cases where it would create a hypermetric line if articulated, such as MS *voderray* (v. 114), *voderray* (v. 245), *voderoye* (v. 298), *viveroye* (v. 301), *averoit* (v. 311). For the imperfect subjunctive, the metre requires synaeresis in *deuse* (v. 78), *peust* (v. 219), *heuse* (v. 220), *creusent* (v. 287), *peust* (v. 299); diaeresis would be metrically possible, but not necessary, in *veisez* (v. 60), *eust* (v. 221), *deusent* (v. 284).

The syntax presents a number of typically Anglo-Norman features, such as the verbal periphrasis *prendre a* with weakened value in «jeo luy preng a loher» (v. 44), and in hypothetical sentences the use of present subjunctive in the protasis, as in «si mi doint Deus socours» (v. 144; cf. vv. 189-91, 193-96, 213) as well as combination of imperfect subjunctive in the protasis with (presumably) conditional in the apodosis in «si puse, / La foteray» (vv. 79-

37. Cf. M.K. POPE, *From Latin to Modern French, with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman*, 2nd rev. edn., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1952, § 1261.

38. It would be possible to read *m'i* in some cases, but sufficiently cumbersome to make *mi* preferable. This said, it is not impossible, given the number of occasions on which *ni* (here edited as *n'i*) and abbreviated *qui* (for *que*) are found in the copy, that we are dealing with a scribal spelling in which *-i* replaces *-e* in order to mark hiatus.

39. Cf. F.J. TANQUEREY, *L'Evolution du verbe en anglo-français (XIIe-XIVe siècles)*, Paris, Champion, 1915, pp. 418-25. The form *boutre* was the first of the three features (along with *menter* and the confusion of gender) which caused MEYER, art. cit., to declare that our poem «n'est pas moins correcte dans la forme que dans le fonds» (p. 248). MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., p. 116 n. 3, attempted to rehabilitate *boutre* with the claim that it also appeared in the text of *Boeve de Haumtone*; in fact, it does not, but rather the example of *boutre* : *foutre* is cited in *Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by A. STIMMING, Halle, Niemeyer, 1899, p. xxix, in order to contextualise the form *get(t)re* which does appear in *Boeve*. Stimming himself has taken this example from H. SUCHIER, *Ueber die Matthaeus Paris zugeschriebene 'Vie de seint Auban'*, Halle a. S., Niemeyer, 1876, p. 41, which Suchier in turn has found in Stengel's transcription of our *Vie*. And so the circle is complete...

40. Cf. MEIER-EWERT, op. cit.: «It is probable that the future and conditional forms become identical through sound change, and that the scribe then levels the spellings for the sake of correctness of visual rhyme» (p. 120). On this development, see POPE, op. cit., § 1284.

80; cf. vv. 219-23) (§ 35). Further points of interest include the use of both the present indicative (v. 252) and the future (v. 274) in clauses describing future possibility introduced by *quaunt*, and the alternation between the active and passive sense of infinitives as complements of *veeir* in «quaunt les vey / En berz gisir, cum est ley, / Ou en bras / Tenir, ou sere sus dras» (vv. 255-58).⁴¹

VERSIFICATION

Meier-Ewert sees much of the *Vie*'s literary interest as residing in its versification:

Although one receives the impression at first that the author just rattled it off without much thought, it is in fact very carefully constructed. 8-syllable lines and 7-syllable lines are interspersed with short lines of 3 or 4 syllables, and the sentence structure cuts across the metrical pattern in such a way that there is constant variation.⁴²

Yet where Meier-Ewert sees careful construction and syntactical experimentation, Dean espies «a free form of verse, lines ranging in length from 3 to 10 syllables with rhymes in irregular groups».⁴³ One text, yet two very different opinions: which one is right?⁴⁴

The *Vie* contains a total of 344 lines.⁴⁵ These are organised into groupings in which a short line introduces a new rhyme,⁴⁶ which is then continued by one or more long lines. The most frequent grouping is by far rhyming couplets, of which there are 149 instances; these are complemented by 13 tercets⁴⁷ and a single quatrain.⁴⁸ A characteristic feature is that the short line, while beginning the new grouping, very often remains syntactically connected to the preceding one, resulting in frequent enjambement. The result is, as Meier-Ewert recognised, a not unsophisticated interplay between syntax and form:

De moun estat li fis saver
Tout la fin,
Si priay pur seint Martin
Conseil de luy,

41. Cf. P. MÉNARD, *Syntaxe de l'ancien français*, 3rd edn., Bordeaux, Bière, 1988, § 163; C. BURIDANT, *Grammaire nouvelle de l'ancien français*, Paris, Sedes, 2000, § 229.

42. MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., p. 82.

43. ANL, no. 214, p. 121.

44. For his part, NAETEBUS, op. cit., p. 190 places the *Vie* in an appendix, under III.1, in a group of four texts combining long and short lines «in denen vorwiegend ein Achtsilbner zwischen den Kurzzeilen steht, oder in denen bei erheblicherem Schwanken hinsichtlich der Zahl der längeren Verse nicht regelmäßig jeder neue Reim durch einen Viersilbner eingeführt wird» (p. 39). Since the short lines in our *Vie* do regularly introduce a new rhyme, this classification is inaccurate. A far more detailed analysis of the versification of the *Vie* than that offered here, albeit affected by some of the editorial problems described above, n. 12, is included in GAGGERO, op. cit., pp. 161-79; his study also offers valuable insights into the broader Continental tradition of tail-rhyme poetry to which our text belongs; for all its interest, some of the analysis is affected by the underlying editorial problems and misapprehensions described above, n. 12.

45. For ease, I include my emended reading of vv. 248-50 in the following comments and figures.

46. There are three exceptions (vv. 187, 193, 341) in which the new rhyme is introduced by a long line which does not offer any easy opportunity for emendation to a short line.

47. I.e. vv. 11-13, 14-16, 45-47, 94-96, 109-11, 120-22, 157-59, 166-68, 199-201, 226-28, 277-79, 296-98, 301-3, 324-26.

48. I.e. vv. 253-56, which the scribal orthography presents as two couplets paired in -ay then -ey, but which the underlying phonology reveals to be a monorhyme quatrain. Vv. 339-42 could be seen as another quatrain, but more accurately constitute couplets rhyming in -es then -fes.

Coment puray moun ennuy
Meuz chever (vv. 20-25).

Mes tel manere, si ben le fount,
Aver deusent,
Que de bele parole fusent
E mout curteis,
E que ne creusent les mauveis
Reprové
Veilles, qui sount maleuré (vv. 283-89).

The question of the length of the lines is considerably more complicated on account of the tensions between authorial form and scribal spelling, as well as the aforementioned apparent underlying fluidity in the treatment of final -e. With this caveat voiced, we can identify 161 short lines and 183 long lines. If one counts the syllables of these lines as they stand in the manuscript, applying Continental norms in the treatment of elision and hiatus and assuming synaeresis in the relevant verb forms, of the 161 short lines, 91 contain four syllables, and 55 three syllables; the remaining 15 lines, which ostensibly contain five syllables, scan as four via an entirely unexceptionable and standard interpretation of scribal spelling,⁴⁹ with the exception of 2 lines easily secured by a minor intervention (vv. 224, 318). Applying the same approach to the 183 long lines, 81 would scan as seven syllables, and 78 as eight syllables. With this suggesting that long lines are regularly of either seven or eight syllables, of the 13 hypermetric lines (12 of nine syllables, and 1 of ten), 9 scan as eight syllables if one reads through the scribal spelling, and the remaining 4 could easily be reduced to eight by suppression of a single non-essential word. All of the 11 presumed hypometric lines (10 of six syllables, and 1 of five) could be secured via a minor emendation (in a number of cases also justified by sense).⁵⁰

In summary, the underlying form of the *Vie* appears to consist of a short line of three or four syllables which, while frequently syntactically connected to the preceding line, introduces a new rhyme which is shared by usually one, occasionally two, and exceptionally three long lines of seven or eight syllables. While such syllabic variation stands in contrast to more prescriptive and rigid Continental models, the *Vie* does seem to adhere to this form with a regularity which is quite noteworthy for an Anglo-Norman poem of this period.

MANUSCRIPT

The only extant copy of the *Vie* is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86, ff. 114rb-116vb.⁵¹ Headed by a red titulus, the text is presented in two columns, with 33 lines

49. E.g. reading MS *la acolez* (v. 37) as *l'acolez*, given the tendency of Anglo-Norman copyists to write elided monosyllables in full irrespective of metrical considerations.

50. In vv. 79, 121, one could simply suppose diaeresis, although this would seem contrary to the authorial norm.

51. Cf. *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, ed. by J. TSCHANN-M.B. PARKES, Oxford, Early English Text Society, 1996; the manuscript can also be consulted online via: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/88abdb11-9b84-4e59-b759-eade1964b5ca>. Further general studies include B.D.H. MILLER, *The early history of Bodleian MS Digby 86*, «Annuaire Medievale», IV 1963, pp. 26-56; MEIER-EWERT, op. cit.; CORRIE, *Compilation*, cit.; M. CORRIE, *Further information on the origins of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, «Notes and Queries», XLVI 1999, pp. 430-33; CORRIE, *Harley 2253*, cit.; HINES, op. cit., pp. 71-104; B. BARBIERI, *Les «manuscripts de fabliaux». Typologies et lieux de production en domaine anglo-normand*, in *Les Centres de production des manuscrits vernaculaires au Moyen Âge*, ed. by G. GIANNINI-F. GINGRAS, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2015, pp. 19-35; DELAGE-

per column, ruled in plummet. The initial letter of each line stands in a separate column, with red wash applied. On two occasions (vv. 142, 295), the scribe has completed a line of verse by adding the final letters in the line above, preceded by a red-washed symbol; his positioning of text around a stitched tear in f. 114vb indicates that the damage preceded the copying. The text begins with a four-line *I* in red and black, with a four-line red *S* marking a sub-division beginning at v. 202. The poem has been copied by the individual responsible for the majority of the manuscript, conventionally known as Scribe A, who writes in a fairly legible late thirteenth-century Anglicana script, with relatively little auto-correction and standard forms of abbreviation, and without punctuation marks.⁵²

Of significantly more interest than the quite conventional *mise en page* and *mise en texte* of the *Vie* are its relationships with other texts in the heterogeneous mix of Latin, English, and French material collected in Digby 86.⁵³ Directly before the *Vie* stands the sole Anglo-Norman copy of *Les Quatre Sohais saint Martin* (ff. 113ra-114rb),⁵⁴ which Busby justifiably terms «a shocker».⁵⁵ Despite the loss of its opening lines,⁵⁶ this fabliau tells the notorious tale of a peasant whom St Martin rewards for his devotion by granting him four wishes: the peasant squanders the first wish by gifting it to his wife, who successfully wishes that he be covered in penises, the second by vengefully wishing that she be covered in vaginas, the third by wishing that they both be bereft of all sexual organs, and the fourth by wishing that they be restored to their original state. Although the *Quatre Sohais* does not involve coitus, and hence has no reason to include the verb *foutre*, its focus on the sexual body entails eighteen instances of *vit* and sixteen of *coun*, which clearly resonates with the appearance of these

BELAND, art. cit. The collected volume *Interpreting MS Digby 86: a Trilingual Book from Thirteenth-Century Worcestershire*, ed. by S. FEIN, York, York Medieval Press, 2019 appeared too late for inclusion in this article; an initial reading indicates that its contributions offer important new insights into the manuscript, but that these do not impact directly on the material included in the present article.

52. For more detailed comment, see *Digby 86*, ed. TSCHANN-PARKES, cit., esp. pp. xxxvii-xli, xlvii-liii.

53. The importance of reading texts within their manuscript context was, for Old French, most conclusively highlighted by K. BUSBY, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols., Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, 2002, whose *Fabliaux and the new codicology*, in *The World and its Rival: Essays on Literary Imagination in Honor of Per Nykrog*, ed. by K. KARCZEWSKA-T. CONLEY, Amsterdam-Atlanta, Rodopi, 1999, pp. 137-60, was one of the most significant of a number of attempts at analysing the implications of the material transmission of comic narrative: cf. also e.g. L. BORGHI CEDRINI, *Per una lettura «continua» dell'837 (MS. f. fr. Bibl. Nat. di Parigi): il Département des Livres*, «Studi Testuali», III 1994, pp. 115-66; B. NOLAN, *Turning over the leaves of medieval fabliau-anthologies: the case of Bibliothèque Nationale MS. français 2173*, «Medieval Perspectives», VIII 1998, pp. 1-31; B. NOLAN, *Promiscuous fictions: medieval bawdy tales and their textual liaisons*, in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, ed. by P. BOITANI-A. TORTI, Cambridge, Brewer, 1999, pp. 79-105; B. NOLAN, *Anthologizing ribaldry: five Anglo-Norman fabliaux*, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Context of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by S. FEIN, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2000, pp. 289-327; C. REVARD, *From French «fabliau manuscripts» and MS Harley 2253 to the Decameron and the Canterbury Tales*, «Medium Ævum», LXIX 2000, pp. 261-78; T. ADAMS, *Making «sens» in BnF fr. 19152*, «New Zealand Journal of French Studies», XXIII 2002, pp. 22-33; T. ADAMS, *The cunningly intelligent characters of BnF fr. 19152*, «Modern Language Notes», CXX 2005, pp. 896-924; W. AZZAM, *Un recueil dans le recueil: Rutebeuf dans le manuscrit BnF f. fr. 837*, in *Mouvances et jointures du manuscrit au texte médiéval*, ed. by M. MIKHAILOVA, Orleans, Paradigme, 2005, pp. 193-202.

54. ANL, no. 192. The Digby 86 copy is edited in full in *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, ed. SHORT-PEARCY, cit., 33-35 (citations below are from their edition); see also *NRCF*, ed. NOOMEN-BOOGAARD, cit., IV 189-216, 409-10.

55. BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*», cit., p. 162; the points of connection between the two texts are covered in more detail in Busby's excellent analysis.

56. The Digby 86 copy begins at v. 44 of the *NRCF* edition; on the lacuna responsible for the missing lines, see below.

nouns in v. 36 of the *Vie*. Furthermore, the Digby 86 copy of the *Quatre Sohais* differs from the other three copies of the text, all Continental, by seamlessly adding a 56-line conclusion fashioned from misogynistic platitudes drawn from the textual tradition of *Le Blasme des femmes* and *Le Chastie-musart*,⁵⁷ warning of the deceptions of wives and the bestial corruption and covetousness of women, best corrected by a harsh diet, humble clothing, and regular beatings. The relevance of this extended epimythion for the relationship between the texts is twofold. First, it establishes as a minor leitmotif the figure of St Martin,⁵⁸ who bestows the wishes in the narrative of the *Quatre Sohais*, is called as a witness to the treachery of women in the fabliau's moralisation,⁵⁹ and is invoked by the speaker of the *Vie* when he seeks counsel from his brother.⁶⁰ With the additional appeals at the end of the *Vie* to SS John, Thomas, and Alban, the texts can therefore be seen as linked by the intercession of saints, both actual and desired, in singularly inappropriate situations. Second, the added diatribe seems so out of proportion in length and tone relative to the misdeeds of the wife in the preceding narrative⁶¹ – compare the single couplet warning against uxorious credulousness which closes the Continental copies – that one is led, with Busby, to «wonder whether the overkill of the conclusion does not have the opposite effect of making us in the end laugh as much or more at the weakness of the husband». ⁶² As a result, while overwhelming misogyny might appear to be the obvious superficial connection between the Digby 86 *Quatre Sohais* and the *Vie*, it is also quite possible to see both texts as so excessive in this regard that the reader may be tempted – perhaps even expected – to laugh at the unreasonable and monomaniacal ravings of their expostulating gynophobes.

While it is difficult to perceive direct connections between the *Vie* and the immediately following texts,⁶³ some fifty folios further on, an attentive reader might find material of

57. The Digby 86 extract from the *Blasme* is included in ANL, no. 202; the entire tradition is covered in *Poemetti misogini antico-francesi I: 'Le Blasme des fames'*, ed. by M. PAGANO, Catania, Università de Catania, 1990; note also the edition and translation in *Three Medieval Views of Women: 'La Contenance des fames', 'Le Bien des fames', 'Le Blasme des fames'*, ed. by M. ALLAIN-G.K. FIERO-W. PFEFFER, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1989, p. 119-42. ANL does not, however, catalogue the *Chastie-musart* extract other than via the allusion under no. 192 to «two other poems [...] included in an anti-feminist epimythium» (p. 111). For the full text, see P. MEYER, '*Le Chastie-Musart*' d'après le ms. Harley 4333, «Romania», 15 1886, pp. 603-10; *Il poemetto 'Chastie-musart' della Vaticana*, ed. by F. BLASI, Messina, Università degli studi, 1953; *Chastie-musart (Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 1323)*, ed. by A. PENSA MICHELINI TOCCI, Rome, Ateneo, 1970.

58. Also noted in ANL, no. 214: «At one point the author calls on St. Martin, possibly with allusion to *Les quatre Souhés saint Martin* which precedes in the manuscript» (p. 121).

59. «Pur ceo vous di, par seint Martin, / Que femmes sount de mal engin» (vv. 131-32).

60. «Si priay pur seint Martin / Conseil de luy» (vv. 22-23).

61. On the often ill-fitting moralising framework of the fabliaux, see J. BEYER, *Schwank und Moral: Untersuchungen zum altfranzösischen Fabliau und verwandten Formen*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1969; J. BEYER, *The morality of the amoral*, in *The Humor of the Fabliaux*, ed. by T.D. COOKE-B. HONEYCUTT, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1974, pp. 15-42; E. SCHULZE-BUSACKER, *La moralité des fabliaux*, in *Epopée animale, fable, fabliau*, ed. by G. BIANCIOTTO-M. SALVAT, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, pp. 525-47; W. NOOMEN, *Auteur, narrateur, récitant de fabliaux: le témoignage des prologues et des épilogues*, «Cahiers de civilisation médiévale», xxxv 1992, pp. 313-50; note also J. SUCHOMSKI, *Delectatio und Utilitas: ein Beitrag zum Verständnis mittelalterlicher komischer Literatur*, Bern-Munich, Francke, 1975.

62. BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*», cit., p. 162.

63. The next text is an extract from the widely disseminated *Chasteau d'amour* of Robert Grosseteste, headed *Des .iiii. files deu* (ANL, no. 622; the extract corresponds to '*Le Château d'amour*' de Robert Grosseteste, évêque de Lincoln, ed. by J. MURRAY, Paris, Champion, 1918, vv. 205-468). While I find it hard to relate this wholly pious text to what has come before it, BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*», cit., p. 166, suggests that the compiler might be making amends for the preceding misogyny through the text's positive portrayal of the four daughters of God

interest in the unique copy of *Ragemon le bon*, which supplies the text for a game in which participants would select the tag attached to one of a series of quatrains written on a roll in order to reveal the fortune predicted by the verse.⁶⁴ Unlike the two other extant copies of the text,⁶⁵ the Digby 86 *Ragemon* contains a number of quatrains which predict female infidelity and promiscuity, frankly evoked through use of *foutre*.⁶⁶ Yet in the thirty-fifth quatrain it is not solely the appearance of this verb which seems to establish a link with our *Vie*:

Jolifs estes e amerous,
Mout fotez en nuiz, en jours;
Ja si lede ne trouverez
Que volounters ne la foutrez (*Ragemon*, vv. 137-40).

For anybody who has read the *Vie*, it is difficult not to be reminded of its speaker. The opening line *Jolifs estes e amerous* inevitably recalls the titulus *La Vie de un vallet amerous* and the immediately following declaration that it is *Jolifté* (v. 1) which drives him; the same applies to his assertion that:

Jeo suy jolifs:
N'i leray, taunt cum suy vifs,
Pur daunner
Nule file au chevaler,
Ne de serjaunt,
Ne de vilein (*Vie*, vv. 206-11).

The connection between the two texts is reinforced by the recollection of the carnal ends to which the speaker of the *Vie* deploys his wooing, all the more so when one remembers the misadventure to which his insurmountable lust drove him with a woman who, just like the partner imagined in v. 139 of *Ragemon*, was a «le[de] beste» (v. 59), «si lede» (v. 138) that her «leisure» (v. 132) could not be described. A further connection between the two texts is established through the appearance in both of the distinctive conflation of the synthetic and analytical comparative in the phrase *la plus pire* in reference to an undesirable partner: *Ragemon*'s prediction that after the player has searched far and wide, «La plus pire prendrez

in what is, one might add, an allegorical encomium to the power of the Virgin. Potential connections with the following Middle English religious texts are even more difficult to discern.

64. ANL, no. 222; *Un jeu de société du moyen âge: 'Ragemon le Bon', inspireur d'un sermon en vers*, ed. by A. LÅNGFORS, Helsinki, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian, 1920. Cf. C. BÉMONT, *Le statut 'De justiciis assignatis quod vocatur Rageman'*, in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout*, ed. by M. TOUT-A.G. LITTLE-F.M. POWICKE, Manchester, Printed for the subscribers [by R. & R. Clark, Edinburgh], 1925, pp. 163-70; N.F. McDONALD, *Games medieval women play*, in *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, ed. by C.P. COLLETTE, Woodbridge, D.S. Brewer, 2006, pp. 176-97; S. PATTERSON, *Sexy, naughty, and lucky in love: playing 'Ragemon le Bon' in English Gentry Households*, in *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. by S. PATTERSON, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 79-102.

65. I.e. the pious Anglo-Norman parody in Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 14 (ff. 73ra-b and 82va-b) and the inoffensive Continental *Geus d'aventure* in Paris, BnF, fr. 837 (ff. 259vb-260va).

66. «La damaisele ki vous prendra / Mout sovent vous gabera, / Kar ele se fra verraument / Sovent foutre da la gent» (vv. 49-52); cf. likewise vv. 181-84, 197-200. Cf. *Ragemon le Bon*, ed. LÅNGFORS, cit.: «La petite amusette de société qu'est le poème français est devenue entre les mains du versificateur anglo-normand [...] une chose singulièrement grossière: outre qu'il semble prendre un plaisir particulier à dire des choses désagréables, il a du goût pour les imaginations scabreuses, comme on le voit surtout dans les strophes destinées aux femmes» (p. 7).

/ De tous ceus qui dauné avez» (vv. 131-32),⁶⁷ is realised in the epiphany of the speaker of the *Vie* that «jeo amoye la plus pire / Amour qui fust» (vv. 53-54). All is not lost, however, for *Ragemon* offers hope that the unlikely closing wish of the hero of the *Vie* for repentance and divine forgiveness, despite his life of gallivanting, might not be in vain:

Quant averez tout golivé,
E le país environné,
Au derein si vous repentirez,
E en le servise Deu morrez (*Ragemon*, vv. 37-40).

The correlations between the two texts seem so close, in circumstance and phrasing, that one is led to wonder whether they exist by chance because lascivious young bachelors in medieval Britain coincidentally happened to be so similar, or precisely because *Ragemon* is to be read in connection with the activities of the speaker in the *Vie*.

While the *Ragemon* co-text might be seen as drawing attention to the negative, concupiscent aspects of the *vallet jolif* of the *Vie*, another text, standing a dozen folios and two quires before the *Vie* in the current configuration of the manuscript, might sway the reader in a different direction: *De un vallet qui soutint dames e dammaiseles* (ff. 102va-103va). Paratextually, the connection between the two texts lies not only in the co-occurrence, in the same hand, of the noun *vallet* in both tituli, but also in the shared presence of red-line drawings at the base of the page, of two human heads and a bird for *De un vallet* (ff. 102v and 103r) and of a manicule pointing to the sage counsel offered by the speaker's brother in the *Vie* (f. 114r). *De un vallet*, however, offers quite a different opinion towards women from that subsequently found in the *Quatre Sohais* and the *Vie*: while the extended epimythion of the *Sohais* cites Solomon as an example of a man brought low by women, the speaker of *De un vallet* concludes that even if he were as wise as Solomon and were to live for ever, he could not say all that is good about women. Moreover, while the *joliveté* of the *vallet* of the *Vie* leads him into the pursuit of carnal pleasure, the speaker of *De un vallet* declares that he is «jolif e juaunt» (v. 13) on account of the source of all joy: women. The differences highlighted by these features in common are thoroughgoing: just as the moralisation of the *Quatre Sohais* draws on the misogynistic tradition of *Le Blasme des femmes* and the *Chastie-musart* to make points reinforced by the *Vie*, *De un vallet* derives its arguments in defence of women from the tradition of the *Bounté des femmes*.⁶⁸ In this way, the texts in praise and in condemnation of women are brought into dialogue together, thus creating at a distance a dialectic similar to that achieved through the juxtapositioning of the pro-feminist *Dit des femmes* and the *Blasme des femmes* in Harley 2253 (ff. 110vb-111vb).⁶⁹

67. I correct the erroneous *d'amie* of Långfors.

68. ANL, no. 198. On the complex relationship between *De un vallet* and the two significantly longer witnesses of the *Bounté des femmes* tradition, see D. BATTAGLIOLA, *Processo alle donne: considerazioni lessicali, tematiche e filologiche sulla 'Bounté des femmes' anglo-normanna (fine XIII secolo)*, «Romania», CXXXV 2017, pp. 32-64. For a useful overview of the transmission of pro-feminist texts in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, with emphasis on the prominence of Anglo-Norman material, see F. VIELLIARD-B.S. MERRILEES, 'La vaillance des Marseillaises': un poème français du XVe siècle en l'honneur des femmes (Angers, Bibl. mun. 498, f. 428-433), «Romania», CXX 2002, pp. 28-62, at pp. 43-50. On these texts within the broader development of pro-feminist writing, see A. BLAMIRE, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997; note also *Three Medieval Views*, ed. ALLAIN-FIERO-PFEFFER, cit., pp. 105-18.

69. Discussed by BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*», cit., pp. 167-68. The creation of debates through immediate juxtapositions of this kind is not uncommon: for Continental examples, consider the *Chastie-musart* beside the *Bien des fames* in London, BL, MS Harley 4333 (ff. 113vb-114vb), and the *Blasme des fames* beside the *Bien des fames* in Paris, BnF, fr. 837 (ff. 192vb-193vb) and Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, A454 (ff. 254r-257r). Florence,

As a result, the encomium might encourage a reader towards the aforementioned interpretation of the subsequent misogyny as ridiculous in its excesses; conversely, said misogyny might persuade a reader to view the earlier *De un vallet* as no less comical in its attempts to rehabilitate the indefensible daughters of Eve.⁷⁰

Yet as interesting as the positioning in Digby 86 of the texts hitherto discussed may be in terms of its potential effects on readers, it is a text which, in the current configuration of the manuscript, directly precedes the *Quatre Sohais* which, for literary historical reasons, is arguably the most important co-text to the *Vie*.

AUTHORSHIP

The text in question is a fragment of a poem which is conventionally known as *La Besturné* and attributed to a certain Richard on the basis of its final couplet, which survives exclusively in the only other extant copy of the text, in London, British Library, MS Harley 978 (ff. 106ra-107ra):⁷¹ «Ceo fist Richard en un esté / Si l'apela la Besturné». That the Harley copy supplies the ending (some forty lines) that Digby 86 lacks is its principal merit, as Digby is otherwise superior in every respect, containing a great many lines completely absent from Harley, and nearly always providing a more convincing reading where lines coincide, with the Harley copy – be it due to the scribe or his exemplar – clearly struggling with both the form and the content of the text.

The Digby copy of this poem begins on f. 111rb with the incipit *Ci comence la beitournee*, and breaks off incomplete at the end of f. 112vb by reason of the same lacuna responsible for the acephalous transmission of the *Quatre Sohais*. Although the size of the lacuna is uncertain, the lettering of the surviving quires suggests that three or four gatherings may be missing;⁷² nonetheless, since it is impossible to ascertain what or how much material is missing, there is good reason to share Busby's opinion that «it would be possible, even tempting, to read the

Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plutei 41.42 offers the heading *Incipit tractatus de bonitate et malitia mulierum* (f. 83vb), but provides only one side of this argument through its copy of the *Blasme des fames* (transcribed in *Poemetti*, ed. PAGANO, cit., pp. 143-93).

70. MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., is undecided about the *Vie*: «At times one is tempted to think of it as a satire, but in doing so one would probably over-estimate the subtlety of the author» (p. 65), although she considers the tradition of the *Bounté des femmes* to be satirical. J. BEYER-F. KOPPE, *La Littérature didactique, allégorique et satirique*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1970 (GRLMA VI 2), no. 7252, unequivocally consider the text to be a «satire contre les femmes» (p. 296). The designation of the *Vie* by J. BOURDIER, *Le Jeu et le mot: sémiotique des passages chez Raoul de Houdenc*, «Atelier de traduction», xxiii 2015, pp. 177-89 as a «fabliau coquin» (p. 183) is less easy to grasp.

71. ANL, no. 209. The manuscript can be consulted online via: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_978. To clarify that our discussion is focussed on the Digby copy, we shall refer to the text using the title supplied in its heading: the *Beitournee*. All allusions to the *Beitournee-Besturné*, unless otherwise specified, refer to the Digby copy, of which a critical text ~~is of the Digby copy~~ provided in the Appendix below. This Appendix discusses previous editions of the text; in addition to the references contained therein, note also G. ANGELI, 'La Besturnee': monologo drammatico anglonormanno, in *Il contributo dei giullari alla drammaturgia italiana delle origini. Atti del II convegno di studio, Viterbo, 17-19 giugno 1977*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1978, pp. 277-88; P. UHL, 'La Besturné' de Richard, *œuvre-carrefour du non-sens au Moyen Age*, «Le Moyen Age», xcv 1989, pp. 225-53; MENEGALDO, art. cit., 81-82.

72. Cf. *Digby 86*, ed. TSCHANN-PARKES, cit., xlii. Their estimation contradicts the explanation of P. UHL, 'La Besturné' de Richard. *Edition critique des versions transmises par les manuscrits Digby 86 et Harley 978*, «Estudios Románicos», xix 2010, pp. 231-54, that the ending of the *Digby Besturné Beitournee* is lost because «le feuillet 113 manque» (p. 232), which is erroneous since the numbering of the folios post-dates the loss of material, such that the following extant folio is indeed numbered 113.

manuscript as it now stands». ⁷³ The significance of adopting Busby's perspective is that the current proximity of the copy of the *Beitournee-Besturné* and the *Vie* in Digby 86 – separated by just one text and one folio – causes the casually browsing reader, by reason of the texts' *mise en page*, to be struck by an obvious similarity between them: namely that both poems visually present a broadly comparable pattern of alternating long and short lines. Closer inspection reveals that their kinship may run significantly deeper than the immediate superficial resemblance on the page – indeed to the extent that it raises the question of whether both poems might be attributed to the same author.

The affinity between the texts does not reside principally in their content, at least in so far as the Digby *Besturné Beitournee* does not present any of the obscenity for which the *Vie* has, rightly or wrongly, been renowned. The *Besturné Beitournee* is, in essence, a nonsense poem, a stream of bizarre and fantastic claims and propositions connected more by unexpected verbal and lateral cognitive associations than a discernible logic of the kind found in the narrated misadventures and the philosophical musings of the *Vie*. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to claim that there is no similarity in content. The *Vie* is, after all, no less farcically nonsensical and unexpected in some of its developments, such as the shift from the lover's anguished dilemma to his brother's crude counsel, his transition from desire to disgust, the revelation of his unprecedented ambition to secure an infertile wife, or his final posture of penitential piety. Likewise, the speaker in the *Beitournee-Besturné* evinces concern for ladies' opinion of him (vv. 7-12) and has had an *amie*, a *drue* in *fin amour* for four years by whom he claims to have fathered sixteen children, of whom – as would doubtless be a relief to our *vallet amerous*, given his loathing for progeny – all sixteen are lacking (vv. 65-75). More fundamental than these limited thematic correspondences is the fact that both texts are dramatic monologues at the centre of which stands a fascinating and unpredictable first-person voice. Through their chattering, anticipation of detractors, and boasting – in the *Vie*, specifically about amorous adventures, and in the *Beitournee-Besturné*, more about poetic and other achievements – the speakers are developed into comic characters who in themselves form the interest of the text, in a manner which distinguishes the poems within the extant Anglo-Norman literary tradition.

The similarities between the texts are also linguistic. ⁷⁴ The most obvious of these is lexical, in that both texts pair the same words at the rhyme on a significant number of occasions: *tens* : *sens* (*Vie*, vv. 3-4, 76-77; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 4-5), *purpens* : *tens* (*Vie*, vv. 135-36; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 3-4), *jus* : *pus* (*Vie*, vv. 118-19 < POSTEA; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 8-9 < POSSUM), *sai* : *enmai* (*Vie*, vv. 133-34; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 9-10), *teste(s)* : *beste(s)* (*Vie*, vv. 58-59; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 54-56), *gas* : *dras* (*Vie*, vv. 311-12; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 80-81), *sot* : *mot* (*Vie*, vv. 141-42; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 85-86), *dire* : *descri(v)re* (*Vie*, vv. 131-32, 164-65; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 11-12), *gas* : *pas* (*Vie*, vv. 151-52; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 143-44, 165-66), *seit* : *dreit* (*Vie*, vv. 147-48, 187-88, 333-34; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 100-1), *enfaunt*, -z : *gaunt*, -z (*Vie*, vv. 237-38; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 185-86); note also *dolent* : -ngement (*Vie*, vv. 70-71; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 1-2). There are more than a dozen further words which both texts use at the rhyme, albeit in different admixtures. ⁷⁵ Further lexical affinity is seen in the appearance in

73. BUSBY, «*Esprit gaulois*», cit., p. 162.

74. It is very unfortunate that the linguistic analysis by UHL, *Edition critique*, cit., pp. 234-36, while containing valid observations, conflates orthography and underlying phonology and morpho-syntax, thus obscuring the potential differences between authorial and scribal agency.

75. I.e. *valour* (*Vie*, v. 158; *Beit-Best.*, v. 17), *delit* (*Vie*, v. 180; *Beit-Best.*, v. 13), *heure* (*Vie*, v. 50; *Beit-Best.*, v. 6), *dener(s)* (*Vie*, v. 312; *Beit-Best.*, v. 22), *drue* (*Vie*, v. 18; *Beit-Best.*, v. 65), *amie* (*Vie*, vv. 31, 213, 227; *Beit-Best.*, v. 70), *mesure* (*Vie*, v. 205; *Beit-Best.*, v. 106), *plus* (*Vie*, vv. 167, 239; *Beit-Best.*, v. 108), -ben (*Vie*, vv. 42, 57, 155;

short lines in both texts of the formula *Nel di a gas* (*Vie*, vv. 151, 310; *Beit-Best.*, v. 165) and of the construction *Fest de* + monosyllabic noun (*Vie*, vv. 177, 250; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 52, 63), and in the collocation *gauster moun tens* (*Vie*, vv. 135-36; *Beit-Best.*, v. 40). While none of these admixtures, rhyme-words, or formulas are in themselves especially distinctive, one wonders whether such frequency of co-occurrence in short texts can be purely coincidental, and whether it might point to a single author availing himself of the same building blocks in constructing two separate poems.

In terms of phonology, the rhymes of the *Digby Besturné Beitournee* attest a number of the traits identified in the *Vie*, such as: widespread levelling of diphthongs, including the admixture of earlier /ai/ and /ei/ before a nasal consonant in *meins* (< MINUS) : *freins* : *mains* (< MANUS) (vv. 33-35), the reduction of /ie/ to *e* before /r/ in *Tregeter* : *dener* (vv. 21-22), *coroucer* : *guer* (< JOCARI) (vv. 67-68), *escorcher* : *cumforter* (vv. 192-93), and a rhyme from earlier /ui/ in /u/ in *jus* : *pus* (< POSSUM) (vv. 8-9), as well as the apparent effacement of /v/ before /r/ in *lire* : *escrire* (vv. 89-90), *dire* : *descrire* : *sire* (vv. 110-12). Naturally, evidence for authorial morpho-syntax supported by rhyme and/or metre is sparse, but one can at least note that the observance of declension of masculine nominative singular is very much as in the *Vie*, with flexional -s / -z generally omitted, as in *dolent* (v. 2 : *Estraungement*), *sot* (v. 86 : *mot*), *roi* (v. 178 : *moi*), *aroiee* (v. 182 : *loee*), *malade* (v. 197 : *fade*), etc., with the exception of *fous* (v. 190 : *chous*, *clous*). The metre seems to confirm that epenthetic *e* is purely scribal in MS *saveret* (v. 89), and also in *saveret* (v. 90) unless one substitutes the epicene form for *tele* (v. 90); the same would only apply in respect of *saverioie* (v. 20) and *feverer* (v. 39), as well as the syncopated future *frai* (v. 24), if one were to assume regular three- or seven-syllable lines, rather than the three/four or seven/eight alternation as found in the *Vie* (see below). In all fairness, these are all typical Anglo-Norman characteristics, and their presence in both texts cannot serve as conclusive evidence in favour of common authorship, any more than an argument against such authorship could be constructed from, for example, the absence from the significantly shorter *Besitournee* of other traits identified in the *Vie*, or from the absence from the *Vie* of an equivalent to the *Beitournee's* *Besturné's* notable series of extended rhymes in -*aille* (vv. 60-64, 155-57) and -*endre* (vv. 23-28, 77-78). The only potentially significant linguistic difference would seem to be the absence from the *BesturnéBeitournee* of the mixing of masculine and feminine rhymes and varying treatment of feminine concord that we identified in the *Vie*: as the only instance in the *BesturnéBeitournee* would be in the rhyme *Bruere* : *pere* : *Crevequer* (vv. 116-18), which only appears because of an editorial emendation itself influenced by the presence of this trait in the *Vie*, the lack of evidence in the *Digby BesturnéBeitournee* of this idiosyncratic feature might be considered an argument against common authorship.

The other similarity between the two texts lies in their versification, which is particularly distinctive not only because of the resulting superficial resemblance in the manuscript, but more especially since they are the only extant texts in Anglo-Norman composed in this form.⁷⁶

Beit-Best., v. 133), *chaut* (*Vie*, v. 101; *Beit-Best.*, v. 136), *jour* (*Vie*, v. 112; *Beit-Best.*, v. 158), *roi* (*Vie*, v. 306; *Beit-Best.*, v. 178), *moi* (*Vie*, v. 254; *Beit-Best.*, vv. 172, 179), *après* (*Vie*, v. 249; *Beit-Best.*, v. 125). The following words already cited as occurring in identical pairs also appear in admixtures with other words: *enfaunt*, -z (*Vie*, vv. 248, 267; *Beit-Best.*, v. 72), *dreit* (*Beit-Best.*, v. 14), *pus* (*Vie*, v. 166 < POSSUM; *Beit-Best.*, v. 150 < POSTEA).

76. The following figures relate to the Digby 86 text as edited in our Appendix, including lines which have been divided differently relative to the scribal rendering in the manuscript. There are also detailed analyses of the versification of the text in UHL, *Edition critique*, cit., pp. 236-38, and GAGGERO, op. cit., pp. 161-79 (with comparison to the *Vie*), which, while useful and broadly informative, are impaired by the errors in their editions of the material discussed (cf. n. 12, 84, 85).

Like the *Vie*, the Digby Besturné~~*Beitournee*~~ follows a model in which a short line,⁷⁷ usually syntactically related to the preceding line, introduces a new rhyme which is then continued by one or more long lines. The 208 lines comprise 86 short lines and 122 long lines, grouped into 63 couplets, 21 tercets, 3 quatrains, and 1 sextet. In comparison with the *Vie*, there is a lower frequency of couplets and a higher incidence of tercets and quatrains, and its sextet has no equivalent, but nonetheless the overall similarities in the organisation of short and long lines unquestionably outweigh the differences.

As far as concerns metre, precision is nigh on impossible for the same reasons as in the *Vie*. With this said, one can observe that of the 86 short lines, all but 3 easily remedied lines immediately scan as three or four syllables; with these remedies effected, 21 lines read superficially as four syllables, which can be reduced to 11 by reading through scribal spellings. Of the 122 long lines, 7 read as six syllables before editorial intervention; 4 read initially as nine or ten syllables, but could easily be reduced to eight by reading through scribal spelling or minor intervention. Of the remaining 111 long lines, 31 scan as eight syllables, but this total could be reduced to 14 by reading through scribal spelling or substituting a doublet. In comparison with the *Vie*, there is certainly a higher proportion of three- and seven-syllable lines,⁷⁸ but the extent of variability is still such that the underlying metre would, like the *Vie*, seem to be based on optional alternation between three or four syllables for short lines, and seven or eight for long lines.

What can we conclude from this comparison? It is evident that the *Vie* and the Digby Besturné~~*Beitournee*~~ manifest marked similarity in various aspects of their content, theme, language, and form, and that they bear a greater resemblance to each other than any other extant texts in Anglo-Norman literature – or, for that matter, in the entire corpus of medieval French. This could, of course, be a complete coincidence, a consequence of the selection of material for Digby 86, or – perhaps more likely, bearing in mind the differences relative to the *Besturné* copy in Harley 978 – the result of the (untraceable) homogenising actions of the Digby scribe in treating his exemplars. Yet arguably more probable than all of these explanations is that both texts were indeed authored by the same individual, identified as Richard in the Harley *Besturné*.

And what do we know of this Richard, other than his unremarkable name? As regards his provenance, Kingsford argues that in the Harley Besturné, he provides «some details which seem to show that he was a native of the South-West»,⁷⁹ but since the Digby Besturné~~*Beitournee*~~ also suggests familiarity with other parts of the South and with Lincolnshire, this does not seem a secure conclusion. In terms of the time at which he was writing, in addition to the *terminus ante quem* of around the last quarter of the thirteenth century provided by the composition of Digby 86,⁸⁰ Kingsford suggests a *terminus a quo* of 1263, since he sees the allusion in the Harley *Besturné* to John of Exeter as being in relation to his appointment to the disputed see of Winchester in November 1262, and furthermore that the poem on the Battle of Lewes which follows in the manuscript suggests a date of not later than 1264; the reliability

77. There are two instances (vv. 69, 137) in which a long line introduces the new rhyme and resists easy emendation; compare the three such instances in the *Vie* (cf. n. 46 above).

78. The same conclusion is reached by UHL, *Edition critique*, cit., p. 238, and GAGGERO, op. cit., pp. 170-73; MEIER-EWERT, op. cit., pp. 95-96, is in agreement, but the amount of variation that we note in the Digby Besturné~~*Beitournee*~~ does not seem to support her assertion that its long lines are supposed to be regularly of seven syllables, nor her consequential decision to emend on that basis.

79. *The Song of Lewes*, ed. by C.L. KINGSFORD, Oxford, Clarendon, 1890, p. 154.

80. Cf. *Digby 86*, ed. TSCHANN-PARKES, cit., pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.

of the conclusions drawn from this tenuous evidence is, however, very much open to debate. And as for Richard's precise identity, Wulstan builds on Kingsford's ruminations to muse: «Is this Richard, who contrives to remain in self-confessed obscurity, Abbott Richard de Banaster?»;⁸¹ unfortunately, the justification for this speculation is entirely unclear. In the circumstances, it seems that the safest conclusion would be that if the *Vie de un vallet amorous* and the *Besitourneeé* were indeed written by the same author – Richard, if we are to trust the Harley attribution – we owe this mysterious individual a great debt of gratitude for contributing two of the most entertaining poems to the body of Anglo-Norman comic literature.

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TEXT

For two principal reasons, I have adopted a mildly interventionist policy. First, on the two occasions on which the poem has previously appeared in print, courtesy of Stengel and Gaggero, it has been in the form of a conservative transcription; since this article identifies the errors in their work, and records all of the manuscript readings, there are good grounds for offering a different treatment of the text. Second, the underlying versification seems sufficiently regular that one may reasonably suspect that lines which do not scan as three/four or seven/eight syllables stem from the scribe rather than the author.

Lines deemed hypermetric on the basis of the hypotheses adumbrated have been corrected through a variety of conventional and venial interventions, generally in line with forms adopted by the scribe in copying other lines of the text (such parallels are signalled in the following by cf.): elision of monosyllabic word before word beginning with vowel: *la* (vv. 37, 73, 94, 220, 222, 229, 234), *sa* (v. 232), *le* (v. 157), *me* (v. 107) (cf. vv. 82, 150, 228, 242, 305); reduction of *ne le* to *nel* (vv. 151, 310; cf. v. 133); substitution of *tel* for *tele* (vv. 219, 307; cf. vv. 64, 65, 283); suppression of svarabhaktic *e* in stem of future / conditional (vv. 114, 245, 298, 301, 311; cf. vv. 30, 103, 295, 305, 322); substitution of *el* for *ele* (vv. 90, 194); and, as a last resort, suppression of a single non-essential word (vv. 272, 283, 318, 334, 344). For hypometric lines, minor additions have been made (vv. 2, 4, 59, 69, 79, 121, 134, 167, 250, 302). Where an elision would be possible but, with reference to the varying syllable-count, is not required by the metre, as in e.g. *sa amour* (v. 295), there has been no intervention. The few remaining interventions are made in order to secure the rhyme (v. 73) or sense (vv. 144, 217, 224, 248).

In accordance with modern editing conventions, I have standardised word divisions, silently expanded abbreviations (on the basis of forms written elsewhere in full, where possible), resolved the insignificant doubling in initial *Ff* and *W* as *f* and *u* / *v* respectively, distinguished between *i* / *j* and *u* / *v*, and introduced *é* and *ç* where appropriate. Given the metrical uncertainties, the tréma has not been used. For ease of comprehension, in treating the scribe's consistent and indiscriminate use of the abbreviation of *q* with vertical suspension (which one would usually read as *qui*), I have, without inserting a rejected reading, printed

81. D. WULSTAN, *A perpetual puzzle-canon: 'Sumer is icumen in'*, «Plainsong and Medieval Music», ix 2000, pp. 1-17, at p. 15.

que where it represents a conjunction (vv. 6, 10, 67, 77, 89, 110, 121, 130, 136, 148, 211, 238, 249, 260, 268, 276, 285, 287, 293, 298, 318, 326, 337, 338, 340) or unstressed oblique relative pronoun (vv. 4, 29, 114, 125, 272). Capitalisation and punctuation are editorial. Given the number of unambiguous occasions on which a short line continues a sentence, in cases where the syntax would allow for varying possibilities for punctuation, I have usually preferred solutions which reflect this apparently dominant pattern, while fully accepting the potential for different interpretation.

LA VIE DE UN VALLET AMEROUS

	Jolifté	[f. 114rb]
	Me fes[ei]t aler ad pé,	
	E mes fous sens,	
4	Que mous ay [eu] en mun tens	
	En moun quer,	
	Que ne voloie a nul fer	
	Nul ben fere,	
8	For ad folie moun sen trere	
	E ad deduyt,	
	Que ne poeye jour ne nuyt	
	Repos aver,	
12	Taunt pensay de amour aver.	
	Mes la manere de daunner	
	Ne savoye,	
	Pur ceo en graunt penser estoye.	
16	Un jour aloye par la voye	
	Lez une rue	
	O moun frere, qui fu mi drue,	
	Pur juer.	
20	De moun estat li fis saver	
	Tout la fin,	
	Si priay pur seint Martin	
	Cunseil de luy,	
24	Coment puray moun ennuy	
	Meuz chever,	
	E il me dist: «Beu frere cher,	
	Jeo vous dirray	
28	E mout bon cunsail vous dorray!	
	Savez que frez?	
	Quaunt entre vos bras tendrez	
	Voustre amie,	
32	Si luy priez: "Pur Deu mercie,	[f. 114va]
	Amie chere,	
	Oiez ore ma priere!	
	Vous hos jeo foutre	
36	E mun vit en toun coun boutre."	
	Pus l'acolez	

E mout sovent la beysez
 En la place,
 40 Car jeo vous geur, par ma face,
 Ceo est la ren
 Qui plus toust fest femme ben
 Soun quer chaunger.»
 44 E jeo luy preng a loher:
 «Mout graunt merci,
 Mout bon cunsail ad ici!
 Par Deu de cel, jeo vous afi,
 48 Jeo assayray
 Si la brunette aver purray
 A poy de heure.»
 Mal n'i ad qui n'en savoure,
 52 Ceo pus jeo dire,
 Car jeo amoye la plus pire
 Amour qui fust:
 Ne poeie jour ne nuyt
 56 Vere ren.
 Ceo aparust moust tresben,
 Par ma teste,
 Car ounques plus le[de] beste
 60 Ne veisez
 Qui fust de houme engendrez
 Aler en tere!
 Qui la beise, si poest flere
 64 Tel savour
 E tel aleine e tel odour [f. 114vb]
 Issir de soy
 Qui pir vaut que ne fest toy
 68 De loungain!
 Fous est [~~ce~~lycelui] qui la maine
 Longement,
 E si suy jeo mout dolent
 72 E dolerous
 Qui l'avoye taunt a estrous.
 Ceo fust damaje,
 Car taunt avoye a quer la raje
 76 En cel tens
 Que ne savoye mi sens
 Cum saver deuse,
 Si pensoye [que] si puse,
 80 La foteray.
 En ouscur lu la trovay
 A l'anutere.
 A luy disoye: «Amie chere,
 84 Nous sumes cy,

En un privé lu, ceo quy.
 Ore endreyt
 Ma priere orez, par dreyt:
 88 Jeo vous pry
 Que voustre amy puse estre icy.»
 El me respount:
 «Par celuy qui fist cel e mount,
 92 Noun ferray,
 Voustre amie ja n'i serray!»
 Pus l'acolay
 E .iii. feze la beisay:
 96 Par le beiser la gainay,
 Ceo me semble;
 Quaunt la vey, le quer mi tremble [f. 115ra]
 Durement:
 100 De graunt aunguise longement
 Fu tout chaut,
 Si pensoye, coment qu'il aut,
 Revendroye,
 104 A luy ma priere moustroye.
 Taunt la daunnoy
 E taunt sovent la beiso
 Que m'ad graunté
 108 Sa amour saunz fausseté,
 Si me ad dist
 Que a luy venge saunz respit
 En la plus procheine nuit
 112 Devaunt le jour,
 Si feray de sa amour
 Que k'en vodray.
 E jeo i vinc saunz nul delay
 116 A bon gré,
 E de luy fis ma volonté
 Dounke e pus.
 Sovent aloye sus e jus
 120 Delez lu,
 Taunt que [jeo] ay aparceu
 Par moun sen, qui est revenu,
 La leydure
 124 E la mauveise faiture
 Que ele avoyt.
 Par les espaaules grose estoit,
 Si fust le dos
 128 Neir, e roinous tout le cors
 Tout enviroyn,
 Que ne aparust si cul noun,
 Pur veir dire. [f. 115rb]

132 Sa leidure ne pus descrire,
 Ne jeo nel say,
 Pur ceo tout tens [si] m'enmay
 Quaunt me purpens
 136 Que si folement moun tens
 En ay gausté,
 De si lede aver tausté:
 Ore en avaunt
 140 A vifs deables la comaunt!
 Mes trop fu sot
 Quaunt ounques vers luy parlai mot
 Des amours.
 144 Mes si mi doint Deus socours,
 Desoremés
 Pur sa amour teus autres les,
 A bon dreit.
 148 Gros e gras, coment que seit,
 Ja n'ameray,
 Car de teus ay fest l'essay:
 Nel dis a gas,
 152 Longs e megres ne eim jeo pas!
 Les petis
 Mi sount a gré, jeo vous plevi:
 Ceo dis jeo ben,
 156 N'i lerray pur nule ren
 De teus l'amour,
 Car mout sount de graunt valour.
 De beuté ne de douçour
 160 Ne troverez
 Taunt de femmes enluminez
 Cum les petis!
 De bounté si ount le pris,
 164 Ceo veil dire, [f. 115va]
 Car lor bounté ne say descrire,
 Ne ne pus,
 En un meis ne [meme] en plus,
 168 Taunt sunt amiable e prus
 Entre la gent,
 E debonere ensement
 E covenable,
 172 E de parole moust estable
 Vers lour amy.
 Quaunt la petite ay requilly
 Entre mes braz,
 176 Si suef la tref cume laz
 Fest de soye.
 Graunt joye en ad qui la ploye

En soun lit,
 180 Si poest aver graunt delit
 Pur la tauster,
 Pur acoler e pur beiser,
 Pur veir le dy,
 184 Si autre ren ne feyt de ly,
 Cum me semble;
 Quaunt la vei, le quer mi tremble,
 Femme qui petite seit.
 188 Ne est mi tort, mes est graunt dreit,
 Si pucele
 Ou garcete ou damaisele
 Soit petite
 192 Qui au meinsné soit ellite
 Pur amiable aler en sale;
 Si el n'i seit trop jaune ou pale
 En la face,
 196 Ou de cors soit grose ou grase,
 Serra preisé [f. 115vb]
 E des ameraus loué,
 Ceo nomeiment
 200 De mei memes soulement,
 Le vous dis apertement!

 Saunz fauseté
 Vous diray la verité
 204 De ma nature.
 De ma manere, par mesure,
 Jeo suy jolifs:
 N'i leray, taunt cum suy vifs,
 208 Pur daunner
 Nule file au chevaler,
 Ne de serjaunt,
 Ne de vilein, que meintenaunt
 212 A luy ne die:
 «Si ne vous eie, bele amie,
 A moun talent
 Ne pus vivre longement!»
 216 Ceo luy dirray,
 Si rens ne fust, por fere asay
 De soun corage.
 Tel peust estre, si en boskage
 220 L'heuse trové
 E sa amour mi eust graunté,
 Ne l'ameray,
 Ne jeu d'amours ne li ferray,
 224 Tout fust blamé.

Une manere ay mout usé
 En ma vie
 De femme qui fust ma amie:
 228 Mout sovent, quaunt l'ay daunnie,
 Bel l'acolay
 E de fin quer la beisay [f. 116ra]
 Par graunt douçour,
 232 Quaunt cunquis avoye s'amour
 Par mes dis.
 Ben l'ameray, jeo vous plevis,
 E tendrement,
 236 De bon quer taunt longement,
 Par moun gaunt,
 Deques sache que eit enfaunt,
 E nent plus,
 240 Car quaunt jeo vois sus e jus
 En la place
 E de l'enfaunt vei la face,
 Si trembleray
 244 Pur graunt aunguise, ben le say,
 Car meuz vodray
 A luy doner un palefray
 Pardevaunt
 248 A deporter soun enfaunt
 Que après
 [Porter] un fermail fest de fers,
 Saunz menter!
 252 Quaunt suy houme de pouer,
 Ne sofferray
 Enfaunt venir devaunt may,
 Car quaunt les vey
 256 En berz gisir, cum est ley,
 Ou en bras
 Tenir, ou sere sus dras,
 Teu mal me fount
 260 Que ne pus pur tout le mount
 Aver joye,
 Ja en si bon estast ne soye!
 Devaunt dirray [f. 116rb]
 264 La reisoun par dreit purquay
 Ne ay amé,
 Ne cherie, ne preisé
 Nul enfaunt:
 268 Pur ceo que les vei ploraunt
 Taunt toudis,
 Si ount les testes e lé vis
 Roinous de pel;

272 E pur femmes que vey rebel
 Vers lour ami!
 Quaunt averount enfaunt de li,
 Querrount meitrie,
 276 Si lor semble que seinourie
 Deivent aver;
 Vers eus comencent a tencer
 E par parole ledenger
 280 Parderere,
 Si lor voler e lor manere
 Ne siverount.
 Mes tel manere, si ben fount,
 284 Aver deusent,
 Que de bele parole fusent
 E mout curteis,
 E que ne creusent les mauveis
 288 Reprové
 Veilles, qui sount maleuré.
 Mes a graunt peine
 Troverez nule si certeine
 292 De soun corage
 Que la veille en une estage
 Ne chaungereit
 Soun quer e sa amour toudreyt
 296 De soun amy, [f. 116va]
 E autres femmes autresy.
 Pur ce vodroye que nuly
 Peust engendrer
 300 Fors baroun de sa mulier:
 Dounke vivroye
 Saunz tristour [e] en graunt joye,
 Si nule femme aver purroye
 304 Saunz enfaunter!
 Ben l'ameray si tendray cher,
 Par Deu le Roy,
 Si nule tel trover purroy
 308 Qui soyt barayne:
 Longtens sera ma cumpaine,
 Nel dis a gas;
 Asez avroit viaunde e dras
 312 E des deners,
 E si seroie mout fers,
 Jeo vous jurray.
 Par seint Pere, jeo assairay
 316 En dammayseles
 E en femmes qui soient beles
 Qu'eie trové

- [f. 116vb]

51. Cf. J. MORAWSKI, *Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle*, Paris, Champion, 1925, no. 1174.
53. *amoye* is tenable, but could be a scribal error for *avoye*.
56. Meier-Ewert corrects to *Fere*, but adverbial *Vere* (< VERUS) is defensible: 'I was incapable of absolutely anything night or day'.
59. Correction to *le[de]* is justified by the metre and *lede* (v. 138).
- ~~69. Although the MS reading is syntactically fine, cely is added to secure the metre, with the spelling based on nuly (v. 298).~~
73. Although metathetic MS *estours* would be possible at the rhyme, given the effacement of preconsonantal /r/ attested in e.g. *dos : cors* (vv. 127-28), and although we note the rhyme *a estors : jurs* (vv. 947-48) in *Le Livre de Sibile*, by Philippe de Thaon, ed. by H. SHIELDS, London, ANTS, 1979, we correct for clarity to the markedly more usual *estrous*.
77. Meier-Ewert corrects to *mi[e]*, but *mi* is metrically acceptable, and is an attested Anglo-Norman spelling (cf. *AND*, s.v. *mie*¹); cf. v. 188.
79. Meier-Ewert secures the metre by emending to *p[e]juse*. Since this introduces diaeresis when synaeresis seems prevalent and confirmed by metre (cf. *deuse*, v. 78, *peust*, v. 219, *heuse*, v. 220, etc.), we prefer to override the parataxis and add a conjunction. Another possibility would be *si [jeo] peuse*.
90. Western *El* secures the metre.
95. For plural *feze*, cf. «deus feze par an» (l. 195) in B.A. PITTS, *La Terre des Sarazins: the summary version*, «Medium Ævum», LXXXIV 2015, pp. 297-325.
113. Meier-Ewert emends to conditional *feray[e]* and elides to *s'*, but reading as future (or another instance of conditional without final -e) with unelided *sa* is syntactically and metrically possible
121. Meier-Ewert adds *j'* and assumes *aparcœü*; since ~~this her assumption would~~ introduces an elision of the pronoun and a diaeresis ~~not confirmed by the metre which does not seem typical for the poem's metre~~ (cf. note to v. 79), we prefer to add *jeo* in hiatus.
128. *roinous* 'mangy, scabby' (*AND*, s.v. *roignus*); cf. v. 271.
134. Meier-Ewert secures the metre via *[jeo] m'enmay*. Another possibility would be *tout [le] tens*.
157. All previous editors print as *ceus*, with Meier-Ewert pointing to the difficulties of this as a feminine form; given the common confusion between *c* and *t*, it is also possible to read the copy as *teus* (cf. *teus*, vv. 146, 150)
167. Meier-Ewert prints *ne [pas] en plus* for the metre, which seems questionable; our addition of *[meme]* is easier to justify syntactically and semantically.
192. Meier-Ewert elides MS *Qui* to *Qu'*, but hiatus is required for the seventh syllable.
224. MS *Tout fuse blâmé* is hypermetric. A correction to *fust* secures the metre, and is defensible since it simply identifies the speaker's conduct, rather than his very person, as the catalyst of opprobrium.
- 248-50. The MS reads: *A porter de soun enfaunt / Qui apres / Un fermail fest de fers*. While Stengel and Gaggero retain this disposition without intervention, Meier-Ewert tries to solve the hypometric final line and the rhyme *après : fers* by merging the second two lines into one and emending *fers* to *fer* (*Qu'après un fermail fest de fer*). Her solution, however, is questionable, since the sense is still as unclear as in Stengel and Gaggero (e.g. *porter de*), and since it contravenes the usual structure of a short line to introduce a new rhyme; moreover, in the exceptions where a long line introduces a new rhyme (i.e. vv. 187, 193, 341), it is also always followed by a long line, not a short one, as in Meier-Ewert's solution. Furthermore, the rhyme *après : fers* is not problematic given the effacement of preconsonantal /r/ attested in *dos : cors* (vv. 127-28). We therefore assume scribal confusion and propose a minor reorganisation of elements of the lines, with slight interventions. The sense is: 'I should rather give her a horse beforehand to cart off her child than subsequently to wear a clasp made of chains [i.e. from the servitude of fatherhood]'.
258. Meier-Ewert edits as *seré*, which her glossary records as a past participle with the sense 'arranged' (p. 370). It seems more advisable to follow Stengel in retaining *sere* as the infinitive 'to sit' (chiastically complementing *en berz gisir*, v. 256), a spelling attested in *AND*, s.v. *seer*.
- ~~263. The verb devant dire 'voraussagen, bekannt geben' is recorded by TL, II 1857. AND does not have a comparable attestation s.v. devaunt, but s.v. avant does record dire avant 'to announce; to say, speak publicly'.~~
266. The feminine ending of *cherie* provides a seventh syllable, and while grammatically unjustified, might just be defended with reference to the author's general free treatment of final -e; Meier-Ewert prefers to emend to *cheri* and resolve the hypometric line by adding *ne [n'ay] preisé*.
270. Stengel, Meier-Ewert, and Gaggero all print *le vis*, but *lé vis* matches the preceding plural *les testes*.
280. We print *Parderere* as one word in accordance with the *AND* headword, the entry for which contains the sense of our attestation in the gloss *dire, parler mal parderere* 'speak ill behind one's back'.
- 281-83. The sense of *manere* shifts: in v. 281, it denotes the mode of conduct preferred by the husbands, while in v. 283, it refers to the women's actual behaviour.

293. In line with the editorial policy of introducing a distinction between *qui* and *que*, *Que* here would be the most likely form as a conjunction governed by *si certaine* ('any woman so convinced that...'). It would, however, albeit with an element of redundancy, be possible to retain *Qui* as a stressed oblique indirect relative pronoun related to *Ne chaungereit / Soun quer* ('any woman whose heart an old woman would not change...').

293. While *estage* denoting a period of time is well attested in the dictionaries (cf. e.g. *AND*, s.v. *estage*; TL, III 1336; Godefroy, III 589b), the specific collocation *en un(e) estage* does not seem to have been recorded; its sense in context would appear to be 'immediately, on the spot, at the drop of a hat'.

295-96. Although *sa amour toudreyt / De soun amy* may at first glance (cf. e.g. the second part of Meier-Ewert's gloss of this attestation as 'remove, turn away', p. 375) seem to offer a syntactically unexpected use of *de* after *tolir* (instead of *tolir aucune chose a aucun*), *de* should rather be read as dependent on *amour*, i.e. 'she would take away her love for her beloved'.

297. The *autres femmes* should be taken as an additional subject relating to *chaungereit* 294, i.e. women other than old ones would equally cause such a change of heart.

302. We agree with Meier-Ewert in adding [*e*] for a seventh syllable, which seems a likely omission given that *en* is presented as *e* plus suspension, and is certainly less intrusive than introducing an analogical *grande* when the epicene form is otherwise consistent.

315. Meier-Ewert elides *jeo*, but this is not necessary for the metre. The verb *assaier* is used absolutely, with the sense 'I shall try my hand, undertake experiments amongst'.

318. MS *ieo* is omitted for metre; *jeo* is attested as absent from a similar construction in vv. 338-39.

334. It is difficult to ascertain whether the manuscript reading is *drit* or a very compressed *dreit*. Meier-Ewert elides *ne est*, but as she has also suppressed *nule* in this line, the metre does not require this.

339. Or, redundantly, *N'en*.

342. All previous editions resolve the abbreviation as *confés*, but *cun-* seems more likely as written in full in *cunseil* (v. 23), *cunsail* (vv. 28, 46).

344. To secure the metre, Meier-Ewert suppresses *E* of MS *E pus*; instead, we omit *pus*, which seems more dispensable given the temporal information provided in the same line by *toudis avaut*.

APPENDIX

The *Besitournee* was first printed by Stengel, in a highly problematic hybrid text confected from the Digby and Harley copies.⁸² This was followed by Kingsford's lightly retouched semi-diplomatic transcription of the Harley copy only.⁸³ Both are superseded by Uhl, who provides a separate critical text of each copy, together with some textual notes; there is no correction for metre in an approach described as being «sans zèle interventionniste» (p. 234), although some of the emendations (and, *mutatis mutandis*, non-emendations) are questionable, especially as apparently influenced by the inferior Harley copy.⁸⁴ Gaggero presents transcriptions of the two copies side-by-side, with line numbering as if they combined into a

82. Digby 86, ed. STENGEL, cit., pp. 118-25.

83. *The Song of Lewes*, ed. KINGSFORD, cit., pp. 154-58.

84. UHL, *Edition critique*, cit. We signal the following issues in the critical text of the Digby 86 edition: transcription errors: 31 *truie*, 34 *des*, 35 *meins*, 90 *escriure*, 111 *descriure*, 136 *que*, 137 *que*; questionable editorial decisions (in most cases the problems are identified in our Notes to the text): 4 *ai gasté*, 19, 20, 25 *Je[o]* (*Jeo* is already the MS reading), 30 *en revre*, 32 *fevere* as correction of MS *fefere* not indicated in rejected readings, 36 *Use*, 48 *Caunbre*, 56-57 *Mes autres bestes / Ai mis en ma graunge* retained and not signalled as single line in MS, 64 *Beneit [seit]*, 76 *treis*, 97 *devenois* (see Notes), 101 *Jeo sai fere de dreit / Tort*, 106 see Notes, 116 *la bruere*, 118-9 see Notes, 150 see Notes, 152 *me* omitted without comment, 170 blank line inserted. Given the professed non-interventionist editorial policy, we would also question: corrections which are not necessary for sense or grammar, and are mostly metrical in effect: 36 [*jeo*], 40 *comencer*, 42 [*me*], 78 *vendre*, 137 *ne* omitted, 177 [*en*]; and, given that e.g. MS *qui* is retained irrespective of function, the unnecessary correction of a number of entirely valid and typical Anglo-Norman forms: 21 *Tre[s]geter*, 24 *mei*, 47 *mei[s]mes*, 51 *che[s]cuns*, 74 *for[s]*, 75 *Ce[o]*, 88 *Nauntoil*, 100 *Quei que seit*, 105 *Je[o]*, 132 *dese[s]poire*, 138 *ces*, 147 *alosé*, 148 *apósé*, 162, 169 *noise*, 164 *Brutain[n]e*, 173 *de[s]roi*, 181 *loé* (note error in rejected reading), 182 *aroié*, 199 *heité*, 200 *gueité*.

single text.⁸⁵ As for the *Vie*, the most philologically sound critical text, with the Digby copy presented in parallel with Harley, is probably to be found in the unpublished thesis of Meier-Ewert, although her belief in the underlying rigidity and regularity of the three-syllable short lines and seven-syllable long lines has arguably resulted in excessive emendation.

Since the existing available editions present varying degrees of problems, a lightly edited version of the Digby Besturné ~~Digby 86 Beitournee~~ is offered below. My aim is merely to offer a reliable critical text of this copy in order to facilitate comprehension of the discussion in the main body of this piece, and not to offer a critical edition which takes fully into account the tradition potentially suggested by the Harley copy. As Uhl's edition offers commentary as well as a glossary and index of names, textual notes have been kept to a minimum, and are restricted to explanation of significant editorial decisions and correction of misapprehensions or oversights in previous editions.

The editorial policy is as for the *Vie*, notably including a treatment of metre which assumes that lines of three/four or seven/eight syllables are valid. Hypometric lines have been resolved through addition of a monosyllable (vv. 2, 38, 42, 56, 103, 118, 166). Hypermetric lines have been resolved by suppression of epenthetic *e* (vv. 89, 90), suppression of monosyllables (vv. 88, 165), and *tel* for *tele* (v. 90). For clarity, MS abbreviated *qui* is expanded where appropriate to *que* (vv. 4, 9, 22, 106, 162, 167, 169, 178), and for consistency, MS *ki* (written in full) is likewise printed as *ke* (vv. 11, 15, 134). There are three corrections on the basis of the rhyme (vv. 32, 56, 101), and four instances in which a single line as written by the scribe has been separated into two (vv. 56-57, 113-14, 115-16, 118-19).

LA BEITOURNEE

	Estraungement	[f. 111rb]
	[Taunt] par est mun quer dolent	
	Quant me purpens	
4	Que jeo si gaste mun tens	
	Saunz rimoier de aucun sens	
	Aucun' heure.	
	Les dames me mettent soure	
8	Sus e jus	[f. 111va]
	Que jeo rimoier ne pus	
	Ne ne sai,	
	Einz dient ke jeo me enmai,	
12	A lour dit.	
	Perdu ai le men delit	
	A bon dreit,	
	Pus ke jeo resu par freit	
16	Ma chalour.	
	Jeo sui houme de valour,	

85. GAGGERO, op. cit., pp. 282-88. The text contains the following transcription errors: 1 *Estraingement*, 2 *mur*, 4 *gasté*, 5 *Sainz*, 18 *some*, 22 inserts *pas*, 24, 27, 28, 83, 133 *Pour*, 26 *Granz*, 31 *truie*, 40 *Pur*, 42 *Plus*, 44 *Sainté*, 45 *cunfort*, 48 *Taumbre*, 57 *grange*, 58 *Assez*, 73 *seize*, 74 *Treize*, 75 *m'*, 76 *sunt*, 78 *fer*, 88 *Nantoil*, 105 *meins*, 107 *amblurre*, 115 *premiere*, 117 *Malot ot ad*, 123 *Uinceitre*, 126 *pris*, 132 *desespoire*, 137 line omitted, 141 *Entor*, 164 *Britaine*, 165 *agas*, 192 *Estorcher*. The lack of editorial intervention leaves a number of lines in their questionable MS form; the punctuation is also sporadic, and stops completely after v. 151.

Ceo est la soume.
 Jeo sui mout mervilous home;
 20 Jeo saverioie de une poume
 Tregeter
 Que ne vaudreit un denier
 Pur revendre.
 24 Plus vous frai de mai entendre;
 Jeo sui feble e fort e tendre,
 Graunz e petiz e esclendre,
 Large pur le men despendre,
 28 Hardi pur bataille prendre
 A un levre.
 Oiez cum jeo sui enrevre:
 Jeo faz de ma true chevre,
 32 Karpenter sui e bon fevre
 A tout le meins;
 Jeo sui bon fesour des freins,
 Si ne ai mes peiz ne mes mains
 36 En justise:
 Ceo est une novele assise!
 Usé ai [jeo] ceste guise
 Pus feverer,
 40 Ore la veil recomencer
 Par enfaunce. [f. 111vb]
 Il [me] covent obbliaunce,
 Cil ki me greve me avaunce;
 44 Saunté me doune nusaunce
 E cumfort;
 Maladie me fest trop fort.
 Dreit a meimes de Staunfort
 48 Deça Taunbre
 Estount mes befs en ma chaunbre
 En un soler,
 Si ad checuns un coler
 52 Fest de marbre,
 Si sount liez ad un arbre
 Par les testes.
 Pur aler as hautes festes
 56 Ai [jeo] mis mes autres bestes
 En ma graunge;
 Asez usent linge e launge.
 Fin amour par dreite haunge
 60 Me travaille.
 Jeo ne ai curtine ki vaille,
 Moun lit est en la turaille
 Fest de paille:
 64 Ben eit qui si le aparaille!

Ceo est ma drue,
 Qui me fest de ma charue
 Coroucer.
 68 En mos cois e en guer
 Par fin amour de druerie,
 Ele ad ja esté ma amie
 Quatre aunz,
 72 Si ai eu de lui enfaunz
 Entour sesze;
 Ne s'en faillent for .iii. e tresze,
 Ce me est avis. [f. 112ra]
 76 Les quatre sount a Paris
 Pur aprendre
 A fere molins a revendre
 Pur hanaps.
 80 Ne tenez pas mes dis a gas,
 Kar jeo ai jué touz mes dras
 A la mine
 Pur coroucer la reine.
 84 Ma reisoun comence e fine
 En un soul mot:
 Jeo sui e sage houme e sot,
 Quant jeo veil.
 88 Il n'ad houme deske a Nauntoil
 Qui savreit lire
 Tel chose savrei jeo escrivre
 Par reisoun.
 92 Par racine de ancheisoun,
 Il est dreite semeisoun
 A semer pois
 E tart a semer linois;
 96 Ore atendoum le autre mois,
 La semeisoun as Devenois,
 Tout a leisir,
 Si dirrai de moun pleisir
 100 Quoi que soit.
 Jeo sai fere de tort dreit,
 E si est fort
 A [re]fere de dreit tort
 104 Par folie.
 Je pris meus ma malencolie
 Que mesure.
 Bone beite va en aunblure
 108 Tout le plus, [f. 112rb]
 Rimoier si vest en us,
 Ceo veil dire.
 Ma manere veil descrivre:

112 Ma mere ai apelé sire,
 E moun fiz
 Ai apelé Beatriz
 La premere
 116 De par ceus de la Bruere;
 Malot ad a noun moun pere,
 [E] ma sere Crevequer
 D'Aubenie;
 120 Moun frere ad a noun Margerie
 La chanoine,
 Qui fu de Redinges moine
 A Vinceitre.
 124 Plus vous dirrai de mun estre
 Enaprés:
 Si jeo ment, jeo n'en pus mes.
 Jeo sui deboneire e engrés,
 128 Que Deu l'oie!
 Par ma chevelure bloie
 Qui fu noire
 Jeo vois dejouste la voire.
 132 Fous est ki se desepoie
 Pur soun ben.
 Ore oiez ke est le men:
 Qui ke en chaut,
 136 Lequel ke face freit ou chaut,
 Vous ne en orrez plus ke taunt.
 Jeo fis ses vers en dormaunt
 Le autreher
 140 Ou jeo aloie a moustier
 Entour noune
 O daunz Phelipe de Doune
 Tout le pas. [f. 112va]
 144 Adecertes di mes gas,
 Ben poest estre.
 Tout ne seie jeo bon mestre
 Alosee,
 148 Jeo ai meint houme aposee
 E conclus,
 Qui hounttus ne sont avaunt ne pus
 Mot de lettre.
 152 Jeo ne me sai entrem[e]ttre
 De reisoun;
 Parler dei par ancheisoun,
 Deus i vaille!
 156 Ceo apris jeo en Cornewaille
 Entre Dover e la Bataille
 Le autre jour,

Ou jeo oy mout graunt poour
 160 De une pie,
 Qui cria en Lindesie
 Que la noisse fu oie
 En Espainne,
 164 En Loundres ne en Brutaine,
 Nel di a gas.
 [Ade]certes jeo ne quit pas
 Que par folie,
 168 Qui taunt rimaïne de la pie,
 Que la noisse singnefie
 La graunt guere
 Des rimeours de Engleterre
 172 E de moi,
 Qui me voillent par deroi
 Abesser.
 Il me purount ben leiser:
 176 Par ma bote [f. 112vb]
 Plus sai de ceste riote
 Que le roi:
 Ne se prenge nuls a moi!
 180 Daunz Roger le fiz Renfroï
 Me ad loee
 Que jeo n'i soie aroïee
 Par trop beivre.
 184 Ore les purai touz deceivre
 Cum enfaunz;
 Ore lor fas jeo fere gaunz
 De ma espee,
 188 Od la bone gaunsilee
 Od les chous.
 Ore oiez cum jeo sui fous:
 Jeo faz mes fers e mes clous
 192 Escorcher,
 Pur mes amis cumforter
 De ben vivre.
 Mar fu nez ki est delivre;
 196 Houme ki est touz jours ivre
 E malade
 Si poest ben aver le quer fade
 E heitee,
 200 Si ai jeo estreit gueitee
 Les hauz poins.
 Huimés ne serai jeo loins
 De reisoun,
 204 Kar jeo ai sour ma meisoun
 Un viver

Pendu haut ad un perer
De seint Riulle,
208 Covert de plom e de tiulle [...]

MS readings

32 fefere 56-57 Mes autres bestes ai mis en ma graunge *written on one line* 88 ni ad 89 savereit 90 Tele ;
saverei 101 de dreit tort 105 ma *interlinear addition* 113-14 *written on one line* 115-16 La premere de par
ceus *written on one line* 118-19 *written on one line* 130 noire *could be* neire 173 voillent *could be* veillent

NOTES

2. As neither text offers another instance of adverbial *par* for comparison, we opt for *Taunt* as the intensifier to supply a seventh syllable; Meier-Ewert's *Mout* would be equally valid.

30. *enrevre*: although it is written as one word in the MS, Uhl prints as *en revre*, explaining that we are dealing with «une “adaptation” contextuelle» of *re(s)ve*, with the glossary recording *estre en revre* 'divaguer, être délirant'. It is rather a common Anglo-Norman adjective; cf. *AND*, s.v. *enrievre* 'unruly, refractory'.

47-48. *de Staunfort* / *Deça Taunbre*: Although the initial *t* is clear in the MS (as, indeed, in the Harley copy), Uhl prints *Caunbre*, glossing as 'Cambrie = Pays de Galles; ou Cam (rivière)'. Meier-Ewert retains *Taunbre*, understood as the River Tamar, which would fit well in that it runs between Devon and Cornwall, which feature in our text at vv. 97 and 156. Given the nonsensical nature of the poem, identifying the river does not offer geographical help in interpreting *Staunfort*, but the obvious choice of Stamford in Lincolnshire might be supported given the mention of Lindsey (v. 161) and if one accepts *la Bruere* (v. 116) as denoting Temple Bruer in the same county. Gaggero prints *d'Estaunfort*, following the MS reading of *destaunfort*; we note that *Estaunforthe*, for Stamford in Lincolnshire, is attested in SC 8/275, no. 13739 (PROME Ed I Roll 12 App).

56. MS *Mes autres bestes ai mis en ma graunge*, written as a single line, clearly conflates a long line and the short line which introduces the new rhyme. Separation into two lines and the interversion of the components of the long line to secure the rhyme leaves the long line at six syllables, easily rectified by inclusion of the subject pronoun.

64. *Ben eit*: Meier-Ewert prints as *Beneit*, while Uhl emends to *Beneit [seit]*, in line with the unreliable Harley copy. Nonetheless, Gaggero is right to retain the MS word division of *Ben eit*, which is an entirely acceptable subj.pr.3 jussive from *aver ben* 'be blessed' (cf. *AND*, s.v. *bien*).

68. *guer*: Uhl notes this as an instance of effacement of final *-e* beside *guere*, glossing as '[en mots] après (littéralement “par guerre”)' (p. 235), but the metre suggests that the word scans as *güer* – i.e. a graphy for *juer* 'play', here as a substantival noun.

76. *quatre*: Uhl follows Harley in emending to *treis*, but thereby unnecessarily creates a hypometric line.

97. Meier-Ewert considered MS *deuenois* 'meaningless', and proposed *devois* (thus creating a seven-syllable line), as a form of *desvoie* 'crooked path'. Uhl (as does Gaggero, but without comment) retains as *devenois* ('mot inconnu' in glossary) with a note suggesting: 'Ou Devenois [...] nom de famille attesté en Angleterre'. This critical aporia seems rather perplexing: given the proliferation of references to places in the South of England, *Devenois* surely means 'inhabitants of Devon', next to *Cornewaille* (v. 156).

101. *de tort dreit*: MS *de dreit tort* interverted to secure rhyme. Uhl perplexingly keeps the MS word order, but then places *Tort* alone in a separate line, thus creating an aberrant monosyllabic line.

103. With the line lacking a syllable, we follow Meier-Ewert's suggestion of prefixation to create *[re]fere*, the sense of which seems entirely appropriate to the reciprocity described.

106. *Que mesure*: Uhl begins a new sentence with this line, but this short line clearly closes the comparison introduced in the preceding line (*meus ... que*), and Uhl's *Qui mesure / Bone beite va en aunblure* seems incomprehensible.

116. *la Bruere*: Uhl glosses his *la bruere* as 'bruyère, lande plantée de bruyère; éventuellement un lieu-dit: la Bruyère', while Meier-Ewert suggests 'heath'. Given the apparent references to Stamford (v. 47) and Lindsey (v. 161) in Lincolnshire, it seems more likely that we are dealing with a reference to Temple Bruer in the same county; cf. e.g. D.A. TROTTER, *Noms de lieux, lieux des noms: l'influence anglo-normande dans la toponymie anglaise*, in *Toujours langue varie ...': mélanges de linguistique historique du français et de dialectologie*

galloromane offerts à M. le Professeur Andres Kristol par ses collègues et anciens élèves, ed. by F. DIÉMOZ et al., Geneva, Droz, 2014, pp. 307-19, at p. 313.

118-19. All previous editions have presented these lines as a single line, as written in the manuscript. The arguments in favour of emendation are: 1) The single line would be hypermetric; 2) Usually, a short line introduces the new rhyme. While vv. 69 and 137 remain exceptions, as long lines introducing the new rhyme, they are less easy to resolve than the present case; 3) The proposed rhyme of *Crevequer* with *premere*, *Bruere*, and *pere* would be defensible as an instance of the combination of masculine and feminine rhymes that we also see in the *Vie de un vallet amerous*; 4) There are other instances in which the scribe has failed to separate lines in accordance with quite clear authorial intention; 5) The writing of the lines in the manuscript suggests that the scribe was aware of some flaw in his copying. It seems that he originally wrote on two lines: *Ma sere creuequer / Moun frere*; at the end of these, *daubenie* and *ad anoun margerie* respectively appear to have been added as an afterthought or revision, since both are written, albeit in the same hand, in slightly smaller lettering and lighter brown ink, slightly above the baseline of the preceding text. Although there is no annotation to indicate the correct positioning, our solution seems defensible, and the lacking syllable of v. 118 is easily found with a conjunction.

188. *gaunsilee*: while Meier-Ewert, without evidence, interprets this word as meaning ‘foxglove’, far more likely, especially given the following reference to *chous*, is Uhl’s interpretation of ‘= *jaunce aillie*: sauce à l’aïl’, supported by two textual attestations. For lexicographical reasons, we draw attention to the other attestations already recorded in Godefroy, vi 634a, TL, iv 1564, and especially DEAF J109-10; furthermore, the appearance of the word in the *Digby BesturnéBeitournee* (note also Harley’s *gauncillie*) is important since there is currently no corresponding headword or attestation in the AND (be it of *jance* or our qualified form).

206-7. *un perer / De seint Riulle*: Meier-Ewert glosses as ‘Holy Rule’, but Uhl rightly recognises, from an entry in DMF not currently on-line, that we are dealing with a ‘poirier de saint Regulus’. It is, of course, a «poire novele / de saint Ruille» that the lady offers to her suitor in Thibaut’s *Roman de la poire* (*Le Roman de la poire*, ed. by C. MARCHELLO-NIZIA, Paris, Société des anciens textes français, 1984, vv. 405-6, cited alongside another attestation from Gautier de Coinci in TL, vii 2129); for further information on the high regard in which this variety of pear was held, cf. E. FARAL, *Poire d'angoisse*, in *Mélanges de philologie et d'histoire offerts à M. Antoine Thomas par ses élèves et ses amis*, Paris, Champion, 1927, pp. 149-55, at pp. 150-51.