

# ***Fifteenth-Century Compilation Methods:***

## ***The Case of Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29***

### **Abstract**

The late-fifteenth-century Middle English manuscript Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29 contains a universal history of the world, compiled from diverse religious and secular texts. Written by a single compiler-scribe, the text offers an opportunity to examine in detail late medieval methods of compilation. One of the main sources used by the compiler is Caxton's print of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, thus allowing a detailed comparison with the printed source text. This article investigates the strategies which the compiler uses to copy, edit, and amend his sources, whilst integrating them into a new textual framework. Comprehensive collation reveals different ways of copying and revising the printed source text. The strategies used by the compiler range from close copying to extensive additions, substitutions, corrections, and omissions. A close analysis of these compilation methods allows conclusions not only about the compilatory process but also about the mind-set behind the focus and features of the resulting new historiographical text. The results of this detailed case study of compilation strategies in Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29, reveal this text to be a case of detailed adaptation of sources to create a unified and consistent new textual whole, which is comparable to other late-medieval compilations but unusual in the meticulousness and complexity of its textual strategies.

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Compilation is one of the key textual techniques through which we can understand medieval literary culture. Investigations of the textual details of medieval compilations have often had to work with a certain degree of uncertainty arising from the instability of the medieval text, as the direct exemplars which were used in the process of compiling a text do frequently not survive. It is, therefore, often difficult to trace in detail the textual changes which occur in the process of compilation. Determining exactly which additions, substitutions, and omissions were introduced by the compiler of a text is only possible where the precise textual form of the source text can be identified and where scribe and compiler are the same individual. In many ways, therefore, late medieval manuscript compilations which use printed texts as sources present an ideal basis for such textual analysis, as the exemplar has an established textual form which can serve as a basis of close comparison between printed source and manuscript copy.

The late-fifteenth-century manuscript Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29 (afterwards *T*) contains a Middle English text which provides the rare opportunity to investigate strategies of compilation in such a precise way. *T* contains a universal history of the world which starts with the creation of the world and breaks off incomplete at the time of Hannibal. The universal history takes up the entirety of the manuscript, stretching from ff. 1–225. The material evidence suggests an origin of the manuscript in an Augustinian house in the South of England, as pointed out by Kate Harris.<sup>1</sup> Somewhat unusually, the text is compiled from both manuscript and print sources. The manuscript is written in a single hand, and the compiler is the same person as the scribe.<sup>2</sup> This fact makes *T* very useful for a case study – whilst many manuscript compilations require a distinction between changes to the source texts introduced by the compiler, and those introduced by the scribe, this distinction is not necessary here. This means that we can access the evidence of compiler-scribe's working

process much more directly, and examine it more closely, than is the case with many other fifteenth-century manuscripts.

*T* uses a range of source texts, including the Vulgate, Caxton's print of the *Polychronicon*, the *Canterbury Tales*, a Holy Cross Legend, de Worde's print *Information for pilgrims unto the Holy Land* (or a manuscript source of this print), Peter of Poitiers's *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, a translation of Jacques Legrand's *Book of Good Manners*, and *Mandeville's Travels*.<sup>3</sup> The *Polychronicon* is copied from Caxton's print; all other texts appear to have been copied from manuscript exemplars, and even the excerpts from *Information for pilgrims unto the Holy Land* are likely to stem from a written source preceding de Worde's print.<sup>4</sup> The use of the *Polychronicon* (STC 13438) as a source text in *T* provides a *terminus post quem* of 1482, when Caxton's edition was first printed.<sup>5</sup> Caxton's print was based on Trevisa's translation of Higden's Latin original but Caxton modernised Trevisa's language.<sup>6</sup> Caxton's text thus contains a great number of unique variants which allow us to identify the print as the exemplar used by the compiler of *T*. The source text has also left traces in *T* in the form of several small mistakes which stem from its printed exemplar. For instance, on one occasion *T* has 'Ysidorus, libro ij' (l. 791)<sup>7</sup> where Caxton's print has 'libro 5' (lxxviiij). The reason for this change is obvious from the print, since the number '5' in Caxton's type can very easily be mistaken for the Roman numeral 'ij'. This, along with other variants in *T*, demonstrates clearly that Caxton's print was the exemplar used by the compiler of *T*.

The *Polychronicon* is the most frequently and sizeably excerpted source of *T*. There are more than 250 excerpts in *T*, ranging from a few words to long sections spanning several folios, with the compiler copying large parts of Books I, II, and III of the *Polychronicon*. The compiler of *T* was not alone in finding this source text of great interest, as the *Polychronicon* was one of the most popular historical works of medieval England. Arranged in seven books,

this universal chronicle contains a geographical description of the world in Book I and an exhaustive historical account in Books II–VII following the six ages of the world, whilst the last two books are concerned with the history of Britain.<sup>8</sup> A great portion of the beginning of *T* is taken up with a description of the world copied almost exclusively from the first book of the *Polychronicon*, and large sections of historical material relating to a wide range of events, places, and people, also draw on this source. In many places, the *Polychronicon* provides the main historical outline into which smaller passages from other sources are inserted in *T* to provide additional information and detail.

The two histories thus share many similarities in terms of thematic focus and structure: Both *T* and the *Polychronicon* follow the same chronology based on the six ages of the world, and both texts share a wide-ranging interest in different regions and cultures. The *Polychronicon*'s attention to different chronologies and languages is also echoed in *T*. Crucially, the fact that substantive sections of the universal history in *T* use this printed source gives us the relatively rare opportunity to collate the version in *T* with its printed exemplar, allowing for a precise comparison of the source text and the compiler's revisions, and deductions as to the rationale behind them.

### *Close copying*

Changes to the source text in *T* can be broadly categorised into additions, substitutions, and omissions. In general, the manner in which excerpts from the *Polychronicon* are used varies between very close copying and interacting with the source text a lot more freely. In the former case, the source text is copied extremely faithfully, with very few additions or omissions. Such a case can be found in the section describing the region of Judea, ll. 1235–1342. Two short excerpts from this lengthy passage in *T* are juxtaposed with Caxton's text

below, and are quoted at length to give a flavour of how closely the compiler adheres to his exemplar:

Caxton<sup>9</sup>

*T*<sup>10</sup>

[xvj<sup>v</sup>-xvij<sup>r</sup>]

[ll. 1336-48]

De Regione Iudee. Capitulum 14

De regione Iudee.

Iudea is a kyngdom of Siria, a partye of Palestina, and hath the name of Iudas, Iacobs sone, and was somtyme called Cananea of Cham, Noes sone, eyther of the ten maner of peple that the Iewes put out of that londe.

Iudea is a kyngdom of Siria and a partye of Palestina, and hathe þe name of Iudas, Iacobs sonne, and was som tyme called Cananea of Cham, Noes sone, eyþer of þe ten maner of peple þat the Iewes put oute of þat londe þat come of þe generacion of Cham. Petrus.

Petrus. Iudea is taken in many manere, otherwhile for the Londe of Biheste. And thenne it hath the name of the Iewes and of Iudas. And so it is taken in this speche.

Iudea is taken in dyuers maner, otherwhile for þe Londe of Bihest, and than it hath þe name of þe Iewes and of Iudas, and so it is taken in this speche.

The grete Pompeus made Iudea trybutaryes. And otherwhyle it is taken for the Royamme of Iuda. And so it is wreton of Ioseph, that whan he herde that Archelaus regned in Iudea, he drad for to goo thyder.

The grete Pompeus made Iudea trybutaryes. And otherwhile it is taken for þe royamme of Iuda. And so it is writtyn of Ioseph, that whan he herde that Archelaus regned in Iudea, he drad for to goo thedyr.

And somtyme it is taken only for the lotte of the lygnage of Iudas. And so speketh holy wrytte and sayth, "Iudea and Iherusalem, drede ye not."

And some tyme it is take for þe lotte of Iudas. And so seithe holy wrytte thus, "Iudea and Ierusalem, drede ye not."

[...]

[...]

[xviij<sup>r-v</sup>]

Ysydorus libro quinto, Capitulo primo. The  
Iewes seyn that Sem, Noes sone, that is  
named Melchisedech also, made and buylded  
the cyte Iherusalem after Noes flood and  
called it Salem. But afterward a people that  
were called Iebusey dwellyd therinne and  
named it Iebus. So of thylke two names Iebus  
and Salem is made one name, Iherusalem  
Afterward Salamon called that cyte  
Iherosolyma. And poetes that speken shortly  
callen the cyte Solyma in her short speche.

[ll. 1373-9]

Ysidorus, libro v<sup>o</sup>, capitulo primo, seith how  
þe Iewes seyn þat Sem, Noes sone þat is  
named Melchisedech also, made and buylded  
þe cyte Ierusalem aftyr Noes floode and  
callyd yt Salem. But afterward a peple þat  
were callyd Iebusey dwellyd þerin and named  
it Iebus. So of tho two names Iebus and  
Salem is made one name, Ierusalem.  
Aftyrwarde Salamon called þat cyte  
Iherosolyma. And poetes þat speken shortly  
cal þe cyte Solyma in her short speche.

There are only few differences between this section in Caxton's print and *T*. Apart from occasional changes to function words, what is particularly noteworthy is the replacing of numbers (which are often spelt out in Caxton's text) by Roman numerals in *T*, e.g. 'Ysidorus, libro v<sup>o</sup>' for 'Ysydorus libro quinto'. This reference to Isidore is followed in Caxton's text by a new sentence beginning 'The Iewes seyn', whilst *T* makes the relation between authoritative reference and content even clearer by connecting them with a verb: 'seith how þe Iewes seyn'. Other differences between the two versions include minor spelling variants, such as 'thedyr' instead of 'thyder', or, later on in this section, 'behedyd' instead of 'byheded'. However, it is noticeable that less common words such as foreign names, for which one would typically expect greater variation, are almost always copied exactly as they stand in Caxton's text (e.g. 'Iherosolyma', 'Iebusey', etc.). In other words, the text of *T* only shows minor spelling variation of the sort which is indicative of typical dialectal variation in a process where the

scribe remembered smaller portions of the source text rather than copying it letter by letter. The text also suggests that the scribe was careful to copy difficult and unfamiliar words precisely, probably by slowing down the copying speed to a letter-by-letter basis wherever such words occurred.<sup>11</sup>

### *Addition*

The only more substantial change in the section on Judea occurs in ll. 1340-1, where the noun phrase ‘þe ten maner of peple þat the Iewes put oute of þat londe’ is supplemented by the addition ‘þat come of þe generacion of Cham’, which is not in Caxton’s print. This refers back to a previous section several leaves earlier in *T*, in which the sin of Ham and his punishment are elaborated upon (ll. 934-9). In this way the text subtly activates the readers’ memory of what they have read before. This creates a connection between different sections across a large number of pages. Such references can be found throughout *T*, imbuing the text with a sense of unity and coherence, and are signs of a deliberate authorial strategy. Sometimes these references repeat certain key pieces of information, as in the example above, and even more clearly and extensively in an addition on Lacedaemonia in ll. 10947-9:

This Lacedomonie is a prouynce of Grece, and these were tho þat her wyves grucchyd and complayned of her husbondys for beyng longe from home. Herof it spekyth more before in þe kyngdom of Macedoni.

This addition is found in the middle of a section copied from the *Polychronicon*, III, 14 (cxxvij<sup>v</sup>-cxxviii<sup>v</sup>), and is inserted after Lacedaemonia has been mentioned in a different context. Not only does this reference provide the reader with a helpful reminder of certain key facts about this region, but it also explicitly points him towards an earlier section – the chapter on Macedonia – where more information can be found.

Many other references in *T* follow a similar pattern and refer back and forth within the text explicitly, such as ‘as it is aforsayde rehersyd’ (ll. 6826-7) or ‘Belus sonne, kyng of Assirie, of whom þe chapitre beganne’ (ll. 4292-3). A good portion of these intratextual references contain detailed pointers to where in the text the relevant information can be found, e.g. ‘as we rede before in þe next lefe’ (ll. 5208-9) and ‘We may loke more herfor before in þe latter lefe of þe reyne of Thare’ (ll. 9225-6), with some references even showing evidence of the compiler-scribe having diligently counted the manuscript leaves in order to provide his readers with an exact reference: ‘Yf ye wyl knowe þe comodytees and maruels of Egipte, rede þe chapitre of Egipte in þe xxxviij lefe befor’ (ll. 3635-7). In manuscript culture, it is highly unusual for an author to cite by leaf, as later copies could not be expected to have the text identically disposed on leaves.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the compiler did not envisage any further copying and circulation of his text beyond a single copy,<sup>13</sup> or, perhaps, that he expected any further copying to be undertaken by himself. The evidence fits well with the features of the genre within which the compiler-scribe is writing: medieval historiography is comparatively rich in surviving autograph manuscripts, as ‘many historical works were personal efforts with no wider circulation at all’, with no expectations of further copies being produced.<sup>14</sup> As a result of these leaf-specific references, the long and complex history, which could so easily have been unwieldy, becomes much easier to navigate for the readers, giving them a sense of what came before and what would follow. This evidence is particularly interesting in light of the fact (outlined above) that the scribe took great care to copy personal names and place names precisely, without translating them into his own dialect. The care taken over accurate spellings of key names precisely as they occur in the printed sources may be seen as an expression of the same desire to create a text which was both accurate and easy to read and navigate. This indicates that even if no further copying of the text was envisaged, there was an expectation that the manuscript would be consulted by other readers beyond the compiler himself, whose reading could be aided by intratextual references.



In any case, these cross-references and finding aids indicate that the compiler-scribe had a very clear plan about what to include in his history and in what form to present it. Sections from the source texts are deliberately chosen for their relevance, and their relation to other sections is made clear through explicit references. Oftentimes these references are original additions and cannot be found in any of the source texts. In other places, however, cross-references which do occur in the source texts are adapted to the requirements of *T*. For instance, the sentence ‘Loke more herof in þe reyne of Nachor in þe begynnyng of þe chapter of Grece at Lacedemonia’ (ll. 9232-3) is adapted from Caxton’s *Polychronicon*, which here has ‘Loke more herof in the firste book capitulo grecia scilicet lacedomonia’ (cvijj<sup>v</sup>). The compiler-scribe evidently rewrote this reference into a format suitable for the new text, firstly by rendering the reference in English instead of Latin, secondly by making it more precise by adding ‘in þe begynnyng’, and thirdly by adding information which is applicable specifically to the structure of *T*. The readers are told to look ‘in þe reyne of Nachor’ (instead of ‘the firste book’ of the *Polychronicon*), which refers to the use of running titles in *T*. These running titles appear at the top of every manuscript page, and refer to the names of the ancestors of Christ. The precision of the cross-references in *T* thus shows an awareness of and close attention to the requirements of the new text which the compiler was creating. The total number of intratextual references in *T* is more than eighty, including both forward and backward references.<sup>15</sup> The overwhelming majority of these are original additions by the compiler, indicating that they were part of a systematic and reader-friendly design. Such devices of textual referencing show that *T*, albeit composed of a very large number of individual sections from a range of sources, was conceived not as a collection of passages but as a unified new text.<sup>16</sup>

There is evidence of further strategies employed in *T* to establish coherent textual connections, especially at points of transition from one source text to another. For instance, a

section discussing the virtue of pity, which is copied from another source text – the *Book of Good Manners* – is followed by a summary of this passage which is likely to be an original addition by the compiler: ‘And so was Kyng Alysandre mercyful and had pyte of þe wymmen whan he was answeyrd to resoun, as before is rehersed’ (ll. 7028-30). This added summary of the preceding section is then followed by a passage on the reign of Jair (from l. 7031 onward), which is copied from the *Polychronicon* II, 2 (lxxxxvij<sup>v</sup>), and which is different in tone and emphasis to the preceding passage from the *Book of Good Manners*. Thus, some of the additions in *T* serve the purpose of making the transition between different source texts smoother by clarifying and summarising information. Occasionally, such transitional passages are even uttered in a first-person authorial voice. For instance, ll. 7423-5, which create a transition between exegetical material based on 1 Sam 5:1–4 and a section on covetousness from the *Book of Good Manners* III, 1 (212<sup>r</sup>), are spoken by a first-person narrator or, more likely, the compiler-scribe speaking for himself in the first person:<sup>17</sup>

But nowe I wyl retourne ayen to þe seyde sonnys of Hely, þat is to sey, Ofues and Fynyes, of whom we redde of aforne, þat were ryght couetus and vycyusly disposyd, þe whom we may ley grete examplis.

The first-person pronouns in this passage switch from singular *I* to plural *we* in the middle of the sentence, thereby including the compiler amongst the implied readership. The readers are given the distinct impression of being guided through the vast array of historical material by a compiler who is providing his audience with a structural framework, whilst also presenting himself as a reader eager for learning. This structural framework consists of cross-references and other ordering devices which influence the information structure of the text. In this example, an interpretation as to the morality of certain actions is also given, informing the reader that Eli’s sons were ‘ryght couetus and vycyusly disposyd’.

This is not the only instance where the compiler provides an interpretation of the historical events which he relates. Sometimes such an interpretation can be a straightforwardly moral one, as after a passage on idol worship copied from *Mandeville's Travels*. After this, the compiler adds, 'Lo, thus mysbeleue and worship had þe pepyl in tyme heere before' (l. 4153), before continuing with a passage from the *Polychronicon*, which gives further details of idol worship in different parts of the world. However, not all additions of this kind provide a moral judgement. Some comments are simply evaluative, whilst others establish a causal connection between important events. The sentence 'Medea went from her husbonde Egeus, kyng of Athene, into þe ylond Colchos þere she was born' (ll. 6834-6), copied from the *Polychronicon*, is followed by an addition by the compiler, explaining: 'This was a parte of occasyoun of þe gynnyng of þe seege of Troye, as hereafter we shul reede of' (l. 6836-7). Such comments indicate that the compiler is not solely interested in historical events for their didactic and moral value (an approach taken by the homiletic tradition), but also in connections between historical events and causal patterns, an approach perhaps best described as 'history for history's sake'.<sup>18</sup>

Quite frequently, additions do not serve any of the purposes outlined above – cross-referencing, interpretation, or establishing textual connections – but rather provide additional information which clarifies or explains the material of the source texts. A very simple example of this impulse has already been highlighted in the analysis above: references to authorities in Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon* are often followed by a punctuation mark (usually a paraph or a *punctus*), whereupon follows the content of said source. *T* often expands such references by adding the word 'seith' to make the connection between source and content even clearer, as in 'Ysydorus [...] seith' (ll. 1373).

Other additions are similar in their evident desire to make the meaning of the text as clear as language will allow. Some lines in Caxton's *Polychronicon* are somewhat unclear, as in a

section describing Ezra's chastising of the children of Israel: 'There he chastysed in his comyng the childer of the transmygracion, and specially preestes for wyues of straunge nacions' (III, 15, cxxxix<sup>r</sup>). *T* clarifies this by adding a participle: 'for *takyng* wyues of straunge naciouns' (l. 10998, italics added), thus making the sense a lot more obvious.<sup>19</sup> Such additions can be found regularly where the sense in Caxton's text is unclear, or where sentences are elliptical. In a section on St Patrick's Purgatory, *T* adds a noun where it is evidently missing from the text of the *Polychronicon*: 'Ther is also Seint Patriks purgatorie þat was shewed at his prayers to conferme his prechyng and his lore whan he prechyd to mysbeleued *peple* of sorwe and of payne þat euyl men shulde suffre for her wyckyd werkes' (ll. 3340-2, italics added). In Caxton's text, the noun which is modified by 'mysbeleued' is missing, and this error is rectified by the compiler.<sup>20</sup>

In his correction of errors in Caxton's text, the compiler is not infallible. There are a few cases where he mistakenly amends an account in the *Polychronicon*, such as the story of Helen of Troy's abduction by Theseus. Evidently confusing this earlier abduction, said to have taken place during Helen's youth,<sup>21</sup> with her later, much more well-known and important abduction by Paris, the compiler changes the name 'Theseus' to 'Parrys', and attempts to reconcile the text in Caxton with what he believes to be the correct version of the tale.<sup>22</sup>

Where the *Polychronicon* as printed by Caxton has:

Aboute that tyme Theseus rauesshyd Eleyne and hir twey brethere Castor and Pollux fett hir and brought hir agayne. And toke Theseus moder and chased Theseus out of contray (II, 20; lxxxxv<sup>v</sup>–lxxxxvj<sup>r</sup>)

the compiler changes this to:

And also notyth wel þat in þe tyme of Iayr, Parrys, þe worthy knyght, rauysshed þe fayre Elyn. But than the bretheryn of Elyn callyd Castor and Pollex recouered and

restoryd hir ayene besyde þe see syde, than Parys beyng absente and oute of countre  
(ll. 7039-2)

It is interesting how not only the name of the protagonist is changed here, but other details from Caxton's text as well: for instance, the phrase 'out of contray', originally referring to Theseus being chased out of the country, is applied to Paris in a new semantic context, as an explanation for how Castor and Pollux were able to liberate Helen from her captor, who was 'absente and oute of countre'. The compiler is evidently hesitant to dispense with Caxton's text completely even where he disagrees with its content, but is eager to use as much of the source text as he can, and to make sense of it within a new context.

In contrast to this example, most of the compiler's changes to the source text identify errors in Caxton's text correctly. In one of the passages copied from the *Polychronicon*, for instance, he notices an incongruity and corrects it in accordance with other relevant information. In a section on Judge Abimelech, he combines different material from Books I, 15 and II, 21 of the *Polychronicon*. The passage in the former book relates how Abimelech sowed the earth at Shechem with salt after crushing a revolt (cf. Judges 9:45), with Caxton's text mistakenly referring to Abimelech as 'Ierobabels sone' (I, 15, xix<sup>r</sup>). The passage in Book II, 21, however, provides an overview of Abimelech's reign and correctly identifies him as '[G]edeons sonne' (lxxxxvj<sup>v</sup>). In *T*, these two accounts from the *Polychronicon* are brought together. This is reflective of a strategy ubiquitous in *T*, in which the compiler collects information on significant events and historical figures from different places and sources, bringing it together in a single section. As a consequence, the contradiction between the two different names given for Abimelech's father in the *Polychronicon* would have been immediately apparent, with the section in *T* beginning 'Aftyr þe dethe of Gedeon, his sonne Abymalech [...] was iugge of Israell' (ll. 6767-8), and the compiler then inserting the account from Book I, 15 only a few lines later. Consequently, the compiler replaces 'Ierobabels sone'

with ‘þe sonne of Gedeon’ (l. 6779), thus correctly identifying the mistake in Caxton’s text and rectifying it. Not only does the compiler possess the skill to collect in one place different pieces of information originally scattered across long source texts, but he is also a discerning and critical reader of his sources who is aware of incongruities which he is willing and able to correct.<sup>23</sup>

Additions and corrections which clarify the sense of the text can range from single words to more substantive additions. In a passage telling the story of Cyrus, the compiler makes additions which explain and clarify the text copied from the *Polychronicon*. Upon being ordered to kill the child Cyrus, who is the son of the king’s daughter, the servant Arpagus fails to do as he is told: ‘Than he trowed þat þe kyngdom shulde som tyme falle to þe kyngis doughter *and wold nat sle þe childe*, but he toke þe childe to an heerde þat kept þe kyngis bestys and comaunded hym to ley þe childe in a woode there to be deuoured’ (ll. 10496-9, italics added). In this sentence, ‘and wold nat sle þe childe’ is an addition which is not contained in the *Polychronicon* (III, 4; cxvii<sup>v</sup>). Without this clarifying addition, the narrative would be missing a logical step between Arpagus’ considerations regarding the king’s daughter one day inheriting the kingdom and his taking the child to a shepherd, and the compiler’s addition provides precisely this link.

Additions can also occur for stylistic, rather than clarificatory reasons. In some places, *T* introduces doublets by adding a synonym, such as in ‘Abraham yaf fyrst *oblaciouns or tythe to God*’ (l. 4568, italics added). In this example, ‘oblaciouns or’ as well as ‘to God’ are added to Caxton’s text. The latter of these additions makes the sentence more precise by mentioning the object of Abraham’s devotion, whilst the former of these additions provides a synonym for ‘tythe’. Fifteenth-century translators who expand single nouns into doublets often add a less Latinate term as the new part of the doublet for the purposes of clarification, but this case does not fit the pattern as the doublet does not seem to have been added for clarification.<sup>24</sup> It

is unlikely that *tythe* would have required glossing, as it is widely attested throughout the Old English and Middle English period.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, none of the *MED*'s earliest attestations of *oblacioun* pre-date the first quarter of the fifteenth century,<sup>26</sup> which suggests that this word may have been perceived by a late fifteenth-century compiler as the more recent of the two terms. In addition, as a Latinate word it would have been associated with a higher register than a word of Germanic etymology such as *tythe*. Thus, the purpose of the compiler's addition here may have been to update the language of the source text, or the doublet may have been introduced for stylistic reasons, adding variety to the language and adorning it as an attempt at *amplificatio* (a method of refining the subject matter which was an important part of medieval rhetorical practice). Such stylistic changes are not unlike to the changes which Caxton himself made to his source texts.<sup>27</sup> The well-educated, Latinate compiler of *T* is very likely to have received an education in grammar and rhetoric, and expansions in *T* which do not serve an obvious clarificatory purpose may indeed be a reflection of his rhetorical skill.

The same explanation is suggested by another example of the same impulse, which can be found in an account of the reign of Ehud. Here a Latinate technical term is added to the *Polychronicon*, which had used a more circumlocutory, and less precise, description. Where Caxton's text has 'This Aioth vsed eyther hande for his right hand' (II, 17; lxxxxij'), the version in *T* runs 'this Aioth was ambidexter. He vsyd to alle thyngis his lifte hande as he dyd his right hande' (ll. 6542-3). The compiler is likely to have been influenced by Higden's Latin version here, which runs 'Iste Ayoth [...] fuit ambidexter, utraque scilicet manu utens pro dextra',<sup>28</sup> but this usage of the term in English would have been highly unusual at the time of the manuscript's creation. *T* antedates the earliest attestation for this word in the *OED* by more than 100 years, with the earliest quotation of *ambidexter* as an adjective in the sense 'able to use the right and left hands equally well' dating from 1627.<sup>29</sup> The *MED* only records the word in the sense 'One who improperly occupies two offices or sides with both parties in

a conflict; double-dealer'.<sup>30</sup> The striking *terminus technicus* – a stylish, Latinate innovation – provides a clarification of Caxton's rather odd wording, but only highly educated readers would have been able to make sense of this word in *T* at the time of its creation. Those readers not in this group were provided with the following, non-Latinate explanation, which is expanded and much clearer in *T* as compared to the *Polychronicon*. Given this clear description, it is particularly striking that the compiler felt the need to incorporate such an unusual term. This suggests that he was envisaging a mixed and wide audience, but in spite of this was unwilling to compromise on the precise and learned nature of his text with its amplifying and adorning stylistic features.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, other additions in *T* by the compiler are not necessary at all in order to make sense of the text in the *Polychronicon* in terms of register or sentence structure, but they provide useful additional information on concepts which are perhaps difficult to understand or put into context. This is illustrated by a section on Norway, which describes the polar day and night in detail. Additions which are not in Caxton's text are emphasised in italics below:

In þe northe syde of þat londe many nyghtes in þe somer tyme, aboute þe styntyng of þe sonne, *þat is whanne þe sonne is at þe hiest, þat is in þe monthe of Iunij*, than þe sonne goth not doun but shyneth alle nyghte there. And efte as many dayes in þe wynter, aboute þe styntyng of þe sonne, *whan it is at þe lowest, þat is in þe monthe of Decembre*, than þe sonne aryseth not to yeue hem lyghte. Therfor alle þat tyme they muste werke by candellight what werke þat hem nedeth. To knowe what þe styntyng of þe sonne is to menyng, take hede þat þe sonne styntith twyes a yere, ones in somer whan it goth none higher, and eftsones in wynter, whan it gooth no lower. And so in eyþer tyme is þe styntyng of þe sonne. *And thus from Iunij to December is alwey lyghte þere, and from December to Iunij is contynuel derke þere, thus seyth Treuisa.* (ll. 2683-94, italics added)



Each time the solstice is mentioned in this section, the additions clarify whether it is the winter or the summer solstice (e.g. ‘whanne þe sonne is at þe hyst’), whilst also detailing the month in question (e.g. ‘in þe monthe of Iunij’). The sentence at the end of this passage, which is a new addition for which no obvious source can be determined, gives further details on the months of the polar night and polar day.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting that this information is attributed to Trevisa here. A reference to Trevisa can be found in the *Polychronicon* (I, 31; xliij) at the start of the sentence beginning ‘To knowe what þe styntyng of þe sone is to menyng’. The reference is omitted at the start of this sentence in *T*, but instead it is attached at the end of the sentence containing new information. Perhaps the compiler felt that an addition of such detail and length had to be justified by means of an authoritative source. Whatever the reason, the result of these additions is that the passage in *T* is much clearer as a whole, and now contains further useful details which serve to make the content more precise than it is in the *Polychronicon*.

Additional details which increase the precision of the text can also be found in many other sections in *T*, as the compiler frequently adds contextual details and explanations when key places or names are mentioned. For instance, when Andromache’s name comes up in a section from the *Polychronicon*, the compiler adds ‘þat was Hectors wyfe’ (l. 7230). Similarly, ‘Macedones’ is followed by the addition ‘þat is in Grecia’ (l. 1694). This pattern is common throughout *T*, and is evidence of a systematic intention behind the creation of *T*. Such additions go beyond the merely clarifying additions discussed above; they are not strictly necessary to understand the sense of the text, but they do add precision and detail. Often, they also serve a second function, as they can implicitly refer back to a previous section in which the information has first been provided, e.g. the section on Greece, and remind the readers of what they have read before (as detailed above).<sup>33</sup>

The analysis so far has outlined the broad functional categories under which additions in the manuscript can fall – clarification/explanation, correction, intertextual referencing, interpretation, and establishing coherent textual connections. The additions which function broadly as a means of clarification or explanation testify to the compiler's extraordinary love of detail, as well as his awareness of writing not (only) for himself but also for an audience. The text appears to cater to the needs of an envisaged audience which was likely a broad and mixed one. On the one hand, the types of changes to the source texts which we have observed point to a well-educated, Latinate audience, which would have appreciated the text's amplifying stylistic features. On the other hand, the changes also imply a non-Latinate audience, which would have required clarification and translation. As mentioned above, the text likely originated in an Augustinian context,<sup>34</sup> and an obvious audience would have been the members of a religious community, who could have used the text as an aid in their studies and as a reference work. However, the fact that the compiler was writing for an audience which was at least partly non-Latinate also points to a lay or mixed audience beyond the religious community.<sup>35</sup> The text of the *Polychronicon* is explained in a number of ways where necessary, in view of the requirements of a wide range of readers, but relevant information is also added where it is not immediately necessary for an understanding of the text, but as a way of providing contextual details. Several textual strategies are used to ensure that the text as a whole remains cohesive, unified, and easy for the readers to follow and refer back. Although the compiler evidently subscribed to a holistic approach to history writing, trying to collect information from a range of sources and supplementing it with details where he felt this was in order, he is not unnecessarily verbose, and navigates the tension between length and precision successfully. In fact, as we will see below, omissions of sections from the source texts show that the compiler is highly selective in which parts of his sources he chooses to include in the manuscript.

### *Substitution*

An additional category of changes is the substitution and reordering, rather than addition, of information. Replacing of information, where one word or expression is substituted by a synonym, usually seems to happen in the context of modernisation of obsolescent words. For instance, ‘mette’ in the *Polychronicon* is replaced by ‘dremyd’ (l. 10489), ‘heestes’ by ‘commaundmentis’ (l. 10511), ‘heyte’ by ‘is named’ (l. 1707), and ‘hyeld water on the erth’ by ‘shedde oute water’ (l. 6504). In all of these cases, diachronic variation appears to be the reason for such replacements. *Meten* fell out of use soon after the Middle English period and is likely to have been perceived as rather more antiquated than *dremen* by the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup> *Heste*,<sup>37</sup> *hoten*,<sup>38</sup> and *helden*<sup>39</sup> present a similar picture, suggesting that the compiler updated the language of his sources, replacing words which were falling out of use with more current vocabulary, similarly to Caxton’s changes to his sources.<sup>40</sup>

Whilst the local replacement of individual words must be largely due to diachronic variation, the reordering of sections, which is very frequent throughout *T*, relates to how information is structured in the text. Such reordering of sections can occur on a large scale in *T*, and the reasons for this are clearly deliberate. A lengthy section details the story of Romulus and Remus (ll. 9235-67), copied from Book II, 31 of the *Polychronicon* (cvij<sup>v</sup>–cvij<sup>r</sup>). The flow of this story in Caxton’s text is somewhat harshly interrupted by etymological considerations relating to the Latin word *lupa*, and the question of whether the twins were literally fed by a she-wolf rather than by a human woman of that name. After this section, the story continues with the twins’ revenge and killing of King Amulius, a section which sits a little awkwardly after the etymological excursus. The compiler of *T* clearly felt that rearranging the sections would help to make the story run more smoothly. The quotations below illustrate how this is achieved; the text is presented as it occurs in *T*, with the numbers

at the start of individual sections relating to the original order in Caxton's text, and italics indicating which parts are additions by the compiler. An addition introduces the story and alerts the reader to what is to come:

(1) *Also in thes dayes was Remus and Romulus born, as ye shul here.* The fyftenth of Latyns, Amilius, Procas yonger sonne, regned xliij yere.

[... followed by the story of Romulus and Remus: the King orders the killing of the children, they are abandoned in the woods and fed by a she-wolf, and eventually found by the shepherd Faustulus. In the end, they are recognised by their grandfather:]

Thenne aftyr whan Munyto<sup>r</sup> knewe þat þe chyl dren were his doughter sonnes, he and þe children entended to slee his broder Amulyus.

(3) Thes children Remus and Romulus waxed strong and gadred to hem many heerdes and theues, and slough Amulus vpon þe ryuer Alba and restored her grauntsyr Munytor to his kyngdome ayene.

(2) Martinus seith Faustulus, þe heerde þat kept þe kyngis beestes, fonde twey lytyl bretheryn leyde be þe brynke of þe ryuer Tyber and brought hem to his wyf þat was callyd Acta laurenčia. And for her fayrenes and concupyscence of her disordynate lust, she was callyd lupa in Latyn, þat is [f. 180<sup>r</sup>] a woluesse in Englissh. And þerfor þe hows of comyn women is called yet lupanaria in Latyn.

(4) Netheles, wheþer þat woman was callyd lupa or noo, þe olde wrytyng in marbyl and in oper stones at Rome sheweth yet þat a woluesse fedde þe twey bretheryn with her mylke.

The section concludes with an addition, which includes a typical cross-reference to a preceding section of the text, and establishes a connection with the building of Rome – an element which, although crucial to the story, Caxton’s text does not mention at all here:

*This Remus and Romulus buyldyd þe cyte of Rome aftyrward, as ye shul rede before in þe chapiter of Italya in þe regne of Rehu. (ll. 9268-9)*

This sentence in effect replaces the sentence ‘a woluesse is lupa in latyn’ (cvijj<sup>r</sup>), which concludes the story in Caxton’s edition. Given that the meaning of the word *lupa* has already been made abundantly clear above (‘lupa in Latyn, þat is a woluesse in Englissh’), the compiler evidently felt that it was unnecessary to repeat this piece of information. Reordering this section achieves a smoother transition from the story itself to etymological questions, which make the passage more coherent and elegant than in Caxton’s version, where section (3) stands in a somewhat displaced position between (2) and (4). Repetition of material in Caxton’s text is omitted, and the passage is introduced and concluded by clear textual markers concerning what is to follow, and references to places in the manuscript where further information can be found. Changes such as these indicate that the compiler is highly conscious of how information is structured in the text. In a striking attempt at *ordinatio*, he seeks to make improvements to the order of his source texts even in sections where he is not compiling from different places, but quite straightforwardly copying, with minimal changes, a single section from a single source text.

Such reordering of material occurs in many places in *T*, but always seems to be driven by a systematic desire to assemble relevant information on a particular topic in a single place. This can be seen on a much smaller scale than in the previous example in a sentence describing Ptolemy Soter’s exploits: ‘He put Siria to his kyngdom and warred with þe Iewes þat were ydel in þe holy day and toke Ierusalem by fraude and gyle and toke many Iewes prysonners and solde them for couetyse’ (ll. 11611-4). This sentence is based on material in

the *Polychronicon*, II, 32, but it combines the content of two sentences into a single one. In the source, a section running ‘he putto Siria to his kyngdome and werred with the Iewes that were ydel in the holy day and toke prysonners of hem and sette hem to sale’ (cliij<sup>v</sup>) is followed by several paragraphs concerned with the leadership in Israel and other countries, interspersed with material on Ptolemy, before returning to the matter of Ptolemy’s war against the Jews: ‘Tholomeus toke Iherusalem by fraude and gyle and toke many Iewes prysonners and sold hem for couetyse’ (cliij<sup>v</sup>). Although these two sentences appear on the same page in Caxton’s edition, they do not stand next to each other but are separated both visually and contextually. In spite of this, the compiler recognised that they describe two aspects of the same event, and overlap in their content. This overlap is skilfully used to combine these two aspects into a single sentence: The Jews being made prisoners and sold, a point which is made in both sentences, is only mentioned once in *T*, whilst the point from Caxton’s second sentence about Ptolemy taking Jerusalem by guile is incorporated into the structure of the first sentence.

This is an illustrative example of a technique which the compiler uses throughout *T*. This technique can be observed both on a small scale (as in this example), and on a much broader scale in passages which stretch across multiple pages. The content of various sections of the *Polychronicon* is often rearranged thematically by the compiler, collecting information on a specific topic in a single place, instead of leaving it displaced and scattered across different chapters and pages, as can often be the case with Caxton’s text. The compiler is not limited by what is visible on one page opening in Caxton’s edition, but rearranges material from disparate parts of Caxton’s text in a very complex process of comparison which must have involved the turning of multiple leaves. With such a large-scale reordering of sections, it is astonishing that the compiler managed to maintain a clear and detailed overview both of his source text, and of the new text he was creating. This is no small achievement, given that in

many places, the rearranged material covers several pages in the manuscript, and is excerpted from several chapters of the source text. The material is of a complexity which could easily have been confusing, yet across the entire manuscript there is only a very small number of instances where material is repeated. The compiler's masterful handling of his material thus reveals a large-scale and intricate knowledge both of the source texts and the new text which he was creating.

### *Omission*

The changes to the source texts of *T* indicate a methodical and purposeful compiler who is writing a new historical text with specific objectives in mind, and who aims at achieving these through a range of complex textual strategies. This methodical approach entails not only reordering and addition of material for purposes of clarification, correction, interpretation, and to improve the thematic structure, but also the omission of material which the compiler deems to be of lesser relevance. Typical omissions can be broadly categorised into three groups: omission of references, duplicate information, and inessential information.

References to authoritative figures and texts are abundant in the *Polychronicon*. Often these are fully copied in *T* without any significant alterations, but in other places, references are omitted. For instance, *T* copies the sentence 'Pat cyte Iacob bought som tyme with moneye and grete trauayle and yaf yt to Ioseph, his sonne, aboue his lotte' (ll. 6772-3) from the *Polychronicon*, I, 15, but does not include the reference at the end of this sentence ('so seyth Iherome' (xix<sup>f</sup>)). Moreover, the subsequent sentence begins with the reference 'Genesis octo decimo capitulo' in the *Polychronicon*, whereas this reference is not included in *T*, which instead only has the following sentence ('For yt was a cyte of refuge and of socoure, so it is wrytyn in Iosue, capitulo xx<sup>mo</sup>', ll. 6774-5). As the reference to Joshua at the end of this sentence is included in *T*, the aim does not appear to have been a complete omission of all

references in this section. The compiler may have felt that some sections in the *Polychronicon* were especially dense in references to authorities, so that it was acceptable to leave some of them out – or even that omission was preferable in order to avoid interrupting the flow of the text.

Conversely, references to source texts are added in other places in *T* in order to avoid extensive copying from the *Polychronicon*. Instances of this occur especially towards the end of *T*, where a change of policy seems to have occurred. The compiler might have realised that it was difficult to cover the abundance of material in Caxton and include everything which was potentially of interest within the limited space afforded by a single manuscript. A section on Democritus, for instance, concludes with the reference ‘We may loke more for this in Policronicon in þe iij<sup>de</sup> boke and xviiij chapter’ (ll. 11113-4), in lieu of including the remainder of this section from *Polychronicon*, III, 18. Once again, the plural pronoun *we* implies that the compiler here includes himself amongst the readership. Similar references occur throughout the following folios: ‘We may loke more for this in Policronicon in þe iij<sup>de</sup> boke and xix chapter’ (ll. 11130-1), ‘Loke for this in Policronicon in þe iij boke and xxij chapter’ (l. 11157), etc. In this way, omission of material can occur in conjunction with added references, in order to shorten the text in *T* whilst at the same time pointing the reader to a place where further details can be found, should they be of interest.

In other places, sections of varying length from the *Polychronicon* are omitted entirely in *T*. In general, this tends to happen where the text of Caxton’s print is somewhat verbose, or concerned with inessential detail. For instance, at the beginning of a chapter on Ireland, the *Polychronicon* contains a rather laboured introduction:

HYbernia, that is Irlond. And was of old tyme incorporate in to the lordship of Britain, so seith Giraldus in sua topographia, where he descriueth it at fulle; yet it is worthy and semely to praise that lond with larger praysing. For to come to clere and ful knowleche



of that lond, these tytles that folowe opene the way. Therfor I shal telle of the stede and place of that lond, how grete and what manere londe it is. Wherof that londe hath plente, and wherof it hath defawte, also of what men that dwellid therinne firste, of men, of maners of that lond, of the wondris of that lond, of and worthynes of halowes and saintes of that lond. (I, 32; xlij<sup>r</sup>)

*T* omits the greatest part of this long-winded section entirely and merely contains the short note ‘Ybernia þat is Irlond, and was of olde tyme incorporate into þe lordship of Brytayn, so seith Giraldus in sua topographia’ (ll. 3191-2) before continuing with the rest of this chapter, which is concerned with a topographical description of Ireland.

This focus on concision is also evident in the way in which the compiler frequently replaces lengthy descriptions with much shorter and pithy summaries. Chapter I, 27 of the *Polychronicon* contains an extremely detailed section on the genealogy of the French kings, only a few lines of which are quoted here:

After Theodericus regned Clodoneus. And after hym his yonger broder Childebertus. After hym his yong sone Dagobertus. [...] And thenne faylled the lygnage in men of Ferramundus blood but yet it lasted and dured in a woman that was Batildis, Dagobertus suster. [...] This Charles gate the second Pupinus and Charles the Grete that was afterward a monke. This second Pupinus was of kynges kynde. For he cam of Batildis that we spak of bfore and therfor he was made kyng of Fraunce [...] (I, 27, xxxviij<sup>r</sup>)

This entire section, covering nearly a whole page in Caxton’s text, is summarised in *T* in the following way:

Aftr Theodericus regned Clodoneus and so fourthe eche kyng aftr oþer lynyally tyll it cam to þe ij<sup>de</sup> Pupinus, whiche was ryghtful kyng of Fraunce. And he begate Charles þe Grete. (ll. 2791-3)

The genealogy is thus reduced to the most important figures – Theoderic and his son, and finally Pippin and Charlemagne. The troubles in succession for the Merovingian dynasty are not explained in detail, although they are acknowledged in the compiler’s summary by calling Pippin the ‘ryghtful kyng of Fraunce’. This demonstrates that even where the compiler omits lengthy sections of the source text, he is intimately familiar with the omitted material, and is making a well-considered choice to include or exclude a certain section.

The compiler is not only aware of the content of the passages he is cutting down to manageable proportions in this way, but also of the context of each of these sections. This is evident, for instance, in a section in the *Polychronicon* which repeats a reference to the same number of years twice in very close proximity: ‘Abraham was born bifore the buyldyng of the cyte of Rome nygh a thousand yere & thre C. Oro. li. 1. The yere bifore the buyldyng of the cyte of Rome a thousand and thre hondred’ (II, 9, lxxxij<sup>v</sup>). The compiler must have been aware of this repetition and considered it unnecessary, as he shortens the second reference to ‘in þat tyme and yere aforseyde’ (ll. 4025). The same is true for other cases of repetition (possibly due to dittography) in Caxton’s text, as in a section in I, 7 (xi<sup>r</sup>) on the properties of Africa:<sup>41</sup>

Also Affryca in his kynde hath lasse space. And for the sturennes of heuen it hath the more wyldernes. And though Affryca be lytil, it hath more wyldernes and waste londe, for grete brennyng of hete of the sonne

By contrast, the compiler omits parts of this sentence:

Also Affryca in his kynde hathe lasse space and for þe sturennes of heuen it hathe þe more wyldernes and waste londe, though it be ly[t]yl, for grete brennyng of hete of sonne (ll. 1105-8)

The compiler evidently recognised the overlap between the two phrases ‘it hath the more wyldernes’ and ‘it hath more wyldernes and waste londe’ and, avoiding any repetition,

combined both phrases into a single one, whilst taking care to include the remainder of the sentence. Constant attention, both to the content of a specific section, and to its immediate and wider context, is required for these systematic omissions and summaries. The compiler's minute attention to detail is particularly extraordinary given the considerable length of the text.

As a closer look at the additions in *T* has demonstrated, the compiler is very adept at collecting information on a specific subject from a range of sources, and rearranging it accordingly. However, his strategies of omitting and abridging his sources show that he is not merely amassing material, but carefully selecting and, if necessary, shortening it with a clear purpose in mind. The way in which the compiler interacts with his sources and maintains an expert overview of a vast quantity of highly complex material on a very large scale, whilst at the same time taking care over small textual details in view of the requirements of a wide and mixed audience, suggests that the history in *T* is the creation of a highly educated, extremely well-read and systematic mind. The strategies of addition, substitution, and omission which we find in *T* thus reveal detailed insights into how a fifteenth-century compiler reshaped his source texts, and – contrarily to what the term ‘compilation’ might suggest to the modern mind – create a unified and consistent new textual whole.

Through its compilatory strategies, *T* also sheds light on late medieval reading and writing habits at the historically significant intersection between print and manuscript culture. The text clearly demonstrates the close interplay between manuscript and print at the close of the Middle Ages.<sup>42</sup> As has been recognised in recent scholarship, there was a great deal of continuity between the two media in spite of their technological differences, and early readers do not seem to have perceived them as radically different from each other.<sup>43</sup> The greatest difference between the two media was one of audience: whilst manuscripts could be intended for a single individual, or small groups, printed books addressed a large audience to make

their production worthwhile in economic terms. The compiler of *T* counteracts this development in taking a printed work back to a smaller audience. The *Polychronicon* is copied by hand from Caxton's print, put into a new context, adapted according to a reader-friendly rationale, and enriched with additions from other sources which give *T* a new direction. Whilst *T* seems to envisage a mixed audience, perhaps beyond its immediate religious community, it is likely to have been an audience whose interests were different, and perhaps more specific, than those of the intended audience of Caxton's print, as indicated by the addition of other source texts to *T*, such as *The Book of Good Manners* and *Information of pilgrims unto the Holy Land*. In a sense, Caxton's print and *T* thus sit on opposite ends of the spectrum of late medieval book production: Whilst printed works aimed at a broad market and were reproduced in a large number of copies, *T* is a text which enjoyed only a limited readership and circulation, without any expectations of further reproduction.

The number of texts which are comparable to *T* in terms of specific textual strategies is large, partly because *T* is firmly situated within the context of typical medieval *compilatio*. The compiler's strategies in composing the text include those of compiling, editing, reordering, and translating material (whether from different languages, or across different registers, as in the case of *ambidexter* discussed above). As such, these strategies follow the established principles of *compilatio partium*, *ordinatio*, and *translatio*,<sup>44</sup> and the resulting text is remarkable in its compendiousness and meticulous attention to detail. Reordering, addition, and omission of information in general terms is of course very common in fifteenth-century compilations – these strategies occur in a large number of manuscripts, including famous ones such as the Thornton manuscript, and are often both complex and well thought through.<sup>45</sup> However, the highly systematic nature of the rearrangement of material in *T*, sustained across a dense and lengthy text on 225 folios, goes far beyond what is usual in such compilations.<sup>46</sup> In terms of specific textual strategies, *T* also invites comparisons with texts of different

traditions, such as Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Malory's strategies of compiling material from a wealth of English and French sources in verse and prose, which included reordering this material, reversing the order of narrative episodes and drastically reshaping the stories according to a new narrative structure, is in principle similar to the textual strategies we find in *T*, although they are here applied to a very different subject matter.<sup>47</sup>

*T* is thus firmly rooted in the fifteenth century in its use of current textual strategies, but it is unusual to see these strategies applied in their full range, ambitiousness, and persistence to the genre of universal history writing in this period.<sup>48</sup> In this context, *T* is one of the last texts of its kind, a text which still invokes in manuscript form the models of viewing history as a holistic, interconnected whole in the tradition of Higden's *Polychronicon*, rather than the more fragmented, localised, and politicized examples of history writing which are more prominent at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>49</sup> *T* is entirely different in nature from texts such as Thomas Gardyner's *Flowers of England*, a prose chronicle not far removed in time from *T*, which was completed in 1516 and follows a clear political agenda.<sup>50</sup> There are few universal histories being written as late as the fifteenth century in English, and none are comparable in textual terms to *T*. Capgrave's *Abbreviacion of Cronicles*, for instance, operates within a universal framework of world history, but is firmly rooted in the annalistic tradition as a structuring principle and is thus different in focus and structure to *T*.<sup>51</sup>

There are very few notable examples of similar approaches to universal history writing in England after *T* which employ a similar range and complexity of compilatory strategies. A somewhat curious and unique heir to this tradition is the sixteenth-century Welsh *Cronicl* by soldier Elis Gruffydd, completed in Calais in 1552. The *Cronicl* is a remarkable history of the world in two parts, spanning nearly 2500 pages and drawing on a wide range of sources in various languages.<sup>52</sup> The *Polychronicon*, probably in Trevisa's translation, has been named as one of Gruffydd's sources in terms of structure, bearing witness to the fact that this tradition

of universal history still attracted the interest of the occasional compiler in the sixteenth century. The creative process behind this chronicle is in some regards comparable to that of *T*, although it is written in a different language: ‘Not only was it necessary for the author to select, arrange and splice together this disparate material, he had also to impose some kind of literary unity upon his work’.<sup>53</sup> Like Elis Gruffydd, the compiler of *T* succeeded in this task. Through the consistency and range of his compilatory strategies, his masterful overview of the subject matter, and close attention to detail, the compiler-scribe of *T* was able to create one of the last texts in the tradition of universal history writing at the close of the Middle Ages.

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<sup>1</sup> For further details on a possible origin in an Augustinian house, see Kate Harris, ‘John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*: The Virtues of Bad Texts’, in Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England. The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study: Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York* (Cambridge, 1983), 27–40. Harris was the first scholar to focus on this manuscript in depth and fully identify its sources; see Kate Harris, ‘Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*’ (DPhil thesis, University of York, 1993), 67–75; and Kate Harris, ‘Unnoticed Extracts from Chaucer and Hoccleve: Huntington MS HM 144, Trinity College, Oxford MS D 29 and *The Canterbury Tales*’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 20 (1998), 167–199. For other references to the manuscript, see A. S. G. Edwards, ‘The Influence and Audience of the *Polychronicon*: Some Observations’, *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, 17 (1980), 113–119 (117); Donald Kennedy, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, vol. 8: *Chronicles and Other Historical Writing* (New Haven, 1989), 2662; S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, *The Index of Middle English Prose*, vol. 8: *A Handlist of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Prose in Oxford College Libraries* (Cambridge, 1991), 95–96; Daniel Mosser, *A Digital Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Manuscripts and Incunables of the Canterbury Tales* (pubd online 2010) <<http://www.mossercatalogue.net>> accessed 22 April 2020; Daniel Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375-1510* (Cambridge, 2014), 175–178; Cosima Clara Gillhammer, ‘The Holy Cross Legend: A Unique Version in Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29’, *Medium Aevum*, 88 (2019), 52–79; Cosima Clara Gillhammer, ‘Non-Wycliffite Bible Translation in Oxford, Trinity College, 29 and University History Writing in Late Medieval England’, *Anglia*, 138 (2020), 649–72. The most up-to-date description is contained in Richard Gameson, *The Medieval Manuscripts of Trinity College, Oxford: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Oxford, 2018), 219–222.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed review of the evidence for a compiler-scribe is contained in my forthcoming edition of Oxford, Trinity College, MS 29 with *Middle English Texts*. The case for a compiler-scribe rests both on palaeographical features of *T* as well as on textual details of two other manuscripts in the same scribe’s hand (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 84, and San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 144). On the question of a compiler-scribe see also Kate Harris, ‘Ownership and Readership’, 69–75.

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<sup>3</sup> These source texts were first fully identified by Kate Harris, ‘John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Virtues of Bad Texts’, and are discussed in further detail in my forthcoming edition of *T*. On excerpts from *Confessio Amantis* and the *Canterbury Tales*, see Kate Harris’s detailed work in ‘John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Virtues of Bad Texts’; Kate Harris, ‘Ownership and Readership’; Kate Harris, ‘Unnoticed Extracts from Chaucer and Hoccleve’.

<sup>4</sup> The evidence is discussed in my forthcoming edition.

<sup>5</sup> This *terminus post quem* is noted by Kate Harris, ‘Unnoticed Extracts from Chaucer and Hoccleve’, 168. *STC* = A. W. Pollard, and G. R. Redgrave (eds), *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, rev. by W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson, and K. F. Pantzer, 3 vols (London, 1976-91).

<sup>6</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, ‘John Trevisa’, in A. S. G. Edwards (ed.), *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres* (New Brunswick, 1986), 133–146 (143). The text was printed again by de Worde in 1495 (*STC* 13439) and by Treveris in 1527 (*STC* 13440).

<sup>7</sup> Line references in this article refer to my forthcoming edition of the text.

<sup>8</sup> For further background on the *Polychronicon*, see John Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulph Higden* (Oxford, 1966); James Freeman, *The Manuscript Dissemination and Readership of the ‘Polychronicon’ of Ranulph Higden, c. 1330 – c. 1500* (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2013); Jane Beal, *John Trevisa and the English ‘Polychronicon’*, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 437 (Tempe, Arizona, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Caxton’s text of the *Polychronicon* is transcribed here from the 1482 print (*STC* 13438, available on *Early English Books Online* <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>>). My transcriptions use modernised punctuation and capitalisation to allow for an easy comparison with *T*. Paraphs are not displayed, and abbreviations have been silently expanded. Roman numerals refer to books of the *Polychronicon*, Arabic numerals refer to chapters.

<sup>10</sup> The text of *T* is edited according to the following policy: The letters *u*, *v*, *p*, *z*, *i*, and *j* have been preserved as they occur in the manuscript. The ambiguous majuscule *I/J* is treated as *i* throughout. Double *f* is represented as capital *F*. Numerals have been regularised. Interlinear additions have been marked by \forward and reverse primes/. Abbreviations have been silently expanded throughout the text. Punctuation, capitalisation, paragraphing, and word division have been modernised.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Beadle, ‘Some Measures of Scribal Accuracy in Late Medieval English Manuscripts’, in V. Gillespie and A. Hudson, *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century* (Turnhout,



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2013), 223–239, and Daniel Wakelin, *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts 1375-1510* (Cambridge, 2014), 43-70, find a similar scribal concern with accurate copying when comparing exemplars and direct copies. The role of scribal memory in copying is detailed in Eugène Vinaver, ‘Principles of Textual Emendation’, in Mildred K. Pope (ed.), *Studies in French Language and Mediaeval Literature Presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester, 1939), 351-69 (353). When copying verse, scribes may have memorised one line at a time (as suggested by Barry A. Windeatt, ‘The Scribes as Chaucer’s Earliest Critics’, in Daniel J. Pinti (ed.), *Writing after Chaucer: Essential Readings in Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1998), 27–44 (39)), but in the case of prose, as in *T*, it is more difficult to say what would have been the norm.

<sup>12</sup> This strategy used in *T* is highly unusual for the period. For a discussion of the difficulties of foliation in manuscript culture, see Margaret M. Smith, ‘Printed foliation: forerunner to printed page-numbers?’, *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 63 (1988), 54-70.

<sup>13</sup> This is the conclusion suggested by Kate Harris, ‘Ownership and Readership’, 69.

<sup>14</sup> J. P. Gumbert, ‘Autographs of historians in the Northern Netherlands’, in Natalia Golob (ed.), *Medieval Autograph Manuscripts: Proceedings of the XVIIth Colloquium of the Comité International de Paléographie Latine* (Turnhout, 2013), 39-48.

<sup>15</sup> Backward references occur in ll. 272, 307, 789, 1264-5, 1277-8, 1282, 1295, 1840, 2048, 3439, 3465, 3601-2, 3603, 3636-7, 3703, 3737, 3953, 4009, 4012, 4015, 4072, 4389-90, 4390-1, 4397, 4494, 4565, 4781, 5163, 5181, 5209, 5372-3, 5426, 5435, 5731, 5736-7, 5881, 5888, 5941-2, 6012-3, 6462-3, 6472, 6481, 6704, 7030, 7275-6, 7413, 7515-6, 7695, 7758-9, 8211-2, 8369, 8586, 8648, 8824-5, 9225-6, 9268-9, 9294-6, 9633, 9663. Forward references occur in ll. 548, 940, 997, 1027-8, 1060, 1287-8, 1312, 1458-9, 1495, 1541-2, 1580-1, 2301-2, 2419-20, 3599-600, 4241, 4290-1, 5015-6, 5515, 6143, 6837, 6851-2, 8248-9, 10256-7, 10420-1, 10486 (all line numbers refer to my forthcoming edition of the text). Kate Harris has suggested that the references ‘almost invariably direct the reader backwards in the text’ (‘Ownership and Readership’, 69), but in fact around thirty per cent of all references direct the reader to what is to follow in the text, indicating that the compiler-scribe had a clear overview of what he would include in the history.

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed identification of these excerpts and their use in *T*, see the Commentary of my forthcoming edition of the text.

<sup>17</sup> The first-person narration in *T* seems unselfconscious on the whole, although this is of course also a Chaucerian habit, as discussed by A. C. Spearing, ‘A Ricardian “I”: The Narrator of *Troilus and Criseyde*’, in A. J. Minnis, C. Morse and T. Turville-Petre (eds), *Essays on Ricardian Literature in Honour of J. A. Burrow*

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(Oxford, 1997); and expanded in A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> This approach has more in common with Higden's (who is influenced by the homiletic tradition and provides many *exempla*, yet also relates historical events of general interest) than with more contemporary fifteenth-century histories and chronicles (which are primarily concerned with local history). However, *T* shares none of the emerging humanist focus on political rather than moral behaviour and is, in that sense, firmly 'medieval'. See Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols (London, 1982), 43–57 and 342–428.

<sup>19</sup> Caxton's version here follows Trevisa's translation ('and specialliche preostes for wifes of straunge naciouns'), which translates Higden's Latin text very closely ('et præcipue sacerdotes, pro uxoribus alienigenis'; see *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, vol. 3 (London, 1865-1886), 248-9).

<sup>20</sup> This omission is particular to Caxton's text; Higden's Latin text has 'populo incredulo', which Trevisa (rather more sensibly than Caxton) translates as 'mysbileued men' (*Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, vol. 1 (London, 1865-1886), 362-3).

<sup>21</sup> See *Diodorus of Sicily in twelve volumes*, transl. C. H. Oldfather, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), 4.63.1–3, and Plutarch, *Lives, Theseus and Romulus*, transl. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), 31-4.

<sup>22</sup> This is representative of a common phenomenon in Middle English texts dealing with classical matters. As Daniel Wakelin's recent research has demonstrated, medieval scribes tend to be familiar with the names of well-known classical characters and copy them accurately, whilst the names of minor characters which were less widely read about often lead to confusion, resulting in scribal error and reinterpretation of the text ('Not Diane: The Risk of Error in Chaucerian Classicism', *Exemplaria*, 29 (2017), 331-48).

<sup>23</sup> For an interesting parallel, see the scribe of London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, who corrects historical sources whilst copying (Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England*, (Columbus, 2012), 100-45).

<sup>24</sup> Samuel K. Workman, *Fifteenth Century Translation as an Influence on English Prose* (New York, 1972) demonstrates how fifteenth-century translators use doublets for the purposes of clarification.

<sup>25</sup> MED = H. Kurath, S. M. Kuhn, J. Reidy et al., *Middle English Dictionary*, <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>> (Ann Arbor, 1952-2001) accessed 28 April 2020, title n. (2).

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<sup>26</sup> *MED*, oblāciōn *n*.

<sup>27</sup> On Caxton's use of doublets, see Norman Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London, 1991), 253-8.

<sup>28</sup> *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, vol. 2 (London, 1865-1886), 352.

<sup>29</sup> *OED* = *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. online, <<http://www.oed.com/>> accessed 2 June 2021, ambidexter, *n*. and *adj*., B 2). See also ambidextrous, *adj*., 1 a).

<sup>30</sup> *MED*, ambidexter *adj*. as *n*.

<sup>31</sup> This is reminiscent of the Latinate style of fifteenth-century classical translations into English, discussed in Daniel Wakelin, 'Classical and Humanist Translations', in J. Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards (eds), *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry* (Cambridge, 2013), 171-86.

<sup>32</sup> A section with further information on the polar night and polar day occurs earlier on in the same chapter in the *Polychronicon* (I, 31), but is much less specific and does not give precise months for the times when it is continuously light and dark. It seems likely that the addition is the compiler's own, or is only very loosely based on other sources.

<sup>33</sup> Caxton himself added similar clarificatory glosses on specific people and places to the *Polychronicon* (Ronald Waldron, 'Caxton and the *Polychronicon*', in Geoffrey Lester (ed.), *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake* (Sheffield, 1999), 375-94 (380, n. 6).

<sup>34</sup> See Kate Harris, 'Ownership and Readership', 68-9.

<sup>35</sup> For further details on the text's potential audience, see the discussion in my forthcoming edition.

<sup>36</sup> *MED* mēten, v. 3; *OED*, mete, v. 2. The latest attestation of this verb used transitively (as in Caxton's text) is 1577 (uncertain).

<sup>37</sup> *MED* hēst(e, *n*. 1; *OED* hest, *n*. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *MED* hōten, v. 1; *OED* hight, v. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *MED* hēlden, v. 1a; *OED* hield | heeld | heald, v. I.5.

<sup>40</sup> Caxton himself frequently updates the language of his sources for his prints. See, for instance, Daniel Wakelin's research on *The Chronicles of England* in 'Caxton's Exemplar for *The Chronicles of England*?', *Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscripts and Printing History*, 14 (2011), 75-113.

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<sup>41</sup> This repetition occurs in Caxton's edition and in London, British Library, MS Add. 24194, but not in other manuscripts, which suggests that this error occurred at some point in the course of the transmission of Trevisa's text.

<sup>42</sup> For further background on this interplay, see Julia Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London c. 1465–1530* (London, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> This is suggested by examples of hybrid forms, such as bound volumes which include both manuscript and print quires. See, for instance, Julia Boffey, 'London, British Library, Additional MS 18752: A Tudor Hybrid Book?', in A. S. G. Edwards (ed.), *Tudor Manuscripts 1485–1603* (London, 2009), 41–64.

<sup>44</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Philadelphia, 1988), 374.

<sup>45</sup> See the case study in Marleen Cré, 'Miscellaneity, Compiling Strategies and the Transmission of The Chastising of God's Children and The Holy Boke Gratia Dei', in Sabrina Corbellini et al. (eds), *Collecting, Organizing and Transmitting Knowledge* (Turnhout, 2018), 131–44 (142–3).

<sup>46</sup> On late medieval compilations, see M. Connolly, and R. L. Radulescu (eds), *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> For details of Malory's compilatory strategies, see the commentary in volume II of Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. P. J. C. Field, 2 vols (Cambridge 2013). See also Thomas Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Eugène Vinaver and P. J. C. Field, 3 vols (Oxford: 1990), 3. 1275.

<sup>48</sup> On *T* in the context of universal history writing, see Gillhammer, 'Non-Wycliffite Bible Translation'. Amongst the vast body of scholarship on universal history writing, see especially Michele Campopiano and Henry Bainton (eds), *Universal Chronicles in the High Middle Ages* (York, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Galloway, 'Writing History in England', in David Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), 255–83. See, for instance, the *London Chronicles*, discussed further in Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Matthew Payne and Julia Boffey, 'The Gardyner's Passetaunce, the Flowers of England, and Thomas Gardyner, Monk of Westminster', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 18 (2017), 175–90.

<sup>51</sup> See the edition by P. J. Lucas, *John Capgrave's Abbreviacion of Cronicles*, EETS OS 28 (Oxford, 1983). On the annalistic tradition, see M. S. Kempshall, M. S., *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400–1500* (Manchester, 2011), 83.

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<sup>52</sup> Prys Morgan, 'Elis Gruffydd of Gronant: Tudor Chronicler Extraordinary', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 25 (1971), 9–20. The chronicle is discussed in further detail in Jerry Hunter, 'Taliesin in the Court of Henry VIII: Aspects of the Writings of Elis Gruffydd', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, New Series*, 10 (2004), 41–56; and Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Welsh Tradition in Calais: Elis Gruffydd and his Biography of King Arthur', in N. J. Lacy (ed.), *The Fortunes of King Arthur* (Cambridge, 2005), 77–91. For a more detailed identification of sources, see Thomas Jones, 'A Welsh Chronicler in Tudor England', *Welsh History Review*, 1 (1960), 1–18.

<sup>53</sup> Lloyd-Morgan, 'Welsh Tradition in Calais', 85.