

Key Words

Heralds, challenge letters, tournaments, chivalry, allegory, romance, manuscript studies, Henry IV, Eltham Palace

Abstract

This article examines a curious set of thirteen allegorical challenge letters associated with King Henry IV's Christmastime festivities at Eltham Palace in 1400 and the five heraldic handbooks in which these letters survive. The Eltham challenge letters attest to late-medieval English heralds' conscious engagement with myth, allegory, and chivalric literature and offer new insights on their cultural and literary ambitions. The article begins with a general account of heralds' duties in the late Middle Ages and argues that their development of a specialized sphere of knowledge and bookishness – in other words, their written systematization of blazonry, detailed record keeping, and establishment of an institutional library – were concomitant with their growing professionalization and authority. Herald's bookishness also included the production of relatively consistent heraldic manuals, such as the five in which the Eltham letters survive. In each of these five witnesses, the Eltham letters are copied as part of a semi-standardized cluster of eight heraldic texts. By studying the family of manuscripts containing this cluster, it is possible to gain a sense of which texts were widely known and deemed practically or ideologically important by heralds. The article then turns to a detailed discussion of the Eltham letters themselves. An edition of the letters collating all known witnesses is offered as an appendix. The style of the Eltham letters is overtly one of chivalric allegorical romance, a genre of medieval allegory which has rarely been studied and which reveals a great deal about heralds' literary ambitions. This article demonstrates that heralds and their texts played an important role in the socio-literary chivalric discourse of the later Middle Ages in England.

Heraldic Handbooks and the Discourse of Chivalric Allegory:
The Case of the Eltham Challenge Letters of 1400*

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Though heralds occupied an important role in the court-culture of late-medieval England as the authorities on armorial bearings, deeds of arms, and chivalry, medievalists have only in the last few decades begun to investigate the intellectual world of heralds on a large scale.¹ Many questions remain concerning heralds' book culture and the extent of their authorship and engagement with romance literature. Through an exploration of a curious set of thirteen allegorical challenge letters associated with King Henry IV's Christmastime festivities at Eltham Palace in 1400 and the heraldic handbooks in which the letters survive, this article begins to tackle some of these difficult questions and sheds new light on the cultural and literary ambitions of late-medieval English heralds.

The thirteen allegorical challenge letters, henceforth referred to as the Eltham letters, survive in five late-medieval heraldic miscellanies: London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 63 (also known as 26); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 271; a once separate booklet now bound as part of London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D ii (ff. 252-65); London, British Library, MS Additional 34801; and another once separate booklet now bound as part of Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 32.6.9 (ff. 38-90).² These five manuscripts share a semi-standardized group of texts, which for ease of reference will be called the Arundel cluster, after the manuscript which appears to be the Eltham letters' most faithful surviving witness. This cluster of texts consists of 1) the statutes of the Order of the Garter; 2) *Les dits des philosophes*, a mostly mythological history of heralds which traces their order back to Julius Caesar; 3) the oaths a man must swear upon being made a poursuivant (a junior herald); 4)

* This paper derives from research undertaken as part of Dr. Andrew Taylor's SSHRC-funded "Writing Chivalry: The *Lettrure of Armes* in Late Medieval England" project at the University of Ottawa. I am indebted to Dr. Taylor for his diligent guidance and discussion throughout the composition of this paper. I would equally like to thank Dr. Laura Ashe and my reviewers for their many useful comments.

¹ See, for instance, the work of Laurent Hablot, Torsten Hiltmann, and Claire Boudreau on Continental heralds, the work of Richard Moll on English heralds, as well as Katie Stevenson's *The Herald in Late Medieval Europe*, Nigel Ramsay's *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, and D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton's "Advanced Heraldic Studies" article series.

² MSS Arundel 63, Douce 271, Cotton Nero D ii, and Additional 34801 are discussed in Anglo, "Financial and Heraldic Records," 188-89 and Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 16, n. 67. MS Advocates 32.6.9 was recently revealed to contain the Eltham letters by Bennett, Carpenter, and Gardiner in "Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III," 337, n. 4. Note that the Eltham letters are not contained in College of Arms, MS L6 (*pace* Bennett, Carpenter, and Gardiner, 337, n. 4). Furthermore, there is a great deal of confusion concerning the shelf mark of MS Arundel 63 (formerly known as MS Arundel 26 and referred to as such by Anglo and Moll). This manuscript is not to be confused with MS Arundel 26X, a 16th-century Statutes and Ordinances of the Order of the Garter. I would like to thank the College of Arms Archivist Dr. James Lloyd for his help navigating this confusion and for permitting me to consult the College's manuscript collection in London.

Thomas of Woodstock's ordinances for trials by combat; 5) further ordinances on how to hold jousts and tournaments; 6) the rights belonging to kings of arms (the senior rank of herald); 7) the manner of making knights of the Order of the Bath; and 8) the Eltham letters. Although these eight texts are present in all but one of the heraldic handbooks in which the Eltham letters survive, they are not always in the same order nor do they all share the same textual variants, as we shall see when we turn to examine the letters in more detail.³ Nevertheless, the Arundel cluster corresponds to what Richard Moll has identified as a "standardized heraldic manual," and many smaller groupings of these texts also reappear in other heraldic manuscripts. The semi-standardized Arundel cluster to which the Eltham letters belong can therefore give us an idea not only of heralds' duties, their tenants, and the common texts they needed ready to hand for reference but equally of their professionalism and book culture.⁴

For whom this serviceable cluster of texts was originally compiled is a difficult question to answer definitively. There is little doubt that the Arundel cluster would have been most useful to heralds themselves. This collection would have supplied working heralds with the self-aggrandizing mytho-history of their office, the rules and ordinances they needed to follow in all manner of courtly situations, as well as the rights and benefits belonging to them. But a heraldic manual would equally have been useful for someone other than a herald. Noblemen with heralds in their service or who participated in the tournaments refereed by heralds would have done well to know the ordinances laid out in the Arundel cluster. Knights and squires with a strong interest in heraldry might also have desired copies of such texts. For instance, Sir John Paston included heraldic material in his *Grete Boke*, a personal chivalric miscellany.⁵ As we shall see, one of the manuscripts containing the Eltham letters also appears to have been commissioned and owned by noblemen. Other owners of heraldic handbooks may well have included lawyers and minor gentleman pursuing careers in the entourage of great nobles who would have felt the need to learn the nobility's emblematic system.⁶ Even craftsmen such as painters, stainers, engravers, and goldsmiths would have benefitted from a basic understanding of heraldry, though it should be noted that the specific texts in the Arundel cluster are primarily concerned with the regulation of court ceremonials rather than with the art of armorial bearings.⁷ Whether the Arundel cluster was compiled for a herald-proper or for someone from another estate, this semi-standardized compendium was clearly indebted to the specialized knowledge of heralds and to the increasing professionalization of their office, a matter on which it is worth dwelling.

Although the Arundel cluster's self-aggrandizing origin myth *Les dits des philosophes* traces the heraldic order all the way back to Julius Caesar, in reality heralds had much humbler origins, and blazons only began to be used as hereditary familial insignia (as opposed to

³ Note that MS Cotton Nero D ii omits the oaths of the poursuivants.

⁴ Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 16, n. 67.

⁵ See Lester, *Sir John Paston's "Grete Boke."* For Paston's model and other chivalric miscellanies owned by knights, see Taylor, "The Chivalric Miscellany." See also Hiltmann's comparison of manuscripts compiled for working heralds to those produced for the aristocracy in *Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien*, esp. 233-37.

⁶ See Boulton's discussion of the intended readership of heraldic texts in "Advanced Heraldic Studies," part II, division B, 94.

⁷ *Ibid.*

individual emblems) in the early-twelfth century in Western Europe.⁸ Indeed, early heralds were unlikely to have been attached to any particular lord and, like minstrels (with whom they were often associated), they seem to have travelled from tournament to tournament to offer their services as announcers and referees.⁹ In this way, “the earliest heralds are not distinguishable by dignity or even entirely by function from this riff-raff [the grooms, armourers, minstrels, and jongleurs] that made a living” off the largesse of carousing noblemen.¹⁰ Maurice Keen reminds us of Chrétien de Troyes’ telling portrait of the ragged herald in *Lancelot* who pawns his shoes and coat for a drink on the eve of a great tournament.¹¹

However, within a few hundred years heralds became recognized as dignified experts on armorial bearings with the “prerogative to act as arbiters of chivalric worth.”¹² Already in the reign of Edward III (r. 1327-77), heralds acted as military staff officers, diplomatic messengers, and supervisors of courtly ceremonies and tournaments.¹³ In the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, heralds came to be supervised by the Lord High Constable and the Earl Marshal of England and were increasingly professionalized, regulated, and associated with royal authority.¹⁴ In 1415, Henry V created the rank of the Garter King of Arms, an office attached to the Order of the Garter, and, in 1417, Henry’s brother, the Duke of Clarence, is credited with having written a series of ordinances outlining heraldic duties and fees.¹⁵ Shortly thereafter, in January 1419/20, seven English officers of arms formed a chapter at Rouen and produced a series of resolutions for their office that included the institution of a common seal, a fund for members in hard times, and an oath to be sworn by new heralds.¹⁶ This chapter met on a least two other occasions, in 1474 and 1487 and, as Jackson W. Armstrong notes, clearly demonstrates that English heralds acted as an organized body long before they were officially incorporated.¹⁷ The heralds finally received their grant of incorporation from Richard III in 1484 and were given the house of Coldharbour in London as their headquarters.¹⁸ Although the officer of arms lost this house only a year later when King Henry VII gained the throne and granted Coldharbour to his mother, Lady Margaret Beauford, heralds were not long bereft of royal graces.¹⁹ Under Henry VII’s successor, King Henry VIII, heralds were given the right to grant coats of arms and to carry out

⁸ Keen, *Chivalry*, 126. For *Les dits des philosophes*, see Boudreau, “Les hérauts d’armes et leurs écrits face à l’histoire” and Hiltmann, “Vieux chevaliers, pucelles, anges,” esp. 512-14.

⁹ Keen, *Chivalry*, 136.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135. Boulton also notes that, tellingly, the Old-French word “heraude” (in use by at least 1335) had “the basic sense ‘a herald’s wife’, and the extended sense ‘a woman of dubious sexual morality, a bawd,’” “Advanced Heraldic Studies,” part II, division A, 48.

¹² Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 7.

¹³ See Armstrong’s discussion of the professionalization of English heralds in “The Development of the Office of Arms.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵ Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 6. As Moll notes, the authenticity of Clarence’s ordinances is contested; see Ailes, “Ancient Precedent or Tudor Fiction.”

¹⁶ Armstrong, “The Development of the Office of Arms,” 26. See also Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 7 and Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 69.

¹⁷ Armstrong, “The Development of the Office of Arms,” 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 134-35.

visitations of regions under their jurisdiction (called provinces), during which they could revoke and deface counterfeited devices.²⁰ It is also in this period when Garter Kings of Arms habitually became knights in their own right.²¹

As Moll rightly observes, “[t]he development of heraldic authority in the fifteenth century corresponds with the increased professionalization of heralds themselves,” although it bears emphasis that the professional authority of heralds was itself the result of their establishment of a highly specialized sphere of knowledge.²² Anyone who reads a heraldic treatise for the first time will inevitably be struck by the obscure nomenclature of the tinctures, divisions of the field, and devises of armorial bearings (one might stumble over terms such as *gules*, *gros vair*, *embattled*, *party per bend sinister*, and *flaunches*) and be disoriented by the seemingly endless regulations for marshalling (or combining) coats of arms to express genealogical ties and inheritances. In addition to this scientific expertise on armorial bearings, heralds needed a firm understanding of genealogical record keeping, inheritance laws, courtly etiquette, orders of precedence, the international nobility, chivalric literature, and the martial ordinances to be followed by knights in war, tournaments, and judicial combats. One can imagine that it would have been dishonourable for a herald to make a misstep while overseeing a symbolically charged event such as a knighting ceremony or celebrations in honour of a foreign potentate. Part of heralds’ function at such events was to lend air of liturgical solemnity to the rituals of knighthood, and it is for this reason that Keen famously called them the “priesthood” of the secular cult of chivalry.²³

Alongside heralds’ scientific rigour and liturgical solemnity was a strong sense of legal authority. The legal aspect of heraldry was promoted both by the authors of heraldic treatises themselves as well as by kings, who recurrently sought to use heralds as a means of checking the social ambitions of the gentry. As Armstrong notes, fourteenth-century English heraldic treatises were mostly written by jurists and “reflect a growing desire to clarify entitlement to arms within a legal framework.”²⁴ In the later-fifteenth century, heralds’ expertise in the law of arms and detailed genealogical records were harnessed by monarchs who were keen to extend their control

²⁰ In the Letters Patent of Henry VIII of 1530, the king authorizes the Clarenceux King of Arms to carry out a visitation of “the south, east and west parts of this our realm, from the river Trent southward” to take note of gentlemen’s descents, inspect arms, and to “reform all false armory and arms... and then to deface an take away wherever they be set [...] whether it be in stone, windows, plate” and memorials in churches, qtd. in Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, 16. See also Wagner’s discussion of heraldic visitations in *The Records and Collections of the College of Arms*, 55-84.

²¹ The first Garter King of Arms to be knighted was John Wrythe (*alias* Wriothesley), who held his office from 1505 to 1534. Boulton explains that this honour “indicated that [Wrythe’s] office was now regarded as comparable in rank to such older offices as judge and sheriff, whose incumbents had normally been elevated to knightly rank for several centuries,” “Advanced Heraldic Studies,” part II, division B, 58.

²² Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 6.

²³ Keen, *Chivalry*, 124.

²⁴ Armstrong, “The Development of the Office of Arms,” 12. See also Boulton’s discussion of the authorship of English heraldic treatise by jurists in “Advanced Heraldic Studies,” part II, division B, esp. 92-93.

over the minor gentry.²⁵ Armstrong notes that “[b]y the reign of Henry VII, the establishment of the office of arms as an official registry of gentility was well developed” and that the heraldic records “provided the crown with information on its potential public servants in the civil administration of the realm.”²⁶ In the reign of Henry VIII, when heralds were officially given the right to carry out visitations and deface unlawful coats of arms, they had become fully integrated in the Tudor dynasty’s administration of state-control.²⁷

It is important to note that, despite the remarkably rapid professionalization of heralds in the later Middle Ages in England, there still remained a strong element of amateurism in the heraldic fraternity. Outside of the officially ranked *poursuivants*, heralds, and kings of arms in royal service, there were a number of private heralds retained by nobles on a more or less *ad hoc* basis.²⁸ These men likely had various degrees of professional training, though their dignity is suggested by the fact that they were allowed take part in the heralds’ chapter at Rouen and that they appear to have moved easily between private and royal service.²⁹ Men who were not officially retained as heralds might also sometimes have acted in the capacity of heralds and even have been recognized as such. For instance, many of the authors of heraldic treatises were not official officers of arms but jurists with a strong interest in the law of arms who sometimes consulted heralds during the composition of their works.³⁰ Chroniclers of local histories or gentleman antiquarians recording the genealogy and coats of arms of a given family might also be said to be doing the work of heralds. The slippery identity of private and amateur heralds who, nevertheless, drew from the specialized knowledge of professional heralds adds to the difficulty of pinning down who precisely may have first compiled, owned, and consulted the Arundel cluster of texts containing the Eltham letters in the late Middle Ages.

At least one of the Eltham letter’s witnesses, MS Douce 271, appears to have been used as a reference book in one or more versions of the heralds’ institutional library.³¹ The heralds’ first institutional library was established at Coldharbour House the same year of their incorporation, and, although it fell victim to a change of regime within a year, it bespeaks the increasing bookishness of heralds in the fifteenth century.³² Herald’s bookishness – in other

²⁵ Armstrong, “The Development of the Office of Arms,” 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 18-19 and n. 20 above. See also James, *Society, Politics and Culture*, 328. For the might of the Tudor administration more generally see Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*.

²⁸ A list of these private heralds is compiled by Godfrey and Wagner in “Additional Officers.” See also Wagner and London, “Heralds of the Nobility.”

²⁹ Armstrong, “The Development of the Office of Arms,” 26, 20; London and Wagner, “Heralds of the Nobility,” 44-45.

³⁰ See Boulton’s discussion the authorship of heraldic treatises in “Advanced Heraldic Studies,” part II, division B, 66-103.

³¹ Bodleian Library, *The Douce Legacy*, 155.

³² Selwyn, “Heralds’ Libraries,” 472-73. It is unclear how much of the library was lost in the shuffle when Henry VII suddenly transferred Coldharbour House to his mother, though it appears that at least sizeable portion of the collection was immediately relocated to the house of John Wrythe, then Garter King of Arms. In 1555 Queen Mary and Phillip II granted the heralds a new home, though it seems that kings of arms continued to maintain their own separate libraries until 1597, when their collections were acquired and unified by the College of Arms chapter. See

words, their written systematization of blazonry, detailed record-keeping, and production of relatively consistent heraldic manuals – fuelled their erudition, professionalization, and therefore their authority in the later Middle Ages. Of course, as Keen reminds us, heraldry was always a textual affair; its stimulus – chivalry – was a literary culture which relied on romances to underpin its values and offer models of behavior.³³ It was in turn the “[t]he literature and mythology of chivalry” which “gave [heraldry’s] history and values a coherent basis” and which were thus “very much the concern of heralds.”³⁴ The early-fifteenth-century heraldic ordinance attributed to the Duke of Clarence indeed specify that, in addition to their armorial studies on the properties of colours, herbs, and stones, heralds should apply themselves to books, namely chronicles and accounts of honourable deeds of arms, in order to cultivate eloquence and good manners.³⁵ This literary aspect of heraldry came most prominently to the fore in the later Middle Ages, when heralds became the general registrars of the court and chronicled events such as coronations, royal entries, knighting ceremonies, weddings, tournaments, and battles.³⁶

Despite heralds’ clear engagement with books as instructional manuals, repositories of genealogical information and historical precedents, as well as touchstones of chivalric ideology, much remains unknown about the authorship, copying, and circulation of heraldic texts in England. Notably, it is unclear how heraldic handbooks such as the Eltham letters’ witnesses were compiled, organized, and related to one another as well as to what extent the tenuous existence of an institutional heralds’ library in the late-fifteenth century promoted a sense of the need for standardization in the production of such handbooks.

Given the internationalism of the heraldic fraternity, Torsten Hiltmann’s findings on the compilation of heraldic manuscripts in late-medieval France and Burgundy may well help shed light on the book culture of English heralds.³⁷ Posing the same questions as to how heraldic miscellanies were compiled, organized, and related to one another, Hiltmann found that “[z]usammenfassend sind die Heroldskompendien also in ihrer gesamten Struktur – bis in die kleinsten Elemente ihrer Überlieferung – als sehr heterogen und variabel zu beschreiben” [in summary, heraldic compendiums can be described as very heterogeneous and variable in their entire structure – right down to the smallest elements of their transmission].³⁸ Considering the circulation of individual texts, Hiltmann discovered that works consistently presented multiple

also Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 130-36 and Wagner, *The Records and Collections of the College of Arms*, 8-15.

³³ Keen, *Chivalry*, 140.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 67.

³⁶ At times, heralds appear to have deliberately embellished their accounts for literary effect. Lloyd Edward Kermode notes, for instance, that heralds were consciously creating emotionally charged narratives in their accounts of official ceremonies and not “simple disinterested (objective) record[s]” (“The Cite of insufficiency,” 56). Sarah Carpenter has moreover shown that the Somerset Herald John Young drew on “a literary discourse of courtly love” in his chronicle of Margaret Tudor’s marriage to James IV of Scotland in 1503 (“To the exaltation of noblesse,” 11). For further discussion of heralds’ literary ambitions see Lester, “The Literary Activity of the Medieval English Herald” and Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, esp. 168-79.

³⁷ See Hiltmann, *Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien*, esp. Chapter 3: “Struktur der Heroldskompendien und ihre Überlieferung,” 83-231.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

variations (even errors) and were rather inattentively copied and compiled.³⁹ He notes that heraldic texts were usually strung together with little perceivable rhyme or reason and that even important tracts sometimes remained entirely without titles and abruptly juxtaposed with unrelated texts.⁴⁰ Hiltmann adds that only very few of these individual works were widely circulated. In the twenty-five fifteenth-century manuscripts he considered, there were a total of 135 individual texts, of which only half were present more than twice and of which barely a tenth appeared in more than eight manuscripts.⁴¹ From miscellany to miscellany, there was therefore a considerable amount of difference, with only a few core texts present in multiple manuscripts.⁴² And, even then, these individual core texts were present in a array of variations, leading Hiltmann to conclude that, in late-medieval France and Burgundy, “der größte Teil der Heroldskompendien scheinbar separat und ohne größere wechselseitige Einflußnahme entstand” [most heraldic miscellanies seem to have originated separately and without much mutual influence].⁴³

At present, Hiltmann’s findings also seem to hold true for compilation of heraldic miscellanies in late-medieval England.⁴⁴ Using a comparative approach similar to Hiltmann’s (though on a smaller scale), Sydney Anglo has produced a chart comparing the presence of forty-eight texts in ten late-medieval English heraldic miscellanies.⁴⁵ While Anglo’s work does reveal certain textual clusters and the clear popularity of certain treatises, it also demonstrates a high degree of variability, where texts are constantly being dropped, added, substituted, and shuffled round from one manuscript to another. This variability is clearly apparent, for example, in MS Douce 271’s relation to other fifteenth-century heraldic miscellanies such London, British Library, MS Additional 29901 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 764.⁴⁶ Each of these manuscripts shares a handful of texts with MS Douce 271, yet there appears to be no clear parentage or consistent textual relationship between these witnesses. Many of the standard heraldic texts present in Arundel cluster, such as *Les dits des philosophes* and the statutes of the Order of the Garter, were widely circulated and existed in multiple variations. To find a copy of what appears to be the same text in two given manuscripts is therefore no guarantee that the manuscripts were copied from one another or even from a close common antecedent. Moreover, the high degree of variability between English heraldic miscellanies seems to suggest that popular texts were generally copied individually or in small groupings and that it may have been

³⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 96-97.

⁴¹ Ibid., 98. See the tables in Hiltmann’s appendix comparing the popularity of heraldic texts and listing their surviving witnesses, 439-65.

⁴² Ibid., 98.

⁴³ Ibid., 101. Hiltmann adds that it is therefore probable that heraldic miscellanies were a much more widespread phenomenon than the surviving witnesses seem at first to indicate, 228.

⁴⁴ No comprehensive study of the contents of heraldic manuscripts in late-medieval England has yet been produced. Further research may yet reveal further textual clusters and patterns in the copying of English heraldic miscellanies.

⁴⁵ Anglo, “Financial and Heraldic Records,” 195.

⁴⁶ For the contents shared between these manuscripts and MS Douce 271 see Bodleian Library, *The Douce Legacy*, 155. See also Moll’s table comparing the contents of MS Ashmole 764 to MS Douce 271 in *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 20-24.

relatively uncommon for a miscellany to replicate wholesale the contents of its model.⁴⁷ This mode of textual circulation on the whole renders it difficult to establish relationships between the English heraldic miscellanies which survive today.

Happily, the Eltham letters belong to an uncommonly consistent family of five manuscripts from which we may glean further insights on the production of heraldic miscellanies in late-medieval England. As we have noted, these manuscripts share a cluster of eight core texts; however, it is almost certain that these witnesses were not all copied directly from one another and that there were one or more intermediary manuscripts from this family that have been lost. However, MSS Douce 271 and Cotton Nero D ii are clearly very closely related; the order of their texts is nearly identical, and they share similar frontispieces and pen drawings of combatants in the lists.⁴⁸ This pair also contains a text on the largesse belonging to kings of arms and a series of moral works which are not present in the other manuscripts containing the Arundel cluster.⁴⁹ Given that MS Cotton Nero D ii is the only manuscript to omit the oaths of the poursuivants, it is likely that it was copied from MS Douce 271 and not vice versa.⁵⁰ It is also reasonable to assume that MSS Douce 271 and Arundel 63 are closely related as their semi-standardized contents are present in the same order and are textually very similar, although the collation of the Eltham letters offered in the appendix reveals that these volumes were not copied directly from one another but rather from a common antecedent.⁵¹ Lastly, MSS Additional 34801 and Advocates 32.6.9 can be identified as another more closely related pair as they share a different version of the thirteen allegorical letters than the rest of the group. The scribe of MS Advocates 32.6.9 also seems to have mistakenly copied the title of a text (the Laws of Oleron) which is present in the same position in MS Additional 34801 but which was not in fact included in MS Advocates 32.6.9.⁵²

⁴⁷ Of course, as Hiltmann reminds us, one must account for the fact that there may once have been now-lost intermediaries between the heraldic miscellanies which survive today, *Spätmittelalterliche Heroldskompendien*, 228.

⁴⁸ Cf. MS Douce 271, f. 4r and f. 27v with MS Cotton Nero D ii, f. 252r and 257r, respectively. The texts of these two manuscripts are also present in the same variants, though MS Cotton Nero D ii contains more anglicisms.

⁴⁹ Cf. MS Douce 271, ff. 23v-26r, 48r-59v with MS Cotton Nero D ii, ff. 256v-257r, 262v-265v.

⁵⁰ This theory appears confirmed by the level of anglicization in MS Cotton Nero D ii and the collation of the thirteen letters offered in the appendix.

⁵¹ Moll notes that “[a] quick look at the opening lines of *Les dis* shows that Cotton Nero D.2 and Douce 271 contain very similar version of the text” and that “Arundel 26 [63], however, includes a copy from a different family,” *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 16-17, n. 70. However, upon closer inspection, the versions of *Les dits des philosophes* in MS Douce 271 and MS Arundel 63 are in fact extremely similar. The differences between the texts occur only at the level of spelling and occasionally of word choice and order; they are of a similar nature to the minor differences noted between MS Douce 271 and MS Arundel 63 in the collation of the thirteen letters and on the whole do not disrupt the sense of proximity between these two manuscripts.

⁵² Cf. MS Additional 34801, f. 43r and MS Advocates 32.6.9, f. 69v. Despite the scribe’s telling error, the collation of the thirteen allegorical letters suggests that MS Advocates 32.6.9 was not directly copied from MS Additional 34801 but rather from a common antecedent. See the discussion at below at p. 18.

Despite their semi-standardized contents, the five witnesses of the Eltham letters are of disparate quality and origins and bespeak the varied readership of heraldic miscellanies. The manuscript likely to be the most faithful surviving witness of the Eltham letters, MS Arundel 63, appears to have been professionally executed for a nobleman in the fifteenth century, although at some point in its circulation it clearly fell into the hands of working heralds who annotated and expanded the volume. As Moll has traced, the early portions of MS Arundel 63 are written in an elegant *bâtarde* hand with fine illuminated initials.⁵³ However, after the opening group of eight texts (the Arundel cluster), the handbook-sized manuscript continues in a series of unadorned late-fifteenth and sixteenth-century English secretary hands. Moll suggests that MS Arundel 63's later additions – an English copy of the heraldic origin myth *Eneas de heraldis* and a French text on combats attributed to Thomas of Lancaster – were copied by the Garter King of Arms John Writhe (d. 1504) and his son and successor, Thomas Wriothesly (d. 1534), respectively. Both of these Garter Kings signed the manuscript on its final folio, and Wriothesly added his crest to the volume's opening flyleaf and f. 28v.⁵⁴ A once separate fifteenth-century booklet containing correspondence related to John Fastolf (written in a hand similar to that of Ricardus Franciscus) was also appended to MS Arundel 63 by the time it came into the hands of Writhe, if it was not added by the Garter King himself.⁵⁵ MS Arundel 63's later additions suggest that the manuscript was used and adapted by several generations of late-medieval and Tudor heralds.

We have already noted that MS Douce 271, a more humble volume, appears to have been used by heralds as a reference book in one or more versions of their institutional library. Betraying its function as a handbook, MS Douce 271 was glossed and annotated by at least six different hands over the course of the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵⁶ This manuscript is decorated modestly (even naively in the eyes of Moll) with pen-flourished initials and only occasional larger illuminated initials or colourful borders.⁵⁷ There are two half-page pen drawings, the first (unfinished) of a figure kneeling before an emperor holding a scepter and an orb on f. 4r and the second of two knights fighting with halberds in a circular enclosure on f. 27v. In addition to these drawings, MS Douce 271's original copyist inserted two texts within the manuscript's Arundel cluster, one on the largesse belonging to kings of arms and the other a short series of moral works, which were subsequently reproduced in MS Cotton Nero D ii. MS Douce 271's numerous annotations reveal that it was once owned by two sixteenth century Garter Kings of Arms, Thomas Wall (d. 1536) and his successor Sir Christopher Barker (d. 1550), both of whom inscribed it with practical notes such as the titles of Henry VIII, a list of officers of arms in order of their ancientness, and a reminder on how to introduce a Knight of the

⁵³ Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 15-16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Additions to MS Douce 271 include the heraldic foundation myths *Dionisius*, *Furst Insitutoure* and *Eneas de Heraldis* (fragmentary) as well as more practical notes such as the oath heralds must make upon their creation.

⁵⁷ Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 16 (see also Moll's discussion of the manuscript at 16-24, 93-97). MS Douce 271 is catalogued in detail in Bodleian Library, *The Douce Legacy*, 154-56 and briefly in Madan, *A Summary Catalogue*, 575-76.

Bath.⁵⁸ The binding of the manuscript bears the arms and motto of a third Garter King of Arms from the seventeenth century, Sir Edward Walker (d. 1677), who scaled the heights of royal service under Charles I and II.⁵⁹ An account of Walker's ambition and Machiavellian schemes would require an article of its own; suffice it to say that his ownership of MS Douce 271 alongside the manuscript's sixteenth-century additions suggest that it may have been customarily bequeathed by each Garter King of Arms to his successor.

The heraldic booklet within MS Cotton Nero D ii, which appears to have been copied in the second half of the fifteenth century, is similarly plainly decorated with red and blue initials and shares MS Douce 271's pen drawings and two additions to the Arundel cluster.⁶⁰ Measuring roughly fourteen by eleven inches, MS Cotton Nero D ii is almost twice the size of MSS Arundel 63 and Douce 271 and thus was not likely intended to be carried as a handbook. It too was owned by at least one unidentifiable king of arms, who inscribed the final folio of the booklet with "Je suis a Clarencieux Roy d'arm[es]" though did not gloss or annotate the volume any further.⁶¹

Like MS Cotton Nero D ii, MS Advocates 32.6.9 is a composite volume with sections dating from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.⁶² The booklet of this composite manuscript containing the Arundel cluster dates from the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century and is almost completely undecorated except for occasional blue and red initials with scrollwork. At some point, this handbook-sized booklet came into the hands of the antiquarian and herald Francis Thynne (c. 1544-1608). It is likely Thynne who assembled MS Advocates 32.6.9 as it is known today as he appended further heraldic material to the Arundel cluster booklet, including a text of his composition on the arms of the Earl Marshals of England dated to 1601. The arms of Edward VI painted on the first folio of the composite manuscript, which begins with a short booklet containing The Statutes of the Order of the Garter of Edward VI, also appear to have been added by Thynne. Later, MS Advocates 32.6.9 was owned and annotated by John Anstis the Elder (1669-1744), who became Garter King of Arms in 1718.⁶³

Unlike the previous three relatively humble working manuscripts, MS Additional 34801 is a luxury octavo volume with fine spraywork borders of blue, green, pink, and gold that was in all likelihood intended for a nobleman. Indeed, given that the first initial of the manuscript contains the Mowbray coat of arms, it has long been assumed that MS Additional 34801 was copied in the time of, and possibly for, John Mowbray (1392-1432), who became the Earl Marshal in 1405 and the second Duke of Norfolk in 1424.⁶⁴ However, as Rowena E. Archer notes, the list of Mowbray titles and lordships inscribed on f. 60r of the volume includes that of Warenne, which was only granted to the third Duke of Norfolk in 1451.⁶⁵ It therefore possible

⁵⁸ For a full list of the additions made to MS Douce 271 by Wall and Barker see Bodleian Library, *The Douce Legacy*, 155-6 as well as Moll, *A Heraldic Miscellany*, 20-24. For more on these Kings of Arms see Godfrey and Wagner, "Garter King of Arms," 38-74.

⁵⁹ Bodleian Library, *The Douce Legacy*, 155-6. For Walker, see Chesshyre, "Walker, Sir Edward (1612-1677), Herald."

⁶⁰ For this dating see British Library, "Heraldic Miscellany. Cotton MS Nero D II."

⁶¹ This inscription is on f. 265v and is cut off at the end by the rebinding of the volume.

⁶² For this dating see National Library of Scotland, "Regula of the Knights Templar."

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ For this dating see British Museum, *Catalogue of Additions*, 90-92.

⁶⁵ Archer, "Parliamentary Restoration," 108-9, n. 40.

that the manuscript was copied in the mid-fifteenth century, possibly for the third duke, also named John Mowbray (1415- 1461), who inherited the office of Earl Marshal from his father in 1432.⁶⁶ As Earl Marshals, the Dukes of Norfolk were official supervisors of the heraldic order, and it is therefore easily conceivable that they would have desired a luxury manuscript of core heraldic texts. MS Additional 34801's next likely owner, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers (1440-83), equally had a profound interest in chivalry and its elaborate protocols; Woodville is well-known to have fought in numerous extravagant tournaments (such as that against the Bastard of Burgundy) and to have acted as chivalric tutor to his young nephew, prince Edward V.⁶⁷ It should come as no surprise that a renowned knight such as Woodville would own a fine heraldic manual such as MS Additional 34801 with which to study the intricacies of the art of chivalry. There is no indication of who may have owned the MS Additional 34801 after Woodville, though a sixteenth-century hand has added a table of contents to the volume and given the Eltham letters the title "The form of lettres in ancient tyme used by knights when they sent there challendges to any princes court." This title may suggest that, for the sixteenth-century owners of the manuscript, the Eltham letters represented a curious record of earlier practice rather than a model for imitation.

Four out of five of the manuscripts containing the Arundel cluster can therefore be shown to have been owned by either late-medieval or early-modern heralds, while the fifth appears to have circulated among noblemen with an exceptionally strong interest in the heraldic order and chivalry. Given what is presently known about the compilation of heraldic miscellanies in late-medieval England – namely that texts were often dropped, added, substituted, and rearranged from one manuscript to another – it is highly suggestive that the Arundel cluster remained intact in all five volumes of this family. The stability of this group of eight texts bespeaks its usefulness and ideological importance to heralds and their specialized sphere of knowledge. In the remainder of this paper, we shall explore the most mysterious of these texts: the Eltham allegorical challenge letters.

The Eltham Allegorical Challenge Letters

The thirteen allegorical challenge letters present in the Arundel cluster's family of manuscripts appear to have been originally written as scripts for a tournament in honour of Princess Blanche (b. 1392, d. 1409), the daughter of Henry IV.⁶⁸ While Juliet Barker posits that the letters were written in 1400 as part of a celebration anticipating the princess' marriage to Louis III, Electoral Palatine of the Rhine, in 1402, internal evidence suggests that the tournament in honour of Blanche in fact took place on Christmas in 1400, when she was only eight years old.⁶⁹ Heiner Gillmeister explains that the letters often refer to Christmas and New Year's day (which were presumably the same day) as well as to the presence of a person of high rank visiting from the

⁶⁶ Ibid. Of course, it is also possible that the manuscript was commissioned and/or owned by the second duke and that the inscription listing the Mowbray titles was added at a later date.

⁶⁷ Woodville inscribed the volume with his signature (now erased) on f. 61r. See British Museum, *Catalogue of Additions*, 90-92.

⁶⁸ These thirteen allegorical letters have often mistakenly been said to be in College of Arms, MS L6, a manuscript which in actuality contains a different set of challenge letters. For this manuscript's contents see Campbell and Steer, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the College of Arms*, 28-33.

⁶⁹ Barker, *The Tournament in England, 1100-1400*, 97-98; Gillmeister, "Challenge Letters," 184.

East, Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391-1425).⁷⁰ This Byzantine emperor had come from Constantinople to ask Henry IV for help against the Turks and is known to have stayed in England from at least 21 December 1400 to 3 February 1401 and to have celebrated Christmas with the king at Eltham palace.⁷¹ Drawing on Thomas Walsingham's *Chronica maiora* and Henry IV's wardrobe accounts, Donald M. Nicol concludes that "[t]he Christmas party at Eltham was clearly a grand and expensive occasion" and that "a tournament was staged in the grounds of the palace in honour of the Emperor, with a brave array of newly decorated banners, pennons and standards bearing the King's arms."⁷² It is likely that the Eltham letters correspond to this tournament in some way (whether as scripts for the event, transcripts following the event, or in some looser relation), though it remains unclear to what extent the letters reflect the real celebrations which took place in honour of Emperor Manuel and (at least nominally) of Princess Blanche.

The letters, which are edited and appended to this paper, employ the conventional figure of the knight-errant who seeks a worthy challenger "in order to learn the profession of arms" and were ostensibly written by imaginary characters such as a Phoebus, Youth, Cleopatra, Virtue, and Nature on behalf of their champions.⁷³ The challenges offer technical descriptions of the jousts to take place and only allude to a desired opponent in some fanciful way, such as the challenger "who is the most desirous of taking part in the conquest of the Kingdom of Jerusalem" or the "knight who has lately fought in the Kingdom of France so valiantly that he has gained great praise and prizes in the said Kingdom of France and in other countries."⁷⁴ The adversary of choice is also sometimes identified only by his coats of arms, such as the knight of Letter #3, "who bears on his shield arms of which the field is azure [sic] three cinquefoils of gold and a crescent of silver." The ages of the combatants are also often used to differentiate opponents. For instance, the young hero of Letter #7, named Ardent Desire, hopes to learn of chivalry by challenging a knight aged between twenty and twenty-four years who has travelled to the greatest number of strange lands. This letter further specifies that the jousts shall take place on New Year's Day and that for every hit landed the winner shall receive a golden twig from the king, who will serve as judge.

Although it is difficult to know with certainty whether these allegorical letters were in fact used during the jousts at Eltham, it is easily conceivable that the challenges would have been read aloud, perhaps by heralds, over the course of Henry IV's extravagant Christmastime festivities. The jousting knights may even have been costumed according to their mythological

⁷⁰ Gillmeister, "Challenge Letters," 184, n. 7. England at this period would have officially celebrated New Year's Day on March 25th to coincide with the festival of the Annunciation. However, December 25th was also often celebrated as New Year's Day for it marked the birth of Christ and roughly coincided with the winter solstice (which was long celebrated as the beginning of the New Year by Anglo-Saxons). January 1st only became celebrated as New Year's Day in England in the eighteenth century, when the Gregorian calendar was officially adopted.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nicol, "A Byzantine Emperor in England," 215. See Priestley, *Eltham Palace*, 133, for other chronicles mentioning Emperor Manuel II's visit to Eltham Palace.

⁷³ Letter #2. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of the Eltham letters are from Priestley and Clarke's translation of the text in MS Douce 271 appended in Priestley, *Eltham Palace*, 133-38.

⁷⁴ Letter #4; Letter #3.

backstories. We know of many such theatrical late-medieval tournaments, for instance, the tourneys at Guînes in 1415, where the Earl of Warwick famously fought romantically disguised as “The Green Knight,” “The Grey Knight,” and “The Attendant Knight.”⁷⁵ One might also note the jousts celebrating the marriage of Edward IV’s young son in 1477, where the groom’s uncle, Anthony Woodville, fought costumed as a hermit, a recurrent figure in chivalric romances.⁷⁶ Drawing on such examples, Susan Crane has shown that “early courtly literature d[id] not reflect but rather transform[ed] noble practice” and that, by “the later Middle Ages[,] courtly literature provided scripts for noble endeavor – for behavior between lovers, among knights, to prisoners, and to enemies in war.”⁷⁷ While Crane uses the word “scripts” figuratively, it is reasonable to believe that the Eltham letters were used by Henry IV’s courtiers as actual scripts to stage a knightly performance rooted in the tropes of chivalric literature.

If we turn to analyse the letters more closely, it is readily apparent that their style is specifically that of chivalric allegorical romance, in the manner of works such as Thomas de Saluces’ *Livre du chevalier errant* (c. 1394-96), Jean de Courcy’s *Chemin de vaillance* (1424-6), René d’Anjou’s *Livre du cuer d’amour espris* (c. 1457-77), and Olivier de La Marche’s *Chevalier délibéré* (1483). This chivalric sub-genre of allegorical narrative has only rarely been distinguished, let alone studied, by medievalists and merits a brief exposition here.⁷⁸ Though chivalric allegorical romances draw from a variety of sources, they can largely be characterized as an amalgamation of the courtly allegories of the *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1230, 1275), the chivalric feats of quest romances, and the moral didacticism of allegorical “pilgrimage of life” narratives, most influentially Guillaume de Deguileville’s *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (1331). Armand Strubel holds that the pioneer of the “roman de chevalerie’ allégorique” is Saluces’ *Chevalier errant*.⁷⁹ As with each of the four romances enumerated above, the *Chevalier errant* centers on a questing knight who encounters a cast of conventional personifications (Fortune, Love, Lady Knowledge, War, etc.) as well as a variety of fictional and historical figures, such as Iseult, Cleopatra, and Alexander. The knight’s dealings with these characters are borrowed directly from the register of Arthurian romance; there are chance encounters with adversary knights and damsels, combats, *pas d’armes* (here with Tristan and Lancelot), enchantments, and betrayals.⁸⁰ Ultimately, the knight’s journey is didactic as the romance negotiates the courtly and

⁷⁵ For this tournament see Lester, “Fifteenth-Century English Heraldic Narrative,” 201-12. For further examples of the elaborate costumes worn by knights in tournaments see Chapter 5 “Tournaments” in Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks and Masking*, 109-27.

⁷⁶ For the heraldic account of this tournament see W. H. Black, “Narrative of the Marriage of the Infant Duke of York,” 26-40.

⁷⁷ Crane, *Insular Romance*, 143, 178.

⁷⁸ To my knowledge, chivalric allegorical romance has only been discussed as a sub-genre by Armand Strubel and Marco Nievergelt. See Strubel’s section “Le ‘Roman de chevalerie’ allégorique” in “*Grande senefiance a*,” 283-92 and Nievergelt’s chapter “Chivalric Transformations in Fifteenth-Century France” in *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spenser*, 45-73. While Nievergelt does not explicitly identify the four works listed above as chivalric allegorical romances, his discussion of them as chivalric derivatives of Guillaume de Deguileville’s allegorical *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* is complimentary to Strubel’s characterization of the sub-genre as well as my own.

⁷⁹ Strubel, “*Grande senefiance a*,” 283. See his summary of the romance at 235-38.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 236-37.

religious elements of chivalry and emphasizes knighthood's spiritual purpose.⁸¹ This type of chivalric allegorical literature became increasingly popular and complex in the fifteenth century, with works such as the *Livre du cueur* and the *Chevalier délibéré*.⁸² More work must be done to establish the extent of the chivalric allegorical romance corpus and the tradition's precursors. It may well be that the general topoi of chivalric allegory circulated widely in courtly settings before giving fruition to major literary works in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The Eltham letters indeed attest that the elements of chivalric allegorical romance were celebrated at the court of Henry IV already at the turn of the fifteenth century, only a handful of years after the composition of Saluces' seminal *Chevalier errant*. Like the romances enumerated above, the letters each center on the quest of a knight (often allegorically named) who seeks to learn about honourable combat and, in the course of his chivalric education, encounters a panoply of allegorical personifications and legendary figures. Fantastic castles, Saracens, squires riding dragons carrying the heads of serpents spitting fire, men literally burning with love, and famed romance heroes also abound. In one letter, for instance, Phoebus writes on behalf of Ferombras of the Fountain (a version of the well-known hero Fierabras) to Princess Blanche, who is compared to the pale moon illuminated by the sun god. As Gillmeister notes, this comparison is "both pertinent and clever" as Henry IV's royal symbol and badge was the sun and "[q]uite appropriately, Blanche, 'the White,' is conceived of as the 'pale moon' owing her light to Phebus."⁸³

A similarly witty moment occurs in Letter #4, when Dalida, the invented Sultan of Babylon and King of Alexandria, creates a clever parallel between Eastern and Western religions. While Dalida is sultan "by the grace of Mahomet, god of all true infidels and Saracens," the English king is said to rule "[b]y the grace of Him to whom the three kings offered gold, incense and myrrh."⁸⁴ In a witty anachronism, the author then proceeds to blend the two rulers' religions, claiming that Dalida had composed the missive "in our city of Jerico the day of the Translation of Appolin." Gillmeister explains that "[t]he author, again adopting the word-view of the heathen prince, treats Appolin as a Christian calendar saint, a truly ingenious move."⁸⁵

The letters are indeed often clever, and they clearly strive to be literary. In the fifth letter, ostensibly written by Nature, the author employs the conventional image of the earth returning to life in April after the bleak cold of winter (here personified):

Naturo, nurse of life, executor of the most powerful King of Kings, to the most excellent princess, eldest daughter of the most powerful King of Albion, greetings and deepest love. We, who ordain to man and beast their lives according to the high commandments of the Creator of all creatures, know for certain that as our subject Priapus, the god of gardens, grasses and flowers, renews and refreshes the face of the earth in the noble season of April which was bare and without grass from the terrible winter which is the

⁸¹ Nievergelt offers a very useful discussion of the success with which each of the four chivalric allegorical romances identified achieves this negotiation of the spiritual and secular, "Chivalric Transformations."

⁸² Strubel, "*Grande senefiance a*," 284.

⁸³ Gillmeister, "Challenge Letters," 188.

⁸⁴ Gillmeister explains that medieval Christians falsely supposed that Moslems considered Mohammed a god, *ibid*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

king of cold, a region and area covering the whole earth now takes once more its fine covering of sweetness and flowers [...]

Perhaps because Princess Blanche was only eight years old at the time of the tournament, the author tactfully censors his portrait of the fertility god Priapus (often depicted with a permanent, oversized erection) and describes him only as the god of gardens, grasses, and flowers.⁸⁶ Nature continues that the world rejuvenated by Priapus is adorned with virtue by the gracious government of King Henry IV, who has a noble heart and is the paragon of honour, goodness, and kindness. For this reason, Nature sends forth her knight Ferant de Ferieres to learn of deeds of arms at Henry's court. The champion's name, which loosely translates to "the Battering Smith," is apt as it refers to the knight's ability to violently ram into the steel armor of his opponents.⁸⁷ In a nominally didactic fashion, Nature challenges the knight of King Henry's court "who has spoken most of love to different maidens and who has most frequently changed the custom of loyal lovers" to joust with her champion.⁸⁸ The jousting may sit in the saddles of their choice, though they must not be tied down to them in any way, and the winner will be declared after landing six hits with a naked lance (one without any protective padding at the tip). By means of this tourney with a known seducer, Ferant de Ferieres will learn not to be duplicitous or false in love.

As Nature's letter demonstrates, the moral didacticism of the challenges is often in tension with the logistical instructions needed for a real tournament. While chivalric allegorical romances can have layers of allegory and abstraction, the challenge letters must necessarily be short in order to be functional (each letter is no more than a paragraph) and must clearly establish the rules of the joust at hand. Due to these limitations, the moral lesson of each letter must remain extremely simple (even inane). Still, the author often finds room to weave in a flattering remark to King Henry. For example, in the fourth letter, Sultan Dalida's champion, Power Lost, is a knight of the Kingdom of Love who has for a long time been the prisoner of Lady Pleasure, a member of the royal court. In order to escape Lady Pleasure and the chain she keeps round his neck, Power Lost traveled through many fantastic lands – "countries, castles, towns and cities, over mountains, valleys, woods and rivers" – seeking advice before finally being sent by his Sultan to the noble court of Henry IV. The knight can now be freed, but only if he lands six hits with his lance while sitting in a low saddle (with no upright plate at the back) without being attached to his seat in any way. In another letter, Youth's champion Nonsachant, or Unknowing, suffers from love-sickness and must seek the Lady Grace, of whom he had found no trace until arriving at Henry's court. Although these didactic scenarios are simplified to the point of absurdity in order to be used to stage real jousts, they clearly resonate with the topoi of chivalric allegorical romance and imply that their author was likely familiar with this genre or its precursors.

The author of the Eltham letters may also have drawn inspiration from an earlier set of fantastical challenge letters from the mid-fourteenth century that have only recently been rediscovered.⁸⁹ These letters appear to have been used to stage jousts in the court of Edward III

⁸⁶ For Priapus' range of associations in the Middle Ages see Brown, "*Hortus Inconclusus*."

⁸⁷ Gillmeister, "Challenge Letters," 190.

⁸⁸ My translation.

⁸⁹ These letters are fully analysed, transcribed, and translated in Bennett, Carpenter, and Gardiner, "Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III"; for these authors' comparison of the Edinburgh letters to the Eltham letters see 305, 310-11.

and survive in the Edinburgh University Library's Royal Letter Book (MS 183), which was written in the 1390s-1410s and contains copies of royal correspondence from the reigns of Edward III (r. 1327-1377) to Henry IV (r. 1399-1413).⁹⁰ Like the Eltham challenge, the Edinburgh letters are supposedly sent from mythological figures such as "Pantesilia, powerful Queen of Persia, of Femenye and Frisce, Lady of Damascus and of Africa the Great," a character which reappears in the fourth Eltham challenge letter.⁹¹ It is in fact highly likely that the author of the Eltham letters modelled the fantastical – and often Arthurian and alliterative – names of the Eltham mythological cast of characters on those in the Edinburgh letters or in other now-lost challenges of the same tradition.⁹² Moreover, the two sets of letters share strikingly similar formulas for the introduction of the knightly champions who are "nez et nourriz" (born and brought up) in the courts of mythological figures and sometimes identified by their heraldic blazons; for the establishment of the rules of the jousts; and for the fantastical dating of the missives, which are sent from imaginary castles or eastern lands on some fictional anniversary. At least three of the Edinburgh letters also appear to have been written for Christmastime festivities.⁹³

Despite these similarities, the editors of the Edinburgh letters note that, in comparison with the Eltham letters, these earlier challenges "are less rhetorically developed, setting up the personae and titles of the sender and establishing the romanticized fictions more swiftly."⁹⁴ In other words, the Edinburgh letters are less concerned with creating a coherent fictional framework for each challenger that explains his quest and why he desires to learn of deeds of arms in the court of the King of England. These earlier letters are more simply fantastical than properly allegorical and are devoid of the didactic and moral elements that characterise the Eltham letters.⁹⁵ It therefore seems likely that the author of the Eltham letters drew on an earlier tradition of fantastical challenge letters such as those preserved in the Edinburgh Royal Letter Book and incorporated into these models allegorical, didactic, and narrative elements from the budding allegorical romance genre in order to stage an elaborate chivalric performance.

It remains unclear who typically would have composed such elaborate challenge letters. The editors of the Edinburgh letters suggest that these challenges emanated from the entourage of Queen Philippa, the wife of Edward III, and that they may well have been devised by

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁹¹ Cf. with the transcription of the fourth Eltham letter below, in which Pantesilia is styled "l'Emperis Panthesillee."

⁹² The challengers of the Edinburgh letters include, for example, Bohors de Bassenu and Frik de Frikaunce, while the Eltham challengers include Lancelot de Libie and Ferombras de la Fontaine. Bohors, Lancelot, and Ferombras are all well-known romance and chanson de geste characters for whom imaginary epithets seem to have been invented merely for the sake of alliteration.

⁹³ Bennett, Carpenter, and Gardiner, "Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III," 311. Despite internal references to Christmas in certain of the letters, the editors caution: "Given the early date of the letters, and our lack of knowledge of their immediate context, it remains impossible to tell what occasions they were designed for or their relation to any wider festivity."

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ One of the challengers of the Edinburgh letters is said to have been sent "to teach him to handle himself as best he can in feats of arms," but no allegorical scenario is constructed to explain this knight's need for education. See *ibid.*, 332.

women.⁹⁶ They argue that the women are prominently featured in the letters (they are often addressed to Queen Philippa and sent by romantic or biblical women). The editors add that women are known to have been actively involved in the orchestration of other medieval jousts, such as when Queen Elizabeth Woodville and her ladies gave Anthony Woodville, then Lord Scales, a gold collar with the Flower of Souvenance and secretly dropped a challenge into his cap. This challenge is then said to have spurred the knight's tournament with the Antoine de Bourgogne, the Bastard of Burgundy in 1467.⁹⁷ However, it should be remembered that the tournament between the Lord Scales and the Bastard of Burgundy was a complex logistical feat that took years of careful planning to come to fruition; this event was not an impromptu affair but a serious diplomatic undertaking.⁹⁸ Despite the romanticized account portraying Queen Elizabeth and her ladies as chivalric benefactresses who ostensibly devised a knightly challenge with heraldic precision, it appears that these women had little involvement in the actual organization of the event. In fact, as soon as Lord Scales read the scrap of paper dropped in his hat by the ladies, the logistical tasks of taking the challenge to the Bastard of Burgundy, relaying his response, accompanying him to Smithfield, and later demarcating the field of battle for the tournament, refereeing the fighting, and chronicling the event were all left to heralds.⁹⁹

Like the tournament between Lord Scales and the Bastard of Burgundy, Henry IV's entertainment of Emperor Manuel II at Eltham would have been a serious diplomatic undertaking in which nothing could be left to chance.¹⁰⁰ As experts on chivalric etiquette, heralds would surely have been involved in the orchestration of the formal entertainments put on for Emperor Manuel. The Eltham letters' presence in the Arundel cluster's family of heraldic manuals makes it tempting to believe that heralds may even have composed these fantastical challenges, which appear to have been used to stage real jousts at least nominally in honour of Princess Blanche during the Emperor's stay. Indeed, while it is impossible to know with certainty who first wrote the Eltham letters, their inclusion in the Arundel cluster's standardized core of texts strongly suggest that the letters were useful to heralds and copied by them, perhaps after having read the challenges aloud during the jousts. In this way, the letters could be circulated for future consultation on matters of chivalric style, form, allegory, and mythology, as appears to have been the case with the earlier fantastical challenges in the Edinburgh Royal Letter Book.¹⁰¹ The inclusion of elaborate allegorical challenge letters as paradigms in heraldic

⁹⁶ Bennett, Carpenter, and Gardiner, "Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III," 307.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* For this account of the ladies dropping the letter into Lord Scales' cap see Bentley, *Excerpta historica*, 178.

⁹⁸ Bentley, *Excerpta historica*, 171-75; Anglo, "Anglo-Burgundian Feats of Arms," 273-83. Anglo reminds us that "beneath the glitter of international court festivals, there were often concealed very desperate political negotiations" and that on this occasion the tournament appears to have been part of Edward III's plan to further an Anglo-Burgundian alliance and to marry his sister, Margaret, to Charles, the heir of Philip the Good, 275.

⁹⁹ Bentley, *Excerpta historica*, 175, 184-212. The heraldic account of the tournament is included in Bentley.

¹⁰⁰ For the politics of the emperor's visit see Nicol, "A Byzantine Emperor in England."

¹⁰¹ Gillmeister notes that, in Letter #3 of the Eltham challenges, the date of the jousts is left open seemingly on purpose ("Written in our castle of pleasure, the day of the present month"), making it especially easy to repurpose for future tournaments, "Challenge Letters," p. 219. Herald's regularly recorded challenges and tournament proclamations, though it has rarely been noted that

handbooks sheds new light on the literary output of heralds. The Eltham letters reveal that officers of arms deliberately engaged with the topoi of allegorical romances and were intimately involved in the nobility's imitation of chivalric literature.

This study of the Eltham allegorical challenge letters and their family of semi-standardized heraldic handbooks offers new insights into the intellectually rich and literary world of late-medieval English heralds. Although heralds occupied an important role in late-medieval court-culture, they have often been treated as marginal figures: the funnily-dressed messengers of the "great men" of history. Accordingly, the specialized field of knowledge developed and professionalized by heralds has not yet been fully explored for its significance in the development of the cult of chivalry in the later Middle Ages. Neither have heralds' book culture and engagement with the formal and ideological elements of chivalric literature been fully unpacked. Upon closer inspection, heraldic handbooks such as those containing the Eltham letters reveal that heralds and their texts played an important role in the socio-literary chivalric discourse of the later Middle Ages in England.

these precedents may have been used by heralds themselves as models for the composition of future texts. For examples of specimen documents and formularies in late-medieval heraldic miscellanies see Whitbread, "Tournaments, Jousts and Duels," 289-90.

Appendix: Collated Edition of the Eltham Letters

Manuscripts

The thirteen allegorical challenge letters in honour of Princess Blanche are known to survive in five manuscripts:

A: London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 63, ff. 33r-40v (15th century)

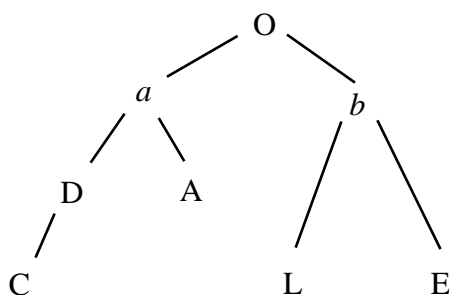
D: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 271, ff. 40v-47v (3rd quarter of the 15th century)

C: London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D ii, ff. 260v-262r (2nd half of the 15th century)

L: London, British Library, MS Additional 34801, ff. 36r-42v (mid-15th century)

E: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 32.6.9, ff. 63v-69v (late-15th or early-16th century)

Based on the collation of the five witnesses and the discussion of the manuscripts' contents offered above, it is possible to construct the following stemma:



There are two main version of the text, *a* and *b*. Version *a* is the more complete of the two, as version *b* recurrently abbreviates the letters (as in letters #9, #10, #11, and #12). These abbreviations often condense the letters' fanciful scenarios, and in Letter #12 the description of the heraldic blazon identifying the knight being challenge is omitted. This heraldic blazon would have been important information for the original audience of the letters, and its omission in the *b* version of the text appears to suggest that it is a later variation meant for an audience which may not have recognized or been concerned with the arms of the original joustes.

There are a number of scribal errors which make it clear that L and E were not copied directly from one another, but rather from a common antecedent. For instance, L is the only witness of the text which corrects the repetition “n’a peu ne ne puet” in Letter #3, making it highly unlikely the E was copied from L. Moreover, eye-skip has caused the scribe of E to omit a line in Letter #6; this line is present in L, thus making unlikely that L was copied from E.

As for the *a* version of the letters, the texts in A and D are extremely similar and generally differ only at the level of spelling. However, there are a number of more significant differences between these two witnesses (see Table 1) which bespeak A's closer proximity to the *b* version of the text and thus to L and E. It therefore appears that A is closer to an earlier, now-lost antecedent of both of the *a* and *b* versions than D. This theory is reinforced by the fact that both D and C are missing the word “fions” in Letter #6, which is present in A. It is likely that D was not copied from A as on occasion D presents readings that disagree with A but agree with L

and E (see Table 2). A and D therefore appear to have been copied independently from an earlier witness.

There are very few differences between D and C. However, as Gillmeister notes, C is “teeming with anglicisms and conspicuous for its gross trespassing against the French language by a scribe who to all appearances had but little familiarity with it.”¹⁰² D, in which anglicisms are much less frequent, is thus more than likely the antecedent of C. As we have already noted, C is also the only manuscript of this family to omit the oaths of the poursuivants, making it almost certain that C was copied from D and not vice versa.

Table 1. Significant Differences Between D and A Suggesting the Proximity of D with C and of A with L and E

Lines in A	MS Cotton Nero D ii (C)	MS Douce 271 (D)	MS Arundel 63 (A)	MS Additional 34801 (L)	MS Advocates 32.6.9 (E)
5	clere	clere	clarté	clarté	clarté
36	plusours	pluseurs	maintes	mains	maints
68	montaignes valees	montaignes valees	valees montaignes	valees montaignes	valees & montaignes
77	qu’il se tire & adresce	qu’il se tire & adresce	qu’il s’adresse	qu’il s’adresce	qu’il s’adresce
92	yver	yver	yre	yre	yre
137	en vostre sale au soir	en vostre sale au soir	au soir en vostre salle	au soir en vostre salle	au soir en vostre salle

Table 2. Differences Between D and A Where D Agrees with L and E Suggesting that D Was Not Copied From A

Lines in A	MS Arundel 63 (A)	MS Douce 271 (D)	MS Additional 34801 (L)	MS Advocates 32.6.9 (E)
36	travailles a dangier	travaux et dangier	travalx et dangiers	travaux et dangiers
78	menans	mene	mayne	mayne
120	Prince	Princesce	Princesse	Princesse
160	vers vostre	par deveurs vostre	par deveurs vostre	par deveurs vous & vostre

As we have seen, the quality and origins of the five manuscripts at hand are varied, though in each case the thirteen letters are written in a *bâtarde* hand with occasional otiose flourishes. The

¹⁰² Gillmeister, “Challenge Letters,” 185. For instance, the scribe of C consistently confuses the masculine and feminine and makes anglicizations such as “estate” for *estat*, “season” for *saison*, and “gracious” for *gracieuse*.

punctuation of the letters is very sparse and amounts only to the occasional use of a punctus or, in D, a double punctus at the end of each letter. The texts in C and D are modestly decorated with red and blue initials at beginning of each letter, while E is plain except for one blue and red initial at the beginning of Letter #10. A and L are both finely decorated with illuminated initials and spraywork at the beginning of each letter.

In each of the witnesses, the opening address to Princess Blanche (ll. 1-2) appears to function as the title of the text. In L, a sixteenth-century hand has added the title “The form of lettres in ancient tyme used by knights when they sent there challendges to any princes court.”

Previous Editions

The version of the text in C collated with that in D has previously been published by Heiner Gillmeister in “Challenge Letters,” 199-206. The text in D has equally been translated by D.M. Clarke and John Priestley in an appendix to the latter’s *Eltham Palace*, 133-38 (this translation is one intended for the general public and has no critical apparatus).

Editorial Procedures

The edition of the text given below collates all five witnesses of the text. The base text used is A, and endnotes supply variations from the other surviving witnesses of the text. Where the *a* and *b* versions of the text substantially diverge from one another, the *b* version of the text is given separately in the endnotes with L as the base text. Minor differences in spelling and articles (for example: “du dit fait d’armes,” versus “le dis fait d’armes”) have not been noted unless the meaning is unclear. Otherwise, changes in choice of words and word-order have always been noted. The spelling is faithful to A, and corrections have been made only sparingly when scribal error seems evident. Abbreviations have been silently expanded unless their meaning is unclear, in which case the letters supplied are in italics. The editorial procedures follow those established in Yvan G. Lepage’s *Guide de l’édition de textes en ancien français*, where capitalization, punctuation, word spacing, and distinctions between *i/j* and *u/v* follow modern practice. The acute accent “é” is used to distinguish the tonic “e” from the a-tonic “e” only if the “e” is terminal or followed by a consonant. Unless otherwise noted, all definitions are supplied from Aberystwyth University’s online *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*.

The Text

- 1 [f. 33r] A tres excellente & tres noble Princesse, Dame Blanche, fille a tres puissant Prince, le
2 Roy d’Albion.
- [#1.]
- 3 A Phebus la principale planette du firmament, a tres excellente Princesse, Dame Blanche, fille
4 au tres puissant Prince, Roy d’Albion, saluz et tres parfait dilleccion. Comme nous qui par nostre
5 continuel cours environnans le hault cercle du firmament voyans par nostre clarté inspeccion la
6 gouvernance de toutes choses terriennes, sachant de certain que tout ainsi comme nostre suer la

7 lune¹⁰³ prent sa course et lumiere de noz droit, aussi tost la clarté du monde prennent nourreture
 8 & liesse¹⁰⁴ de vostre court royal comme de la vostre droit fontaine d'onneur et de noblesse.¹⁰⁵
 9 Nous desirans l'engresse¹⁰⁶ de nostre tres amé enfant de nostre chambre Ferombras de la
 10 Fontaine¹⁰⁷ luy envoions devers vostre haultesse pour veoir le contenment de vostre court royal
 11 & pour aprendre le fait d'esbatement d'armes. Vous en prians que vous plaise commander
 12 aucun¹⁰⁸ de voz honorables chevaliers estans en vostre feste a delivrer nostre dit enfant de six
 13 coups de la[n]ce avecques roches¹⁰⁹ d'assise en haultes selles sans estre liez ou atachiez afin que
 14 nostre dit enfant puisse retourner devers nous le mieulx apris d'esbatement dessus dit, comme
 15 nous [f. 33v] affions¹¹⁰ tres entierement en vous. Et si chose soit devers nous que faire povons a
 16 vostre aise ou consolacion, nous la veullé certiffier par nostre dit enfant & nous l'acomplirons de
 17 tres lie et joyeux cuer. Vostre excellent & honorable estat en honneur, joie et parfaicte
 18 prosperité garde & gouverne le createur de toutes creatures. Donné en nostre merveilleuse
 19 Manssion du Firmament plain d'estoille.

[#2.]

20 A tres excellente & tres noble Princesse, Dame Blanche, fille au tres puissant Prince, Roy de la
 21 Grant Bretaigne. Monstre tres humblement ung jeune et non sachant escuier, porteur de cestes,
 22 qui est venu de loingtains parties pour veoir le contenment de vostre court royalle et en
 23 espacial pour aprendre le fait d'esbatement d'armes, suppliant a vostre haultesse que vous plaise
 24 commander le plus vaillant bacheler ou escuier dessous l'aage de trente deux ans estans en vostre
 25 feste a delivrer le dit suppliant en basses selles¹¹¹ de douze coups de lance avecques roches

¹⁰³ Gillmeister notes that this comparison is “both pertinent and clever: Edward III as well as Richard II had adopted the sun as a royal symbol and badge before, and Henry apparently continued to do so. Quite appropriately, Blanche, ‘the White,’ is conceived of as the ‘pale moon’ owing her light to Phebus,” “Challenge Letters,” 218.

¹⁰⁴ Alternative spelling of *leesce*, meaning “joy, gladness.”

¹⁰⁵ Gillmeister notes that “[i]n much the same way as the sun, which gives light to his sister, the moon, the court of the king of England, and his tournament, called ‘Fountain of Honour’ after the model of similar festivities in contemporary France, give nourishment and joy to the world,” “Challenge Letters,” 218.

¹⁰⁶ From the verb *engresser*, here meaning “to increase” and “to advance.”

¹⁰⁷ Gillmeister identifies him as “the English variant of an underlying French Fierabras, a well-known hero of medieval romance “Challenge Letters,” 189.

¹⁰⁸ Here meaning “anyone” or “one.”

¹⁰⁹ Alternative spelling of the Old French *rochet*, meaning a protective “padded cap on a tournament lance,” Hindley et al., *Old French-English Dictionary*, 535.

¹¹⁰ From the verb *affier*, in this sense meaning to “to swear, pledge; to assure, promise.”

¹¹¹ Gillmeister notes that type of combat described here seems to correspond with the *jousts à plaisance* defined by Bradford Broughton in the *Dictionary of Medieval Knighthood and Chivalry*, 275: “combat between two knights on horseback using lances of courtesy – lances rebated with coronals [or *rochets*] on their tips to reduce the possibility of fatalities. The battles were fought with the object of splintering lances or of unhorsing an opponent [...] In such an exercise... the saddle had no upright plate at its back so that unhorsing was not hindered in any way.” The *basses selles* seem to refer to this form of saddle without a backplate.

26 d'assise sans estre liés ou atachiés affin de lui aprendre le fait & esbatement dessus dit et ce
 27 parvoié¹¹² de vostre tres noble bonté et gentillesce.

[#3.]

28 [f. 34r] Jennesce, par le grace de Dieu d'Amours, Royne de Joie et de toute liesse. A haulte &
 29 puissante Princesse et nostre tres chiere et tres amee seur Blanche, ainsnee fille¹¹³ du tres hault &
 30 puissant Prince, le Roy de Bretaigne la Grant & de Gaule, seigneur des pais des merveilles &
 31 vray sucesseur du puissant Empereur Artus ouquel honneur et prouesse de haulte chevalrie est
 32 plus grant habondance en sa personne que en prince qui soit aujourduy vivant, car moult
 33 approuvee est la prouesse de la haulte chevalrie en pluseurs estranges regions dont les renommee
 34 en court par tout le monde, saluz et plaisant dilleccion. Nostre tres chiere & tres amee seur,
 35 veuillez savoir que en nostre court avons nourry ung jeune chevalier par son droit nom appellé
 36 Nonsachant qui en amours a souffert & soustenus maintes¹¹⁴ travailles a dangier. Pour alegier sa
 37 peine il est mis en la queste pour querir une dame de grant renom que on appelle Grace, de
 38 laquelle il n'a peu ne puet [sic]¹¹⁵ encore avoir aucunes nouvelles et de present entendu que une
 39 moult noble & belle assemblee de pluseurs nobles dames & damoiselles et de vaillans chevaliers
 40 et escuiers doit estre [sic]¹¹⁶ devers vostre *presence* a ceste presente feste de noel. Si¹¹⁷ c'esttrait
 41 & tourne vers celle part pour veoir & savoir se pourra avoir aucun recours de sa dite queste et
 42 aussi pour ce [f. 34v] qu'il est de coustume que tous chevaliers errans voullentiers s'acointent¹¹⁸
 43 de cours de roys & haulx princes par maniere d'armes. Nous qui avons entendu que icelle
 44 solempnele feste et noble assemblee entre les autres vaillans chevaliers et escuiers il y a ung
 45 chevalier qui nagueres a fait armes ou Royaume de Gaulle si bien & vaillamment qu'il a acquis
 46 grant los et grant pris ou dit Royaume de Gaulle et en pluseurs autres contrees dont il puet
 47 mieulx estre prisé & loé. Desirant que le dit Nonsachant nostre nourry soit apris es fais des
 48 esbatemens d'armes par les mains d'icelluy noble chevalier, vous prions tres affectueusement
 49 que icelluy mesmes nostre nourry faciez delivrer de six coups de lance assis en seelles rasses¹¹⁹
 50 par le dessus dit noble chevalier qui porte en ses armes ung escu dont le champ est d'azur a trois
 51 quintefueillez¹²⁰ d'or & ung croissant d'argent et que ce soit sans estre atachiez ne liez en main
 52 ne en seelle et en ce faisant vous nous ferés tres singullier plaisir, sachant que se voulez chose

¹¹² Likely an alternate form of *parvenir*, meaning “to come (to), arrive, (at), reach, attain (a place, person, etc.).”

¹¹³ Genealogically, this detail works to link the Blanche of the letters with Henry IV's eldest (*ainsnee*) daughter, Blanche.

¹¹⁴ Alternate spelling of the Old French adverb *mainte*, meaning “in large numbers,” Hindley et al., *Old French-English Dictionary*, 405.

¹¹⁵ MS: n'a peu ne ne puet. L is the only witness to correct the repetition of 'ne'.

¹¹⁶ MS: ester

¹¹⁷ Here meaning “so, thus.”

¹¹⁸ From the verb *acointer*, meaning “to make the acquaintance of, get to know; to learn, experience.”

¹¹⁹ Low saddles.

¹²⁰ A *quintefeuille*, or cinquefoil, is a common heraldic devise in the shape of a five-petalled flower.

53 qui soit en nostre royaume nous le ferons liement en priant celuy qui sur tous a puissance qu'il
 54 vous maintienne tousiours en bonne prosperité, d'onneur & de liesse. Escript en nostre Chastel
 55 de Plaisance le jour¹²¹ du mois present. En oultre nostre tres chiere & tres amee [f. 35r] seur
 56 veullés savoir que le dessus dit nostre nourry en venant devers vostre dite presence a rencontré
 57 une damoiselle qui venoit de par de la du Royaume Panchaluce, laquelle il acompaigne jusques a
 58 vostre presence.

[#4.]

59 Dalida, par la grace de Mahomet, Dieu de tous vrais infildés & sarazins, Soudan de Babilosne &
 60 Roy d'Alixandrie. A haulte & puissante Princesse & nostre tres chiere & tres amee cousine &
 61 cetera, par la grace de celuy a qui les trois roys offroient or, encens & mierende,¹²² ainsnee fille du
 62 tres noble Roy d'Albion, heritier & successeur du tres noble Empereur Charlemaine, soudanal &
 63 alexandrial dillection. Notre tres chiere & tres amee cousine, en vostre court a une dame de grant
 64 pris que on appelle Plaisance, qui par long temps a tenu prisonnier en ses prisons ung chevalier
 65 du Royaume d'Amours nommé le Pouer Perdu, lequel chevalier ne puet estre delivré d'icelles
 66 prisons tant qu'il soit deschargie¹²³ de six coups de lance assis en basses selles sans estre atachiez
 67 ne liez en seelle ne en main. Pour laquelle delivrance avoir, il luy semble qu'il lui couvendroit¹²⁴
 68 cheminer et errer maintes contrees, chastiaux, villes et cités, [f. 35v] valees, montaignes, [b]oys
 69 & rivieres avant qu'il peust trouver ung tel qu'il demande senon qu'il trovast aucun¹²⁵ bon
 70 conseil qui lui abregast¹²⁶ son chemin. Et pour ce que nous avons entendu que nostre tres chier &
 71 bien amé cousin le Roy vostre pere a ceste feste de noel tient moult solennele & loable court &
 72 tant solennelle qu'il a en sa court ung empereur & grant renommee de nobles dames &
 73 damoiselles, vaillans chevaliers & escuiers qui font merveilles, comme les ungs qui
 74 chevauchent¹²⁷ dragons, les autres portent serpens sur leurs testes getans feu et flambe, les autres
 75 qui sont si ardans en amours que parmy leurs targes & escus geitent flambe de feu tout visible &
 76 plusieurs autres chevaliers aventureux & errans qui viennent devers vous tant de par l'Emperis
 77 Panthesillee comme de par la Royne de Cartage. Nous luy avons conseillé qu'il s'adresse
 78 devers vous dominall & jouvencal presence & icelluy Pouer Perdu conduit & menans nostre tres
 79 chier & bien amé nepveu [sic]¹²⁸ Feresbas de Damas, le jeune general gouverneur de nostre
 80 Royaume d'Alixandrie, affin que ne rompera mie¹²⁹ sa prison et qu'il ne s'enfuie lyé & atachié

¹²¹ Gillmeister notes that “[h]ere the date seems to have been left open on purpose,” “Challenge Letters,” p. 219.

¹²² Variation or scribal error of *mirre* (or “myrrh”). This reading is confirmed by the rest of the witnesses.

¹²³ From the verb *deschargier*, meaning to “to unload, discharge; to unburden.”

¹²⁴ From the verb *couvener*, an alternative of *convenir*, here meaning “to be fitting, adequate, correct.”

¹²⁵ Here meaning “anyone” or “one.”

¹²⁶ From the verb *abreger*, meaning “shorten; to shorten (a text, etc.); to abridge.”

¹²⁷ From the verb *chevaucher*, here meaning “to mount (a horse); to ride; to ride alongside.”

¹²⁸ MS: nepveu & feable

¹²⁹ Adverb meaning “not (at all) (as a reinforced negation).”

81 d'une chaine parmy le col. Sy¹³⁰ vous prions tres affectueusement que au dit chevalier Pour
 82 Perdu vous veullés delivrer le chevalier de vostre court [f. 36r] qui plus grant desir a de faire le
 83 conquest du Royaume de Jherusalem soit roy, prince, duc, conte, chevalier ou escuier pour le
 84 delivrer et deschargier des six coups de lance dessus diz et vous nous ferés tres feminal¹³¹ plaisir.
 85 En priant a Alpha & Primus qu'il vous doit regner pardurablement. Donné en nostre cite de
 86 Jherico le jour de la translacion Apolin.¹³²

[#5.]

87 Naturo, nourrice de vie, executeur du tout puissant Roy des Roys, a tres excellent Princesse,
 88 Dame & cetera, fille au tres puissant Prince, Roy d'Albion, salut & tres parfait dileccion. Nous
 89 qui ordonnons a homme & beste leurs vivres¹³³ selon le hault commandement du createur de tous
 90 creatures savons de certain que ainsi comme nostre subget Priapus, qui est Dieu de jardins,
 91 d'herbes et de fleurs, renouvelle & refresche la face de la terre en la noble saison d'avril, qui estoit
 92 povre & sans vesteure par le importable yre qui est le Roy de Froidure Region et trace par entre
 93 la terre si repret sa conjointure et soubtille mantel plain de douceur & de fleurs, droit ainsi tous
 94 estaz du monde vivans atendants honneur sont vestus & aournés de vertueuse science par
 95 gracieuse gouvernance & contenment de vostre excellent noble cuer royal, comme [f. 36v] du
 96 [sic]¹³⁴ vray mireur et exemplaire de tout honneur, bonté & gentillesce a cest vostre noble feste
 97 pour veoir la gouvernance de vostre excellent estat et pour aprendre le fait d'esbatement d'armes.
 98 Nous desirans l'encres de nostre bien amé nory Ferant de Ferieres, porteur de cestes, luy
 99 envoions devers vous, priant que par l'avis des nobles de vostre feste vous plaise commander le
 100 chevalier ou escuier estant a vostre feste dessus dite qui a plus parlé d'amours a pluseurs
 101 damoiselles et qui plus souvent a changié la coustume de loyaus amans delivré nostre dit escuier
 102 de six coups de lance en hault ou en basses seelles avec roches d'assise sans estre liez ne atachés
 103 affin que nostre dit nourry puisse en sa jeunesce aprendre d'eschiver¹³⁵ d'estre double ou faulx
 104 en amours, que Dieu deffende comme nous affions tres especiallement a vostre bonté et
 105 noblesse. Tres excellente Princesse nous prions a Dieu d'Amours de vous ottoier honneur,
 106 parfaicte santé & joyeuse vie & long a durer. Donné en nostre Palais de Plaisance plain de
 107 delisces.

[#6.]

108 [f. 37r] Vertu, mere & nourrice d'onneur, dame de parfaicte plaisance, a tres excellente Princesse
 109 nostre tres chiere & tres amee cousine & dame de ceste haulte et honnourable feste, dame &

¹³⁰ Here meaning "so, thus."

¹³¹ Adjective meaning "female."

¹³² Alternate spelling of "Apollo," who was believed to be worshiped by Saracens. See "Ap(p)ollin, Apollō n.," *Middle English Dictionary*. Gillmeister notes: "Here Apollin refers to an alleged Muslim deity who had made his appearance in the literature of the West as early as in the *Chanson de Roland*. The author, again adopting the word-view of the heathen prince, treats Appolin as a Christian calendar saint, a truly ingenious move," "Challenge Letters," 188.

¹³³ Substantive infinitive of the verb *vivre*, here meaning "(human) life, existence."

¹³⁴ MS: de [f. 36v] du

¹³⁵ Meaning to "to avoid, keep away from, shun; to ignore, reject; to escape from, avoid."

110 cetera, fille a tres puissant Prince, Roy de l'Ysle des Geyans, salut & dilleccion. Nous de plain
 111 entente avons ordonné & deputé vostre noble personne pour generale executeresse de toute
 112 choses qui appartiennent a l'excellence de nostre office dons garantiez par le Roy des Roys
 113 comme a tres noble dame predustinat de Dieu de l'acomplir, loyaument et honnorablement
 114 envoyons devers vostre noblesse ung chevalier de nostre chambre appellé Joune l'Apernant qui a
 115 grant voulenté & espacial desir pour veoir le noble devise & execucion de nostre commission a
 116 vous dite par nostre providice¹³⁶ prudence et pour aprendre le fait du honnorable esbatement
 117 d'armes, vous especiallement prians qu'il vous plaise commander le plus honnorable & noble
 118 chevalier d'estat ou de conte qui a plus viel temps esté armé sur les mescreans a present estant a
 119 vostre haulte & royale feste a aprendre nostre dit chevalier de nostre chambre le fait de
 120 l'esbatement dessus dit. Et tres excellente Prince[sse]¹³⁷ pour ce que donné nous est a entendre
 121 que deux de plus [f. 37v] excellens princes de toute chrestienté sont a vostre haulte &
 122 honnorable feste, ce sont a ce que nous sommes certiffiez le tres noble Empereur de
 123 Costentinoble et le tres puissant Prince, Roy d'Albion et de Gaille. Nous envoions devers eulx
 124 non mie¹³⁸ pour don mais pour remembrance de cest premier jour de l'an deux petis
 125 entresignez¹³⁹ pour nostre dit chevalier, vous en prians que nostre presente lettre nous puissions
 126 commander aux hauls & honnourables estas des excelle[n]s princes dessus diz comme nous fions
 127 en vostre parfait & honnourable bonté. Tres excellente & tres noble Princesse, l'especialle cause
 128 de nostre creacion, vous garde et gouverne en honneur & parfaicte santé et vous octroie joyeuse
 129 vie & longue a durer. Donné en nostre noble Dongon¹⁴⁰ de Parfaicte Dilligence widé¹⁴¹ de vices.

[#7.]

130 A tres excellente et tres noble Princesse, Dame & cetera, fille au tres puissant Roy de la Grant
 131 Bretagne. Monstre tres humblement ung jeune chevalier nommé Ardant Desireus qui est venu de
 132 longtaines parties de la terre d'Ynde a ceste vostre noble feste pour veoir le contenment¹⁴² de
 133 vostre excellence et pour aprendre le fait d'esbatement d'armes, vous [f. 38r] suppliant
 134 humblement qu'il vous plaise commander le chevalier de ceste feste qui a plus chevauché¹⁴³ en
 135 estranges pais entre les aages de vingt & xxiiii ans crut ait et delivré le dit suppliant de six coups

¹³⁶ Gillmeister suggests this to be “a somewhat unusual variant of Old French *providente*, the feminine gender of the adjective *provident*,” “Challenge Letters,” 220.

¹³⁷ MS. excellent Prince. Correction supplied from DCLE.

¹³⁸ Adverb meaning “not (at all) (as a reinforced negation).”

¹³⁹ Meaning “token,” though also possibly “standard, banner; sign, mark; personal emblem (worn by knight); signal,” Hindley et al., *Old French-English Dictionary*, 276.

¹⁴⁰ Noun meaning “(castle) keep.” Gillmeister also notes the meaning “tour du seigneur,” “Challenge Letters,” 220.

¹⁴¹ Alternate spelling (or scribal error) for *vuidé*, here meaning “empty,” Hindley et al., *Old French-English Dictionary*, 616.

¹⁴² Noun meaning “behaviour, conduct, way of life.”

¹⁴³ From the verb *chevaucher*, here meaning “to ride; to drive” or “to take part in mounted raid.”

136 de lancez de mesure¹⁴⁴ sans villain rochet et sans estre liez n'atachiez icest premier jour de l'an
 137 au soir en vostre salle en basses selles, et celui qui a jousté les m[e]illeurs coursses par vostre
 138 tres noble jugement aura a chacune cours de son conpaignon une verge d'or parvoié¹⁴⁵ de bon
 139 escuier. Ceste poure supplicacion vous plaise garantier et acomplir et le non du chevalier qui me
 140 delivrera me fera asavoir parvoié de bonté & gentillesce.

[#8.]

141 A tres excellente Princesse, Dame & cetera, fille a tres puissant Roy d'Albion. Penolese, femme
 142 a noble Prince Ulixes, saluz & tres parfait dilleccion.¹⁴⁶ Pour ce que la commune Femme
 143 d'Amour nous a informez que vous tenez a present une feste royalle comme vous estes tous dis
 144 acoustumé, auquel mains bons chevaliers & escuiers sont pour joster, dancier & joyeuse vie
 145 mener. Sy¹⁴⁷ vous envoions a vostre haultesce ung nostre bien amé enfant Palamides le Loyal,
 146 porteur de cestes, qui a grant desir d'estre aprins¹⁴⁸ du fait d'esbatement d'armes, suppliant a
 147 vostre bonté & haultesce de commander [f. 38v] ung noble chevalier estant a vostre feste qui
 148 porte a sa devise trois diverses feuilles en guise de ung tresfoille a delivrer nostre dit enfant de six
 149 coups de lance sans villain rochet en basses selles affin que nostre dit enfant puisse retourner
 150 devers nous le mieulx apris du fait d'esbatement dessus dit, nous certiffians par lui vostre plaisir
 151 soit a vostre excellence droit nouvelle de vostre hault & honnorable estat pour especial
 152 consolacion de nostre cuer comme nous affions tres entierement de vous. Tres excellente
 153 Princesse, le vray Dieu d'Amours vous octroye honneur, joye & parfaicte santé et bonne vie &
 154 long a durer.

[#9.]

155 Venus, mere de Cupide, Dieu d'Amours, a tres excellente Princesse, dame de ceste haulte feste,
 156 fille au tres puissant Prince, Roy de la Grant Bretaigne, salut & tres parfait dileccion. Pour ce que
 157 nous avons plain entendement par la rellacion de nostre feal mesagier apellé Loyal Report que en
 158 vostre noble court sont grande partie des millours chevaliers du monde a ceste vostre royalle
 159 feste pour joster, dancier & joieuse vie mener, nous qui tres volentiers desirons l'encresse [f.
 160 39r] de nostre petit enfant appellé Joesne le Ameruez, porteur de cestes, lui envoions vers vostre

¹⁴⁴ "Jousting challenges [...] specified that the lances should be *de mesure*, that is, of equal length as measured against a standard provided by the organizer. This prevented any knight having an unfair advantage in length," Barker qtd. in Gillmeister, "Challenge Letters," 220.

¹⁴⁵ The scribe appears throughout to use the verb *parveer* ("to see clearly, understand completely") in confusion with the verb *purveer* ("to provide, furnish with").

¹⁴⁶ Gillmeister argues that the order of the two first sentences of this letter (which is the same in all witnesses) should be reversed, reasoning that it is a mistake as "Penelope is obviously the sender of the letter introducing to the English royal court her champion Palamedes," "Challenge Letters," 220.

¹⁴⁷ Here meaning "so, thus."

¹⁴⁸ This form is not noted in the Anglo-Norman dictionary nor in Hindley et al.'s *Old French-English Dictionary*, although Gillmeister suggests that *aprens* is equivalent to the modern French *qui a appris* and that the "n" is etymological and from the Latin *apprehendere*, "Challenge Letters," 219.

161 haultesce pour aprendre nourreture & le fait d'esbatement d'armes, vous enpriens de commander
 162 a aucun¹⁴⁹ chevalier de vostre feste a delivrer nostre dit enfant de six coups de lance sans villain
 163 rochet & haultes selles, par entre nostre dit enfant puisse retourner devers nous avec nouvelles
 164 [de] vostre honnorable estat & parfaicte santé le mieulx aprins de esbatement dessus dit. Tres
 165 excellente Princesse, le hault et puissant Roy des Roys vous garde & gouverne en t[r]es parfaite
 166 santé & vous octroie honneur et joieuse vie long a durer. Donn  en nostre merveilleuse Mansion
 167 de Monsicheroun,¹⁵⁰ l'an depuis nostre creacion cinq mil cinq [sic] cens¹⁵¹ & xvj.

[#10.]

168 Cleopatra, par le grace de Saturnus & de [t]outes les autres planetes, Royne de Messepotaine &
 169 de Gobosse, ainsnee fille de tres hault Empereur d'Ynde la Majeur appelee Presbyter Jehan,
 170 cappitaine de basses cours de paradis terrestre. A hault & puissante Princesse & nostre tres chiere
 171 & bien amee cousine Blanche, par la grace de celuy par qui les oiseaulx vollent en l'air, ainsnee
 172 fille de tres noble Roy, vray successeur du Roy Saint Louys et du vaillant villain le Conquereur,
 173 [f. 39v] pardon [sic],¹⁵² salut et feminal dilleccion. Nostre tres chiere et bien amee cousine, nous
 174 avons entendu que mains chevaliers & escuiers de plusieurs estranges royaumes se adressent
 175 vers vostre presence pour aprendre & veoir le deduit¹⁵³ des armes que les vaillans chevaliers &
 176 escuiers de vostre court font a cest noel. Pourquoi nous envoions devers vous nostre tres bien
 177 am  chevalier apell  Pertsapeine, lieutenant du cappitaine de nostre cit  de Troye la Grande, qui
 178 grandement desire d'estre apris de la science du dit fait d'armes avecques les autrez chevaliers &
 179 escuiers dessus diz. Pourquoi tres affectueusement vous prions que a nostre dit chevalier vous
 180 veuillez baillier¹⁵⁴ & delivrer ung chevalier de vostre court qui porte en ses armes ung escu
 181 d'argent a ung chief d'azur a deux melletes d'or¹⁵⁵ pour le deschargier de six coups de lance
 182 assis en basses selles sans estre atachi  ne liez, et ne le nous ten  pas longuement, considr  le
 183 grant chemin qu'il luy convient retourner. Donn  en nostre cit  de Troye dedans le Temple de
 184 Jupiter,¹⁵⁶ ce jour de sa deffendacion. Celuy qui fait croistre le pain & le vin vous doit regner
 185 sans fin.

¹⁴⁹ Here meaning "anyone" or "one."

¹⁵⁰ Gillmeister notes that "monsicheroun", likely an invented name referring to Olympus, is a hybrid of the Latin *mons* ("mountain") and of the Greek *h ron* ("holy mountain"), "Challenge Letters," 188.

¹⁵¹ MS: cens cens. Correction supplied from DC: cinq cens.

¹⁵² MS: pardonit.

¹⁵³ Meaning in this sense "merry-making; sport, amusement; game, sport."

¹⁵⁴ Meaning in this sense to "give, hand over; deliver, surrender."

¹⁵⁵ *Melletes*, or mullets, are a common heraldic charge in the form of a star with straight-sided rays. The arms described here appear to correspond to the De Clinton family of Madestoke; see Boutell, *The Handbook to English Heraldry*, 50-51. Gillmeister suggests that *melletes* should in fact be read as *nielletes*, "[a]pparently a diminutive of *nielle*, 'corn-cockle,' 'a blue flower growing in corn-fields,'" "Challenge Letters," 221; this reading is unpersuasive.

¹⁵⁶ Gillmeister notes that Jupiter, like Apollo, was considered a Muslim god in the Middle Ages, "Challenge Letters," 221.

[#11.]

186 [f. 40r] A tres excellent & tres noble Princesse, Dame de ceste haulte feste, dame & cetera, fille
 187 & cetera. Monstre, tres humblement ung petit et jeune homme nommé Toret de Tollide,¹⁵⁷
 188 porteur de cestes, qui est venu d'estranges parties pour veoir le contenment de vostre court royal
 189 affin de aprendre nourreture et le fait d'esbatement d'armes, humblement suppliant a vostre
 190 haultesce que vous plaise commander le plus jolis chevalier de vostre feste entre les aages de xvi
 191 et xx ans qui a plus longuement esté servant d'amours de son aage sans estre ne guirdon¹⁵⁸
 192 recevoir a delivrer le dit suppliant de six coups de lance de mesure sans villain rochet en vostre
 193 excellente presence en vostre salle quant il plaira a vostre haultesce affin que le dit povre et petit
 194 suppliant puisse retourner a l'estrange pais dont il venoit le mieulx aprins d'esbatement dessus
 195 dit & ce parvoié de vostre excellence, bonté & noblesse.

[#12.]

196 A tres excellente et noble Princesse, Dame & cetera, fille & cetera. Monstre, humblement ung
 197 jeune homme apellé Lancelot de Libie, qui est venu de loingtains parties d'Orient pour serchier
 198 la droite escolle de nourreture & d'amours. Aiant plain informacion que vostre court royale [f.
 199 40v] est vray université de toutes excellentes vertus, sy¹⁵⁹ vient a vostre hault pov[o]ir aprendre
 200 nourreture et le fait d'esbatement d'armes, suppliant a vostre excellente noblesce que vous plaise
 201 commander le chevalier demourant en vostre court qui porte en sa devise une maniere de beste
 202 appellee foliard¹⁶⁰ a delivrer nostre dit enfant de six coups de lance en basses selles avecquez
 203 roches d'assise sans estre liez ne atachiez pour apprendre le jeune suppliant le fait d'esbatement
 204 & ce parvoié de vostre begnine courtoisie.

[#13.]

205 A tres excellente Princesse, Dame de ceste haulte feste, fille & cetera. Monstre tres humblement
 206 ung jeune petit enfant appellé Voulenté d'Apprendre, porteur de cestes, venus de longtains
 207 parties pour veoir le noble contenment de vostre court royale et pour apprendre le fait
 208 d'esbatement d'armes, a vostre excellente haultesce humblement suppliant que vous plaise
 209 commander le plus jolis & mieulx joustant chevalier de vostre feste qui est droit cousin au tres
 210 redoubté Prince, le Roy de l'Isle des Geans, a delivrer as premiers jousteurs [unfinished]

¹⁵⁷ Toledo, in Spain.

¹⁵⁸ Alternate form of *guerdun*, meaning “reward.”

¹⁵⁹ Here meaning “so, thus.”

¹⁶⁰ Gillmeister hesitantly translates this as “fol liart,” meaning “silly grey horse,” “Challenge Letters,” 206. The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* identifies “foliard” as a possible alternative spelling of *fulmard* / *folimard*, the Old French word for “polecat” (D is the only witness cited for this alternate spelling).

Textual Endnotes with Corresponding Line Numbers

5. clarté] clere DC
6. gouvernance] covernance L
7. prennent] prent L
8. de la vostre droit] la droite LE
9. l'engresse] la succession LE
- 9-10. Ferombras de la Fontaine] son bras de la fonraine L
10. haultesse] tres haut haultesse LE
13. coups] coupplés LE
13. avecques] a E
15. faire povons a] pour vous faire puissons pour LE
17. excellent] prosperité LE
19. plain] tout plains L
20. tres noble] noble E
21. escuier porteur] enfant porteur L; enfant pour tenir E
22. parties] terres & pays LE
22. contenment] comencement LE
25. coups] coupplés L; coupeles E
26. le fait & esbatement dessus dit et ce] le dit fait & ebatement d'armes et tout soit LE
27. bonté et gentillesce] & bonne gentillesse LE
28. liesse] gentillesce LE
29. seur] cousin C
33. approuvee] est approuvee LE
34. court] est court LE
34. seur] cousin C
36. maintes] pluseurs DC
36. a] & DCLE
37. il est mis] et s'est mis LE
37. querir] trouver LE
38. aucunes nouvelles] nouvelles LE
40. devers] devant LE
40. vostre *presence*] vostre Prince DC
40. ceste presente] cestre prochene LE
41. avoir] aura C
45. a fait] fist LE
- 46-47. ou dit Royaume [...] prisié & loé] et semblément en plusieurs autres regions & contrees estranges dont il doit estre mieulx loué et prisié LE
47. Desirant] Desirons LE
49. mesmes nostre nourry faciez] nostre norry mesmes faciez LE
- 50-51. ung escu dont le champ est d'azur a trois quintefueillez d'or] d'azur a trois quies [E. quintes] feullez LE
52. ferés tres] ferés tout et LE
55. seur] cousin C
56. le dessus dit] dit C
56. venant] alant LE

57. Panchaluce] Panthaluce DC; Panthalice L; Panchalice E
 57-58. laquelle [...] presence] laquelle il a acompaigné C; laquelle il acompaigné & acompaigne jusques a vostre presence LE
 59. infildés] juifs E
 64. tenu] detenu LE
 66. prisons] prisonnez C
 67. luy] me LE
 68. valees, montaignes] montaignes valees DC; valees & montaignes E
 71. bien] tres bien LE
 71. feste de noel tient] feste de noel tendra L; foys de nouvel tendra E
 72. tant solennelle qu'il a en sa court] si haute qu'il y aura LE
 72. grant] tres grande C
 73. font] sont LE
 75. targes] caiges E
 77. Panthesillee] Panthasillee D; Pantasile C; Panchasillee LE
 77. s'adresse] se tire & adresce DC
 78. jouvenal presence] joyeuse prince LE
 78. conduit & menans] conduit & mene D; covent & mene C; conduit & mayne LE
 79. nepveu] ne pveur C [Gillmeister suggests that this is an abbreviation for *nostre prover*, "Challenge Letters," p. 219.]
 79. Feresbas] Ferebras DC
 80. rompera mie sa prison et qu'il ne s'enfuie] rompe [...] DC; rompe ne brise sa dite prison fuyant LE
 83. le conquest du Royaume de Jherusalem] a conqueste de Jerusalem LE
 83. conte, chevalier] conte, baron, chevalier LE
 84. lance dessus diz] lance LE
 85. Alpha & Primus] Alpha & Primi D; Alpha & O C
 88. Roy] puissant Roy LE
 89. ordonnons] ordonnasines E
 91-107. Alternate ending to Letter #5 in LE: qui estoit [...] pour ce qu'il est vu & pover sans vesture par le importable yre qui est qui est [E. qui est] du Roy de Froidure Region & trace par entre la terre isi reprene la couverture et soubtil mantel plain de doulcour flours d'iris est [E. doulcour & de flour drois est] ainsi que tous estas du monde chacun en son endroit [E. droit] doivent tendre a honneur & estre & reconnaitre coite & mantel de vertueuse meurs & sciences comme sont tous ceulx de vostre tres noble court par la vertu de vostre gracieusité, bonne gouvernance, et bon contenenment qui est le vray mirer & examplaire [E. miroir example] de toute honnour & gentilleste avons entedy que prochement tenés feste a tout [E. court] merveilleuse a laquelle & pour icelle veoir et nous en certiffier envoyons ung nostre bon familier sergant nommé l'entres [E. l'encros] norry Feirant, porteur [E. pour tenir] de ceste, vous prians tres affectueusement que par le conseil & advis de plus nobles & experts en armes de vostre dite feste vous plaise faire delivrer et accomplir nostre dit familier & sergant de six coups [E. couples] de lance a rochez par le plus renommé chevalier ou escuier de vostre dit court qui souvant ait parlé d'amours & parlé a plusieurs dames & dameiselles et changé la coustume de tous loiaulx amoureux, assiz en bassez selles sans estre liez ne attachez affin que nostre dit noroy [E. norry] puist en sa jeunesse aprendre d'eschiver d'estre double ou faulx en amours, que Dieu deffende comme nous affions en vostre noblesse. Tres excellente Princess nous prions au Dieu

d'Amours de vous otroier honneur & parfaite, saint [E. parfaite santé] et joyeus vye & longue.
Donné en nostre palais de plaisance plain de delices.

92. yre] yver DC

108. d'onneur] d'amour L

109. ceste haulte et honnorable feste] ces hault feste C

110. dilleccion] parfaite dileccion LE

110-11. de plain entente] du tout & a plaine LE

112. dons] nous DC

112-13. dons garantiez [...] de l'acomplir] le vous garentissons de par le Roy des Roys comme a la plus haulte et noble dame predustinat de Dieu de pour l'acomplir LE

113-14. honnorablement envoyons devers vostre noblesse ung chevalier] envoyons devers vous ung noble chevalier LE

114. Joune] Jeune DC; Josne LE

116-17. fait du honnorable esbatement d'armes] tres honorable fait d'armes LE

118. d'estat] estant de duc LE

118. viel] long LE

118-19. a present estant a vostre haulte & royale feste a] qui soit en vostre tres noble court pour LE

120. l'esbatement] d'esbatement d'armes CLE

120. tres excellente] aussi tres haulte et excellent LE

120. donné nous est] or nous a donné LE

122-23. feste, [...] Costentinoble] feste, comme l'Empreur de Constantinoble L; feste, comme l'Amperour de Constantin noble E

123. Roy] puissant Roy L

124-29. Alternate ending to Letter #6 in LE: petis [...] entresignes pour nostre dit chevalier, vous prians que dessus que nos dit deux entreseigne leur soient presentees [E. cest premier jour de l'an deux entresaignes lui soient presentees], vous priant et nous recomandé a leurs haulx & honorables estas & excellentes seignores & princes comme de ce avons en vous nostre parfaite fiencé. Tres excellente & tres noble Princesse, l'espaciale cause de nostre creacion, vous garde & gouverne en honneur & parfaite sainte & vous etroit [E. octroit] joyeuse vye & longue durré. Donné en nostre donjon de diligence wydé de tout vice.

125. vous en] en vous DC

125. puissons] puisse DC

126. excelle[n]s] tres excellentz C

126. fions] [Absent in DC]

129. widé] voidé C

131. Desireus] Desir LE

133. aprendre le fait d'esbatement d'armes] aprendre et veoir l'esbatement et fait d'armes LE

134. humblement] tres humblement LE

134. de ceste feste qui a plus chevauché] de vostre dite feste qui plus a esté & chevauché LE

137. au soir en vostre salle] en vostre sale au soir DC

137-40. Alternate ending to Letter #7 in LE: et celui [...] au mieulx joustant par jugement & comant sa lance aura de son compaignon une verge d'or prians tres humblement vostre haultesse & seignore fera acomplir le requeste du dit suppliant et a *savoir* le non du chevalier.

137. a] aura DC

138. a chascunne cours de son compaignon une verge] de son compaignon a chascunne cours une verge DC
141. Penolese] Penelope LE
142. noble] tres noble DC
142. Ulixes] Olixes L
143. vous estes tous dis] tous dit anés LE
146. du fait d'esbatement] en l'esbatement et fait LE
- 147-48. ung noble chevalier [...] enfant] a ung chevalier de vostre dit feste qui porte en sa devise trois diverses fuelles en façon de treffle a delivrer nostre filz LE
149. enfant] filz et enfant LE
- 150-54. Alternate ending to Letter #8 in LE: d'esbatement [...] & esbatement d'armes qu'il pourra et nous certifier par lui bon [E. voz], noblez & gentils [E. grans] plaisirs & le bon estat de vostre tres haulte & noble personne qui nous sera [E. fera] confort & gentit [E. grant] consolacion a nostre cuer. Tres excellente Princesse, le vray Dieu & cetera.
153. santé] saintié C
158. noble court] court LE
159. joster, dancier & joieuse vie mener] chanter, dancier, et mener joyeuse vye LE
- 159-60. l'encrese de nostre petit enfant] l'acroissement & avancement d'un nostre filz & enfant LE
160. vers vostre] par deveurs vostre DCL; par deveurs vous & vostre E
- 161-67. Alternate ending to Letter #9 in LE: enpriens [...] prions tres acertes & de cuer de comander a aucun chevalier de vostre dit feste qu'il delivre nostre filz & enfant de six coups de lance a roches sans villein en haultes selles et que nostre dit enfant & filz, a son retour devers nous, nous en puisce certifier avec des nouvelles de vostre noble estat & santé aussi s'il est chose que pour vous & cetera puissons [E. vous faire puissons] pour l'acomplir. Tres excellente Princesse, le hault & puissant Roy des Roys vous tiegne en bonne santé & vous octroit joyeuse & longue vye. Donné [unfinished] [E. Donné & cetera.]
161. vous enpriens] en vous priant DC
163. entre] outre DC
168. Messepotaine] Mesopolitaine D; Mesopolitaine C ; Neseptame L [[the initial "N" could well be an "M" partially eclipsed by the illuminated "C" of "Cleopatra"]; Mesopotame E
169. appellee Presbyter Jehan] Prestre Johan LE
171. bien amee] tres chiere et amé LE
- 172-73. villain le Conquereur, pardon] Guillaume le Conquereur, cuy Dieux pardonit LE
- 174-85. Alternate ending to Letter #10 in LE: se adressent [...] soprennent les [E. si prennent leur] adrescés par devers vous en vostre ro[a]lle [E. noble] court pour eulx deire & apprendre ou noble fait d'armes assés prochement comme a cest jour de noel prochain pour laquelle feste veoir nous y envoyons ung nostre un amé chevalier apellé Portsapeyne [E. Pertsapeine], lieutenant du capitaine de Troye la Grande, lequel a grant desir de veoir & apprendre le tres noble fait & exercité d'armes & especialement en vostre dit tres noble court pourquoy vous prions tres affectueusement que au dit nostre servant & chevalier vueiller bailler le chevalier qui porte en son blason d'argent a ung chief d'azur a deux melletes [E. molletes] d'or pour lui acomplir vi coups de lance en basses selles sans estre lyé ne ataché et ce fait le nous le rouvoir et de voz haultes & bonnes nouvelles [E. nous le renvoyés certes de voz haultes & bonnes nouvelles]. Donné & cetera.

187-95. Alternate ending to Letter #11 in LE: homme [...] enfant nommé Toret de Tollide [This name is entirely omitted in E, and there are only two illegible letters in its place.], lequel vient d'estranges parties pour veoir le noble estat de vostre court & aussi pour apprendre & retenir des nobles faiz d'armes, vous tres humblement suppliant qu'il vous plaise lui fair delivrez gentil homme de son aiage come de xvi a xx ans en ce temps hautee d'amours & les deduis sans estre guere donné qui acomplisse le dit suppliant de six coups de lance de mesure sans vellein & en vostre presence pour soy en retourner escrip [E. retourner es dit] estranges parties & cetera.

194. venoit] est venu DC

196-204. Alternate ending to Letter #12 in LE: Monstre [...] suppliant [E. supplie] tres humblement Lancelot de Libye [E. de l'Arbre], persone bachelier des terres, royaume [E. josne bachelier du royaume] & contree des parties d'Orient pour sercher, querir & trouver la droite escelle & norriture d'armes & d'amour, qui par sa vraye informacion a trouvé que cest vostre roial & excellente court a laquelle pour honnour vous requiert qu'il ait son soublr [?] [E. semblable] pour l'acomplir de vi coups de lance a roches sans estre lyé [E. lyé ne] aitaché en basses selles affin de soyen retourner & certiffier de vostre dit tres noble court & cetera.

197. apellé] nommé DC

205-10. Alternate ending to Letter #13 in LE: Monstre [...] dame de ceste tres haulte & noble feste, suppliant [E. haulte & noblesse supplie] tres humblement ung josne et petit enfant nommé Bonne Volonté d'Apprendre, porteur de cestes, lequel vient de longtaines marches poure veoir le noble estat de vostre court pour y apprendre l'esbatment & fait d'armes, qu'il le conplaise [E. vous plaise] lui delivrer le plus jolis & meulx joustant de vostre court, lequel est cousin au Roy de ysye & l'acomplir de vi coups de lance a roches sans estre aitaché nit [E. ou] liez & cetera.

209. redoubté] tres doubté C

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