Abstract

This thesis endeavours to understand late medieval lyric poetry and song from two ostensibly separate contexts: insular manuscript witnesses of English lyric from 1200 to 1400; and the narrative effects of lyric in Geoffrey Chaucer’s longer poetry, including the Canterbury Tales, the Parliament of Fowls, and the Book of the Duchess. These two contexts yield new insights about the medieval lyric. First, an overview of the manuscripts of medieval lyric from 1200 to 1400 in England suggests that about half of anonymous lyrics in this period exist in multiple witnesses and are thus in some sense connected, providing us with the insight that lyric at this time was not so much fragmentary as embedded in rich networks of meaning. The first chapter of the thesis uses network mapping software to represent some of these networks, and discusses the relationships among lyrics that appear in Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13 and related manuscripts, such as Oxford, Jesus College MS 29, and Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 27.
Subsequent chapters of the thesis draw out connections between lyrics and narrative events in Chaucer’s poetry, showing in a very different sense that lyric as a literary form reaches outward from the speaker to the narrative world itself, inviting narrative events to take place. Such an insight is markedly different from views of the lyric which think of it as making nothing happen. Lyric is a force for change that drives narrative, and a force for change in Chaucer’s imaginary social worlds; Chaucer’s lyric and late medieval lyrics are embedded in networks of meaning, both in the narrative poetry in which they appear, and in the manuscripts in which they are copied.
Acknowledgments

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auchinleck</td>
<td>Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bod.</td>
<td>Bodleian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCC</td>
<td>Cambridge, Corpus Christi College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUL</td>
<td>Cambridge, University Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Def.</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Text Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.S.</td>
<td>Extra Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley 2253</td>
<td>London, British Library Harley MS 2253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus 29</td>
<td>Oxford, Jesus College MS 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidstone A.13</td>
<td>Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MED</td>
<td>Middle English Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIMEV</td>
<td><em>New Index of Middle English Verse</em> (ed. Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>OM</td>
<td><em>Ovide moralisé</em></td>
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O.S.                Original Series

PMLA               *Publications of the Modern Language Association*

PL                  *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*

s.                  centuries (*saecula*); s. xiv = fourteenth century

S.S.                Second Series

UL                  University Library

Vernon              Oxford, Bodleian MS Eng. poet. a
Thesis Introduction: What does Lyric do?

The idea that the genre of lyric involves both introspection and timelessness has an honorable genealogy, beginning at least with the Romantic period, when the lyric poem was explicitly defined as an introspective and self-reflexive form. The view of lyric as solipsistic rests on an understanding that lyric poetry is substantially different from narrative; the lyric poem cannot be part of a “narrative where one thing leads to another” says Jonathan Culler (1981, 165). Stories are about something and have sequence; lyric, meanwhile, is a contemplative moment, has no events, is not about anything, and thus has no sequence: “nothing need happen in an apostrophic poem” (Culler 1981, 165). When a lyric poem addresses someone, a “timeless present” is evoked, Culler says, echoing the philosopher Susanne Langer in Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art.  

For Culler and many others, lyric’s non-sequentiality and its inwardness are strongly associated, to the point where it is believed that one characteristic requires the other. Such a view of lyric has been influential in Chaucer criticism. James Wimsatt persuades us that “lyric commentary” in Troilus and Criseyde “slows the pace and focuses on sentiment and introspection” (1985, 28–29). Wimsatt takes his cue on introspection from Daniel Poirion’s statement that late medieval French poetry is the most “exclusively lyric” epoch of all, since its lyric poets present man “in his most inward truth” (Le Poète et le Prince [1965, 99, in Wimsatt 1985, 30]). Wimsatt argues that Chaucer’s lyric is very much like Old French lyric, and he supports his argument with comprehensive evidence of Chaucer’s borrowings from the dits amoureux, such as Guillaume de Machaut’s Remede de Fortune and the Fonteinne Amoureuse. Ardis Butterfield is equally interested in introspection in Chaucer’s lyrics in Troilus and Criseyde and the Book of the Duchess; for example, Butterfield questions how “the inset

---

1 Susanne Langer, writing of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poetry, links the present simple tense of German to the non-sequentiality of lyric: “The whole creation of a lyric is an awareness of a subjective experience, and the tense of subjectivity is the ‘timeless’ present” (Langer 1953, 100).

2 By “lyric commentary,” Wimsatt means the speeches of characters.
lyrics in the *dits* act as a means of exploring, and expressing, tensions implicit in a love poet’s role” (Butterfield 1991b, 42). Curtis Jirsa’s recent dissertation on lyric in *Piers Plowman* meanwhile explores Richard Maidstone’s “personal, affective” adaptation of the seven penitential psalms (Jirsa 2008, 135–6), and says that by apostrophizing Love, Troilus attempts to leave behind the stasis of lyric discourse (2008, 46). James Simpson’s analysis of the Ovidian elegiac mode in the sixteenth century also recalls the Romantic lyric in its readings of Chaucer’s lyric. Simpson says the “Complaint unto Pity” deploys “forms of public affairs and civic responsibility” but does so in order to signal “a turning away from that world, from which the Ovidian narrator is an exploitative recusant” (2004, 130). Simpson says of the “Complaint unto Pity” that its “sequence of time is itself destroyed,” leading to a “temporal stasis,” including a deliberate confusion of tenses (2004, 129), which Simpson believes is characteristic of this mode in the late medieval and early modern period.

The view of lyric’s stasis and inwardness can be challenged by suggesting that lyric actually does important things in the world or in a narrative. Critics of lyric who value the idea of its inwardness sometimes suggest that the introspective mode facilitates lyric poetry’s ability to engage with the social world by rejecting it and its ideological baggage. G.W.F. Hegel, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno describe lyric quite differently, but always as a genre whose emphasis on self-expression entails tension with the social and political world. For Adorno and for other commentators, lyric’s ability to withdraw from or fracture ideological structures means it is anything but apolitical.

---

3 While the *Book of the Duchess* is a court elegy, Butterfield says, it is not as much a public performance as contemporary French elegies by Jean Froissart and Jehan de la Mote; Ardis Butterfield points out, for example, that no presentation copy of a *Book of the Duchess* manuscript survives (1991, 33).

4 Richard Maidstone, d.1396, was a Carmelite friar who studied theology at Oxford; his major work was *Protectorium pauperis* (“In defence of poverty”) and his seven penitential psalms are his most popular work today (Copsey 2004).

5 For Hegel’s view on lyric, see *Aesthetics* (1975, 2:1154); for Benjamin’s, see his work on Baudelaire (1973).
Other critics seek to show a relationship between lyric and that which lies beyond it by paying attention to lyric poems as outward looking—extrospective rather than introspective. Lisa Lai-Ming Wong, for example, suggests that we expand the monologic lyric voice to “a triangular or quadrangular communication circuit” including the addressee and reader (Wong 2006, 273). In Wong’s view, a lyric poem demands to be overheard—heard over and over again. Kalliopi Nikolopoulou meanwhile suggests that when lyric involves an address it tends to suggest an existential aporia that arises from seeking a divinity who does not turn toward the speaker:

In “Cantique des Colomes,” Paul Valéry summarizes the task of poetry in its promise to carry us through a world without guarantees, a world that is godless: “Nous allons sans les dieux / À la divinité!” [“We go without the gods / Towards divinity”]. (Nikolopoulou 2006, 773)

Going “towards” a divinity, like the task of address described by Wong, is a way of thinking about what lyric does if it is no longer imagined as entirely inward-looking. It is this kind of treatment of lyric that I expand upon in this thesis. I begin in Chapter One with a two-part definition of lyric genre that borrows its terms from Fredric Jameson. Jameson argues that genre is revealed partly by its social contexts. His further insight is that genre is also revealed by certain kinds of “directions,” including concepts that are characteristic of a genre, and which Jameson refers to as “semantic codes” (Jameson 1975, 141). Jameson considers that a speaker’s intentions for how words are to be used are signalled by the “physical presence of the speaker, with his gesturality and intonations,” but writing, which does not have these things, must persuade the reader by means of other kinds of signals or directions (Jameson 1975, 135). In this thesis I approach my central questions—what do medieval English lyrics do? How are they other than timeless and introspective or isolated and fragmentary?—from two standpoints, related to those offered by Jameson.

---

6 Although J.L. Austin excluded poetry from his theory of performative utterances, literary critics such as Lisa Lai-Ming Wong choose to include it (2006, 282 n4).
First, I set Middle English lyric in its manuscript contexts as a way to explore some of its “social” and historical contexts. In doing so, I draw implicitly on several decades of work in the fields of book history, including a great deal of influential work on verse in early modern and medieval manuscripts. In well-known studies, Arthur Marotti and Harold Love present abundant bibliographic evidence for the importance of material poetic texts in social life. Marotti shows that manuscript and print forms can be “the basis of a socioliterary history” (1995, xii) and can reveal much about social groups (1995, xiii). In *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (1995), Marotti considers specific locations—universities, court, London’s Inns of Court, and families—where manuscripts were circulated; and, by focusing on poems in manuscripts rather than in print, Marotti shines a light on the coterie circulation of the lyrics of John Donne (1572–1631) and on obscene and politically scandalous verse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Harold Love turns to the manuscript circulation of seventeenth-century ‘state’ poetry (satires of politicians and politics) and libertine verse, which he terms “scriptorial satire” due to the role of scribes in producing this poetry (1998, 232). Love proposes the term “scribal community” for groups he shows were “bonded by the exchange of manuscripts” (1998, 180). In studying medieval manuscripts, Brian Stock meanwhile presents the idea of a “collective consciousness” for textual communities which have their norms structured by texts (1996, 13). Stock defines the textual community as a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretive community, but it is also a social entity. (Stock 1996, 150)

Harold Love and Arthur Marotti’s work on Renaissance lyric manuscripts attends to material contexts by productively using the insight of Jerome McGann’s that “ballads and songs typically descend to us through wildly heterodox lines of textual transmission” (1991, 75). According to McGann’s notion of “textual socialization” (1991, 83), the “universe of literature is socially generated” (1991, 75) and the “thick” literary text—one with metaphor and metonymy, among other things—can be built through the “textual presence and activities of many nonauthorial agents” (1991, 76). These book-historical approaches to lyric texts nicely illustrate D. F. McKenzie’s insight that bibliography has a massive authority to “show the human presence in any recorded text” (1999, 20).
The bibliographical work in my first chapter serves as a background to the findings of my subsequent chapters. It stands independently of the rest of the thesis and it will be expanded by future research on fifteenth-century manuscripts (including those that contain Chaucer’s poems) by further analysis of the evidence, and by what more that evidence tells us about sociohistorical and codicological contexts for lyric. In Chapter One of the thesis, I come to some important if preliminary conclusions along these lines. I judge lyric manuscripts to be evidence of historical social networks; further, surviving manuscripts can be visually represented as being connected together, belonging to one or more networks. While the networks of manuscripts that survive today are, clearly, not the same networks of manuscripts that existed several hundred years ago, today’s networks nevertheless reveal traces of those past networks and allow us to generate new questions that, with further attention and research, will facilitate the discovery of more information about these manuscripts and lyrics. The process of developing such a network involves identifying lyrics that exist in multiple copies, and then looking carefully at the books in which these multiple witness of lyrics appear, in order to see what else these books have in common, such as provenance, organization, scribal features, or material features. For example, in Chapter One I identify several manuscripts that share lyrics and also appear to have been owned by institutions run by the Hospitaller order at the time the lyrics were copied.

The second section of my thesis, comprising Chapters Two to Four, turns to the Middle English poet Geoffrey Chaucer and to the different perspective that his literary texts provide on the Middle English lyric tradition. In this part of the thesis, I take up Fredric Jameson’s idea that genre is signalled not just by social contexts—that is, by the way that communities produce and use texts (something evident, as I will show, from manuscript traditions)—but also by semantic codes and by written texts’ own complex forms and structures. To pursue this line of thought, I narrow my focus to Chaucer's deployment of lyric in the fictional worlds of his narrative texts. There, I argue, lyric cannot possibly conform to any simple (especially any post-Romantic) definition of lyric such as that appearing in the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary (“lyric,” adj. Def. 2.a): “expressing direct usually intense personal emotion especially in a manner suggestive of song.” That
is, my thesis seeks to revise ideas about lyric’s introspective quality. Some of the lyrics in Chaucer’s narratives do have that generic quality. Consider the Black Knight’s complaints and the Knight’s Tale’s May songs or even the devotional or quasi-devotional lyrics that burst from Chaucer's clergeon, or Second Nun, or his Troilus. These lyrics are marked generically in familiar ways. They are inward-looking; they stop the flow of narrative time. Their effects are also familiar: they are intended to relieve personal suffering or express hope or sadness or joy, and they build and build upon the speaker or singer’s idea of himself or herself as a lover or as a pious Christian. But other lyrics in Chaucer’s narrative texts also have effects beyond the self in the world. Some of these effects are intended by the speakers of lyrics and singers of songs in Chaucer’s works. Those who engage in lyric prayer, for example, hope to redeem themselves by winning a share of grace from God or to obtain favours from pagan gods. Lovesick and lustful characters use lyric to woo. The speakers of lyrical charms and spells hope to effect change in the natural environment, and the singers who join together in religious song hope for harmony here on earth as well as for eternal life in heaven. Lyric thus becomes a part of the force for change that drives narrative, and a force for change in Chaucer’s imaginary social worlds.

However, my argument is further that as lyric becomes extrospective in Chaucer's narrative work in this way, its limitations are revealed and these limitations too are part of how lyric is marked and part of what lyric does in these texts. Lyric has unintended as well as intended effects. Many, even most, of Chaucer’s lyrics fail in their overt purposes. In some cases lyric reaches the wrong audience, while in others, Chaucer brilliantly parodies lyric’s purpose or the nature of lyric utterance itself. The result of song-like performances of texts in Chaucer's narrative fiction is thus, more often than not, disappointment or something even worse. Lyric is implicated in disharmony, disgust, retribution and revenge, bodily violence, and the bawdy inversion of lofty ideals. Only very rarely does lyric lead to the remedies its speakers and singers seek, and when it does, the reader is invited to see this as a result of divine grace, not worldly song.
1 Medieval Lyric—Backgrounds

Others who more delighted to write songs or ballads of pleasure, to be sung [sic] with the voice, and to the harpe, lute, or citheron & such other musical instruments, they were called melodious Poets [melici] or by a more common name Lirique Poets, of which sort was Pindarus, Anacreon and Callimachus with others among the Greeks: Horace and Catullus among the Latines.

The word “lyric” arrives in English from Latin “lyricus” via the French “lyrique,” and in the sixteenth century it describes, in both English and French, a song sung to music. Despite this apparent clarity, even in the sixteenth century the lyric sits between musical and unmusical literature. George Puttenham says that lyric poets write songs and ballads, for example. Literally, “ballad” meant a “light and simple song,” but the word was indistinguishable from the ballade, a poem that could be sung, spoken, or read. Sir Phillip Sidney evidently means non-musical poems when he terms the Earl of Surrey’s poems lyrics (1586). Even this most early definition of “lyric” in English thus includes short poetry with and without musical accompaniment.

Before Puttenham’s time, the word “lyric” is uncommon in English and does not appear in the Middle English Dictionary (MED). The word would nevertheless have been familiar to those who spoke French and read Latin, for the French adjective “lyrique” and the Latin “lyricus” meant “sung to the lyre” as the poetry of ancient Greece was sung. The verse in late-medieval insular manuscripts is frequently referred to as “song,” whether or not it is accompanied by music, and the word “song” in Middle English sometimes conflates telling and singing. For example, in John Gower’s Confessio

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7 George Puttenham (1529–1590/91), a writer and critic from Sherfield-on-Loddon, is generally believed to have written The Arte of English Poesie, although it was published anonymously (May 2004).

8 Sir Philip Sidney (in An Apologie for Poetrie [1595], sig. I4v) finds “In the Earle of Surries Liricks, many things … worthy of a noble minde” (“Lyric,” Def. 3., OED 1989).

9 The related meaning of lyric as an adjective denoting something abstractly song-like appears much later in English, if the citations in the OED are to be trusted: Robert Southey applies the adjective to the lark; John Keats says “While little harps were touched by many a lyric fay”; and Robert Browning asks people to “greet the lyric girl!”
Amantis, Mercury with his piping “tolde” Argus “such a lusti song / That he the fol hath broght aslepe” (IV, 3346–7). To call each and every medieval lyric a “song” in modern English is not accurate, however, since the word “song” now applies only to poetry accompanied by music. It appears that the words “song” and “lyric” have changed places over time; “song” has become more specific to poetry accompanied by music, while “lyric” has replaced “song” as meaning either something sung or a short poem. The term “medieval lyric,” anachronistic as it is, thus properly describes the ambiguous status of short medieval verses that were sung—or were called “song” despite their not having been sung.

Reviewing this etymological history of the word “lyric” makes apparent the deep-rooted conceptual framework often shared between lyric and song, a framework which, when operative, meant that lyric and song shared ideas of performance and musical reception. These ideas are explored in my thesis by considering, in Chapter One, the importance of song lyrics that are accompanied by musical notation in late medieval manuscripts; and in Chapter Four, the relevance to Chaucer’s lyric of music theory by Boethius and other medieval commentators.10 A knowledge of early and late medieval views about music’s various types and strange mysterious powers enriches our understanding of Chaucer’s lyric, which at times appears to bear characteristics of a musical song. And yet because the relationship of musical song to lyric is unstable in the period, and because at times lyric in Chaucer is not expressly musical—for example, in the Merchant’s Tale, where Damyan’s “lay” is written rather than sung—music cannot provide a consistent or coherent way of thinking about Chaucer’s lyric and its effects. Nevertheless, at times musical song is very relevant; such as in Chapter Two’s discussion of the farted compline in the Reeve’s Tale; and in Chapter Four’s treatment of the Parliament of Fowls, where medieval philosophical controversies about birdsong and pure and corrupt music provide a useful background to the discussion of the roundel sung by birds.

10 Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (d. 524) can be said to belong both to the world of late antiquity and the Middle Ages by virtue of his education and influence (Marenbon 2003, ix).
The idea that lyric at times shares features with musical song, and yet at times does not, suggests to me that medieval lyric and musical song may benefit from being thought of as a fuzzy set—a group of items with imprecise boundaries. Such imprecise boundaries are characteristic of psychological categories such as beauty or tallness (“fuzzy set,” 2008). Rather than see these imprecise boundaries as obstacles, we can choose to see them as opportunities. In fact many medieval lyric critics have chosen to do just that: a fuzzy or very open approach to definitions of medieval “lyric” has generated fascinating studies. Anthologies of the medieval English lyric treat it as short verse, whatever its literary form, and regardless of musical annotation (Brown 1932, 1939; Luria and Hoffman 1974; Hirsh 2005). Rosemary Greentree’s bibliography of medieval lyric is useful because of its very broad definition—“short poem” (2001, 8)—despite her admission that many medieval English lyrics may be fitted easily into subcategories such as the ballad, roundel, complaint, charm, and prayer.

The Romance language origin of the word “lyric” also signals the rich Latin and, later, European heritage of the Middle English lyric, and the debt English lyric owes to prayer and liturgy may be seen in the many studies showing links between lyric and Latin liturgy. Parts of the liturgy are sung, and for some critics the liturgy’s musical influence on lyric cannot be underestimated. Bruce Holsinger notes a gray area between “liturgical” and “non-liturgical,” and asks “What exactly is the liturgy itself, particularly in the context of religious lyrics whose function is a matter of speculation?” (2007, 303). Carleton Brown presents evidence of the liturgical and Latin devotional influence, providing sources for many Middle English lyrics in his collections of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English lyrics (1932, 1939). Rosemary Woolf’s The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages (1968) also gives Latin liturgical and extra-liturgical sources for English religious lyrics. Latin preaching materials appear to have generated, or to be associated with, the copying of English lyric verse: Siegfried Wenzel did

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11 Here I am thinking of translation efforts in lyrics that aim to render meaning word-for-word, a concept that Rita Copeland refers to as “primary translation,” and which can be seen in texts such as the Ovide moralisé and Chaucer’s Boece (Copeland 1991, 94). Early articles by Carleton Brown (1911–12, 1915) revealed that intercalated lyrics in Chaucer drew upon phrases and images from Latin liturgical hymns.
influential work in this area (1986, 1989, 1994). Specific author studies reveal Latin
sources for devotional English lyrics, such as Edward Wilson’s index of John of
Grimestone’s lyrics (1973) and Stephen Reimer’s Works of William Herber (1270–
1333); Herber was a Franciscan friar who composed Middle English lyrics while
translating from or working with Latin originals (Reimer 1987). 12

Wide-ranging links between liturgy and medieval English lyric raise the issue not only of
music in lyric but also the question of prayer’s relationship to lyric, for prayer is
sometimes a part of liturgy. Since many prayers were written in lyric form, where is the
dividing line between prayer and lyric? Some focused views of prayer may help. For
example, Kathryn R. Vulic considers prayer to be distinct from sacrament (that is,
liturgy) precisely because it does not require a priest (2004, 2). Lyric prayer was instead
usually a supplication. In an article on prayer in the Man of Law’s Tale, Ann Astell
considers the root of the word prayer: precari, “to beg” or “to entreat” and orare, “to
plead a case,” and says Hugh of Saint Victor judges meditation an important
precondition of prayer, as does Walter Hilton (1991, 90). 13 But it is clear that in
supplicatory prayer there are, equally, questions about the response of the auditor—about
hearing and being heard. Vulic’s view that prayer is a communication with God that does
not require a priest suggests prayer is a more direct kind of communication with God.
One wonders therefore how an idea of prayer that is overheard—heard not only by God,
but by someone or something else—might shape an idea of lyric prayer. In Chaucer,
lyrical prayers are often addressed to a saint or divinity who appears to be present. In a
sense, by hearing or reading the individual prayer of another person—such as a character
in a narrative—a reader is overhearing that prayer.

12 Recent work on Latin intertexts of English lyric tends to focus on individual lyrics. For example, see
Seth Lerer’s essay on “Dum Ludibus” from London, British Library Harley MS 2253 (Harley 2253)
(2008); Michael Kuczynski’s essay on William Herber’s translation of a verse from the liturgical hymn
Te Deum Laudamus (2011); and Ardis Butterfield’s recent essay that explores the “hinterland of French
and Latin writing” of a couplet in the religious treatise Speculum Ecclesie (2012, 47).

13 Walter Hilton (c1343–1396) wrote several important religious texts, including The Scale of Perfection
and The Cloud of Unknowing (Clark 2004). Hugh of St-Victor (d.1142) belonged to the house of
Augustinian Canons at St-Victor and is known for his works on grammar, geometry, and biblical
Non-liturgical Latin song in sequence form is typically referred to as “planctus” (Stevens 1986, 119). John Stevens notes that, before 1200, planctus sometimes simply describes a song, but most frequently it refers to a kind of song that laments the loss of someone, usually noble. For example, “Iudex summe medie” of the Cambridge Songs praises the legal skill and support of the church of Emperor Henry II and laments his death (1986, 120). For Stevens, then, the planctus is primarily a monophonic Latin musical form used to mourn a public figure. Stevens thus highlights a political, musical, and public aspect to the planctus. Peter Dronke, meanwhile, in his influential Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric, avoids the term planctus when he discusses Latin secular love-lyric as a vehicle for ideas about courtly love. Dronke, like Stevens, treats one of the Cambridge Songs, but chooses to discuss a planctus song that is exclusively erotic and personal rather than public and political. In general, Dronke discusses cases in which the “love-worship of the beloved” is apparent (1968, Vol. 1, 4).

Critics of Chaucer’s interpolated lyric have noted the importance of planctus, or complaint, but have generally taken an approach similar to Dronke rather than Stevens. For example, Dronke identifies Absolon’s song to Alisoun in the Miller’s Tale as a “plaint” that “joins images from the farmyard to the Song of Songs” (1968b, 118). W. A. Davenport also identifies a “complaint” mode in Chaucer, both in Chaucer’s short complaint poems and in his interpolated lyrics (1988, 4), but for Davenport, “complaint” is a “rhetorical device” of apostrophe rather than a poetic form; thus, according to Davenport, complaint carries no musical resonances but requires a “narrative setting” and at times is a kind of “debate poetry” (1988, 5–6). Davenport’s complaint recalls Dronke’s idea of the amour courtois mode in Latin love-lyric; for example, Davenport says that Chaucer’s complaint “presents the lover’s speech as the registration of the extent of sophisticated anguish” (1988, 8). For Davenport there is in Chaucer’s complaints both a

14 Stevens notes there is no full study of the planctus as such, but that the unpublished dissertation by Janthia Yearley (1983) is helpful, as is her published bibliography (1981).
15 The Cambridge Songs are a mid-eleventh-century compilation of around eighty Latin songs, some of which are musically notated (Bayless 2010). Emperor Henry II (973–1024) was king of Germany and Italy and was made emperor in 1014 (Parisse 2002).
lyric voice that “speaks in the moment of feeling” and a narrative voice that “constructs some continuity out of events” (1988, 8). Davenport departs from, for example, Nancy Dean (1967, 1) who believes that Chaucer’s idea of complaint descends from Ovid’s *Heroides*. She anticipates Simpson’s connection of the elegiac mode in Chaucer with Ovid’s *Amores* and *Heroides*. By contrast, when Wendy Scase (2007, 1) briefly treats several of Chaucer’s complaints (including *Anelida and Arcite*, and the “Complaint unto His Purse”) she notes the importance of English law in shaping the late medieval idea of complaint, and uses the word “complaint” such that it means “the expression of a grievance as a means of obtaining a judicial remedy”:

> Complaint [has]… uses both in law and in literature. … In law, a pleinte is the expression of a grievance as a means of initiating litigation. Pleinte is related procedurally and conceptually to the querela, the libellus, the bill, and clamour. … In literature, compleinte is sometimes associated with the names of the French lyric formes fixes poems, such as the ballade and virelay, but it never designates a fixed form itself. Middle English terms derived from planctus, compleinte, and the verbs pleinen and compleinen, sometimes seem to describe a manner of expression, for example pleinte wise, and complayning wyse, but these expressions do not have a precise rhetorical meaning. (Scase 2007, 1)

Scase’s view of complaint, interestingly, is similar to John Stevens’s, regarding the public nature of complaint, but has little to do with Dronke’s idea of the planctus, or with Simpson’s or Dean’s views of Ovidian elegiac influence.

I include charms as well as complaints in my corpus of lyrical texts in this thesis. Charms are typically considered to be lyrics only by critics who use a very broad definition of late medieval lyric, simply because charms are short and rhyme. While charm may not

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16 Interestingly, neither Dean nor Simpson mentions the importance of the late medieval *Ovide moralisé* as a redaction of the *Metamorphoses*—and some parts of the *Heroides*—though this version was undoubtedly an influence upon Chaucer.

17 More on the influence of legal “plaint” upon Chaucer’s lyric is found in C. J. Nolan (1979).

18 Charms would be excluded from the corpus of lyrics by many critics. Unlike the lyrics identified in *Troilus and Criseyde*, charm laments nothing and is thought to be without artifice. Moreover, a charm might not contain any apostrophe, and, because of its subsequent apparent lack of inner reflection, could hardly be considered as complex as a Petrarchan sonnet. While these things are true, it is also apparent that charms do often contain apostrophes, because they invoke unseen powers to help make material changes.
now be instantly recognizable as lyric, in the late medieval period it is still associated
with lyric by means of its long-term etymological and magical associations with song.
The word “charme” appears quite commonly in Middle English texts to describe verses
and inscriptions used to perform magic. In Chaucer’s Man of Law’s Tale, for example,
the word “charme” is used to indicate Donegild’s magical powers: “The mooder was an
elf, by aventure / Ycomen, by charmes or by sorcerie” (II, 755). Charm also often
suggests a kind of magic that heals, as for example in The Knight’s Tale, where, “To
oothere woundes and to broken armes / Somme hadden salues and somme hadden
charmes” (I, 2712). (The Middle English Dictionary provides several examples of similar
uses of “charme” in Chaucer.) Like “lyric,” “charm” comes to English from Latin via
French and etymologically it is related to the Latin carmen, or song. Indeed, charms were
often sung in ancient Greece and Rome and in subsequent periods, just as song was
frequently used as a kind of medical treatment.19

Above are listed some of the concepts and names that help us understand medieval lyric
in its literary, rhetorical, or musical contexts: planctus, plaint, carmen, charm, song, and
tale. As important as these historical and literary terms are—terms that the literary critic
depends upon for a background, or intellectual context, of lyric—so too are lyric’s
material contexts: the manuscripts in which medieval lyrics appear. It is widely agreed
that investigating these material contexts provides historical and intellectual backgrounds
for medieval English lyrics. The potential of a bibliographic approach is suggested by
work on medieval lyrics by Julia Boffey and many others, by researchers such as Arthur
Marotti and Harold Love, and by work on manuscripts of medieval lyrics in other
languages, including Ardis Butterfield’s work on medieval French song (2002); Marc-

19 Glending Olson notes fabliaux met a need for hygienic or therapeutic “recreational activity” (1982,
138). One fabliau says it will tell a story “for the sake of joy and pleasure” and “to make people laugh”—
purposes which allow people to attain a cheerful and happy mood. A fifteenth-century commentator in a
medical handbook by Aldobrandino of Siena comments that reading delightful and unusual works
(“ioyeuses” and “estranges”) will help one become cheerful and will combat melancholy (Olson 1982, 57).
These medieval views of recreation help contextualize the apparent remedial efficacy of sung and written
lyric in Chaucer.
René Jung’s work on manuscripts of the chanson (1986); and Rupert Pickens’s work on the twelfth-century Jaufré Rudel (1977, 1978). Studies of French lyric manuscripts lead the way in focusing on chansonniers—manuscript anthologies of chansons—with work by Christophe Callahan (1990); Maria Carla Battelli (1996); Stephen G. Nichols (1996); and Kathleen Frances Sewright (2008). Jane Taylor’s survey of work on the French lyric notes that “chansonniers and recueils are felt to reveal something of the socioliterary dynamics of particular texts and the social history of their transmission” (2007, 73). In medieval Italian studies, continued attention to the manuscripts of lyrics by Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) has led to a critical edition of Petrarch’s lyrics being digitized alongside manuscript images in the Oregon Petrarch Open Book Project, spearheaded by Massimo Lollini (Petrarca 2008). In the field of medieval English lyrics, as well, digital editions of manuscripts are being created to satisfy scholars’ desires to consult manuscript images as well as traditional printed editions. Medieval lyric studies has profited from the advent of online editions of the Auchinleck and Vernon manuscripts (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.1 and Oxford, Bodleian MS Eng. poet. a.1 respectively). D. Burnley and A. Wiggins’s digital edition of Auchinleck is freely available on the Web, and the Vernon manuscript edited by Wendy Scase is available in CD-ROM format; meanwhile, there is increasing online access to manuscripts held in repositories such as the Bodleian and the British Libraries. The move to digitize images of manuscripts is a sign not just of technological advancement, but of an increasing sense of the importance of the material aspects of texts—and the awareness that images of manuscripts can convey ample information about these material aspects.

Many recent studies of Middle English lyrics look closely at specific types of lyric manuscripts, at the lyrics of named authors, and at lyrics in Middle English poetry collections. Julia Boffey’s Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages (1985) presents rich descriptions of manuscripts of courtly love-lyrics from the fifteenth century. Susanna Fein’s book on the lyric poet John Audelay (d. c.1426) brings together essays on Audelay’s manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Douce MS 302) from scholars such as Richard Firth Green and Derek Pearsall; Fein herself writes an article on “Death and the Colophon in the Audelay Manuscript” (2009). Jonathan Horng Hsy’s
2007 dissertation, “Polyglot Poetics: Merchants and Literary Production in London, 1300–1500,” investigates the lyric poet Charles d’Orléans and other contemporary authors in terms of the exchange between merchants and poets, looking specifically at accountbooks and phrasebooks to identify points of contact between these two spheres. Julia Boffey’s article in the Brewer *Companion to the Middle English Lyric* (2005) surveys manuscripts of Middle English lyrics and as such was an important inspiration for my thesis. Other studies consider lyrics in terms of how they form parts of of specific manuscript anthologies and collections of lyrics. The miscellanies Vernon, Auchinleck and Harley 2253 are considered the three most important collections of Middle English lyrics, and all three medieval books are now available in facsimile (for Harley 2253, see Ker 1965; for Vernon, see Scase 2012 and Doyle 1987; for Auchinleck, see Burnley and Wiggins 2003 and Pearsall 1977). Each of these manuscripts has a growing bibliography of critical studies, some of which combine book-historical and literary approaches. The collection of articles on Harley 2253 edited by Susanna Fein (2000) presents a range of studies which begin with the material realities of the manuscript: Carter Revard identifies the hand of the Harley 2253 scribe; Frances McSparran identifies dialect groups of lyrics and other texts; and Marilyn Corrie considers differences among the inclusion of lyrics in both Harley 2253 and Oxford, Bodleian Digby MS 86 (Digby 86). Fein’s book arrives ten years after Derek Pearsall’s collection of essays on the Vernon manuscript (1990), which includes John Thompson writing about the Vernon lyrics and A.I. Doyle on the shaping of both the Vernon and the Simeon manuscripts. Wendy Scase also has a book forthcoming in 2013, *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript*. Strangely, perhaps, the Auchinleck manuscript so far has no collection of essays devoted to it, although it has attracted several dissertations, notably ones by Alison Wiggins (2000), Frederick C. Porcheddu (1994) and Timothy Shonk (1981). Another important early Middle English anthology which has attracted attention is the Oxford, Bodleian Laud Miscellaneous MS 108 (Laud 108), which contains saints’ lives and some lyrics; Kimberly Bell and Julie Nelson Couch’s collection of essays (2010) about Laud 108 contains work by A. S. G. Edwards and Susanna Fein among others. The work on medieval and early modern manuscripts of lyrics has broadened our understanding of the Middle English lyric and more and more suggests the intellectual rewards that can come from attending to
individual manuscripts as well as the individual lyrics and lyric groupings apparent within these manuscripts.

2 Chaucer’s Lyric—Background

One important influence on Chaucer’s idea of song was Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, a prosimetrum that Chaucer translated and that was a source for Old French *grands chants* and *dits amoureux* that were also familiar to Chaucer. Alternating meter and prose, the *Consolation* provides a model for inserting verse into narrative for *dits amoureux*, and into Chaucer’s poems. Three of Chaucer’s short lyrics are translations of *metra* from Boethius’s *Consolation*: “Fortune,” “The Former Age,” and “Lak of Stedfastness,” while two other works (the *Book of the Duchess* and *Troilus and Criseyde*) are regarded by James Wimsatt as drawing upon Boethian-influenced *dits amoureux*, such as Guillaume de Machaut’s *Remede de Fortune*. A *dit amoureux* is a French love narrative that intersperses short lyrics throughout the text.

Ardis Butterfield argues that not only the narrative material of the *Consolation* but also the inserted *metra* appeal to Chaucer—indeed, the mixing of forms attracted great interest from the time of the text’s composition, judging from an early commentary (Butterfield 1987, 195). Chaucer was also influenced by the model of Jean Renart’s *Romance of the Rose*, which intersperses 48 songs into its narrative, including “stanzas from 13 high-art songs from the trouvères and three from the troubadours” (Brown and Butterfield 2007, 211). James Wimsatt pioneered the study of Chaucer’s interpolated lyric to the fourteenth-century *dits amoureux*, themselves influenced greatly by the *Consolation* and the *Rose*. Wimsatt’s many articles on French influence, and his 1993 book, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, showed decisive links between Chaucer and Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart—links that Wimsatt designates as

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20 By “interpretations” I refer to translations of the *Consolation* that rewrite it and supplant its meaning, in a practice that Rita Copeland calls “secondary translation,” such as Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*, which not only translates parts of the *Ovide moralisé* but appropriates and transforms its meanings (Copeland 1991, 202).
The great importance to Chaucer of the French *dits amoureux* is summarized by V. J. Scattergood in the *Oxford Guide to Chaucer's Shorter Poems*: Chaucer appears to have detached himself almost completely from the rich and complex English tradition that was available to him … the influence of French lyric poetry on Chaucer is pervasive: he used French sources, and adopted and developed French forms. (Scattergood in Minnis 1995, 459)

For many critics, then, Chaucerian lyric is always in some sense French. Indeed, in the *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, lyric is missing from the three genre sections (romance, comedy and pathos) but appears in a section on Chaucer’s French inheritance (Butterfield 2003, 20–35).

Chaucer’s idea of lyric was undoubtedly influenced by Italian poets too—particularly by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). Piero Boitani identifies these three authors’ influences in Chaucer’s prayers to Love and to Mary (1987), and a song typically identified as having been inset into Chaucer’s poetry is the *Canticus Troili*, a translation from Petrarch. This area of influence is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead my aim is to describe patterns of imagery that arise in association with “intercalated lyric,” songs, and the mention of songs. Intercalated lyrics—lyrics that appear to have been inserted into longer poems, or at any rate seem to stand out from them somehow—and the mention of lyric and song (saying that Damyan wrote a lay to May, for example) are intriguing phenomena. In a discussion of Chaucer’s lyric, V. J. Scattergood admits that Chaucer’s intercalated lyrics are important but nevertheless concentrates on the twenty-two short poems of Chaucer’s that “had a separate existence” (1995, 457). Here, the interpolatedness of certain lyrics…

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21 James Wimsatt also publicized the theory, based on a dissertation by Charles Mudge, that the French “Poems of Ch” from University of Pennsylvania MS Codex 902 are by an associate of Chaucer (Wimsatt 1982) (it has been suggested that they might be by Chaucer himself).

22 As if to reinforce the marginal status of Middle English lyric, introductions to the field of Middle English literature and to Chaucer frequently give only a cursory treatment of lyrics; the *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Wallace 1999) includes no chapter on lyric, although some short poems are mentioned; and Michael Kuczynski notes that the lyric is treated “almost idly across sustained and earnest chapters” (2011, 4) in that book. Peter Brown’s *Companion to Chaucer* (2000) includes no chapters on lyric, and neither does Piero Boitani and Jill Mann’s *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (2003) or Steve Ellis’s *Oxford Guide* (2005).
leads to their marginality and their exclusion from the canon of lyric. The separate existence of Chaucer’s short poems also sometimes leads to them being excluded from discussion of interpolation. For example, Chaucer’s “ABC” stands alone, but its source text, Guillaume de Deguileville’s “ABC,” interacts with a longer poem—the *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*—and Chaucer’s “ABC” responds to this longer poem as well (Phillips 1993, 1).²³ It is evident that the “ABC” poems, via the *Pelerinage*, are shaped by the practice of intercalating lyrics and songs, as are other lyrics in Chaucer’s work, but critics have not often discussed the relationship between intercalated lyric and the imagery of the surrounding narratives. I focus on Chaucer’s intercalated lyric in Chapters Two to Four, but I also argue in Chapter Two that Chaucer’s “Complaint unto Pity” shares an attitude to lyric remedy that may also be found in the narrative poems that contain intercalated lyrics.

James Wimsatt’s influential 1991 book popularized the idea that Chaucer’s idea of lyric is shaped by the theory of “natural music.”²⁴ Song is not often dealt with in recent criticism of Chaucer’s lyric, however. T. G. Duncan’s *Companion to the Middle English Lyric* (2005), the only guide to insular lyrics, has no chapter on music and Sarah Stanbury’s treatment of gender and voice in that volume does not mention singing. The *Index of Middle English Verse* has no list of English lyrics that are accompanied by musical notation. Such minor omissions may mark a recent turn away from the idea, current in the 1950s and earlier, that medieval lyric was song-like. For example, E. T. Donaldson valorizes the orality of Chaucer’s lyric, although he sees it as a popular and degrading feature (1951, 126). So too does Arthur K. Moore’s 1949 article on “Chaucer’s Lost Songs” draw attention to Chaunticleer’s love-song “My lief is faren in londe,”

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²³ Guillaume de Deuileville or Digulleville, is the author of three long pilgrimage allegories: the *Pelerinage de la vie humaine* (Pilgrimage of Human Life, c.1330–1332), the *Pelerinage de l’âme* (Pilgrimage of the Soul), and the *Pelerinage de Jhesucrist* (Pilgrimage of Jesus Christ) (Kamath 2010, 179). John Lydgate produced a translation of the first work, the *Pilgrimage of Life*, c.1426–1430.

²⁴ Eustache Deschamps (c.1340–1404) theorized that the rhythm of poetry was also a kind of music, but natural in that it did not require musical instruments other than the voice. James Wimsatt points out that the idea of “natural music” is not original to Deschamps and is apparent in John of Garland’s *Parisiana Poetria*, where rhythmic poetry is described as a species of music (Wimsatt 1991, 13).
suggesting that this was written separately from the Nun’s Priest’s Tale and inserted into it after the tale was finished. But music in lyric also poses certain problems for critics: literary critics want to claim the lyric as wholly literary, and to say that the lyric is musical may detract from its literariness. As Maria Rosa Menocal points out, *reading* a song can be “a baffling enterprise” (1994, 151) because “a whole range of phenomena is part of the music itself and of the way the voice manipulates music” (1994, 152). Some medieval lyric specialists have begun to take into account the importance of musical lyrics as a category of their own; for example, Julia Boffey’s section on manuscripts in T.G. Duncan’s *Companion* includes a category of “songbooks.” Medieval musicologists, themselves very interested in early manuscript contexts, have provided much useful work on medieval songs (see, for example, work by Helen Deeming, Yolanda Plumley, John Stainer, and John Stevens).

Like prayer and lyric, song and lyric are related in complex ways. The idea that Chaucer’s lyric is interchangeable with song is evident in Nicolette Zeeman’s “Gender of Song in Chaucer” (2007) and in Bruce Holsinger’s *Music, Body and Desire* (2001). While many of the songs Zeeman discusses are evidently sung (e.g. “Alma redemptoris mater” in the Prioress’s Tale, and “*Angelus ad Virginem*” in the Miller’s Tale), other songs are not so musical (e.g. the ballade, “To Rosemounde” survives with no musical annotation). Bruce Holsinger meanwhile does not discuss lyric *per se* in “Pedagogy, Violence, and the Subject of Music” (1997), or in *Music, Body and Desire*, but views as “musical” certain Chaucerian songs and speech that apostrophize Apollo and the Virgin Mary. Most recently, Ingrid Nelson’s thesis, “The Lyric in England, 1200–1400” (2010) argues that Chaucer’s lyric uses a discourse of song that is fundamentally oral and exists in contradistinction to texts and documents. Nelson suggests the lyrics of Chaucer were influenced by insular song, including poetry surviving in London, British Library Additional MS 46919 (BL Add. 46919) (William Herebert’s commonplace book) and Harley 2253.

25 R. L. Greene’s *Early English Carols* (1977) remains the most authoritative list of insular lyric manuscripts containing music.
Chapter Outlines

There has been a prevailing view that lyric manuscripts have survived in a random and scattered manner. If we think of a lyric as a shard, as Rossell Hope Robbins once did (Kuczynski 2011, 334), then this implies that lyric is metaphorically and perhaps practically cut off, separate, and isolated. This view of medieval lyrics, that they are somehow separate from other lyrics and from identifiable social contexts, has, coincidentally, coexisted with a literary view of the lyric as inward-looking, whereby lyric provides a moment for a character to speak and reflect, and to stop the flow of narrative time and events. Proponents of this view maintain that lyric contains no narration of events itself, and thus may be seen as disconnected from a narrative world. The lyric is perfect for introspection.

While this theory of introspection in lyric often holds true for late medieval lyric—lyric can slow the pace of a story, be personal and emotional, and tell more about the speaker than the narrated story in which the speech takes place—I argue that the lyric also connects “outside” of itself to a narrative world. Additionally, the late medieval English lyric connects “outside” itself via its manuscript witnesses, for a manuscript witness of lyric can be shown to connect to other lyric manuscripts and to other specific social contexts. Therefore, instead of viewing late medieval lyrics as isolated shards, in this thesis I reimagine lyrics as things that are embedded in networks of meaning in the manuscripts in which they are copied. The kinds of connections made between late medieval lyrics in manuscripts is the focus of my first chapter. In the remaining chapters I turn to Chaucer’s lyric in narrative to consider how lyrics stretch “outside” themselves; that is, how lyrics have specific, localized effects in the sense of reaching out into a narrative world and evoking responses from auditors and overhearers.

Chapter One takes a codicological approach to Middle English lyrics from 1200–1400. This serves as a backdrop and to some extent an alternative to the literary approach to Chaucer’s lyric in remaining chapters. In Chapter One, I delineate social contexts for Middle English lyrics from 1200 to 1400 (contexts of the sort described by Jameson as a marker for literary genre). I do so by surveying manuscripts and grouping them into four
categories. Using the idea of the network and a digital humanist methodology, I suggest that citation networks are a useful intellectual tool that show relationships between anonymous lyrics about which little is otherwise known. Network maps are meanwhile a useful digital tool that help us to visualize the relationships between multiple witnesses of lyrics, providing a means for us to imagine the profound interconnectedness of the processes of lyric copying and circulation. Rather than imagining medieval lyrics as isolated shards, we can begin to see how these shards may relate to each other and how lyrics and lyric copyists were involved with their own and other social circles.

In Chapter One I approach the idea of lyrics’ embeddedness in a social world by showing how the relationships between lyric manuscripts constitute a network. I identify four groups of related manuscripts that can reasonably be thought to be networks of lyric manuscripts. Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13 (Maidstone A.13) appears to have close relationships with Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 27 (Emmanuel 27), and both books were owned by Hospitaller institutions. A separate group of manuscripts in which I also note Hospitaller connections includes Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 405 (CCCC 405), and London, British Library Royal MS 12.C.XII (Royal 12.C.XII): both of these books share a lyric in common with related books. CCCC 405 has an Anglo-Norman lyric that appears in Digby 86; Harley 2253 and Digby 86 both share a lyric (“The Debate between the Body and Soul.” [NIMEV 1461]); and Harley 2253 and Royal 12.C.XII were copied by the same scribe. In addition to these manuscripts with provenance connections to the Hospitaller order, there are three other groups of manuscripts that deserve to be identified as networks: manuscripts owned by Franciscans and Benedictines; manuscripts with lyrics that have music notation; and manuscripts that contain lyrics on, near, or as legal documents. Two examples illustrate how some lyrics, when thought of in its manuscript contexts, connect to the social world of law and land administration: the rhyming charters (octosyllabic land-grant charters) and lyrics that are copied near or on the dorso of statutes or land-grants.

In addition to identifying these networks, I present them visually with network mapping software—database software that uses lists to produce visually networked arrangements of manuscripts—and this step helps us visualize the complicated relationships that ensue
when manuscripts share lyrics in common with other manuscripts but not each other. Not only can we think of networks of lyrics as somehow related; we can also see them as somehow related. Like a stemma, but more loosely imagined, a network map of manuscripts enables scholars to chase new avenues of relationship between manuscripts—relationships that otherwise would be difficult to imagine. These networks then allow us to see the lyric as connected to identifiable communities and social worlds. Such a view departs from R. H. Robbins’s view of the lyric as a shard or fragment, disconnected from other lyrics or from identifiable and familiar social contexts. These networks help provide social contexts for lyric, connecting them to specific historical settings and communitites.

The view of the song as a shard has at times been productive for literary scholars; for example, Jerome McGann points out that Sappho’s poems “gain much of their peculiar power from their fragmented condition,” as do other ballads and songs (1991, 76). María Rosa Menocal identifies a “largely lyrical” mode of Romance philology in which one throws “shards” on a table although it looks “like a terrible jumble” (1994, 113). Rather than try to approach Chaucer’s lyric in the same vein—as if it were a collection of shards or fragments—in the remaining chapters of my thesis I take a different and more narrativizing approach. I argue that lyric can be introspective but often is also outward-looking; speakers often attempt to have effects on audiences; their lyric invitations or attempts frequently fail disastrously; lyric may relieve suffering or engender joy; lyric rarely leads to the remedies it seeks; and lyric shapes and is shaped by narratives. Whereas the approach in Chapter One privileges the non-sequential organization of fragments of lyric, the approach in Chapter Two onward looks at lyrics that occur before and after other events; thus, I look at lyrics that seem connected to other events.

In Chapter Two, I argue, based on lyrics in the fabliaux of the Canterbury Tales, and the short lyric “Complaint unto Pity,” that lyric expression is sometimes meant as a remedy or cure, or is involved in processes of remedy. Ideas about lyric as a cure, especially for lovesickness, are shaped by the imagery of cures in Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy, and the late medieval reception of Ovid’s Remedies for Love and by commentaries on the Viaticum. In the Miller’s Tale various characters are caught up in an
Ovidian process of remedying love; Absolon expresses his lovesickness through his lyric outburst, but he is cured not by poetry but by much more bawdy, bodily remedies. Nicholas is not lovesick; he only pretends to be, but he is cured anyway, when Absolon applies the coulter to him. John uses lyric to try to save his beloved Alison: the cure for his misplaced love is painful too. In the Reeve’s Tale, the clerks seek unpleasant kinds of easement as their remedy for Simkin’s improper care of their corn, eventually “caring” for or “curing” Simkin’s property in a surprising and painful way. In the Merchant’s Tale, I argue, January regains his sight, but is not cured of his foolish love for May. The effectiveness of his lyric performances in the tale is put in doubt. Damyan also appears to experience lovesickness; but again it is not poetry but the illicit attentions of May that cure him.

Chapter Three goes on to explore various effects of lyric requests, lyric songs, and lyric prayers. Some similar motifs are apparent: whereas, in the fabliaux, characters may use lyric with specific ends in mind (for example, Absolon sings to woo Alisoun), in the Knight’s Tale, Second Nun’s Prologue, Prioress’s Tale, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, characters also are often caught up in situations where lyrics—often lyric prayers—hope to achieve things but almost always fail to do so. The Knight’s Tale has May songs that draw on Italian and French traditions, and the lyric outbursts by Emily’s lovers use phrases that resonate with prayers to Mary, the foremost medieval Christian intercessor. The prayers of Palamon and Arcite invite the intercession of a pagan god, and Arcite’s and Palamon’s prayers are effective in that they appear to get a specific desired result from a divine auditor—but Emily’s prayer appears to fail in getting the particular response from Diana that she desires.

In the next section of Chapter Three I take up the question of making amends, a process which can mean doing penance as well as granting relief, and I compare the Second Nun’s request for amends in her Prologue with contemporary Middle English poetry
from the Vernon manuscript and by William of Shoreham. Shoreham’s poetic appeals for amends to Mary, as well as conventional medieval scribes’ appeals to readers, are useful contexts for the Second Nun’s request that readers amend her “werk” (VIII, 84). Turning to the Prioress’s Tale, I argue that the clergeon’s performance places his song at risk of having wholly unexpected effects—risks that the virtuous boy does not perceive, but which are perceived by the overhearers. This song, sung as it is in a “free and open street” (VII, 494), is vulnerable to being interpreted in totally unexpected ways. Finally, in reading *Troilus and Criseyde*, I argue that Troilus’s prayer to Love is overheard by Pandarus and Criseyde and interpreted in unexpected ways, quite differently from how Troilus intends it to be received. Both these overhearers are skeptical of Troilus’s piety, just as the narrator eventually is skeptical of Troilus’s desire for “feyned” loves (5.1848).

Chapter Four goes beyond the effects of language to take up the question of the musical effects of lyric alongside those of lyric prayers. In readings of the *Book of the Duchess*, the Manciple’s Tale and the *Parliament of Fowls*, I look at what representations of prayer, birdsong (heavenly and worldly), and *musica mundana* have to tell us about lyric’s effects. In discussing the *Book of the Duchess*, I consider the prayers of Alcyone and the dreamer, which seek benevolent help from a pagan god or gods. These prayers parallel the conversation between the narrator and the Black Knight, in which the narrator offers to “amende” the Black Knight’s sorrow (551). In these prayers the supplicants use lyric either to express sorrow or to seek relief from it by asking for outside help, but their lyric appeals fail. By contrast, in the *Book of the Duchess*, birdsong evokes cosmic harmony, an accord that only partially reassures the reader. In the Manciple’s Tale, I argue, the allusion to Amphion shows the extrospective nature of

26 William of Shoreham was from Shoreham near Sevenoaks in Kent, suggests M. Konrath. Nearby, in Leeds, Kent, there was a priory of regular canons that had been founded in 1119 (Shoreham 1902/1973, xiv).

27 *Musica mundana*, literally, the music of the spheres, is an ancient concept of music that is made by the planets from their movements, and which is silent to the ears of humans. It was imagined to be the highest form of music and thought to be perfectly mathematically proportioned (Rumbold 2002).
lyric, as well as its attempt to shape the world—Amphion sings walls into existence. The
crow’s song and its reception meanwhile show how lyric song’s effects are misfires. By
removing control of the song’s effects from the crow, Phebus uses them to justify his
lethal anger.

Chapter Four ends with a discussion of the *Parliament of Fowls*, its birdsong, and its
roundel. In the *Parliament of Fowls* there is choral birdsong at the poem’s opening and in
the middle of the poem, as well as celestial harmony of the poem’s *locus amoenus*. The
poem ends with the roundel so as to recall this heavenly accord, and the use of birds as
singers blends the many meanings of *concentus*: not only does this word mean celestial
harmony; it can also mean birdsong. Despite this pleasant imagery of *musica-mundana-
as-birdsong*, the poem ultimately suggests that the roundel is a worldly pleasure rather
than a sacred one.

Lyric thus has a variety of effects in the narratives in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*,
*Troilus and Criseyde*, and dream visions. Lyric can be a way to express internal sorrow
as well as a way of seeking relief from it. It often involves requesting the help of others
in a move that is fundamentally extrospective. Lyric can evoke animal sounds—
birdsong—and birdsong can in turn evoke heavenly music, *musica mundana*. Lyric is
always a thing of the world, though, and as such seems to complicate any straightforward
or easy effects that its performers might seek.
Chapter 1
Citation Networks in Insular Lyric Manuscripts, 1200–1400

Introduction

Many critics say that the corpus of early English lyrics appears to be scattered or fragmented. T. G. Duncan (2005) says Middle English lyrics “often survive in a random, scattered and marginal manner,” while Julia Boffey notes that these lyrics survive in ways that are “multifarious and largely resistant to logical classification” (2005, 1), being written inside, above, beside, and below margins. Ardis Butterfield suggests that the manuscript evidence of lyric suggests a “weak and struggling” English vernacular until 1400, although Butterfield believes this very weakness may have rich literary implications (Butterfield 2009, 97). Duncan adds that these lyrics are often the apparently “casual productions of careless, unprofessional scribes” (2005, xvi). In this chapter, I take a slightly different approach in arguing that, despite the ostensible haphazardness of the corpus, the early English lyrics are a rich resource for literary and manuscript scholars. A unique lyric of only a few lines may have a myriad of literary connections with contemporary prose and poetry texts; even one poem is a way into a vibrant network of meaning. As Ardis Butterfield argues,

lyric language in Middle English functions both as high art and as a more transparent medium full of formulas, repetition, and citation; it requires us to consider questions of the whole and the fragment; of linguistic identity and plurality; of the relation between words and music; of lyric’s possible meditative, didactic, liturgical, and political functions; and of memory, writing, and oral performance. (2009, 97)

Not only are individual lyrics a rich literary resource, there are a significant number extant for scholars to begin to find rich literary connections between many lyrics. There are over 110 extant manuscripts of books and documents containing English lyrics copied prior to 1400. Very many of these lyrics are copied within the margins, as planned productions, by professional scribes. A large portion of these lyrics survive in multiple copies, also known as witnesses (a “witness” is a specific manuscript copy of a lyric). The survival of a corpus of multiple-witnessed lyrics suggests the fluid yet tenacious
connections between the social networks in which these small poems were produced and circulated.

I noted above that many critics argue that the earlier lyric corpus appears scattered. My impression of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English lyrics is that they were not randomly scattered; instead, a loosely connected network of scribes circulated about half of the short lyrics extant today. Describing and mapping the relationships of manuscripts of lyrics, and seeing these relationships as a network rather than a random scattering of items, allows a more nuanced understanding of the social contexts for the writing of English lyric in the fourteenth century. I situate this approach to social contexts within a view held by D. F. McKenzie, who suggests that a “sociology of texts” can direct us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption. ... [A sociology of texts] alerts us to the roles of institutions ... in affecting the forms of social discourse. (McKenzie 1999, 15)

Without an easily apparent social context for English lyrics, some critics have turned to genre as a means of understanding these short poems. In “Poems without Contexts,” J.A. Burrow describes genre as “an internal substitute for context” and endeavors to show that short poems in Oxford, Bodleian Rawlinson MS D.913 (Rawlinson D.913) belong to a genre (1979, 27). For Burrow, genre, and with it poetic meaning, is still reclaimable for Rawlinson D.913’s’ short anonymous medieval poems. Interestingly, despite his belief in a lack of context, Burrow does ultimately identify four contexts for the lyrics in Rawlinson D.913: England, the Middle Ages (1979, 1); the lyrics themselves (1979, 22), and the co-occurrence of scraps of these poems in another manuscript: the Red Book of Ossory (1979, 23). These four contexts help Burrow read the meaning of one of its lyrics, “Maiden in the mor lay” (1979, 25). So even though Burrow posits “genre as an internal substitute for context” (1979, 27), in fact he also works to establish an extra context that will help him to determine genre. The appearance of the “Maiden in the Mor Lay” poem in the Red Book of Ossory is a manuscript context that provides extra generic evidence and thus helps discourage interpretations “which see the maiden as Mary Magdalen or the Virgin Mary” (1979, 25) and allow readers today to read the poem as a secular one. Burrow regards a second manuscript witness of a poem as its literary context.
Burrow finds several of the poems in Rawlinson D.913 to be dance-songs due to their repetition (for example, “Icham of Irlande” [1979, 18]). The role of performance, something that is done in the world in addition to the event of the words of the poem, is an important part of theorizing the genre of Middle English lyric, I argue in this thesis. Recent views of Middle English lyrics embrace performing and the performative in the theory and definition of lyric. Emily Steiner argues that the documentary Charters of Christ lyrics in a sense perform Christ’s Testament on earth, since they are analogous to documents that “perform” the will of the absent author (Steiner 2003, 72). Music notation accompanying Middle English lyrics meanwhile tells us that some lyric performances did take place: some lyrics were sung, which suggests the importance of understanding performance with relation to the lyric genre. Unfortunately, the association of music with lyric is something which literary critics of lyric tend to avoid theorizing. Ardis Butterfield (1990, 184) argues that musical performance is a sticking point for the very theory of literary genre: for example, Fredric Jameson’s and Hans Jauss’s definitions of genre fail to account for implied performances. Fredric Jameson says genres are “essentially literary institutions or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact” (Jameson 1981/2002, 92). Jameson gives a political definition of genre, hence his emphasis on a reading public. But this definition also appears to be attached to an idea of performance that obviates the need for genre:

the farther a given text is removed from a performing situation (that of village storyteller, or bard, or player), the more difficult it will be to enforce a given generic prescription on a reader; indeed, no small part of the art of writing is absorbed by this (impossible) attempt to devise a foolproof mechanism for the automatic exclusion of undesirable responses to a given literary utterance. (1975, 135)

Clearly, Jameson’s vision of performance as village storyteller or bard simplifies the idea of performance and detaches it from genre. His idea of literary genre is that it is a practice or style that will compensate for a lack of performance. The idea that the performance of a Middle English lyric might have been be integral to its genre does not quite fit into Jameson’s idea of performance versus genre. And yet performance of a Middle English lyric while dancing or singing, or in some other sense in which the poem
is connected to an event in the world other than words, seems to have been important for
the medieval English lyric, as Burrow suggests, in ways which do not quite fit Jameson’s
understanding of literary genre. Apart from the aural and physical performance that
accompanies lyric, there is moreover a way in which a lyric’s performance can be visual
or imaginative. This is admittedly a much more fluid way of interpreting performance;
nevertheless the analogy is quite apt. Jessica Brantley’s work suggests that reading itself
can be performative: for example, in a late medieval miscellany, London, British Library
Additional MS 37049, which contains many lyrics, “the reader—whether monastic or
lay—recreates in solitude the liturgical celebrations that reenact and commemorate the
events of Christ’s crucifixion” (Brantley 2007, 19). Performance is a useful concept
when it comes to medieval lyrics and their genre but, like the fuzzy set of musical song
and lyric presented above, it cannot provide a coherent framework for thinking about
medieval lyric because there is often little solid evidence for musical or dramatic
performance; nor were all lyrics necessarily read performatively in Jessica
Brantley’s sense.

Rather than focus on lyric performance, in this thesis I take up a different idea of
Burrow’s, that of the lyric manuscript context. In Chapter One I expand this idea by
considering lyric manuscript contexts in terms of a network of lyric manuscripts. By lyric
network, I mean a lyric citation network—a set of connections between lyrics (of lyrics
citing themselves and other lyrics) that helps us organize those lyrics. This lyric citation
network may meanwhile be visualized by means of a technology becoming popular in
the social sciences: network mapping software. The concept of “citation network” is
based on the idea of the citation as an intertext. Ardis Butterfield describes lyric as being
full of “formulas, repetition and citation” (2009, 97). Beyond its presence in lyric,
citation is known for its broad application. As Yolanda Plumley acknowledges in a
recent essay collection, *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory*, for Antoine Compagnon,
culture itself is constructed by citation (Plumley 2011, ix). The French word “citation”
encompasses the English meanings of quotation, reference, and citation, and thus to
adopt this word in English allows me to take a purposefully broader and inclusive view
of semantic and material connections between lyrics. Burrow’s approach to lyric, above,
can thus be described as looking at the citation of lyric, in that Burrow compares
manuscript witnesses of the same lyric. Network mapping software meanwhile gives us
the practical wherewithal to display inter-manuscript connections quickly and
meaningfully. Thus by viewing multiple-witnessed lyrics as citations, and by using
network software to map the relationships between multiple witnesses of lyrics, we are
able to visualize loose relationships between lyric citations, which helps us articulate
better the social contexts in which lyrics may have been read. Moreover, by calling
multiple-witnessed lyrics “citations,” I draw attention to the performative character of
early English lyric, by which I mean its ability to perform, or signal the performance of,
moral, musical, and legal acts.28

A few preliminary words are needed on citation networks. My use of networks
undoubtedly has broad applications for the humanities and for any scholars interested in
relationships between books, authors, publishers, and readers.29 The term “citation
network” is used in the social sciences for a visual representation of the relationships
between journal citations listed in a citation index. Computers parse these relationships
every day, but the visual representation of them remains hidden to computer users unless
we use a network analysis software such as Gephi or Netvizz to map the network as a
graph. Now, the two words *citation network* might seem to be anachronistic for medieval
studies, but in fact the word “citation” has a long history in English and Old French, and
the word “network” itself goes back to Middle English as well. To *cite* in Middle English
was to summon someone to court; a *citacioun* was the summoning of a person to court.
Just as a person was “cited”—brought forward to provide evidence in a case—so, in the

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28 By flagging these categories I do not mean to say these were the only acts that English lyric might have
marked, or performed, but that these are three significant categories that I was able to document.

29 A recent panel, “Networks of Stories, Structures and Digital Humanities,” King’s College London, July
2010 considered how social networking software can be used to map the relationships between characters
in a Dickens novel. This is the only scholarly humanities application of network software I have
encountered. The concept of networks has in the past two years also garnered much attention both from
manuscript scholars, meanwhile: the Early Book Society will hold a network-themed conference in 2013,
and Estelle Stubbs’ project entitled Networks of Book Makers, Owners, and Users in Late Medieval
England endeavours to model digitally the networks of relationships between authors, scribes, and those
who commissioned books.
sixteenth century, a citation became a document or passage used to prove a point. The word citation is even today used in the sense of a piece of evidence for an academic argument or legal case. Turning to the word “network,” the first documented use of the word in English is in William Tyndale’s 1530 Bible, as “networke”—the work of making a net—where it translates the Hebrew for “net making” (“Network,” OED 2003). It is however quite likely that “networke” or “netwerk” was an earlier coining: Middle English offers a plethora of compound “–work” words with a similar sense, including “kerpet werk” (c.1500) and “tapsterwerk” [tapestry work] (c.1472) (“Werk,” MED 2006). “Citation network” as I use it in this chapter is also friendly to the medieval idea of the florilegium or compilation of excerpts. Florilegia result from the work of gathering flowers, the implication being that the multiple flowers are analogies for texts copied together on the leaves of a book. A network—the work of making a net, or of creating relationships between things—involves a similar process of weaving texts together.

The power of citation in court and in academia is particularly useful in theorizing lyric “citation networks.” Bibliographic and literary evidence suggests that medieval lyrics might have been used in order to prove or to provide evidence by referring to an authority. Many lyrics also cited other lyrics as if those lyrics were themselves words of an authority. Several titles of well-known early English poems illustrate this view of lyric as the words of an authoritative or holy person, such as the “Proverbs of Hendyng,” the “Sayings of Saint Bernard,” and the “Proverbs of Alfred.” It is therefore plausible to view medieval lyrics as analogous to modern-day journal citations: medieval writers using lyric were frequently advancing an argument by referring to source texts (which rhymed). Moreover, the brevity of lyrics means that they were easily cited. More so than an entire romance or fabliau, a lyric was easily compiled next to, and included inside, longer texts. Medieval lyrics cited and were cited by other lyrics and other non-lyric texts.
There are several different ways of “citing” lyrics. Simply copying a lyric into a booklet is citation. By compiling a booklet that contains mainly lyrics, a compiler is creating a loose citation network among lyrics of this booklet. Here I do not mean to imply that the side-by-side occurrence of lyrics constitutes each lyric citing each other; instead, that the compiler has “cited” these lyrics together, or at least at close quarters to each other. The material closeness of the lyrics may, however, encourage us to consider how these lyrics cite each other. Seeing two lyrics side-by-side on a manuscript page, or copied one below another, presents extra possibilities for enabling us to understand the literary meaning of each lyric. In this latter sense, a citation network could therefore be equivalent to a booklet or a book. Thus when a scribe copies several similar lyrics in different parts of a manuscript—lyrics that nevertheless appear to have some literary, linguistic, or physical relationship—this too presents us with a citation network. For example, Frances McSparran identifies three different dialectal “groups” in Harley 2253 (2000, 417–418), groups that she believes show traces of three exemplars the Harley 2253 scribe used to source lyrics. I suggest that the term citation network can apply to McSparran’s dialectal “group.” Dispersed texts that are unified by scribal, bibliographic, linguistic literary characteristics may constitute a citation network. A sequence of texts across quires also constitutes a citation network. When a scribe garbles two lyrics together, he in effect creates a citation link between the two lyrics (and thus a mini citation network). Similarly, when a scribe copies a stanza from one lyric into a different lyric, this act creates a citation network as well. A scribe might even copy a couplet in a lower or side margin, beside another lyric, and beside a related treatise or letter, creating a network between two or three texts. The concept “citation network” is intentionally broad, in order to allow me to treat the many varying kinds of relations between lyrics while acknowledging the similar intent of grouping texts. My understanding of a citation network is thus more inclusive than the idea of the reading circle, as the term is used by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice (1997). A network diagram may not be exactly

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30 For more on booklets, and a useful list of bibliographic features that indicate one or more quires were treated as a booklet (such as variation in leaf size, hand, page format, decoration, signatures, soiled outer leaves, blank outer leaves, and “filler” texts), see the feature list reprinted by Ralph Hanna (1996a, 30–31).
the same as a particular institution or its member who owns or reads a book. (A reading circle might also be a citation network, if it presents textual or material evidence.) By seeing manuscripts, lyrics, readers and writers all as parts of a network, however, we can imagine more aspects of how a book is discursively formed.31

There are undoubtedly many other kinds of non-lyric texts (such as sermons or romances) that have important relationships among themselves and to lyrics as well. However, one distinctive characteristic of a lyric it is that it is fairly short. It does not usually take up much space on a page or in a book. Because of their brevity, lyrics tend to become clustered with other lyrics. When a lyric is anonymous and little is known of its provenance, moreover, lyrics’ association with other lyrics ultimately becomes the richest source of information about them. We might surmise that if economic use of a page was an important concern, a lyric on its own would be less likely to survive. Indeed, almost all extant medieval lyrics survive either in collections of lyrics and with other short and long texts, either in books or on documents. That is, if a folio survives that has on it a lyric, the folio generally also includes another text on it—another lyric, or a receipt, or a charter or list of some kind, in either English or French or Latin—and thus the lyric does not survive alone per se. (The “Rhyming Charter of Æthelstan” is a notable exception.) By treating citation as a practice that generates complex relationships between lyrics, we can explore the significance of the patterns of relationships between multiple-witnessed lyrics and their manuscripts. In taking this approach, I am endeavouring to do as Burrow does in seeking an extra context for a Rawlinson D.913 lyric in the Red Book of Ossory. And yet I am increasing the number of the connections made between manuscripts of lyric. It is partially computer software and modeling that makes possible the increase of these connections, allowing us to see the range of semantic possibilities that might come from connecting together otherwise solitary lyrics.

31 It might be useful to think of the network as an aspect of the “discursive formation” of an object to which Michel Foucault refers (2002, 49). Also relevant is Martha Rust’s idea of the manuscript matrix—a space or locale that enables thinking, and that is brought forth by the physical space of the book (2007, 7).
1 Hospitallers and Maidstone A.13

Above I introduced the concept of a lyric citation network, and in the chapter sections below I will illustrate the loose interconnectedness of groups of manuscripts containing lyrics. Section One identifies citation networks in groups of lyrics in eleven medieval books (see Figure 1 below, page 35). These lyrics are shared directly with Maidstone A.13 or have a secondary relationship through another manuscript. The diagram below shows these relationships as a network map made with NetDraw (Borgatti 2002). In this network diagram, a number (e.g. 433) represents an English lyric text; N130 is an Anglo-Norman lyric. 

Maidstone A.13 was owned at Northampton Hospital of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, and by identifying the books that are related to Maidstone A.13, one reveals a network of lyrics occurring in books that were owned by regular orders or had Hospitaller connections. There is little evidence today to link the Hospitallers per se with literary production or consumption, so it might at first seem strange to put forward this claim. Nigel Ramsay and James Willoughby point out that John Leland did not bother to visit most of the Hospital libraries while he was seeking out antiquarian books in 1532; “nevertheless, the communities of secular priests and laymen which were based in these institutions seem quite often to have formed book collections of at least a modest size as well as enduring character” (2009, xxxi). These libraries may have been built up mainly from bequests. For example, a copy of William Caxton’s *Boke Ryal* belonged either to the library at Toddington Hospital or its clergy or patrons (Doyle 1953, 72). Chaucer’s Pardoner is meanwhile said to come from “Rouncivale,” or the Hospital of St. Mary Rouncivale in Charing Cross (Maxfield 1993, 148). The Pardoner is also said to have sung “Com hider, love, to me” (I, 672), which W.W. Skeat in his notes (Chaucer 1894/2008, n672, 5:55) compares to a couplet in *Pearl*, “Com hider to me, my leman swete / For mote ne spot is non in the,” echoing

32 The numbers used throughout are the references to poems used in the *New Index of Middle English Verse* (Boffey, Edwards and the British Library, 2005); thus NIMEV 2817 is a reference to a specific Middle English lyric listed there.
the Song of Songs 4:7. As we shall see, Maidstone A.13 contains a lyric that is accompanied by musical notes, thus providing us with a historical example of a song that could have been sung by a Hospitaller.

Figure 1: Relationships between Maidstone A.13 and other books

33 Verses 4:7–8 from the Song of Songs are as follows,

Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee. Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned from the top of Amana, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards.

tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te. veni de Libano, sponsa, veni de Libano, veni: coronaberis de capite Amana, de vertice Sanir et Hermon, de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum.

35
Maidstone A.13 is a thirteenth-century book with several English lyrics, and it shares multiple-witnessed lyrics with two other thirteenth-century miscellanies: Oxford, Jesus College MS 29 (Jesus 29) and London, British Library Cotton Caligula MS A.IX (Caligula A.IX). These two books are probably descended from one exemplar, according to Neil Cartlidge (1997, 251).34 Another book, Cambridge, Trinity College MS 323 (Trinity 323), shares several English lyrics with Maidstone A.13, Jesus 29, and Caligula A.IX. Five other early books share lyrics with Trinity 323, Maidstone A.13, Jesus 29 and Caligula A.IX: London, British Library Egerton MS 613 (Egerton 613); Emmanuel 27; Oxford, New College MS 88 (New 88); London, Lambeth Palace MS 499 (Lambeth 499); and London, British Library Arundel MS 292 (Arundel 292). For example, Maidstone A.13, Lambeth 499, New 88, Jesus 29, and Arundel 292 contain the short lyric “When I think things three.”35 In Figure 1 above (page 35) I have included a network diagram of the relationships between Maidstone A.13 and these other books. Maidstone A.13 shares four lyrics in common with other manuscripts that also share lyrics in common with each other. Jesus 29 gives the appearance of being a “hub” of this network, in that it has nine overlaps with other books in the group, more than any other manuscript that appears here.36 These overlaps are meaningful insofar as we can locate other connections between the books. The network map allows us to imagine several

34 Jesus 29 consists of two booklets. The second booklet contains mostly Middle English texts. Because there are many English poems in the same order in both Jesus 29 and Caligula A.IX, Carleton Brown (1932, xxxv) concluded the two books used a common exemplar. Boffey (2005, 8) points out that Jesus 29 was copied by only one scribe, whereas Caligula A.IX contains the contributions of many scribes, which is evidence of different production processes, if not different sources.

35 This poem has two NIMEV index numbers, 695 and 3969, but this numbering obscures the fact that these are basically the same poem (or two very similar ones) (Brown 1932, 19, n to No.11/12). The translation of the short lyric is as follows: “When I think three things, I may never be happy: one is that I shall go hence; the other is that I don’t know what day; The third is my most care, that I know not whither I shal fare.”

36 A hub is a well-known term for a network node that connects multiple nodes. In social networks one person who knows many others functions as a hub. In journal citation networks a primary source that becomes cited by many secondary sources is also seen as a hub. By analogy, a medieval lyric exemplar copied by many scribes would be a hub of a citation network. However, critics are fairly sure that Jesus 29 was not itself an exemplar for Caligula A.IX or these other books, so we should look for another explanation for the hub-like appearance of Jesus 29—such as the possibility that the compiler of the book had access to a ‘hub’ exemplar—or himself acted like a hub in a social network.
potential questions, such as, were there any social connections between the owners, scribes, or users of these books? The map thus gives us several possible directions for questions about the nature of the relationships between these books.

Carleton Brown believed there were no direct relationships between these manuscripts, saying, “a fair share of the material in the Trinity [323] MS. was in circulation” but that “it affords no evidence of any direct relationships between the Trinity [323] MS. and these other collections” (Brown 1932, xxii). What is interesting, despite this lack of an obvious direct relationship, is that several of the books are quite large. Four books have folio lengths over 200 mm: Maidstone A.13 (270 mm), Emmanuel 27 (244 mm), Lambeth 499 (230 mm), and Egerton 613 (222 mm). Egerton 613’s smaller size is misleading, since the pages have been cropped (Hill 1998a, 394); it is possible that the leaves of Egerton 613 (222 mm) were once as large as those of Maidstone A.13. Maidstone A.13 (270 mm), the biggest book of the group, is in fact unique in not having been cropped and in retaining its original boards.37

The larger size of these books suggests that they were not produced from scraps. Maidstone A.13, which retains its wooden boards (now varnished, and with chain-holes), must have required a substantial outlay of money for its binding and materials alone. The book’s parchment is also very white and quite fine, probably treated by an expert parchmenter. Little is known about the income of the Northampton Hospital where Maidstone A.13 was owned, but the Taxation of 1291 states that “a pension of £2 was received from the rectory of Helmdon, held by the master of St. John’s” (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 156). Based on circumstantial evidence, then, the Hospitals perhaps could have afforded to pay for a book like Maidstone A.13. Ramsay and Willoughby note however that “most hospitals were underfinanced (at least, by comparison with monastic houses and cathedrals) and accordingly dependent upon benefactors” (2009, xxxv) and

37 The manuscript retains its original boards. These have been varnished and show four holes for chains, as well as the original four beveled holes for binding straps. As for London, Lambeth Palace MS 499, I have not yet seen it and the catalogue does not indicate cropping (James 1930, 692–701).
they believe that “no medieval hospital ever paid for a chronicle, law-book, medical text, or, probably, even a devotional book” (2009, xxxiv).

Does the network map point to the existence of a social network as well as a citation network? Indeed it may, for all the institutions that owned these books were associated with regular orders, including the Hospitallers and the Cistercians. Accounts and letters in Maidstone A.13 show that this book was owned in the thirteenth century by a brother at the St. John the Baptist Hospital in Northampton.38 The Knights Hospitaller followed their own rule, including some items of the Rule of St. Augustine, and some items of the Rule of St. Benedict. There were also sometimes affiliations with other orders; for example, in 1228, Sigena, a women’s Hospitaller convent in Spain, was admitted to a Cistercian familiaritas, and in 1233, Hospitaller sisters in Aconbury, England, asked to transfer from the Hospitaller to the Augustine rule (Luttrell and Nicholson 2006, 30).

Indeed, one lyric in the Maidstone A.13 book is an Anglo-Norman poem praising those who wear a white habit, and Saint Lawrence (Brown 1928, 4).39 Based on this lyric, Carleton Brown (1926a, 3-4) initially imagined the owners of the book to be Cistercian.40

38 The Northampton hospital was founded in 1140 and received its royal charter in 1307 (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 156).

39 The Cistercians are well known as the “white” monks, although the Premonstratensians also wore white. The poet’s praise of the white habit does raise a question as to the writer’s affiliations, since the Hospitallers wore a black habit; in 1120 they had adopted a rule inspired by that of St. Augustine (Legras 2001). Carol Rawcliffe says “most of the Hospitals in London followed the Rule of St. Augustine because “the burden of spiritual duties imposed upon its members far lighter, thus leaving more time for the care of the sick … there was also a distinct emphasis upon the need for involvement in society” (1984, 5). Her list of thirty-four London Hospitals shows that four also followed the Cluniac order, and one followed the order of the Knights Hospitaller.

40 The book may have originated in a Cistercian monastery and found its way to the Hospital in Northampton; otherwise, it is unclear what the connection between Cistercians/Premonstratensians and the Hospitallers might have been.
Like Maidstone A.13, Emmanuel 27 was compiled in the thirteenth century, probably by someone at Sompting Church near Chichester, on the south coast of England. Sompting Church at that time belonged to the Templars, another regular order. Like Maidstone A.13, Emmanuel 27 was also later owned by the Knights Hospitaller, who took over Sompting Rectory after the Templars fell from favour in the early fourteenth century. English lyrics in these Hospitallers’ books could have been read privately by literate regular or lay clergy, or out loud to the literate and illiterate laypeople who sought refuge at the hospitals. Hospitals were for the care of the sick and the destitute, and Hospitallers’ books did not contain the anatomy and physiology texts we today consider characteristic of medical books. The Hospitallers’ care for laypeople involved feeding, clothing and preaching, and the books owned by the Hospitals at the time reflect this practice of providing for the moral and spiritual welfare of the poor and sick. For example, in Maidstone A.13, the lyrics are found next to Bible verses and sermon sections, texts that would have been useful in ministering to spiritual welfare, if not spiritual healing of the body.

In contrast to the lyrics in the other three large books, many of Lambeth 499’s lyrics are secular. Lambeth 499 is made up of four main sections—Augustinian writings, sermons, Grosseteste’s writings, stories probably used for preaching, and administrative documents—and the eight secular lyrics are in the first section, with the Augustinian writings. The Augustinian treatise and lyrics were likely copied by someone at Stanlow Abbey, a Cistercian monastery in Cheshire (Pickering 1992, 157). Later the book was taken to Whalley Abbey in Lancashire after a flood at Stanlow. Not only do Lambeth 499 and Maidstone A.13 have in common the English lyric “When I think things thre,” but both manuscripts have a connection with regular clergy. Although the Augustinian writings suggest regular clergy as readers (perhaps the Cistercian monks at Stanlow or

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41 Sompting Church has no records that it owned Emmanuel 27, but the book itself has a Sompting church dedication in it (Laing 1993, 11; James, 1904, 22). M.R. James (1904, 22) thought the book was owned at Chichester.

42 William de Braose granted Sompting Rectory to the Templars in 1154. It was confirmed as owned by the Hospitallers in 1438 (Hudson, Baggs, and Currie et al. 1980, 57, 61).
Whalley, some of whom could have compiled and read this book), the writings of Grosseteste could indicate secular clergy: Robert Grosseteste was bishop of Lincoln. The secular lyrics do not indicate the same desire to minister to the moral welfare of laypeople that was a concern for the readers of Maidstone A.13. There are, however, some moral lyrics in Lambeth 499, and these moral lyrics are copied in a way which indicates the scribe intended them to be read and used slightly differently than the secular lyrics. For example, the short moral lyric “When I think things three” (NIMEV 695 and 3969) is copied within a Latin story (about the disappearance and reappearance of knights and a queen) on f. 125v, rather than in the margin, like the secular lyrics.43

The smaller books that are included in this group, Caligula A.IX and Jesus 29, may have had some links with the Cistercians. Sompting, where some documents in Emmanuel 27 originated, and which was run by the Templars and later the Knights Hospitaller orders, is on the south coast of England; by contrast, Caligula A.IX and Jesus 29 are often thought of as West Midlands productions. According to Neil Cartlidge, texts in these two books could have been owned by and read at the Premonstratensian Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire on the south coast. Cartlidge says that several of the texts in Jesus 29 and Caligula A.IX (such as The Owl and the Nightingale, which survives only in those two books) belonged to the library at Titchfield in 1400. This tenuous link is strengthened by Cartlidge’s point that the monastic house in Hampshire was a colony of the Premonstratensians at Halesowen in Shropshire, near Birmingham (Cartlidge 1997, 251). There is meanwhile a possible regional connection between Titchfield and Sompting. Titchfield, run by the Premonstratensians, was only forty-five miles from Sompting Church, and was run by the Templars and later the Hospitallers. The Premonstratensians, founded in France in 1120, were another order friendly to the Cistercians; they wore white habits, and followed a version of the Rule of St. Augustine influenced by Cistercian ideas (Cross and Livingstone 1974, 1119). Contrary to David Jeffrey’s suggestion (1975, 206–9) that these thirteenth-century books were read and written by

43 Richard Firth Green has a forthcoming book, Elf Queens and Holy Friars, that argues for a medieval belief in fairies across class boundaries.
Franciscan friars, it seems likely that they were circulated among people belonging to monastic orders.

The preceding discussion addresses books containing lyrics and their connections to the Hospitaller and other regular orders. There are also other Hospitaller connections apparent with other fourteenth-century books which contain lyrics. For example, a Hospitaller institution owned quires of the fourteenth-century miscellany CCCC 405, which contains a handful of Old French, Anglo-Norman and English lyrics. CCCC 405 has three unique English lyrics in its first section. The Old French lyric “Ave sainte Marie,” which appears on pages 311–315, is also found in Digby 86 and in London, British Library Additional MS 46919 (William Herebert’s commonplace book [BL Add. 46919]). The “booklet” format of the book is suggested by evidence that CCCC 405 was once read as separate quires. Sinclair argues convincingly that the book’s disparate quires were transported to the St. John of Jerusalem Hospital in Waterford, where they were read as several booklets and later compiled into one book in the thirteenth century. As well as the similarities in scribal hand to Harley 2253 and Digby 86, the CCCC 405 folio containing the English lyric also has a ruling (162 x 108 mm) that is very similar to the smaller measurements of Scribe A of Digby 86. This similarity may be accidental—or it may be evidence of similar training of the scribes, and a similar folio size may be evidence of similar construction of these books. Digby 86’s folios are about 220 x 160 mm while CCCC 405’s folios are 210 x 160 mm.

44 CCCC MS 405 is paginated rather than foliated. The Old French lyric begins “Ave seinte Marie, mere au Creatour, roine de Angres, plainne de Doucour.” For other manuscript witnesses, see Langfors and Meyer (1970, 36) and Sinclair’s list (1984, 229 n52; 740a in Dean and Boulton [1999, 400]).

45 M. R. James (1912, II, 277–88) identified six “volumes,” or booklets. Keith Sinclair splits James’s Book V into two parts, which he calls codices Va and Vb (1984, 222). Booklet Va is early fourteenth century and contains a Latin Bull addressed to the Master of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, 1300. Booklet IV is also useful in establishing provenance in that it contains the Waterford Custumal in Anglo-Norman and charters for Bristol, Drogheda and Haverford, as well as a chronology of civil and ecclesiastical events in Ireland (Sinclair 1984, 223). Booklet Va (pp. 251–462) contains entirely Anglo-Norman literary texts all in one spiky anglicana hand. A catchword indicates the end of this quire. The next folio, p. 463, contains different ruling, a different hand, and two quires of eight folios, with an Anglo-Norman copy of a Continental French didactic treatise, “Livre des Moralités.” Sinclair thus distinguishes the two booklets on the basis of differences in hand, ruling, literary text, and quiring.
A final interesting connection with the Hospitallers is apparent in Royal 12.C.XII. This book was copied by the Harley 2253 scribe and contains a c.1308 copy of royal charters granting freedoms to the Hospitallers of St. John at Kilbarry near Waterford in Ireland. Like Sompting Church (mentioned above in connection with Emmanuel 27), the Kilbarry Hospital was owned by Templars and was given to the Hospitallers after the Templars lost favour in the early fourteenth century (Nicholson 2003, 234).

Above, I mentioned the possibility that we might identify different “citation” networks within a single manuscript that contains a handful of English lyrics. One might wonder, what is a citation network, in this manuscript context? Just as Frances McSparran identifies different dialectal groups in Harley 2253 (2000, 417–418), here I want to identify specific literary or scribal groups of texts within a book. McSparran identifies at least three groups of exemplars that the Harley 2253 scribe used to source lyrics for the book Harley 2253. These groups are not booklets, but rather loose groups of texts with common scribal, dialectal, and/or literary characteristics. These groups are what I want to term citation networks. Turning to the Lambeth 499 manuscript, the secular and moral lyrics constitute two different literary groups of lyrics—two different citation networks. Citation network A (moral lyrics) may have shared an exemplar different from citation network B (secular lyrics). Moreover, the two citation networks may have a predictive relationship with the patterns of relationships between manuscripts that we observe on a network map, precisely because they point to the existence of at least two different exemplars. In other words, the moral lyrics may have circulated with a different group of manuscripts than did the secular lyrics.

To put it another way, there is more to learn about the relationship between these nine books by looking at where the English lyrics occur within these books, and by looking at the generic characteristics that help us identify separate groups of lyrics (such as moral vs. secular, in the case of Lambeth 499). The following discussion will therefore focus on the distribution of three English lyrics from Maidstone A.13: the “Proverbs of Alfred” (NIMEV 433), the “Poema Morale” (NIMEV 1272 and 3246), and “Death’s Wither Clench” (NIMEV 2070). The “Proverbs of Alfred” is a long lyric (700 short lines) that uses irregular alliteration and rhyme. Several short passages from it appear in Maidstone
A.13; one folio (f. 93r) contains a long section, while other instances are short sections of the longer poem. The “Poema Morale” is a rhyming sermon composed around 1170, adapting Latin septenary verse into English. Its rhymes are mostly in couplets. Only a few lines are copied in Maidstone A.13. The long version (270 lines) survives in London, Lambeth Palace MS 487. “Death’s Wither Clench” (twenty lines) on f. 93v is a shorter poem and deserves to be called a song, because in Maidstone A.13 the words are set to music.

One way in which we can identify groups of lyrics, or distinctions among lyrics, is by identifying the extent to which a lyric’s copying appears to have been planned in advance. The distinction between planned and “random” lyric copyings is one that Boffey identifies as “the most significant distinction to be made among lyric manuscripts” (Boffey 2005, 2). In the case of Maidstone A.13, there are lyrics that fall into both categories. For example, the occurrence of the “Poema Morale” on folio 93r consists of excerpts of four or five lines that do not appear to be carefully planned, since they are in a bottom margin (see photo A in Appendix 3). The main ruled block of this page contains another lyric: the “Proverbs of Alfred,” which judging from its copying inside the main margins appears to be more well-planned.

Even in the case of lyrics that are less well-planned, it appears that there may still be some element of “planning” in their inclusion. For example, one wonders why the “Poema Morale” excerpts were copied in the bottom margin of f. 93v. They could have

46 The poem is not by Alfred, but praises Alfred and contains advice for kings. See W.W. Skeat’s 1907 edition.
47 See Alan Fletcher (2005, 206–8) for a discussion of this song, which was probably used in a sermon. An edition appears in Carleton Brown’s English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century (1932, 15–16).
48 Julia Boffey separates late medieval lyric manuscripts into two categories: (1) those whose compilers had lyrics available in advance and so copied lyrics within main ruled margins; and (2) those whose compilers, or scribes, jotted poems in the margins for “autograph purposes or for pen-trials” (Boffey 2005, 2).
49 Photograph A in Appendix 2 shows only two lines, but the poem is typically edited in octosyllabic lines and these two lines are split into more lines in a published edition of the “Poema Morale,” such as that by Hermann Lewin (1881).
been copied while a literate lay brother at the Northampton hospital was reading the longer English poem the “Proverbs of Alfred.” But were these lines copied as an afterthought, or did their scribe think to preserve them—and later easily refer to them—by associating them with another, longer English text?

There are some signs that the “Poema morale,” of which a short excerpt is found on f. 93r (lines 149–150, “Swines brede”) was copied with a slightly different intent than the copying of the “Proverbs of Alfred.” The “Swines brede” lines in the bottom margin on 93r are copied less neatly than the “Proverbs” and the marginal hand shows more anglicana and more currens features. The currens mode of the marginal hand is signaled not only by the looser aspect of letters, but also by two mistakes the scribe has made, first writing “dore,” and then striking it out and following it with “dure,” and in the second line, inserting “is” as an afterthought: “Spines brede is Spīše Spete. So is of pilde dore dure / Al to dure he it a bihþ. Þe ȝifh þer fore is Spere.” (See Photograph A in Appendix 2). 50 Despite this currens aspect, there are signs that the “Swines brede” excerpt has a rational or even poetic relationship to the lyric copied in the main ruled block. A translation of this short stanza is as follows: “Swine’s meat is very sweet. So is wild deer’s. / All too costly does he buy it; the gift therefore is sore.”51 First, there is a strong likelihood that the marginal hand is the same hand as the “Proverbs of Alfred,” judging from the similar crossbars on the stem of thorn, and the similar formation of e. Perhaps the “Proverbs” scribe, having first copied the “Proverbs of Alfred,” returned to the folio to include the “Poema morale” lines. Second, there is an evident thematic relationship between the marginal lines of “Poema” and the stanza of the “Proverbs” that is at the bottom of the page. The “Proverbs” stanza is about the high cost of exchanging one’s soul for worldly vanities. Appearing in in the left column above “Swines brede,” the stanza refers to gold, silver, and its changing valuation: it shall “wurthen to noht.” Man

50 This might be an instance of the scribe misremembering a poem rather than copying it wrongly from a written exemplar. The couplet is also present elsewhere in the book (f. 36v) so it is equally possible the scribe is copying from that witness but is, effectively, copying from memory because the book can only be open in one place at a time.

51 See Betty Hill (2003, 377) for a brief description of this copying of the couplet.
rashly “forleseth” (forfeits) his soul for gold and silver. Meanwhile, in the “Swines brede” lines outside the margin, below, man “bihth” (buys) his soul too dearly. The “Proverbs of Alfred” stanza is as follows:

[‘Leue þu þe nouht to swiþe up]
þe se-flod . if þu hauest madmes
manie and moche gold + siluer .
it scal wurþen to noht : to duste
it scal driuen. Drihtie sell lifen
efre . + mani man for his gold haueþh
godes erre. + þurh his siluer . his
sayle soule he for leseþ . Betere him
bcome . boren þat he ne
were .

Elsewhere in Maidstone A.13, the “Swines brede” section of the “Poema Morale” is also copied in a margin, and in an equally appropriate place. The other witness of “Swines Brede” appears on f. 36v, within the ruled margin, to the right of Latin notes for a sermon (see Photograph B, Appendix 2). These notes include several biblical passages and the couplet occurs immediately to the right of an abbreviated passage from Amos 4:1, “Audite hoc vacce. v. q. eo q. dixisti.” The expanded passage, in English, is

Listen to this word, you fat cows who are on the mountain of Samaria, you who make false accusations against the destitute and crush the poor, who say to your nobles, ‘Bring, and we will drink.’

The abbreviation of this passage allowed space for the scribe to insert the “Swines brede” lines (see Photograph B in Appendix 2). Here the juxtaposition of the “Swines brede” quotation compares the swine’s “sweet meat” to Amos’s “fat cows” who crush the poor. Both passages let the reader or listener picture sinful people eating and drinking while others suffer in poverty. By highlighting Amos’s fury at wealth and exploitation, this copying of “Swines brede” has the potential to be a political as well as moral comment on inequity. Moreover, although it is a marginal copying, like the excerpt on f. 93r, the “Swines brede” excerpt has a specific thematic relation to the text in the main block of

52 N. R. Ker records this witness as being on f. 46v (1983, 320).
53 The verse in the Vulgata is “Audite verbum hoc vaccæ pingues, quæ estis in monte Samariae: quæ calumniam facitis egenis, et confringitis pauperes: quæ dicitis dominis vestris: Afferte, et bibemus.”
the page. Even though the “Swine’s brede” couplet on f. 93r appears in the bottom margin and “Swines brede” on f. 36v appears within the margins, these lyrics form a group—the sort of group that, above, I referred to as a citation network. Both instances of the “Swines brede” lines are copied in a less-planned fashion than the “Proverbs of Alfred”—suggesting that the “Proverbs of Alfred” and the “Poema Morale” may have belonged to overlapping but separate citation networks.

There are some other minor similarities evident in the poems’ copying in other manuscripts. In Jesus 29, both the “Proverbs of Alfred” and the “Poema Morale” appear to have a similar degree of planning, in that they appear within the main ruled block. The Jesus 29 scribe has nevertheless copied the “Proverbs” and “Poema” in distinctly different quires in the manuscript. In Jesus 29 the “Poema Morale” is copied on ff. 169r–174v, at the start of quire three, while the “Proverbs of Alfred,” also copied in a long version, is on ff. 189r–192r, spanning the end of quire four and the beginning of quire five. Neither of these poems are in Jesus 29’s sister volume, Caligula A.IX.

The previous discussion of citation networks within manuscripts is important because I suspect that the citation networks between manuscripts reveals traces of the different citation networks within manuscripts. I want to illustrate this point by discussing the manuscripts in which we find “Poema Morale” (NIMEV 1272) and “Proverbs of Alfred.”

“The Poema Morale” appears in the following manuscripts:

Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum McClean MS 123
London, British Library, Egerton MS 613 (two copies)
London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 487
Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby MS 2 (Digby 2)
Durham, University Library MS Cosin V.III.2 (two lines only)
London, British Library, MS Royal 7.C.IV (fragments)
Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13 (fragments)
Oxford, Jesus College MS 29
Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.52 (323)

54 The book originally consisted of ten quires of twelve leaves each. Seven of these ten quires, including quires 3 and 5, are still complete and in order (Ker 1963, xii).

55 See M. Laing for a linguistic comparison between “Poema Morale” witnesses (1992, 575).
The “Proverbs of Alfred” (NIMEV 433) appears in only the following three books:

Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.52 (323)
Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13
Oxford, Jesus College MS 29\textsuperscript{56}

Clearly, the manuscripts in which the “Proverbs of Alfred” survive are a small subset of those in which “Poema Morale” survive. Even though the “Proverbs of Alfred” is always found in a manuscript which contains “Poema Morale,” these poems, judging from their distributions, probably belonged to slightly different citation networks. I suspect as well that the difference in planning of “Poema Morale” and “Proverbs of Alfred” in Maidstone A.13 is borne out by another difference in the citation network between manuscripts; namely, the difference in the distribution of the “Death’s Wither Clench” lyric.

The citation network of the “Death’s Wither Clench,” or ‘Mon mai long lives wene” also appears to be different from that of the “Poema Morale.” “Death’s Wither Clench” is perhaps one of Maidstone A.13’s more planned lyrics, having been copied within the main ruled area. It deserves to be called a song due to its musical notations at the top of f. 93v (see Photograph C in Appendix 2). The song has other witnesses, but Maidstone’s is the only version with music.\textsuperscript{57} In Maidstone A.13, the scribe carefully copied out the first three lines of words in the song while leaving three empty lines in which he later includes musical notes as if on a stave.\textsuperscript{58} The ruling on the page is indeed quite narrow

\textsuperscript{56} Passages from the “Proverbs of Alfred” also appear in what has been referred to as the “Proverbs of Hendyng.” This poem presents itself as it were a collection of sayings authored by a wise man, and it is found in eight other manuscripts, but none of these contain the “Poema Morale.” If we considered the “Hendyng” manuscripts as part of the “Proverbs” family then this would support the theory that the “Proverbs” and “Poema” belong to different citation networks.

\textsuperscript{57} For example, its first stanza appears in the Ayenbite of Inwit (pp.129–30) See Brown (1932, 171), note to No. 10.

\textsuperscript{58} Dorothy Kim suggested to me in conversation that the folio was originally ruled with lines meant for musical stave lines, and the scribe then used these ‘stave’ lines for copying words.
(the lines in which the song is copied are 3.5 mm high). No other music notation survives in the book. It is likely that the scribe copied the words before he copied the music, for two significant reasons. First, a repeated phrase of music is indicated, but the words to this phrase are not written below the repeated phrase, but have no musical notes above them. As well, the second line of music does not begin at the leftmost margin. If a scribe were copying music first on a page with no accompanying words yet copied, why leave a space to the left of a line of notes—why not begin the second line where the first line begins as well? It seems more likely that a scribe first copied the words, and then the same scribe or another person attempted to insert musical notes above the words. Knowing the tune to the words, and knowing the tune repeats after the word “wreinch,” the scribe decided to indicate a repeated musical phrase instead of copying it again, and began to copy the variation in melody again in the middle of the second line, where it begins in the song. It seems, then, that the scribe who copied the words did not leave quite enough space for the musical notes, because the top line of musical notes breaks into the line of words immediately below it, between the words “wreinch” and “fair.” It seems as well that a copying mistake in the lyric’s words—where the scribe has struck out “wreinch” and followed it with “wreinch”—has been easily accommodated during the addition of the musical notes, by copying the note above “wreinch.”

“Death’s Wither Clench” appears on the verso of the folio where the scribe has copied the “Proverbs of Alfred,” prompting the possibility that these two lyrics were somehow associated—in other words; they might form a citation network. The song also appears within the main ruling and in a similar hand (f. 93v) to “Proverbs.” Interestingly, like the “Proverbs,” the song is also an apparently planned insertion into Caligula A.IX and Jesus 29 as well as in Maidstone A.13. Moreover, the first line of the “Death’s Wither Clench” song is contaminated with lines 153–6 of the “Proverbs of Alfred” (Laing 1993, 208,

59 Dorothy Kim suggested to me in conversation that the folio is ruled with lines originally meant for musical stave lines and the scribe then used these “stave” lines for copying words. There are many folios in this manuscript with very narrow rulings, however, that are not musical staves.
A comparison of the relevant lines indicates how the scribe has cross-associated the lines of two poems (Arngart 1955, Vol. 2., 88–89, ll. 153–156):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Maniman weneþ} & \quad \text{Man mei longe him liues wene} \\
\text{Þath he wene ne þarf.} & \quad \text{Ac ofte him liyet þe wreinch} \\
\text{Longes liues:} & \quad (\text{Maidstone A.13, “Man mei longe”}) \\
\text{And him sal liȝen þe wrenche.} & \quad (\text{ed. Arngart 1955, Vol. 2, 88–89})
\end{align*}
\]

Here the memory of lines from one poem appears to be interfering with the recollection of another poem, resulting in the written fusion of these oral/written texts. It is also possible that these lines were a refrain that belonged to both these poems. I will call the relationship between these poems a citation network.

Another example of poems whose “distance” within the manuscript corresponds with distance between different manuscripts are the secular and moral lyrics found in Lambeth 499. This book’s secular lyrics are unique short poems about hunting, a knightly assembly, bad weather, and keeping a lady’s love (Pickering 1992, 157). The secular lyrics are copied differently from the moral lyrics, for the secular lyrics appear in the outer margins of folios 64v–68v in quire 8, a quire that contains an Augustinian treatise, whereas the moral lyrics are copied inside the main ruled block in quire 15 (Pickering 1992, 161). The different modes of citation suggest that, whereas the exemplar of the moral lyrics was available at the time of copying the body of f. 125v, the exemplars of the secular lyrics were not available at the same time as the scribe copied ff. 64–68v. It may also have been the case that the secular poems were memorized, and the moral poems copied from a written exemplar, or vice versa. In any case, we can identify at least two separate citation networks within this book.

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60 The misremembering might be a case of cognitive interference, a psychological process that is understood as a failure of memory facilitated by competing and similar information, the theory being that “learning material similar to the target material causes interference” (Rubin 1995, 147).

61 London, British Library Additional MS 11579 is a fourteenth-century trilingual miscellany. It contains ten Middle English lyrics, three of which appear in other books. This manuscript is more well known for its copy of Odo of Cherriton’s fables, also found in Arundel 292.
One of the moral lyrics that occurs within the main ruled block in quire 15 is “When I think things three.”62 This six-line text appears in five other manuscripts, always cited in the main block of text on the page. For example, in Arundel 292, “When I think things three” is copied in the main margins of the body text. In that book the poem appears immediately before an Anglo-Norman poem that takes up several of the following pages: “Deu le omnipotent, Ki al cumencement Criat cel e terre.” In Maidstone A.13, the lyric “When I think things three” is inserted into the flow of another text in the centre of the page, in the midst of a Latin sermon on f. 243v (Laing 1993, 135). In New 88, the lyric appears in a bottom margin which was originally left blank to include later commentary, so this witness is not necessarily a “random” copying even though it is marginal. This moral lyric is shared between multiple manuscripts by scribes who typically planned to include it. It was not only repeatedly available but repeatedly available prior to the copying of texts within the ruled margins. By contrast, no evidence of this kind of planned copying survives for the unique secular lyrics in Lambeth 499.

At the beginning of this section I provided a network diagram showing the appearance of multiple lyric manuscript witnesses. This particular diagram, when read in concert with evidence about manuscript provenance, led me to suggest that the books in which these lyrics appear were owned by Hospitallers or Cistercians. Moreover, when we interpret the diagram and look closely at the extent to which individual lyrics are planned, it appears that the network diagram sometimes points to the arrangement of lyrics within manuscripts. In the following section I want to consider what citation networks of manuscripts tell us about lyrics that were circulated among contemporary but distinct communities, such as Franciscan monasteries and lay households.

62 The short poem “When I think things three” is, like the “Proverbs of Alfred” a lyric that has several similar versions, including “Yche day me cumeþ tydinges threo” (NIMEV 695), “Hit beoþ þreo tymes on þo day” (NIMEV 1615), “Sore I syc & sore I may” (NIMEV 3199.5), “Thre thinges ben in fay” (NIMEV 3711), “Tre thinges þar ern þat done me sigh sore” (3712), “Bird us neure bliþe be” (NIMEV 550.5) and “Thre ways mosthe wyt thowth” (NIMEV 3713). In Jesus 29, “Three Sorrowful things” is on the very same page as the “Proverbs of Alfred.”
2  Franciscans and Benedictines

Above I introduced the concept of a citation network and gave some examples of citation networks of medieval lyrics. I illustrated the concept using the example of medieval books containing lyrics that belonged to Cistercian and Hospitaller orders, and suggested that lay or regular members of these orders were friendly to each other in a way which allowed scribes to circulate these lyrics. In this section I want to apply the concept of the citation network to the case of lyrics that appear in both Franciscan and non-Franciscan manuscripts.

In his 1975 book *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, David Jeffrey advances the view that Franciscan spirituality significantly influenced early English lyrics. Jeffrey demonstrates useful links between the theology and methodology of the Franciscan Friars and the form and content of many Middle English lyrics, such as the religious lyrics in Harley 2253. Contrary to current critical practice, however, Jeffrey ascribes many miscellanies to the Franciscans that are no longer believed to be Franciscan (such as Trinity 323 and Digby 86). An abbreviated view of Jeffrey’s position is that since lyrics are found in both non-Franciscan manuscripts (such as Harley 2253) and “Franciscan” manuscripts (such as Digby 2), non-Franciscan manuscripts should be considered to be mostly Franciscan, and thus over eighty-five percent of Middle English lyrics before the Black Death were written by Franciscans (Jeffrey 1975, 206-9, 214). This chapter section will suggest an alternate and useful way of thinking about the relationship between lyrics in Franciscan and non-Franciscan manuscripts; namely, that lyrics in these manuscripts belonged to citation networks loosely connecting different social contexts. By visualizing the relationships between multiple-witnessed lyrics in Franciscan books (such as the book of John of Grimestone, or Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 18.7.21 [NLS Adv. 18.7.21]) and apparently non-Franciscan books, and by contextualizing the appearance of lyrics within

63 See John Seabill (2003) for more on the lack of evidence for the Franciscan production of these two manuscripts.
these books, we can illustrate interesting points of connection between the Franciscan friars, other regular orders, schools and universities, and diocesan clerical contexts.

There is a group of lyric books that was once well known as the “Friars’ miscellanies,” namely, the lyric anthologies Digby 86 and Harley 2253. Harley 2253 was produced in the 1340s, so, in a slightly later period than the thirteenth-century books I discussed above in Section One. Another fourteenth-century book that contains a large collection of English lyrics, and which is still believed to be a Franciscan production, is NLS Adv. 18.7.21. Grimestone, like the scribes of Vernon, Auchinleck, and Harley 2253, copied many poems together in one book, although Grimestone’s book is structurally quite different in that it is an alphabetical sermon sourcebook and the sermons all in Latin. Judging from the range of other manuscripts where Grimestone’s poems appear, however, Grimestone drew upon a variety of sources in his compilation practices. The pattern shown by his book, of one manuscript containing very many lyrics, and many lyrics which have multiple witnesses in many different kinds of books, suggests that Grimestone had access to diverse exemplars or that he circulated lyric exemplars in other diverse contexts. The collection of many lyrics, and the connections between these lyrics and other varied kinds of manuscripts, makes Grimestone’s book look like a hub in the visual representation of his lyric citation network.

The Harley 2253 manuscript, thought by Carleton Brown to be a miscellany collected by a monastic collector, perhaps an itinerant friar or wandering cleric (1932, xxxvi), was shown by Carter Revard’s groundbreaking work to have been copied by a professional scribe, whose hand Revard found in many administrative documents related to the town of Ludlow (2000, 21–22). Harley 2253 also has accounts associated with the Mortimer

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64 Carleton Brown says, “The Friar Miscellanies … [include] … Harley 2253, [which] although compiled by monks at Leominster, clearly contains work by friars, since half its poems are duplicated in manuscripts belonging to friars” (Brown 1924, xviii).

65 For more on Grimestone’s book, see Wilson 1973 (containing a list of the English lyrics, and editions of otherwise unedited lyrics) and Wenzel 1986.

66 See p.36, n36, for more about hubs.
family bound into it, suggesting that the book could have been commissioned for a member or associate of the Mortimer family. Judging from the scribe’s earlier book, Royal 12.C.XII, the Harley 2253 scribe had clerical training, whether that was regular, secular, or diocesan training. Harley 2253 is today a valuable resource of Middle English literature, preserving many unique lyrics, and its lyrics are sometimes referred to as “The Harley lyrics.” Although Harley 2253 contains many courtly lyrics, which are unique, it also contains many lyrics whose other witnesses appear in different kinds of books. The Harley 2253 scribe copied thirteen English lyrics that are still extant today in other contemporary books and rolls. This scribe was thus connected to a network that yields a rich variety of exemplars of circulated lyrics, both religious and secular.

The social range of the Harley 2253 scribe’s exemplars begins with the regular orders, including the Franciscan friars, but stretches beyond that world. For example, there is a lyric that in Harley 2253 has both religious and secular versions: “Lytel wotyt onyman” (NIMEV 1922). This poem appears in an earlier book, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 512 (Gonville 512), which contains saints’ legends, sermons and sermon notes, and French and English poetry. This manuscript was the commonplace book of thirteenth-century Franciscan Friar John Rudham. However, another lyric in Harley 2253, namely, the “Proverbs of Hendyng” (NIMEV 1669) indicates a slightly different reach of the scribe’s network. This poem has connections with the “Proverbs of Alfred,” which is discussed above. Another copy of “Hendyng” also appears in Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.1.1, which includes Peter of Langtoft’s French chronicle, and several English lyrics that are interspersed throughout the chronicle. This book, copied c.1325, is not clearly associated with the Franciscans. Peter of Langtoft’s chronicle and its political lyrics would have been more suited to a wealthy lay family household.

Another poem in Harley 2253 that appears in a Franciscan manuscript, Digby 2, is “I syke when y singe,” a song on the passion. Digby 2, like Gonville 512, is a book copied before 1282 in the hand of a Franciscan friar. The owner of this book, William de

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67 Passages from the “Proverbs of Alfred” also appear in the “Proverbs of Hendyng” (Arngart 1955, Vol. 2, 8).
Montoriel, may have been part of a mid-thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman monastic settlement in Drogheda County (Lewry 1980, 67). The book’s tiny size (105 x 70 mm), smaller even than London, British Library Harley MS 913 (Harley 913)—another manuscript that also contains a Harley 2253 lyric (“Erthe on Erthe”)—suggests the private study and portability of Digby 2. Montoriel’s Franciscan sympathies are evident from another English lyric in Digby 2; that lyric encourages the reader to adopt the habit of the Friars Minor. Montoriel’s erudite education is also evident from the presence in Digby 2 of logical and philosophical texts, such as Porphyry’s *Isagoge*.\(^6\) If Montoriel did not at some point live at a university, he belonged to a Franciscan *studium generale*, suggests Lewry, and the book is evidence of his broad intellectual reach.\(^6\) The range of difficult academic texts that accompany the English lyrics in Digby 2 lends support to Michael Kuczyński’s claim that English “religious” lyric in this period was meant for a theologically sophisticated audience (Kuczyński 2011, 321–6).

Another Franciscan connection is found in the tiny fourteenth-century Harley 913, a trilingual notebook compiled by a Franciscan at Kildare. The notebook, which measures 140 x 95 mm, contains fourteen Middle English lyrics. In its size it is similar to Digby 2 and New 88, the latter being a thick sermon book whose typical folio size is also small, at 147 x 88 mm. Like Harley 913 and Digby 2, New 88 may have an early Irish provenance. This book was donated to New College by Thomas Cranley, the Archbishop of Dublin (1337–1417) (Coxe 1852, 28).

The Franciscan educational context is also evident in the contents of another manuscript; namely, Oxford, Bodleian Bodley MS 26 (Bodley 26). This book of 208 leaves contains sermons, Latin saints’ legends, and a moral treatise, and the last part of the manuscript includes physiognomic, astrological and arithmetical treatises. Alan Fletcher and Anne

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\(^6\) Porphyry’s *Isagoge* (written in the third century) is a general introduction to Aristotle. Boethius’s commentary on the *Isagoge* was also popular in late medieval Europe.

\(^6\) Such a *studium* existed by 1324 at Buttevant in the south of Ireland, though before 1280 Montoriel might have learned his Porphyry at a *studium* in London, Paris, Oxford or Cambridge. There were Franciscan priories at the ports of Dundalk and Drogheda, and the friars were well connected to trade routes (O’Sullivan 1960/1961, 33).
Hudson note that many of the compiler’s text sources were Franciscan, and therefore he or she likely had access “to the resources of a conventual scriptorium or centre” c.1300–1350 (Fletcher and Hudson 2008, 320). This manuscript’s poems are mostly unique, but some poems appear in a fifteenth-century manuscript book, University of London, Senate House Library MS 657.

The appearance of a Harley 2253 lyric in the Franciscan friar John of Grimestone’s book continues the picture of connections to Franciscan manuscripts. Grimestone was a friar who copied his sermon reference book before 1372 (Wilson 1973, i). His book has 143 numbered headings, such as “De Auaricia” and “De Auro.” (There are many more headings, but some headings are included under one numbered category.) This is the earliest alphabetical reference book containing Middle English lyrics, and might be usefully compared to other Franciscan alphabetical reference books, such as the Liber Exemplorum of Durham Cathedral (Pfander 1934, 24). Grimestone’s book contains 246 short Middle English verse items—an unprecedented number, and a higher number than is found in Harley 2253 or Digby 86.70 Some of the English lyrics are very short, however, and not every subject section contains verse. The De Passione Christi section is particularly interesting for this study in that it includes more English lyrics (24 items) than any other section. Like other books with high numbers of lyrics, Grimestone’s selections often appear in other quite different kinds of manuscripts (see Figure 2 below). For example, a lullaby from Mary to Christ appears in Cambridge, University Library Additional MS 5943 (CUL 5943).71 Grimestone’s De Passione Christi section also contains a long abecedarian poem (NIMEV 1523 and NIMEV 424), the earliest of its kind in English.72

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70 The book contains much Latin verse as well, and a small number of French verse items.

71 CUL 5943 is one of the few paper manuscripts described in this chapter. Although the lullaby does not survive with music, there are hints that it would have been sung. It is a few folios away from songs with music notation, and the poet explicitly mentions singing in lines 5 and 8.

72 There are two other witnesses of this poem, and both are later (fifteenth-century) copies. Grimestone’s copy is the first English ABC poem in which a letter begins the first line of each stanza rather than each line of the poem.
Grimestone’s book is unusual in the numbers of English lyrics that it contains. Yet it is clear that the phenomenon of lyrics showing up in diverse kinds of manuscripts is quite common, and is documented as occurring in other groups of manuscripts as well, even in cases where books have only a handful of lyrics. For example, Emmanuel 27 is a thirteenth-century preacher’s miscellany that contains an acrostic “Hail Mary” poem (NIMEV 1062) and sermons and notes for use in preaching practices. The book also contains some Latin verse, including verses on “The Ten Plagues” (f. 180v) and a French Pater Noster, beginning “Sire deu omnipotent.” The “Hail Mary” appears among a small group of English prayers. The same “Hail Mary” poem also appears in London, British Library Cotton Cleopatra MS B.VI (Cleopatra B.VI), a fourteenth-century book. The latter book is two separate volumes: one contains Latin treatises on the writing arts, including the *Poetria Nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf and the *Anticlaudianus* by Alan of Lille; and the other contains the Cistercian monk St. Aelred of Rievaulx’s *Twelve Abuses*

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73 Section One notes evidence for Emmanuel 27’s association with the Templars and Hospitallers at Sompting Church.
of the Cloisters. The lyrics are on one folio that has been attached to Aelred’s Twelve Abuses. This text could have had preaching as well as devotional uses for regular clergy. As well, the association with the regular clergy recalls the argument I made in Section One; namely that Emmanuel 27 was associated with military and regular orders.

It is not entirely clear, however, that the rhyming prayers, including the “Hail Mary,” originated in the same context as the Twelve Abuses. The rhyming prayers are a late addition to the quire containing the Twelve Abuses, and they are in a different hand and copied on a different vellum. The leaf appears to have been inserted to the book after the two parts were brought together. We can, however, guess at why a late-fourteenth-century compiler saw a link between the following texts: Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s Poetria Nova; Alan of Lille’s Plaint of Nature; Aelred’s Twelve Abuses, and several rhyming English prayers. It is quite possible that regular clergy studied both the Twelve Abuses and Geoffrey of Vinsauf in a university. Martin Camargo notes that many religious orders sent monks to Oxford for training in estate management, and

such training would have become even more widespread as a result of the 1336 papal law decreed by Pope Benedict XII that directed all monasteries to provide a teacher ... to instruct the novices in advanced Latin grammar, logic, and philosophy. (Camargo 1999, 953)

Monks came to study theology, but were required to study rhetoric first or to show they had already done so; meanwhile, training manuals were taken back to their mother houses to train young monks there (Camargo 1999, 954). The person who copied the “Ave Maria” into the quire with the Twelve Abuses could, we conjecture, have been Cistercian (since Aelred of Rievaulx was a Cistercian), and thus a follower of a regular order—not necessarily a Franciscan friar such as John of Grimestone, who also copied the same poem in his book.

Even though the “Hail Mary” appears in Emmanuel 27 which is connected to Maidstone A.13 and the other group of books identified in section one, the poem also appears in slightly different manuscript contexts. This lyric prayer was also copied into a fourteenth-century book: Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.IV.32 (CUL Gg.IV.32), a lay household miscellany that is one of thirty “Queen Mary Group” manuscripts.
associated with Andrew Horn, London Chamberlain from 1320 to 1328 (Dennison 1990, 122). In this book, the English lyrics are clustered together in quires two and three amid other French and Latin verse prayers, and are immediately followed by treatises on confession and penitence. From the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, then, the “Hail Mary” acrostic seems to have diversified in its readerly contexts, moving from the regular clergy (read by Hospitallers in Sompting, perhaps), to lay people or secular clergy (such as a lay family associated with Andrew Horn in London).

The English “Hail Mary” lyric prayer was therefore at home in a Franciscan milieu in Grimestone’s book (NLS Adv. 18.7.21), but was also copied and read by secular and diocesan clerics, and by members of lay families. In some cases, moreover, poems read by lay families were also read at schools and universities. For example, a Harley 2253 lyric is also found in CUL 5943. This late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century book is like Cleopatra B.VI in that its contents suggest an owner or reader not only interested in theology but who also had had a clerical and Oxford education. The book contains sermons by Jacobus de Voragine, predictions of solar eclipses, and notes on canon law and theology. Various early owners of the book are now identified, including Thomas Turke, who copied the religious songs accompanied by music notation. Turke was a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, from 1384 to 1397 and a chaplain at Winchester College from 1395 to 1397. He was readmitted as fellow in April 1400 and in May 1411 was cited for heresy (Dobson 1979, 25). The religious songs he copied could have been sung at Winchester College’s Christmas feasts, and thus could have been added c. 1395–1398 or 1400–1401 when he was a fellow or chaplain there. The secular songs are probably earlier, however. Critics speculate that they were copied by the person from whom Thomas Turke acquired the manuscript, who is named in the manuscript as William Hennynges, a “joculator” and harper” (Taylor 1991, 66–67; Dobson 1979, 25).

Lynda Dennison lists CUL Gg.IV.32 as part of the Queen Mary group because an image on f. 8 (in quire one) very much resembles the Queen Mary illustration “Wheel of the Attributes of Human Existence” in London, British Library, Arundel MS 83, otherwise known as the De Lisle Psalter.
A Benedictine connection is meanwhile evident in Oxford, Merton College MS 248 (Merton 248), a fourteenth-century book that contains a high number of lyrics, including one copied by the Harley 2253 scribe. Merton 248’s lyrics are short tags of two or four lines that are integrated into sermons, and many tags are unique. One macaronic poem, “On the Evils of the Times” (NIMEV 2787), appears in a book copied by the Harley 2253 scribe: Royal 12.C.XII, as well as in five other manuscripts. Merton 248 is a large (200 x 277 mm) sermon book that belonged to John Sheppey, once a Benedictine monk and later the Bishop of Rochester (d.1360), and it contains thirty-nine English lyrics. The macaronic song also appears in Oxford, Bodleian Rawlinson A.273, a late fourteenth-century book with charters, letters, versified proverbs and prayers in Latin, French, and English, and notes on alchemy and astronomy—a diverse set of contents whose science and legal notes suggest a student or scholar. Sheppey’s book also contains the sixteen-line “Abuses of the age” (NIMEV 906) that appears in a manuscript containing The Lay Folks’ Mass Book and Speculum Guy of Warwick, London, British Library Royal MS 17.B.XVII. 75 “Abuses of the Age” appears in twenty-five manuscripts, but most of these are fifteenth-century books; Sheppey’s copy in Oxford, Merton 248 is perhaps the earliest witness we have. It would appear that Sheppey had access to some lyrics that were unique, and many of these were short and integrated into sermons; others, however, had many more copies and appear to have been used in quite different kinds of books.

I begin this section with David Jeffrey’s attempts to find a way to describe the connections between manuscripts that were evidently Franciscan in origin, such as Digby 2, and NLS Adv. 18.7.21. Jeffrey theorized that, since certain lyrics appeared in both Franciscan and non-Franciscan manuscripts, all these lyrics could be usefully described as Franciscan. Instead I have attempted to show that the lyric connections between Franciscan- and non-Franciscan manuscripts illustrate that some compilers had access to quite a diverse set of exemplars. John of Grimestone, a Franciscan friar, copies the “Hail Mary” prayer that also shows up in quite different non-Franciscan manuscripts, including

75 This manuscript contains a fragment from chapter 33 of Richard Rolle’s Incendium Amoris, for an edition of which see Margaret Deanesley (1915).
one that has connections with the Queen Mary group of manuscripts, and Andrew Horn of London (Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.IV.32) and one that contains a Cistercian treatise (Cleopatra B.VI). Instead of positing that these lyrics are all somehow the same, the citation network allows us to posit that that lyrics connect between diverse social worlds.

3 Music

In sections one and two I addressed how citation networks can offer an alternative view of the circulation of late medieval English lyric texts. I briefly mentioned the occurrence of music notation, and used it as evidence (in the case of Maidstone A.13) that a particular lyric (“Death’s Wither Clench”) was a slightly more planned copying. Medieval music criticism has much more to offer to literary and bibliographic studies of medieval lyrics however, and musicologists are just as interested in the social, bibliographic, and material contexts of song, as are literary critics.76 A 2011 conference paper by Helen Deeming on the alignment of beats and syllables considered how, in one medieval song, notation matches the verbal rhythm and sense, and thus no alterations need to be made to either the manuscript’s words or notes in order for us to understand how the song does its musical and poetic work.77 So far, however, musical analyses of English song include only brief discussions of their words, and literary analyses of poetry rarely discuss rhythm or melody. Literary critics often limit themselves to the kind of

76 The formation of the Medieval Song Network in 2010 brings a welcome interdisciplinary approach to medieval songs. John Stevens provides a comprehensive approach to monophonic songs of England in Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986). See also several articles by Helen Deeming about twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts of songs.

77 The song is a unique witness, “Mirie it is whil sumer ilast” in Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson G.22 (SC 14755), f. 1v (NIMEV 2163). This folio is a flyleaf from the first half of the thirteenth century, added into a book of Psalms in Latin from c.1300. Madan (1980, 3, 344) suggests the book was owned a Gilbertine abbey, due to the mention of St. Benedict and “atque Gilberti” on f. 160, but Carleton Brown suggested the book was from Thorney Abbey in Cambridgeshire, because the book mentions St. Botolph (1932, 169). The Gilbertines were a female religious order based in Lincolnshire from 1130 to the sixteenth century, and regularly used music in their worship practices, though, Josselyn-Cranson suggests, “not in the fashionable secular manner … probably without the antiphons that monastic houses employed” (2007, 186).
observation made by Burrow, namely that a poem is a “dance-song” (1979, 14).

Moreover, in the New Index of Middle English Verse, there is no indication of what
music accompanies which lyrics, or, for example, whether a given tune accompanies two
different lyrics that have the same burden. In this section I will argue that music notation
(like literary form, dialect, bibliographic features or hand) is a useful indicator of a
distinct citation network—a network that can be identified within a manuscript, and can
be visualized as a relationship between different manuscripts.

3.1 “Worldes Blis Ne Last Ne Þhrowe”

I suggested above that a citation network could be distinguished by the presence of music
notation. The manuscripts that contain “Worldes Blis” (a song which, in some witnesses,
has musical notation) and the lyrics “Fifteen Signs” and “The Sayings of Saint Bernard”
(neither of whose witnesses have musical notation) are particularly good examples of
such a network.78

All three poems appear in Digby 86 (see below, Figure 3).79 Despite this commonality, it
is clear from the network diagram shown above that “Fifteen Signs” (NIMEV 1823) and
“The Sayings of Saint Bernard” (NIMEV 3310) appear in a different list of manuscripts
than does “Worldes Blis” (NIMEV 4223). The latter song appears in Oxford, Bodleian
Rawlinson MS G.18 (Rawl. G.18) and London, British Library Arundel MS 248
(Arundel 248), where it is accompanied by music notation. But “Fifteen Signs” and “The

78 The phrase “Worldes Blis” opens a number of lyrics that lament the loss of worldly vanities (see
NIMEV numbers 4220 to 4224, and perhaps 4225, “Werdis ioy3e”). In another “Worldes Blis” lyric there
is similar evidence of its having circulated both as a poem and as a song. For example, NIMEV 4221,
“Worldes blisce haue god day” is copied in two books, one without music (NLS Adv. 18.7.21); and one
with music in a flyleaf, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 8; the flyleaf is a bifolium from a
thirteenth-century psalter. The other part of the bifolium contains an Anglo-Norman motet, “Volez oyer le
castoy,” a secular song (Dean and Boulton 1999, 72). Given this evidence of musical circulation of
“Worldes Blis” songs it is perhaps not surprising to find that some echoes of it appear in other lyrics as
well; for example, Carleton Brown notes similarities between lines of “Worldes Blise ne last no throwe”
and of the “Poema Morale,” (Brown 1932, 201).

79 Digby 86, a layman’s commonplace miscellany compiled in the last years of the thirteenth century, is
well known among critics of Middle English because it contains a high number of English texts, including
hagiography, romance, lyric, games, and the earliest English fabliau, “Dame Sirith” (Tschann and Parkes
1996; Miller 1963; Corrie 1997 and 2000; and Laing 2000).
Sayings of Saint Bernard” appear in Oxford, Bodleian Additional MS E.6 (Bod. Add. E.6) and “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” appears in a host of other manuscripts. We might suspect therefore that “Worldes Blis” and “Fifteen Signs” came from different citation networks.

Is there any evidence of different citation networks within the manuscripts? In fact there may be. For example, in Digby 86, most of the English lyrics appear in quires 15–17, and are grouped with other lyrics, hagiography, and tales. “Fifteen Signs” and “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” are located quite close together at the end of quire 15 and the start of quire 16. (These poems also appear adjacent to each other in another manuscript, the small roll Bod. Add. E.6.) Quires 15 to 17 of Digby 86 are a booklet (judging from their similar content; that is, that they have mostly English poetry in them.) It is interesting, therefore, that “Worldes Blis”—also an English poem—is not included there. Instead the song is much further away: “Worldes Blis” is in quire 20, sandwiched between the French “Ragemon le bon” (a game) and the Latin verses, “Fides Hodie Sopitur.” The distance identified on the network diagram between manuscripts appears to be matched by a corresponding distance within the manuscript.

Figure 3: Relationships between witnesses of “Worldes Blisse” and “The Sayings of Saint Bernard”
If we look again at the network diagram, we notice as well that the song “Worldes Blis” appears in other manuscripts that are less well-connected to the larger lyric network; that is, the other manuscript witnesses of “Worldes Blis” contain fewer English lyrics. Compared to the manuscripts in which “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” is found (Auchinleck, Vernon, Oxford Bodleian Laud Miscellaneous MS 108 [Laud Misc. 108], Bod. Add. E.6 and Harley 2253), the two manuscripts in which “Worldes Blis” appears (Rawl. G.18 and Arundel 248) both contain far fewer multiple-witnessed English lyrics. Indeed, these latter two manuscripts are qualitatively different books from those in which we find “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” and “Fifteen Signs.” Rawl. G.18 is a thirteenth-century book with psalms, canticles, prayers, and the litany. The English song “Worldes Blis” is on a quire of two leaves at the very end of the book where it is set to music and appears alongside a French lyric also set to music. Arundel 248 is a thirteenth-century theological and moral miscellany. In that book, “Worldes Blis” is on folio 154, in quire 12, which consists of four leaves, and which also contains a Latin song set to music, “Magdalene laudes plene,” and a song with words both in English and Latin: “Angelus ad virginem.” 80 Outside of its appearance in Digby 86, “Worldes Blis” appears only in manuscripts with other musically notated songs, and manuscripts that do not contain very many other English lyrics.

It would seem, then, that the circulation network for “Worldes Blis” was different than the network for “Fifteen Signs” and “The Sayings of Saint Bernard,” and this difference manifests itself today in the different contexts of the song’s copying within and between manuscripts. The “Worldes Blis” song is frequently copied adjacent to Latin and French songs; that is, near lyrics that were accompanied by music. Moreover, in Digby 86, where there is no music at all, “Worldes Blis” is copied adjacent to Latin and French material. This is not particularly unusual in itself, but English lyrics more commonly cluster near other English materials in Digby 86. Are these differences actually traces of

80 Although the Latin song “Angelus ad virginem” is famous today (due perhaps to its citation at the opening of Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale [I, 3216]) the English version in Arundel 248 (“Gabriel fram evene king / sent to the maiden swete …”) is today a unique witness, as are the other English lyrics in this book also unique.
different former exemplars, one wonders? If this is the case, then the network diagram usefully reveals the potential for that exemplar.

The different circulation networks of Digby 86 and Rawl. G.18 may even be read as a difference in social networks. Digby 86 was compiled for and read in a layman’s household, but Rawl. G.18 is a psalter which includes polyphonic music notation. Liturgical polyphony in a book is a strong indicator of the book’s use by professional singers: about polyphonic liturgical music books after 1375, Andrew Wathey says, “the principal, if not the only, identifiable users of books of liturgical polyphony were the groups of singers working in the greater churches and the household chapels of the king and higher nobility” (Wathey 1989, 145). Wathey points out that polyphonic music was often kept as loose quaterns, pamphlets, or rolls with small numbers of pieces. The quire of two leaves in Rawlinson G.18 matches this description as a small gathering of folios. Therefore it is likely that the song “Worldes Blis” was read not only in a lay household but also in a diocesan church or regular order.

3.2 “Stond Wel Moder” and “Stod Ho Þere Neh”

Looking at lyrics that share music but have different words also illustrates a variety of circulation contexts. The case of the English passion songs “Stond Wel Moder” (NIMEV 3211) and “Stod Ho Þere Neh” (NIMEV 3216.5) is particularly instructive. These two English songs are sometimes referred to as translations of “Stabat iuxta,” but although all three songs describe Mary weeping on the cross, they do not actually translate “Stabat iuxta.” Instead it seems that different poems on the same topic were sung to one tune.

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81 All other gatherings in Rawl. G.18 are bigger (ranging from six to eighteen folios). The gathering in which the English song is found is a small quire of only two leaves (ff. 105–6) that begins with the continuation of a French poem (“Leuez sus ma alme…” that begins on folio 102. The last two folios are ruled similarly to the rest of the book. Judging from the continuation of the French poem, this small bifolium is not a flyleaf. After f. 106v there are three flyleaves at the end of the book.

82 For example, Rosemary Woolf say “Stond Wel Moder” belongs to the translations of “Stabat iuxta” “by musical setting and stanza form” (1968, 245).
“Stond Wel Moder” appears without music in Digby 86, Harley 2253, Dublin, Trinity College MS 301 and London, British Library Royal MS 8.F.II (Royal 8.F.II). Its words and music appear in Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 111 (E.8) (St. John’s 111) and London, British Library Royal MS 12.E.1 (Royal 12.E.1); for this distribution pattern see Figure 4 below. The same music, along with the lyric known as “Stod Ho þhere Neh,” occurs in Oxford, Bodleian Tanner MS 169 (Tanner 169).

Like the case of “Fifteen Signs” and “Worldes Bliss,” “Stond Wel Moder” shows a different pattern of survival than other poems in the same manuscript that have no surviving musically notated witnesses. For example, “The Sayings of Saint Bernard,” “In a þestri stude,” “The Proverbs of Hendyng,” and “Stond Wel Moder” all appear in both Harley 2253 and Digby 86. None of the first three lyrics are elsewhere set to music, and

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83 The phenomenon of repurposing a melody is seen in the nineteenth-century tune of “Say Brothers,” also used for “John Brown’s Body,” and the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” A medieval example of this phenomenon contemporary with “Stond Wel Moder” may be Bishop Ledrede’s compilation of songs in order to distract monks from “cantilene teatrales et turpes” in the Red Book of Ossory (Greene 1974). The Red Book of Ossory, held at the Representative Church Body Library, Dublin, is a diocesan register containing administrative documents and songs and has now been digitized.
in Harley 2253, none of these three lyrics appear in quire nine with “Stond Wel.” On
the network diagram, meanwhile, “Stond Wel Moder” appears in a host of different
manuscripts, and two of these other manuscripts contain music. Interestingly, in Digby
86, “Stond Wel Moder” is immediately adjacent to “The Sayings of Saint Bernard,” in
quire seventeen. Frances McSparran theorized, based on dialect in Harley 2253, that
“Stond Wel Moder” travelled with a particular sequence of poems since its composition,
including “In a þestri stude,” which also appears in Harley 2253. McSparran calls this
sequence of poems “Group 3” (McSparran 2000, 418). This group is therefore an
identifiable (possibly non-musical) circulation network of “Stond Wel Moder.”

A more traditional approach to the group of manuscripts of “Stond Wel Moder” would
be to identify a stemma originating from the most “correct” version of the poem. For
example, Carleton Brown observes that the musically notated witness of “Stond Wel
Moder” in Royal 12.E.1 contained the “most authentic” copy of the poem, even though
the manuscript was later than Digby 86 (Brown 1932, 205). But if Royal 12.E.1 is the
most authentic witness of the lyric, a question arises about how to devise a stemma
showing development of the song. The work of making a stemma is made more complex
by the existence of two earlier witnesses that contain music but have different words. As
noted above, Tanner 169 sets “Stod Ho Þhere Neh” to the same music. St. John’s 111
also contains the same music, and attaches it to the words of “Stond Wel moder” as well
as the Latin “Stabat iuxta” hymn. Without noting the musical relationship between these
songs, we would consider Tanner 169 an isolated material witness of a unique poem.

In the absence of any clear relationship between these musical and verbal witnesses, it
makes sense not to try to piece together a stemma, but instead to diagram the manuscripts
to show the loose relationships among them. The network diagram can meanwhile be
arranged by date, as in Figure 4 above. This arrangement shows that the earliest witness

84 “In a þestri stude” (NIMEV 1461) is in quire six (f. 57); “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” (f.106r) is in
quire twelve; and “The Proverbs of Hendyng” (f. 125r) is in quire fourteen.

85 In Digby 86 “In a þestri stude” is in quire 21 and the “Proverbs of Hending” is in quire eighteen.
of the music or the words is in Tanner 169, from c.1250; next is Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 111, c.1270–1320; and following after those are Digby 86, c.1270–1285; London, British Library Royal MS 8.F.II, c.1300; Harley 2253, c.1330–1340; and Royal 12.E.1, c.1300–1350.86

In the case of Harley 2253 or Digby 86, or any manuscript that contains non-musically notated lyrics, one wonders whether the scribe used an exemplar with musical notation, and whether we should think of a lyric poem as a song. How should we read literary references to singing in poems that have no extant musically notated witnesses but which appear in manuscripts that contain music and cues for singing? “Stond Wel Moder” appears in Royal 8.F.II with a note indicating that “it is to be sung thus, in the role of the son speaking to the Blessed virgin” (Brown 1932, 204 n49).87 “I syke [sigh] when I sing” meanwhile has no extant musical notation in Digby 2 or in Harley 2253, but Digby 2 nevertheless includes music. In fact, prior to “I syke” on the previous folio there is a Latin song with musical notation, as well as a French song, on folios 1–6.88 Should “I singe” be read more broadly—referring not just to the poem itself, but poems around it in Digby 2—and even beyond that manuscript, to witnesses of the song which occur in manuscripts without any music at all? Perhaps the “I singe” and the presence of music in other manuscripts of the same song simply advises us of the possibility that this lyric was sung, even when it is not notated.

86 For the published sources of dates for these manuscripts, see the respective manuscript entries in Appendix 1.

87 The song is entitled, “vnde cum in qvondam cantu dicatur in persona filii ad Beatam virginem sic.” In Royal 8.F.II, “Stond Wel Moder” occurs on a flyleaf that is one of two leaves in a charter hand from a book of Latin sermons for festivals (c.1300) including one sermon containing the words “Surge comede.” Siegfried Wenzel records a macaronic English-Latin “Surge comede” sermon that begins with these words and appears in fifteenth-century manuscripts: in London, British Library MS Harley 331 (f. 21–23) (Wenzel 1994, 158) and in Arras, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 184 (254) (f. 31rb–51rb) (Wenzel 1994, 204). Wenzel suggests that both manuscripts are derived from “a common source collection” (2005, 183). The section of Royal 12.E.1 that contains three English lyrics is an early fourteenth century collection of Latin, English and French saints’ lives and hymns, with two sermons at the end.

88 Digby 2 (105 x 70 mm) with a tiny ruled space (75 x 50 mm) does not contain any English poems set to music. For more on Digby 2, see Section Two of this chapter.
One way to deal with these songs whose manuscripts suggest both verbal and musical performances is to suggest that songs circulated in different circulation contexts. No version needs to be more correct or authentic; instead, we may acknowledge the authenticity of all these lyric contexts. “Stond Wel Moder” appears to have had at least three circulation contexts. First, its music in Royal 12.E.I and St. John’s 111 attests to its having been sung, perhaps by professional singers. Second, although it appears without music in Royal 8.F.II, “Stond Wel Moder” still appears to have been sung by lay or regular clerics who could sing but perhaps did not read or did not need to read music. Even without music notation the written lyric was provided for the purpose of singing, suggests the note in Royal 8.F.II. Turning to Harley 2253, then, it is possible that “Stond Wel Moder” could have been sung, spoken aloud or read silently, by the professionally trained scribes and lay household readers of Harley 2253 and Digby 86.

4 Legal lyric

In the chapter introduction, I argued that the concept of the “citation” has a legal connotation which, when united with the idea of lyric, allows us to think of medieval lyrics as having a different dimension, at least compared to familiar designations such “religious,” “secular,” or “moral.” In this section, I hope to show that, while the implementation of law was distinct from the practice of writing lyrics, medieval lyric and documents of law were nevertheless related in the sense that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century lyrics were quite often copied adjacent to canon or civil law documents, especially documents relating to the administration of land. This close relationship suggests a reason for why lyrics were sometimes thought of as “legal language” and why the process of reciting lyric could prove truths or support opinions. This section will provide examples of manuscript copies of lyrics found on the verso of charters, or in documents that suggest the copyist or compiler had legal training.

Up to this point in the chapter I have avoided arguing for specific “categories” of lyric books (such as “Franciscan”). Instead I suggested there was a fluid circulation of lyrics between identifiable social contexts (such as schools, wealthy lay households, regular orders, and diocesan churches). However, scholars have made a convincing case for
viewing lyric manuscripts in particular categories. In this section, I will argue for one additional and overlooked category of lyric manuscript: the legal book. My attempt to group manuscripts into categories follows the lead of Julia Boffey, who gives an account of the types of manuscripts in which Middle English lyrics are found. Boffey discusses many single-author collections and miscellanies, including several manuscripts copied prior to 1400. In this section I will make a case for separate citation networks of lyrics in legal contexts, and I will suggest that scholars should recognize legal books and documents as an important manuscript context for English medieval lyrics.

4.1 Rhyming Charters

The idea that the practice of law is markedly distinct from the practice of writing lyrics is put into question by the very existence of the rhyming charter. The rhyming charter is a rare English lyric form that does not appear in the kinds of books mentioned in the previous sections (that is, books owned in universities, schools, regular orders, churches, or wealthy households). All the rhyming charters appear to bear verbal relationships to each other, and thus to form a citation network, although this network does not connect with any of the citation networks mentioned above (in other words, no rhyming charters are found in books with other multiple-witnessed English lyrics). Rhyming charters are thus appropriately described as “isolated” from the main circulation network of lyrics. Despite this apparent isolation, the very existence of these rhyming charters suggests that some scribes who copied these charters saw lyric’s short form and rhymes as a powerful way to reinforce the authority that inhered in land administration documents. Such lyric

89 As Julia Boffey notes, “Any attempt to survey the modes of survival of [lyrics] ... is bound to involve the scrutiny of an extraordinary diversity of manuscripts and other forms of records” (2005, 1).

90 Boffey mentions eighteen manuscripts copied prior to 1400. Miscellanies include London, British Library Harley MS 978, Jesus 29, Arundel 292, Trinity 323, Caligula A.IX, and Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 59; collections for household use include Digby 86 and Harley 2253; anthologies for religious and spiritual instruction include the Vernon Manuscript and its sister-collection Simeon and Richard Rolle’s manuscripts, and sermons and related preaching material include London, British Library MS Additional 46919, NLS Adv. 18.7.21, Harley 913 and Merton 248. Professional collections include CUL 5943, while books with “added lyrics” include London, British Library Royal MS 2.F.VIII.
witnesses point to the potential for a broad and influential relationship between lyric and law emerging before the late fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{91}

The rhyming charters are best thought of as four related lyrics: the “Rhyming Charter of Æthelstan to St. John of Beverley”\textsuperscript{92}; the “Rhyming Charter of Æthelstan to the Abbey of Ripon”\textsuperscript{92}; the rhyming Charter of King Edward (NIMEV 1295), and the rhyming charter from Canterbury Cathedral (Ch.Ant/M2Sl/1).\textsuperscript{93} The “Rhyming Charter of Æthelstan to St. John of Beverley” exists in multiple witnesses. One of its copies, London British Library Cotton Charters IV.18 is a single folded piece of vellum which presents the rhymes unaccompanied by any other text. As this document is not bound with any other material, it is difficult to speculate about whether the charter survives due to poetic (or “curious”) appeal or its legal value.\textsuperscript{94} In another book (London, British Library Additional MS 61901 [BL Add. 61901]) the reason for preservation is more evident. Here the rhyming charter is side by side with documents proving land rights of the Benedictine monastery of St. John of Beverley in Yorkshire; apart from the Cartulary, this book contains only the Life of St. John of Beverley (British Library 2012).

\textsuperscript{91} Other critics of Middle English have demonstrated important relationships between law and poetry during the period; for example, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice (1997) found links between the London law-courts and poets such as William Langland. Wendy Scase’s \textit{Literature and Complaint} sees the rhetoric of complaint at work in many Middle English texts. With regard to lyric poetry, Emily Steiner, in her discussion of the Charters of Christ, argues that one social dimension of the lyric lies in the “apparatus of the law, the formal and material processes by which legal documents come into being” (2003, 61). Steiner believes this documentary discourse of lyric is at work not only in the Charters of Christ but also longer poems and prose, including \textit{Piers Plowman} and \textit{The Book of Margery Kempe}. For more on law in medieval England more generally, see Musson (1999), and on petitions see Ormrod, Dodd, and Musson (2009).

\textsuperscript{92} That is, they contain most of the same lines, but are ostensibly by different kings. The St. John charter (NIMEV 4183) has eight witnesses, two of which appear to be medieval copies. The Ripon charter (NIMEV 3300) has three witnesses.

\textsuperscript{93} The dating of the Edwardian charter that has been copied in London, British Library Cotton Julius MS F.X and San Marino CA, Huntington Library MS HEH EL 34 A9 is unclear, but like the others mentioned here the vocabulary is Anglo-Saxon, the octosyllabic rhymes and some of the language indicate a thirteenth-century composition, and the copy is late medieval. The Cotton Julius book is a sixteenth-century compilation. For more about the Canterbury document see Louis (2010).

\textsuperscript{94} It probably survives due to its legal value. No pricking, ruling, or traces of binding are evident. There is staining that occurred while the charter was folded.
The charters of Æthelstan to Beverley are similar in form but not language to a rhyming charter of the “Church of Saint Wilfray” (NIMEV 4183). This charter is now preserved in London, National Archives DL 41/270. The charter-poem is fourteen couplets long and is preserved in a fifteenth-century transcript of c.1228 plea at Ripon relating to lands and privileges in dispute between Walter, archbishop of York, and the church of St. Wilfrid. The charter appears to preserve language from a period earlier than 1228, however, and J. T. Fowler speculates that “the basis was a writ of Henry I, issued in the time of Archbishop Gerard (1100–1108)” (Fowler 1881, 91).

4.2 Lyrics Copied near Legal Documents

While the rhyming charters appear to fuse the writing of lyric with the exercise of legal land administration, other English lyrics appear in manuscript contexts that suggest their copyists were engaged in similar legal endeavours. For example, the physical format of one secular lyric, “Brid one Brere” (literally, “Bird on a brier”), suggests that the words were copied by a monastic bureaucrat. This lyric is a song, judging from its accompanying music notation. Judging from its provenance (Exeter) and dialect (Midlands and the North), the song was known or copied in at least two geographical locations. “Brid one Brere” (NIMEV 521) is copied on the dorso of a charter granting lands to a Cluniac priory in Exeter, in Cambridge, King’s College SJP 50 (SJP 50). The

95 Today’s Ripon Abbey is founded on the site of the monastery of St. Wilfrid in North Yorkshire. The Ripon and Beverley charters have common legal elements—for example, the invocation to witnesses at the opening, and the mention of “tol, tem, sok and sak” (an Anglo-Saxon legal phrase in use probably until the thirteenth century)—but the rhymes and most phrases are different.

96 The National Archives’s DL (Duchy of Lancaster) series comprises records of the Chancellor and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Palatinate of Lancaster, 1377–1875 (Fowler 1881, 89).

97 The charter is a fourteenth-century copy of a Papal Bull from Pope Innocent III in March 1200 (or December 1199) granting lands to St. James Priory near Exeter. The bull is comprised of two pieces of vellum sewn together and measuring 277 x 210 mm and 272 x 208 mm, which has been folded flat rather than kept as a roll, and shows no signs of having been bound. St. James was devastated by a flood c.1350, when its monks would have found it useful to recopy documents with water damage. For this alien priory, the bull would have helped prove land ownership (at least, up to the fifteenth century, when King Henry VIII stripped St. James of its lands and gave them to King’s College). Another Cluniac-related manuscript of lyrics is London, British Library Harley MS 978. Bryan Gillingham (2006, 167) notes an incipit on f. 90v for the Confession of King Henry II, stating that this portion of the manuscript was written or edited by a Cluniac monk of Reading, and Andrew Taylor (2002) explores this monk’s Oxford connections.
copyist (either a Cluniac monk at the priory or a professional scribe employed by the priory) was engaged in copying very many other land administration documents, judging from the fact that the same or very similar scribal hands occur in other St. James priory charters. The physical format of this lyric manuscript itself meanwhile suggests how the lyric’s transfer from the Midlands to Exeter was facilitated. The score shows the song was sung, which made its words easier to remember; moreover, if the exemplar was (like SJP 50) also a document, its light, unbound format would have made it light and easy to carry or exchange.

A papal charter is not the only legal context in which we find Early Middle English lyrics. “Al hyt is fantom þat we wiþ fare,” a lyric without music in an early anglicana hand, appears on a flyleaf of Cambridge, University Library MS Ee.1.5, a thirteenth-century textbook of civil law containing the Magna Carta and statutes of King Edward II. We can date this hand, and associate it with the book’s legal content, because a copy of a 1319 statute on folio 192r appears to be in the same hand as the poem. Differences in hand and foliation tell us that the lyric copyist was not the original compiler of the book, but nevertheless that he read it and used it—he added the 1319 statute to the book long after the book was first put together. To the “legal” context of this lyric we can also add the moral-themed Latin lyric items which flank it (“Virgo

98 John Saltmarsh believes the copyist was a monk. It is possible also that the church employed a lay scribe to copy the charters and other records; if so, the fifty charters would have been quite an economic investment. The church’s parish tithes were 6s 8d in the late thirteenth century (Dymond 1873, 7) and the parchment alone for St. James’ fifty charters (made from sheep skin, judging from their dark yellow colour) would have cost the church at least this much. Having the charters copied professionally might have cost another 6s., if we extrapolate from De Hamel’s prices of 6s. for twenty-four book-leaves and 16d. for the copying of ten leaves (De Hamel 1992, 13, 39)

99 Andrew Taylor suggests that smaller formats such as rolls bespeak portability—such as London, BL Add. MS 23986, a roll containing the Anglo-Norman “Song of the Barons” (1991, 68–9).

100 The poem is “Al hyt is fantom,” NIMEV 190/1. For more on this book, see Baker and Ringrose (1996).

101 The statute is printed in Statutes of the Realm 1:177 (Great Britain, 1963). The hand identification is my own. Both hands have similar staffs on “f” and “d” as well as a similar straight, narrow, vertical aspect. The statute, on a bifolium, appears to have been added to the book. With the exception of the first quire (four leaves) and the last two quires (four and six leaves) every other quire in the book of 274 folios is made up of eight leaves.
parens vixit sexaginta cum tribus annis” and “Constat in altari carnem de pane sacrari”) on the book’s flyleaf.  

Two other legal textbooks with scraps of secular lyrics include Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 261 (Gonville 261), and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 54 (Gonville 54). Gonville 261 is a civil law book by Roffred of Benvenuto (d. 1243, Naples) (James 1907, 316; Kantorowicz 1957, 249). A six-line English lyric appears on a flyleaf in this book, flanked by numerous French and Latin rhymes. Although the book is in an Italian hand, an English illustration on the flyleaves suggests the codex was bound in England. The presence of the English lyric suggests that an English speaker had possession of the book at one point as well, perhaps in order to study Roffred (James 1907, 316). An example of a student of Roffred is found in Peter de Peckham (fl. 1267–1276). De Peckham was an early translator of the popular *Secreta Secretorum*, and composer of the catechetical poem “La Lumere as Lais” (“The lamp for layfolk”), and he owned a copy of Roffred’s textbook (Whitwell in Kantorowicz 1957, 243 n41).

Gonville 54 is a book of canon and civil law. Its lyrics appear among Latin law-notes toward the end of the book, where there is a French verse letter addressed to Margaret (“Mergerete la bele vous ne estes pas pucele”). The English verse letter appears to continue the conversation in English with the speaker saying he will meet “Mergerete … in halle, in chaumbre, and in the strete.” Both the English and French lyrics are embedded in a French letter. The letter is followed by dense law notes in Latin. R. H. Robbins (1942, 420) mentions the lyric in his article on Middle English satiric love

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102 The uses of this book are apparently quite different from other books containing the same English lyric. “Al hyt is fantom þat we wiþ fare” also appears in two books of English vernacular theology, including London, British Library Royal MS 17.B.XVII, which contains the Lay Folks’ Mass Book, and London, British Library Additional MS 8151, which contains William of Nassyngton’s *Speculum Vitae*.

103 “Spende and god schal sende / spare and ermor care / non peni, non ware / non catel, non care / go peni go” (NIMEV 3209). On the flyleaf, the whole tiny six-line English poem fits into a space of 25 x 50 mm. This book is quite large, with folio 234 measuring 400 x 240 mm. The aspect is compressed and the lines are preceded by a Latin verse line and four French verse lines, and are followed by two Latin lines as well, all in the same hand. Another hand has written four short Latin poems on the same page.

104 See also Carlin (2008).
epistles, and it seems likely that Margaret is a fictive persona, and the copyist a student who uses the lyric to distract himself from the serious pursuits of canon law and French. The song might equally be a French teaching aid. By the early fifteenth century, French lyrics were used as pedagogical aids for teaching French to English business students. Textbooks included songs for courting a lover while travelling on business; some are found in the Manières de Langage, a book used by business teachers at Oxford in the early fifteenth century, the earliest copy of which is from 1396 (Leach 2005, 253).

Another Middle English lyric witness found on the dorso of a legal document is an early version of the popular “Erthe” (NIMEV 3939). Latin, French, and English versions of this multistanza poem appear on the dorso of an Exchequer King’s Remembrance Roll, National Archives E 175/11/16 (Roll E 175/11/16).105 The recto contains a copy of a parliamentary statute—a copy that was copied at or sent to the Exchequer in London. It is not known when the poem was copied onto the dorso, and the statute is a copy that could have been made years later; however, the poem antedates the statute, so we can date the lyric to at least after 1311, about twenty years before a very similar poem was copied into London, BL Harley MS 2253.106 The trilingual “Erthe” poem continued to be read later on, quite possibly near London (for Roll E 175/11/16 was copied in or sent to London, and is kept in the National Archives now) since there are late medieval corrections to the poem made in darker ink. The poem and its corrections are therefore contemporary with the Harley scribe’s work, given that the death of Piers Gaveston (in 1312) is recorded in a calendar in the Harley scribe’s earlier book, Royal 12.C.XII. What is perhaps most interesting is the confluence between the many lyrics in Harley 2253, and the political concerns of the statute on whose dorso the trilingual “Erthe” poem is copied. The Harley scribe’s short “Erthe” poem is itself adjacent to poems praising thirteenth-century royal pretenders, such as Simon de Montfort and William Wallace; and in Roll E 175/11/16,

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105 The trilingual “Erthe” poem is carefully written in verse lines and has square brackets indicating rhyme patterns. The Latin version is in the left column; the French, in the right column; and the English across two columns below. See Appendix 1.

106 The two poems are considered to be variants of each other. The first stanza of the trilingual “Erthe” poem is very similar in sense and phrase to the short “Erthe” lyric in Harley 2253.
the trilingual “Erthe” poem is adjacent to a statute that criticizes actions of Edward II in 1311 and calls for the removal of Piers Gaveston. The Harley 2253 scribe also copies several lyrics critical of Edward III, including the “Trailbaston” poem which critiques an unpopular trailbaston (local court) in 1305–7. Carter Revard points out that the Harley 2253 scribe copies the manuscript around the 1340s, and in 1341, Edward III set up a very unpopular trailbaston to compel lords to pay an equally unpopular tax. The Harley scribe’s copying of “Trailbaston” therefore refers indirectly to the 1341 trailbaston as well as the 1307 one, suggests Revard (2000, 75). Moreover a line in “Erthe” in Harley 2253 appears to pun on a word in the adjacent poem about William Wallace’s beheading. The line in “Erthe” is, “Tho heuede erþe erþe erþe ynoh,” where “heuede” in this context could well pun upon “hewed” as well as “had.” Thus both the scribes of London, BL Harley MS 2253 and National Archives E 175/11/16 copied “Erthe” adjacent to texts that demonstrated a partisan view of political events of the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

Another example of a lyric written on a land administration document is a witness of a Harley 2253 lyric, “The Sayings of Saint Bernard,” which survives in a charter hand on the dorso of a roll from Essex (Bod. Add. E.6). The dorso is a palimpsest and retains the name “Edward” as well as the words “Sciant presentes & futuri quod Ego thomas Choke de ssalyngge Q dominus Robertus park de ssalyngge” on the third and final piece of the roll. This phrase is the beginning of a legal formula indicating a gift or transfer of land; in other words, this lyric is copied onto an old charter.

“The Yorkshire Partisans” (NIMEV 1543), recorded as evidence in a legal case, also reinforces the impression that the political and administrative functions of household clerics and professional scribes could be social contexts for Middle English lyrics. London, National Archives KB 9/144 m31 is a piece of unbound vellum sewn into a roll and containing a contemporary working copy of indictments from the trailbaston at

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108 Saling is a village in Essex (Monda 1970, 300).
Nottingham and York in 1392. The indictment includes a poem, and no musical notation accompanies the words, which the case record says were proclaimed (*proclamari*) publicly by John Berwald of Cottingham as an act of civil disobedience in Yorkshire. ¹⁰⁹ Andrew Prescott argues that the recitation of verses may have been a premeditated attempt to intimidate its listeners, rather than a “spontaneous expression of discontent” (Prescott 2010, 328). ¹¹⁰ Prescott shows that the copy in National Archives KB 9/144 represents an equally premeditated process, one involving polishing and tinkering. Perhaps related to that tinkering is the relatively neat and organized representation of the poem on the page. The scribe uses tail-rhyme stanzaic format, as if he was copying the song from either a (presumably) contraband exemplar in front of him, or a mental representation drawn from an aural recitation (the former possibility seems easier, and thus more likely). Either possibility reinforces the impression that lyric was a legal phenomenon, for they illustrate the likelihood that a legal scribe in Yorkshire and/or Westminster had previously recited, read, or copied other examples of tail-rhyme lyrics. ¹¹¹

The number of Middle English lyrics that can be said to have been copied by bureaucratic scribes or in a legal context is thus evidence that leads us to acknowledge another general category for lyrics; namely, the law. I posit this category as an addition to the ones proposed by Boffey (2005, 6) because it appears that certain lyrics circulated in legal contexts as well as having been in lay household anthologies, or collections used for spiritual instruction or worship.

¹⁰⁹ National Archives KB 9/133 m31 measures 150 x 280 mm, with a written space of 90 x 250 mm, and the verse lines are arranged in a tail-rhyme stanza format of two columns, with the tail rhymes set into a column of their own (making four columns in total). For an edition, see Birch 1885/1964.

¹¹⁰ See also Paul Strohm’s discussion of this poem (1992, 179–185).

¹¹¹ Rhiannon Purdie’s book cites many examples of the phenomenon of graphic tail-rhyme in the fourteenth century, while Helen Cooper cites the brackets in four manuscripts of Sir Thopas (Hengwrt [Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 392], Ellesmere [San Marino CA, Huntington Library, MS Ellesmere 26.C.9], Cambridge, University Library MS Dd.4.24 and Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.4.27) as examples of tail rhyme “gone wild” (Cooper 1996, 300).
5 Conclusion

The preceding sections attempt four tasks in order to help define the medieval lyric genre. In Section One, in order to give examples of a “citation network” of lyric, I discussed associations between lyrics in manuscripts related to Maidstone A.13 and Jesus 29. In Section Two, I discussed how manuscripts associated with Harley 2253 illustrate the existence of lyric circulation between lay households, Franciscan friars, and universities and schools, illustrating the fluid connections between different circulation networks. In Section Three, I discussed how music manuscripts formed their own identifiable circulation networks that intersected with non-musically notated manuscripts. Finally, in Section Four, I argued that there was an additional (legal) context for lyric, which is evidenced by the survival today of medieval lyrics in legal textbooks, and on the backs of charters and other documents to do with land administration.

The suggestion that law instruments and musical settings are important bookish contexts for written lyric again draws our attention to the situations of lyric—the real-world situations of its composition, of its performance, and its copying. This evidence about the material contexts for lyric points to a new view of how lyric is performance-related. The contextual information can help us understand why later medieval-lyric retains vestiges of performance and why the lyric might be thought of as performative. My later chapters look at the representation of lyric in Chaucer and explore how late medieval lyric can unexpectedly affect or fail to affect others. In his fabliaux and religious tales, Chaucer associates lyric with the performances of singing and prayer. In the Merchant’s Tale, lyric is also seen as a “bille” and is associated with the marking or violation of legal boundaries around property (such as January’s wife May). Chapters Two, Three and Four develop the idea that, in Chaucer, musical song and written song intersect with spoken lyric, and lyric and song can be seen as attempting to perform legal, spiritual, or physical remedies. Thus the manuscript and sociological contexts of Middle English lyric in the earlier part of the period (1200–1400) are integral to an understanding of Chaucer’s representation of lyric, just as Chaucer’s lyrics and lyrical interludes can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the lyric that preceded his work.
Chapter One takes a different approach from the remaining chapters by developing the idea of lyric citation among manuscripts. Citation is a term that encompasses reference and quotation and as such encompasses the broad range of ways in which lyric manuscripts are connected with each other, and the ways in which lyrics connect with other lyric within a particular manuscript. Using the term “network” also expresses the fact that lyrics appeared in slightly different kinds of manuscripts, and thus different kinds of social contexts, that were not separate, but connected. The “citation network” is in some ways similar to the idea of the manuscript stemma, which allows scholars to envision how a lyric evolved over time in successive manuscript versions. However, compared to a stemma, a network is non-hierarchical and more fluid. Even though lyrics actually did evolve over time, and we can envision this evolution as a tree formation, we will benefit from thinking of lyrics’ development as non-hierarchical for several reasons. First, this evolution was due to the existence of non-hierarchical links between different social contexts. Second, the manuscripts that show directionality (the clear relationship between a manuscript and its exemplar) have often been lost. Instead of trying to build tree diagrams, therefore, it is to our benefit to assemble undirected network diagrams. These diagrams will point us toward identifying shared regional and social factors among related manuscripts.

Undirected networks are rarely mapped, due to their complexity, but they have still been imagined or discussed in medieval literature studies. I argue above that, when J.A. Burrow identifies copies of the Rawlinson D.913 lyrics in other manuscripts, he reveals a network of manuscripts. Marilyn Corrie also comments that complex “networks” of lost versions now separate the copies of lyrics and longer poems that survive in the miscellanies Harley 2253 and Digby 86 (2000, 427). Similarly, Siegfried Wenzel’s analysis of sermon manuscripts (1994) makes a claim for the existence of an undirected

112 The stemma is also known as a “directed network,” in the sense that the lyrics flowed down through time in one direction (Barabási [2002, 169] discusses stemmas as directed networks). One written copy resulted in many later copies, and one memorized lyric or refrain resulted in many later citations. And yet as philologists well know, stemmas do not have to look like trees; in Spencer et al. (2003) a stemma in fact resembles a spiky thornbush rather than a tree.
network, in that it lists multiple manuscripts in which sermons and lyric appear. The concept of a network is therefore not entirely new to philologists. The concept of the undirected network maps is nevertheless an innovative way to envision manuscript and dialect variance. This variance or *mouvance* is a kind of manuscript “movement” that in philology can be visually represented by a stemma or tree structure. Like the philologist’s stemma, however, a network map is a technical and intellectual tool rather than a scholarly conclusion; here, therefore, I have attempted to use this tool to generate theories and then to use evidence about provenance, bibliography, and the poems themselves, to test those theories. This move allows the expansion of our definition of lyric categories and the redefinition of the relationships between lyric manuscripts as fluid and non-hierarchical.

Above, I introduced a definition of genre that relied on Jameson’s term “specific public.” For Jameson, a genre is a collection of textual features that specifies how a literary text will be used by a particular audience. I then argued that the lyric citation network is a useful way to think about the fluid relations between specific publics, or social contexts, such as Franciscans, Hospitallers, legal land administration, legal education, professional singing groups, or wealthy lay households. I equate these multiple contexts with the specific publics of Jameson’s definition. As Burrow concedes, the relationships between lyric manuscripts allow us to classify the lyrics themselves, and to think about the generic categories to which a lyric belongs. By improving our ability to visualize these relationships, the “citation network” and social networks software allow us to see the field of English lyrics as having specific related social contexts; with an overview of these contexts, the lyric appears both less intimidating and more provocative.
Chapter 2
Lyric in Chaucer’s Fabliaux

Introduction

James Simpson argues that Chaucer’s elegiac mode descends from the elegies of Ovid (43 BC–AD 17), and the voice of the despairing lover that characterizes Ovid’s *Amores* and *Heroides* is adopted for many of Chaucer’s lyric speakers, particularly in the “Complaint unto Pity” (2004, 131). Simpson concedes that he omits discussion of the amusing parts of Ovid’s amatory work because the late medieval reception of the Ovidian tradition “tends to reaccentuate the darker underside of Ovid’s … works” (2004, 131). In this chapter I explore something less dark: the comic-satiric Ovidian allusions that emerge in association with songs and “lyric” letters in Chaucer’s fabliaux. In particular I explore how, in three Chaucerian fabliaux, the idea of lyric comes to be expressed in relation to the ideas about remedy. In the Miller’s Tale, the Reeve’s Tale, and the Merchant’s Tale, lyric is a remedy that almost always fails. These texts on the one hand suggest that lyric has some sort of ability to remedy private suffering. The introspective qualities of lyrical song make it a venue for its author’s intense and private feelings, but lyric is also used more practically in these fabliaux. It is deployed by characters to woo the objects of their affection. Chaucer also evokes the power of religious song to harmonize a community in some places, and he demonstrates ways in which some kinds of lyric—charms—are used by characters to try to change events and environments magically. In all these cases, lyric can be thought of as a kind of remedy, a cure for disharmony, distance, danger, or lovesickness. The failure of lyric to achieve a lasting or valid cure, and Chaucer’s parodies of love songs, charms, and religious songs (or his texts’ subtle critique of the performers of such texts) can be juxtaposed productively with other discursive traditions in these fabliaux. The first is, as I have already suggested, Ovidian, and particularly the discussion of bodily cures of lovesickness conveyed in the *Remedia Amoris* where Ovid describes the visual and
sensual effects of contact with the lover’s body. My discussion turns from Ovid to similar medieval discussions of cures for love, and then to Boethius and to what his *Consolation of Philosophy* has to say about cures for sorrow, as well as about the effects of lyric and music on the sorrowing self.

The idea that lyric itself has a power to heal or cure and its association with lovesickness in particular needs to be established at the outset of this chapter, and to do so I will briefly turn to Chaucer’s lyric “Complaint unto Pity.” The “Complaint unto Pity” is one of Chaucer’s short poems or lyrics in that it stands apart from Chaucer’s longer poems in the manuscripts. The form of the poem as a complaint that borrows from the legal bill format attracts C. J. Nolan’s attention (1979, 370). The imagery of the poem is medical as well as legal, however. Pity’s allegorical entrapment within the heart evokes ideas about wounds and healing. After lamenting the death of Pity, in the second part of the poem the lyric speaker presents a “compleynt” (43), a legal verse petition for the release of “Pity,” which is personified as a woman attacked by the hostile forces of “Bounte” (72). Pity is represented throughout the poem as if she were trapped within a small space: initially, she is depicted as in a “herse” (15), “ded, and buried in an herte” (14); next, her body in the herse is depicted as being surrounded by Beaute, Lust and Jolitye (39), who are “confedred” or united with Cruelty (52). Eventually Pity is described as “annexed ever unto Bounte” (72). At the end of the Bill, the speaker once again states that Pity is “ded” (117) and Cruelty has occupied her “place” (90). The succession of images of Pity’s locations—within the heart and hearse, inside a group of personified figures, and finally annexed by Bounty, have in common that they are images of the enclosure and occupation of small spaces that are metaphors for a part of the body: the heart. The annexation of Pity is not only a military but a medical metaphor, for Pity is depicted as

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113 *Remedia Amoris* literally translated is “Love’s Remedies” but this phrase in English could mean the remedies that love provides, so I follow Mary Wack in rendering this title throughout as “Remedies for Love” (1990, 15).

114 Its rhyme royal stanza may be its earliest use by Chaucer and seems to be an innovation in English, borrowed from French (Stevens 1979 63; Baum 1961, 48; Châtelain 1907, 91–94, 144).
stuck, locked inside a heart unable to escape. The unusual aspect of this depiction is that, despite the obvious lovesickness of the lover, sickness appears to be displaced onto the beloved. It is in the lady’s heart that Pity is trapped, which would seem to suggest her sickness—something not quite right in her body. The narrator even advises Pity to “take cure” to break up the alliance with Cruelty. But Chaucer also presents the speaker’s love-wound early on as a swoon, for the lover appears “ded as a ston” (16): he too is lovesick. The love-lyric thus seems not only to provide a space for the lover to express his “complaint” but to advocate for some sort of cure for both lover and beloved: it seems to achieve something beyond introspective utterance—it demands remedy in legal terms, it hopes for cure of real physical as well as Pity’s metaphorical suffering. The complaint fails in its endeavors before it begins, however, and the narrator ends with a continuing love-wound—with his “herte sore and ful of besy peyne” (119).

Lovesickness is also suffered by characters in two of Chaucer’s fabliaux. In the Miller’s Tale, Absolon and John are both in different ways lovesick, and in the Merchant’s Tale, both Damyan and January are lovesick as well. Both of these texts and also Chaucer’s Reeve’s Tale are also interested in lyrics, as expressions of lovesickness and possible cures for that condition, as well as in more lasting cures. This remedial imagery is, I argue, usefully contextualized by descriptions of cures for lovesickness in Ovid’s *Remedia Amoris* (*Remedies for Love*), by late-medieval commentaries on a chapter of the *Viaticum*, and by the metaphors of healing in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*. Absolon is “cured” of his love-malady by the Ovidian remedy of a close encounter with sexualised female body; and Nicholas, who is not sick, is nevertheless caught up in this process of remediing love when is cured by the application of a coulter. In the Reeve’s Tale, the students take steps to obtain remedy for Simkin’s improper care of their

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115 Chaucer’s awareness of the humours is apparent in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, where Pertelote says, following Macrobius, some dreams are generated by “humours [that] been to habundant in a wight” (VII, 2925). A medical belief in humours during this period is apparent in the work of the fourteenth-century French surgeon Henri de Mondeville (Pouchelle 1990, 17).

116 Suffering from a love-wound is evident in one source for the “Complaint unto Pity,” the balade by Guillaume de Machaut, “Helas ! je suis de si male here nez,” where the speaker suffers from a “maladie” (Wimsatt 1991, 88–89).
property, and the unpleasant outcome of this process is sharpened by some parodies of lyric interludes. In the Merchant’s Tale, both Damyan and January are cured in some way: Damyan gets the attentions of May as a remedy for the lovesickness he has expressed in lyric outburst and in a lyric letter, but only at the expense of May’s marriage debt. January is cured of his blindness, but in spite of, rather than because of his lyric performances; his lyrics are parodied, and their efficacy is brought into doubt at several points. The lyric in the Chaucerian fabliaux is intertwined with the ideas of remedy and cure; the final impression is of a textual form that might seem to offer relief from suffering practically and emotionally, but which is ineffective in preventing—and at times closely associated with—the bawdy and discomforting “comic” disasters of these tales.

1 The Miller’s Tale: Songs, Remedies, and Cures

The Miller’s Tale is well known among Chaucer critics for songs—in particular, Nicholas’s singing of “Angelus ad Virginem” (I, 3216) and “Kynges Noote” (I, 3217) and Absolon’s “jolif” singing and playing of music as he courts Alisoun (I, 3339, 3355). Jesse Gellrich argues that Nicholas’s “Angelus ad Virginem” and Absolon’s love-song to Alisoun together create a poetic disharmony in the tale and parody medieval music (1974, 177). Gellrich’s analysis treats the text as fabliau, and certainly the Miller’s Tale is a narrative text that displays the conventions of that genre: characters who consciously break moral and social norms (Cooper 1984, 126); richly ambivalent and suggestive language along with “sexual congress and public exposure” (Finlayson 2002, 337, 341); elaborate comic tricks that are then paid back by other tricks (Mazzotta 1986, 190); and prevalent imagery of what Bakhtin calls the “bodily lower stratum” (Bakhtin 1968, 87) and “degradation, turnovers, and travesties” (Bakhtin 1968, 81).

117 (The love-triangle

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117 Because the Miller is the first in sequence to “quite” a tale in the Canterbury Tales, his tale occupies a particularly important place in the critical response to Chaucer’s narrative (Walts 2009; Biggs 2009; Pugh 2009; Aloni 2006).
that characterizes the Miller’s Tale is also a common narrative device of the fabliau.)\textsuperscript{118} Within this fabliau narrative, however, there are texts that appear to stand apart; Peter Beidler’s article on Marian lyric and the Miller’s Tale focuses on these texts that seem to stand out within the narrative and generic structure of the text. Beidler asks, regarding the couplet at I, 3361-2 (“Now deere lady, if thy wille be, / I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me”), “Are we in a medieval romance here or in a Marian lyric? We are in the latter, of course, but there is sometimes a fine line between them” (2004, 221). Beidler’s article raises the question of the significance of lyric within the narrative of the Miller’s Tale. I will argue that Chaucer associates lyric with the qualities and stages of different kinds of remedies and cures.

Absolon’s song, which as Beidler points out has the form and some idioms of a Marian lyric, flags the importance of malady in the tale—malady that appears to require a cure. Edward Schweitzer argues that “Absolon, like Arcite, suffers from the “loverise maladye / of Hereos” (I, 1371–2), a disease of the brain widely discussed by medieval physicians” (Schweitzer 1986, 223). Schweitzer claims that Absolon is “cured by the misdirected kiss” (1986, 223), and notes analogues between the Miller’s Tale and texts on lovesickness by Bernard of Gordon, Avicenna, and Arnald of Villanova.\textsuperscript{119} For example, Schweitzer says Absolon is literally looking in the “entrayles” of Alisoun when he kisses her anus, a phrase Schweitzer notes appears in Chaucer’s translation of Boethius’s \textit{Consolation}.\textsuperscript{120} This kiss reveals how “misdirected” Absolon’s love has been, by comparison to the teachings of heavenly love in the \textit{Consolation}, which say that truth is to be found in abstract higher knowledge and not in the material world.

\textsuperscript{118} Love-triangles do, however, appear in genres that display mixed narrative and musical forms; for example, in Adam de la Halle’s \textit{Le Jeu de Robin et Marion}, which I discuss in Chapter 3, includes notated songs within its verse narrative, and tells the story of the characters Robin and Marion, and a knight who courts Marion (Butterfield 2002, 151–70).

\textsuperscript{119} Schweitzer argues that the tale points to the “mistaken choice of goods that is the subject of the \textit{Consolation of Philosophy}” (1986, 224).

\textsuperscript{120} Schweitzer points out a passage in Boethius where Philosophy gives the example of looking inside the “entrayles” of Alcibiades, only to find that “it schulde seme right foul” (2 pr 5.8). Schweitzer notes Alcibiades was often thought to be a woman in the Middle Ages (Curtius 1953, 406).
Medieval literature describes various cures for lovesickness: I would suggest that these operate as background to the real cure that Absolon needs for his lovesickness, and makes something of a mockery of the cure that he hopes for in his Marian lyric outburst, “I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me.” Alison bestows something on him, and it does cure him of love, but it is certainly not pity.

Since Schweitzer wrote his article, Mary Wack has published Constantine the African’s eleventh-century chapter on love in the *Viaticum*, and thirteenth-century commentaries on it by Gerard of Berry, Egidius, Peter of Spain, and Bona Fortuna (Wack 1990, xiv). Several passages in these texts could have suggested to Chaucer the importance of the misdirected kiss episode as a therapeutic response to Absolon’s lovesickness as that sickness is expressed, in part, in his lyric. Gerard of Berry says that for the cure “the counsel of old women is very useful, who may relate many disparagements and the stinking dispositions of the desired thing” (tr. Wack 1990, 203).121 Gerard’s advice about “stinking dispositions” chimes nicely with the description of Alison’s “hole.” Peter of Spain says that “when someone loves a beautiful form, an ugly form ought to be shown him” (tr. Wack 1990, 251).122 Peter of Spain’s advice is equally at issue in the Miller’s Tale in that Absolon is, if not shown, at least brought into contact with something ugly—Alison’s “hole” (I, 3732)—rather than something beautiful (Alison’s mouth). Bona Fortuna meanwhile counsels that if the “beloved object” (“re amata”) cannot be had, then the doctor should discuss with the lover “its filthy and loathsome qualities, and relate all the vicious things that we can” (tr. Wack 1990, 262–3).123 Here the words “filthy and loathsome” also appear to capture an aspect of Alisoun’s “hole.” Schweitzer points out the relevance of similar late medieval cures for *amor hereos*; Michael Calabrese notes that Ovid advises lovers to view the “naked sexuality” of their beloved in order to be

121 “Ad hoc autem multum uaelit consilium uetularum ut narrent uituperationes multas et fetidas dispositiones rei desiderate.”
122 “Ergo cum aliquis diligit pulcrum formam debet ei representari forma turpis.”
123 “debemus narrare rem cum fedititabus et turpitudinibus suis et narrare / Omnia vicia que possumus.”
cured of lovesickness (1994, 14). Calabrese refers to the actual encounter Absolon has with Alisoun’s “hole” as Absolon’s cure.

Chaucer’s Miller’s Tale does more than just adopt these ideas, however; it presses them to bawdy conclusions typical of fabliaux. None of these passages in either Ovid or the Viaticum commentaries suggest that the lover actually touch or kiss what is repulsive about his beloved.\(^{124}\) Ovid in fact appears to oppose touch and sight at one point, when he describes how the lover should attempt to cure himself of love the morning after an erotic encounter.

> But as soon as pleasure has reached its goal and is spent, and bodies and minds are utterly weary, while boredom is on you and you wish you had never touched a woman, and you think you will not touch one again for long, then mark well in your mind every blemish her body has, and keep your eye ever on her faults. (tr. Mozley 1962, 207)\(^{125}\)

If a man has momentarily forgotten the sensation of touching a woman, or has lost the desire to touch, one should encourage this loss and instead replace it with a sight of the woman’s flawed body, counsels Ovid. A few lines later Ovid implicitly advises the man to look directly at the woman’s “obscene parts” and “shameful marks” left behind on the bed:

> One passion was checked, because the lover, in full train, saw the obscene parts exposed; another, because, when the woman arose from the business of love, the couch was seen to be soiled by shameful marks. (tr. Mozley 1962, 207)\(^{126}\)

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\(^{124}\) Translations of Constantine’s chapter were beginning to circulate in the twelfth century, during a revival of interest in Ovid’s poetry, including the Remedies for Love, and Wack says that some readers of Constantine’s chapter noted down lines from Ovid in the margins; she observes that Ovid’s Remedies for Love and medical views of lovesickness reinforced each other into the thirteenth century (Wack 1990, 15).

\(^{125}\) At simul ad metas venit finite voluptas, Lassaque cum tota corpora mente iacent Dum piget, et malis nullam tetigisse puellam, Tactusque tibi non videare diu, Tunc animo signa, quodcumque in corpore mendum est, Luminaque in vitiis illius usque tene. (ed. Mozley 1962, 206).

\(^{126}\) Ille quod obsecenas in aperto corpore partes Viderat, in cursu qui fuit, haesit amor: Ille quod a Veneris rebus surgete puella Vidit in inmundo signa pudenda toro. (Ovid 1962, 429–433)
Ovid’s emphasis on sight is emphasized by his repetition of the verb and the ominously vague “ille” at the beginning of each successive line: “Ille quod obscenas … / Viderat … Ille quod a Veneris … / Vidit ….” Ovid’s lover saw that thing and was repulsed. The visual act is most effective in this passage of Ovid’s as a cure for lovesickness, and it is placed in opposition to touch throughout this particular passage.127

The Viaticum commentaries stress the importance of the discussion and occasionally sight of something disgusting; for example, Schweitzer quotes Bernard of Gordon advising that a “most foul-looking old woman” bring a “menstrous rag” and hold it before the lover’s face, shouting, “Such is your love, such!” (Schweitzer 1986, 228).128 By comparison, in the Miller’s Tale Absolon actually sees nothing. This text takes things a step further. Absolon touches Alisoun’s “hole” “ful savourly” with his “mouth.” He feels and tastes what disgusts him, rather than seeing it. His response to the experience also involves touching, although here he touches himself: he rubs his lips with various dry, hard, and rough things, presumably to remove the sensation of her “hole” from his mouth:

He felte a thing al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, “Fy! Allas! What have I do?”
… Who rubbeth now, who frothe now his lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with cippes (I, 3738–3748)

Chaucer here emphasizes physical sensation rather than the seen experience.

On the one hand it is possible to see this emphasis as typical of the concern of fabliaux with the base and the bodily. The emphasis on touch however may also connect the idea of remedy here with another text and in doing so bring the discussion back to lyric by

127 A true appreciation of the subtleties of Ovid’s imagery of touch and sight would require a more lengthy discussion. In this particular passage in Ovid (lines 397–487) Ovid does appear strangely opposed to touch. At other points Ovid contrarily counsels remedies that are tangible, such as having the man “enjoy the mistress” continually so that “plenty destroys passion” (tr. Mozley 1962, 215)—although in this example Ovid represents this kind of touch with an allegory rather than describes it literally: “now you may drink from mid-stream, but drink even more than your heart craves for” (tr. Mozley 1962, 215).

128 “quod portet sbitus gremium pannum menstruatum … extrahat pannum menstruatum coram facie, portando, dicendo, clamando, talis est amica tua” (Schweitzer 1986, 232 n11).
another route. Touch is important to the metaphors of spiritual healing used in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*. As Schweitzer notes, the *Consolation* is very concerned with spiritual malady (1986, 230). Boethius the prisoner is repeatedly described as being sick in his mind, and in need of a cure. In many cases in the *Consolation*, malady and remedy are also associated with the curative powers of music. The word “malady” occurs fifteen times in Chaucer’s English *Boece*, where it is often paired with the word “remedy” in the same sentence.\(^{129}\) (Chaucer uses “remedie” in the *Boece* to translate “remedia,” while “malady” translates “morbi.”) In the account below, Philosophy identifies two types of potential cures for such maladies (“curationem”—some that are surface applications (“fomenta”) and others that deeply penetrate (“quae in profundum sese penetrant”). The idea of penetration that suggests touch but so does the “fomenta.” A *fomenta* is a warm poultice, normally to be applied to the skin.\(^{130}\) I give the Latin and English translation below as well as Chaucer’s *Boece* because Chaucer uses no direct translation of the word *fomenta*. Chaucer’s phrase, “in a maner norisshynge,” does however suggest the tangible warmth Boethius indicates with “fomenta.” The Middle English “norishen” means to provide food, nutrition, and heat, according to the *Middle English Dictionary*:

\[
\text{Haec enim nondum morbi tui remedia sed adjuc contumacis adversum curationem doloris fomenta quaedam sunt. Nam quae in profundum sese penetrent, cum tempestivum fuerit admovebo.}
\]

For they [music and rhetoric] are not yet intended to be a cure for your ills, but just a sort of poultice for your hurt, which stubbornly resists curing. I shall apply more deeply penetrating remedies when the right time comes. (Boethius, *Consolation*, 2 pr.3, 10–13. tr. Stewart et al.).

“Right so is it,” quod sche. “For thise ne ben yit none remedies of thy maladye, but they ben a maner norisshynge of thi sorwe, yit rebel ayen thi curacioun. For

\(^{129}\) This count is based on the eChaucer edition of the *Boece* (NeCastro 2007).

\(^{130}\) Stewart et al. translate “fomenta” as poultice. “Fomenta” is the plural of “fomentum,” so, literally here it is “poultyces.” “Poultsice” or “folementation” (the latter is a type of warm compress) are given as meanings for “fomentum” in Cassell’s Latin Dictionary (Simpson 1968).
whan that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche thynges that percen hemselfe depe.” (Boece 2 pr. 3 )

This particular discussion of remedy is interesting to me in part because, although it does not concern lovesickness, but instead spiritual sorrow, it occurs in Philosophy’s description of the effectiveness of music and rhetoric. Philosophy points her listener to the argument I have made above, that music and the rhetoric of poetry are associated with remedy. Like Absolon’s lyric outburst, these things may their performers feel better. But music and rhetoric provide an inadequate remedy; a proper “cure” will “perce” something or someone (2 pr. 3.8). This tangible imagery of healing also appears in Book One of the Consolation, in which Philosophy describes the effect of medicines as softening hardened areas of the body:

For wyche we wol usen somdel lyghtere medicynes, so that thilke passiouns that ben waxen hard in swellynge by perturbacions flowynge into thy thought, mowen waxen esy and softe to rescuyven the strengthe of a more myghty and more egre medicyne, by an esyere touchynge. (1 pr. 5, 72–8)

Boethius’s idea that music is like a soft remedy appears to make it little more than a demonstration of illness rather than a solution. In the sense that music or song like a “poultice” is simply a sign that someone is suffering, and not a decent cure, it is analogous to Absolon’s sung lyric, which is symptomatic of his love malady but does nothing to cure him.

Repeatedly in the Consolation, the healing process is said to have tangible physical properties; healing is something that can be felt rather than seen. The true cure is hard, while the first, false musical and rhetorical remedy is soft; this first remedy is no cure at all. In Boethius, meanwhile, rhetoric and poetry themselves take on the tangible qualities of the remedy, so, for example, Philosophy refers to her strategy as “norisschynge” or warming up her student before applying “strengere medicynes” (2 pr. 5, 1–2). As

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131 Boethius’s Consolation will be cited by Chaucer’s Middle English Boece translation throughout, but here the Latin and its modern English provide interesting points of comparison, so I include them as well.

132 As Eleanor Johnson points out, Chaucer is familiar with Lady Philosophy’s idea that poetry and music can remedy spiritual or physical malady (2009, 458).
Philosophy’s phrasing suggests, the tangible qualities of healing have an erotic potential. The healing touch can be gentle, and it may be applied to a part of the body that is swollen hard with sickness. Such suggestiveness of Philosophy’s language is noticed by others; Eleanor Johnson notes that for Philosophy “song is a sensual agent, which eases and softens a swollen psyche” (Johnson 2009, 458). Song is not only sensual; it is erotic, because it involves touch, a potential that Boethius nevertheless repeatedly turns into violence, with the ominous “sharper, stronger physic” that inevitably follows the “soft touching.”

The erotic potential of Boethius’s musical remedy and the sharper philosophical cure thus strengthens the analogy with Absolon’s lyric, which may be Marian in its idiom, but has an erotic goal—Alison’s loving touch. Absolon’s actual cure is meanwhile quite tangible. Immediately after the encounter with Alisoun, the Miller writes unambiguously that Absolon was healed of his malady:

\begin{quote}
His hoote love was coold and al yqueynt;  
For fro that tyme that he hadde kist hir ers,  
Of paramours he sette nat a kers,  
For he was heeled of his maladie. (I, 3754–7)
\end{quote}

Although the Miller says Absolon is cured, Absolon actually cries after this episode. He is still suffering in some sense, and the tale is not yet done with its discourse of bodily remedy. Absolon’s cure is for his lovesickness. It involved touch, instead of lyric—indeed, a touch that in some sense parodies the “pity” he asks for in his Marian lyric, or in another sense realizes the erotic goal disguised by is high-flown rhetoric and religious register. This touch, I have argued, takes the cures described by Ovid and in the *Viaticum* to a more bawdy and bodily solution. What happens next is that a character who was not lovesick, Nicholas, ends up on the receiving end of a bawdy parody of a Boethian cure. It is this that finally cures Absolon of his sorrow. Boethius’s philosophical ideals are here evoked only in the service of fabliau’s disorderly narrative schemes.

Absolon’s “cure” of Nicholas is a graphically imagined narrative rendering of the metaphorical language that Philosophy uses to figure a piercing spiritual cure. Absolon’s Ovidian cure prods him to proceed to the blacksmith, who is honing iron tools (Gervey’s “sharpeth shaar and kultour bisily” [I, 3763]). Here the Middle English word “kultour,”
equivalent to Modern English “coulter,” is not, as is sometimes described, a poker; instead, it is an agricultural implement for slicing up the land—a massive knife, or, “iron blade fixed in front of the share in a plough” that “makes a vertical cut in the soil, which is then sliced horizontally by the share” (“Coulter,” OED 1989). Absolon asks the blacksmith to lend him this sharpened hot coulter. When he comes to Alisoun’s house, he plans to hit Alisoun with it. Again, the association in Ovid and the Viaticum texts between sight and cure is abandoned in favour of something more striking and more comic. Absolon cannot see his victim-patient, so he must ask Nicholas to speak in order to locate him. In what follows, the element of touch is paramount. Nicholas does not see what Absolon does; he just feels the resulting pain:

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“Spek, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art …”
And he was redy with his iren hoot,
And Nicholas amydde the ers he smoot.
Of gooth the skyn an hande-brede aboute.
The hoote kultour brende so his toute,
And for the smert he wende for to dye. (I, 3805–3813).
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While the Miller emphasizes that Nicholas suffers from burned skin (he is “scalded” [I, 3853]), it is difficult to imagine that the sharp edge of the coulter does not add to Nicholas’s pain. Its knife-like quality parodies, by literalizing, Philosophy’s final “sharp” cure for which Boethius must be carefully prepared. Moreover, Nicholas is scalded “in the towte” (I, 3853) and “amydde the ers” (I, 3810)—my italics—signifying that he is hurt in his buttocks—“amydde” signifies in the middle of, or inside, as well as between; thus Nicholas is “smoote” in his body. That would suit Philosophy, who argues that her cures will deeply penetrate—had her philosophical ideals not here been turned into a painfully comic scene involving a knife and someone’s “ers.” Nicholas is treated by Absolon in a manner amusingly reminiscent of Philosophy’s painful cure in the Consolation.

Nicholas is not lovesick, no matter how much he desires Alison. One way we know this is that, unlike Absolon, he does not produce love-lyric, one of this text’s formal signs of

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133 I provide the Oxford English Dictionary definition because the modern word “coulter” probably is unfamiliar to most of Chaucer’s readers today.
the lovesickness. He does sing, but he sings clerkly songs of a student planning to enter orders: “Angelus ad virginem” and the “Kynges noote,” alone in his room (I, 3214).\textsuperscript{134} Alison does not come into this. When, later he “maketh melodie” when he “pleyeth faste” and “taketh his sawtrie” with Alison (I, 3305–6), this is not evidence of lovesickness, but the opposite, its actual bodily cure, sex; when Alisoun and Nicholas sleep together in the beer-tub, the Miller also describes the activity as “revel and the melodye” (I, 3652). The “melodie” of song is here identified with Nicholas and Alisoun’s love-making. There is obvious a potential pun on the word “maladie,” here. Nicholas does not suffer from “maladie” like Absolon does; he only feigns it (I, 3416); but ironically it is he who gets the melody he wants, and that is the reason he fakes a malady. The cure that Absolon delivers does not cure Nicholas’s love-malady; in the inverted schemes of this comic narrative, this cure is instead Absolon’s way of getting some sort of physical remedy from Alison (if she won’t relieve his pain, he can cause her some). It is perhaps appropriate that the remedy ends up accidentally penetrating the real instigator of the “revel” of this tale, Nicholas. And in a way, Absolon does respond to a kind of “song,” although it is the very opposite of a love song. Nicholas after all farts when asked to speak; and if song and lyric is a sweet sound come from one hole in one part of the body, farting is its bawdy opposite—a foul sound come from the hole at the body’s lower end.\textsuperscript{135} As Valerie Allen points out, “the noise of a fart violates the distance between subject and object” (Allen 2007, 3) while presupposing an analogy between the body and a musical instrument (Allen 2007, 26).

Up to now I have focused on Nicholas and Absolon as the recipients of cures, but there is a third person in the Miller’s Tale who receives an ostensible “remedie” (I, 3525), and that is John, Alisoun’s husband. The narrative of John’s remedy begins with Nicholas’s feigning a sickness:

\textsuperscript{134} Fletcher Collins suggests that the “King’s Note” may be a Latin hymn otherwise known as “Ave rex gentis Anglorum” or “Hail the King of the English people” (1933, 196).

\textsuperscript{135} The scatalogical associations of \textit{ars musica} are also apparent in the Summoner’s Tale (O’Brien 1990, 1)
When Nicholas falsely tells John the lie about an impending fatal flood, John experiences his own very real illness. John becomes plagued by the fear that his wife will die. Like Absolon, he suffers sorrow (“For sorwe of this he fil amoost adoun”) (I, 3524). John’s fear is described as a sickness of emotion, and of imagination:

Lo, which a greet thing is affeccioun!
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun
So depe may impressioun be take

He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere
He siketh with ful many a sory swogh; (I, 3611–619)

John then cries out, famously, “Is ther no remedie in this cas?” (I, 3525). What happens to John—the injury he received at the end of the tale that presumably brings him to his senses—is in some sense, at least in the cruel and comic logic of this fabliaux, the remedy he deserves for his stupidity, and again it is a kind of parody of the sort of philosophical remedies that Boethius’s text describes.

There is a further connection to be made here to lyric. John never utters a love-lyric as he worries for Alison. But he does chant a charm calling on Saint Benedict, Saint Peter’s sister, and Jesus Christ, when he hears of Nicholas’s malady. His words “I crouche thee” (and the Miller’s designation of it as a “nyght-spel”) indicate that John is making the sign of the cross as well as performing the charm:

“What! Nicholay! What, how? What, looke adoun!
Awak, and thenk on Cristes passioun!
I crouche thee from elves and fro wightes.”
Therwith the nyght-spel seyde he anon-rightes
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the thresshfold of the dore withoute:
“Jhesu Crist and Seinte Benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,
For nyghtes verye, the white pater-noster!
Where wentestow, Seinte Petres soster?” (I, 3477–3485)

The “nyght-spel” that John uses is the “White Pater Noster,” a well-known charm that involved blessing the four corners of the bed (Opie and Opie 1997, 303–5). The charm
was one of many “night spells” that offered protection against the demons of the night entering a house (Thoms 1878, 150). It is easy to imagine John chanting the charm, for the Miller says John “cride spitously” (vigorously and loudly). As for the Middle English word “chaunten,” which John applies to Absolon’s singing (I, 3367), this meant to sing, to chant, and connotes to enchant, according to the Middle English Dictionary (“chaunten” Def. v.1, MED 2006; “chaunten” Def v.2, MED 2006). Thus John’s recitation, a “nyght-spel,” meant to enchant, still carries with it an association with chanting or singing. Its remedial efficacy for John is clear: the charm ritually protects a property boundary and attempts to heal Nicholas of his putative malady. This particular charm is imagined to have both spiritual and tangible physical benefits.

But the potentially efficacious words of this charm are misapplied. The malady that needs this enchantment is fake; or if there is real illness, it is only John’s own befuddled distress and perhaps his stupidity. John’s ostensible remedy is a wound as Nicholas’s is. The tale ends with him experiencing a physical malady—a real swoon, and a broken arm—when the tub he is hanging in comes crashing down in the absence of the flood Nicholas duped him into believing was on the way:

…this man
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan,
For with the fal he brosten hadde his arm. (I, 3827–29)

Is this not just as Philosophy warned that she would “moeve and ajuste swiche thynges that percen ... depe” (Boece 2 pr. 3.8)? In a way, the Miller’s Tale brilliantly and wittily literalizes such things, such cures and remedies for lovesickness and other sorts of spiritual and philosophical confusion. And in a sense, among the things cured are maladies that have led to useless melodies: like Absolon’s Marian lyric, which is a very

136 In the Franklin’s Tale, Aurelius’s magic, learned in Orleans, is called “magyk naturel” (V, 1125).

137 The power of charms is not to be underestimated. In Chaucer’s England a charm might be recited (as John does) or copied onto an amulet, and charms were used widely for protection of person or property. G.L. Kittredge gives the example of Sir Robert Tresilien, condemned in 1338, who “could not die so long as he had some things about him,” but was stripped and deprived of textual amulets and then hanged without difficulty. The executioners’ belief in the efficacy of orally recited charms is attested to by their having then cut Tresilien’s throat “as a measure of additional security” (Favent in Kittredge 1956, 54).
good example of a superficial but inefficacious, poultice-like cure, or John’s entirely futile charm.

To conclude, I will briefly consider Alisoun’s role in relation to this way of reading the text and its account of lyric. Alison escapes the rhetoric of remedy and cure, and far from suffering from lovesickness, she is its cause—the beloved object—and also its cure. According to Peter of Spain, Avicenna states that the ideal remedy for lovesickness is “to lie with the beloved object herself” (Wack 1990, 235); in this sense Alisoun herself is the remedy. At times in the text, Alisoun’s is subtly identified with song. She has a loud voice, the audience is told; she sings like the swallow (I, 3258). But if Alison is, here and when she is making melody with Nicholas, a producer of lyric of a sort—songs at least—she is still caught up in the text’s comic depiction of cures and remedies. The songs she produces with her sweet mouth (I, 3261)—she is like “hony,” as suggested by Absolon—only suggests the sort of “hony sweetnesse” condemned by Philosophy as inadequate for the kind of remedy for wretchedness:

“Serteynly,” quod I thanne, “thise ben faire thynges and enoynted with hony sweetnesse of Rethorik and Musike; and oonly whil thei ben herd thei ben delycious, but to wrecches is a deppere felyng of harm (this is to seyn, that wrecches felen the harmes that thei suffren more grevously than the remedies or the delites of thise wordes mowen gladen or conforten hem). So that, whanne thise thynges stynten for to soune in eris, the sorwe that es inset greveth the thought.”

“Right so is it,” quod sche. “For thise ne ben yit none remedies of thy maladye, but they ben a maner norisschynges of thi sorwe, yit rebel ayen thi curacioun. For whan that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche thynges that percen hemselfe depe.” (Boece 2 pr. 3, 8–27)

If Alisoun is a remedy, she is a remedy in the economy of this fabliau: she is a body, a beguiling sweetness. Like sweet poems or songs, she may seem to relieve suffering, but she ultimately prefigures—and perhaps by her own sweetness intensifies—the experience of much more painful cures and literally deep wounds that follows.
2 The Reeve’s Tale: Melody and Cure

The Reeve’s Tale is often thought of as distasteful and crude. Song and music have entered into the critical discussion of the tale as evidence of this crudity; David Pearsall objects that the “touches of lyricism and generosity that graced the Miller’s Tale have [in the Reeve’s Tale] been stripped away” and says that “the only music to be heard is the cacophony of the family snoring” (2003,170, 169). The cacophony he refers to is described internally within the text as a “complyn” (I, 4171)—it is marked out as a sort of bodily parody of religious song, as Bruce Holsinger has argued (2001, 184). R.E. Kaske argues that the brief song Aleyn sings to Malyne parodies the dawn song, so that this fabliau exemplifies a lowly parody of an otherwise noble courtly lyric adornment (1959, 310). Remedy is also very important in the Reeve’s Tale. The Reeve provides a tale in response to the Miller’s by satirizing the doings of Simkin, a Miller. Within the tale two Oxford clerks, Aleyn and John, bring their corn to be milled by Simkin, who distracts them, setting their horse free and stealing half a bushel of their flour while they chase the animal (I, 4093). Not surprisingly, Aleyn and John feel wronged because their corn has been stolen (I, 4111). That night, staying with the miller and his family, Aleyn and John are kept awake by farting and snoring, and, provoked, Aleyn claims that he will seek a solution—some payback—to remedy his “los” (I, 4186). He jumps into bed with the miller’s daughter Malyne before she has time to object. The next morning Malyne tells him where to find a cake she baked using the stolen flour, and, while making his way out of the miller’s house in the early morning, Aleyn mistakenly tells Simkin he has

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138 The Reeve’s Tale has received criticism for its “sterility [and] coarseness,” its fascination with death (Cooper 1996, 113; 108) and its “vindictiveness” (Pearsall 2003, 169). The clerk Aleyn’s attempt to reframe his revenge on Simkin as a legal justice—a reframing that Karla Taylor calls the “doctrine of ‘esement’” (2010, 106)—is viewed as “crazy” (Lerer 2006, 249), while the Reeve’s confession of old age is considered by Sheila Delany to be more “offensive” than anything in the Miller’s Tale (1967, 356). The blatant sexual innuendo identified with the tale’s depiction of milling and hopping (Lancashire 1972, 164) does little to mitigate the accusation of offensiveness. Such appraisals are countered by critics who see in the tale a “profound understanding of the physical and social constraints of ordinary life” (Benson 2003, 141); a precisely plotted social satire targeting corrupt clergy and rich peasants (Phillips 2005, 302); and a thoughtful analysis of the optical misperception of space (Brown 2007, 139). Glending Olson also contends, “Chaucer seems to have gone out of his way not to focus on vengeance itself but to turn the tale into a battle of wits, one maneuver against another” (1974, 224).
“swyved” the miller’s daughter three times (I, 4266). The ensuing fight has Simkin fall backwards on his wife; she hits him on his skull, and the two clerks go on their way.

The clerk’s actions in response to Simkin’s corn-stealing are examples of remedies in the broad sense of remedying or fixing a situation, but they are also cures in the sense that they respond retributively to Simkin’s misguided “care” of their corn, and in that they deliver painful blows to Simkin himself. The Consolation passage cited above uses the word “curacioun” for a cure, and here I quote it again:

“Right so is it,” quod sche. “For thise ne ben yit none remedies of thy maladye, but they ben a maner norisschynges of thi sorwe, yit rebel ayen thi curacioun. For whan that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche thynes that percen hemselfe depe.” (Boece 2 pr. 3, 18–24).

“Curacioun,” which Chaucer uses above, is synonymous with “cure” in Middle English.139 “Curacioun” also has some interesting semantic associations in Middle English, because of this meaning and because of the etymological root “cure.” The verb “curen” means not only to remedy a situation or cure a person (Def. 3a), but also to care for a person or property (Def. 2.a, MED 2006). In William Langland’s Piers Plowman, for example, the clergy are intended to “cure” insofar as they take care of people: “clergy is cristes vycary to conforte and to cure” (C.15.70). The Middle English noun “cure” also means not only a medicinal cure, but also any kind of duty or responsibility, including the responsibility for worldly goods (Def. 3b, MED, 2006). While Aleyn and John are not said to seek a “cure” in so many words—the term “esement” is more prominent in the tale—the clerks’ actions might be said to respond to Simkin’s faulty “cure” or “care.” That is, Simkin misuses his duty to care for the corn by distracting the brothers and stealing it (I, 4093). Aleyn then attempts to take back the care of his wheat and retaliates for Simkin’s abuse of privilege by taking additional “care” of Simkin’s property, including his wife and daughter. Aleyn responds to Simkin’s badly delivered cure or care with retributive and painful curing or caring.

139 The Middle English Dictionary glosses “Curacioun” as “(a) the curing of disease, healing, restoration to health, cure; also, fig.; (b) method of cure, medical treatment; a remedy.”
The act of curing, or caring for, in the sense of watching over worldly goods, is related to the legal process of “esement,” which Aleyn views as a means to remedy the unfair situation as well as getting revenge upon Simkin. “Esement” is “the right or privilege of using something not one’s own, such as a pasture, a forest, a waterway, a well, [or] domestic facilities” (Def. 2, MED 2006). The word is used twice by Aleyn (I, 4179; I, 4186) when he says he wants to get back at the Reeve. The first time he uses the word, it is after the “complyn”-like cacophony that is the family’s snoring:

This millere hath so wisely bibbed ale
That as an hors he fnorteth in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynde he took no keep.
His wyf bar hym a burdon, a ful strong;
Men myghte hir rowtyng heere two furlong;
The wenche rowteth eek, par compaignye.

Aleyn the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He poked John, and seyde, “Slepestow?
Herdestow evere slyk a sang er now?
Lo, swilk a complyn is ymel hem alle;
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Wha herkned evere slyk a ferly thyng?
Ye, they sal have the flour of il endyng.
This lange nyght ther tydes me na reste.” (I, 4162–4175)

Aleyn’s use of the word “complyn” (I, 4161) refers to Compline, the last of the liturgical hours following Vespers, which was conventionally sung (Robert Correale points out that Compline had been called “night song” in England since the time of Ælfric (c.950–c.1010) [1967, 163]). But in Middle English, “compline” could also refer to chattering or snoring (“Compline,” MED 2006). The word here evokes ideas of the earthly harmony of a community connected through song and worship; and something quite different, irritating worldly noise. “Lo, swik a complyn is ymel hem alle,” may further evoke
musical harmony in that preposition “ymel” (among or between) suggests both multiple different sounds that combine to make harmony, and may even punning on the Northern Middle English word “melen,” meaning to speak or sing like a bird (“Melen,” Def. a, MED 2006). Moreover, as noted in the section on the Miller’s Tale, a parodic connection between a song (or any sweet verbal utterance) and a fart was conventional in the Middle Ages. Valerie Allen describes an amusing illustration in the fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter, in which a shawm (a bagpipe) with animal legs produces wind from its backside and chants from its human mouth (2007, 26); she observes that the idea of the butt-trumpet is as old as its appearance in the comedies of Aristophanes, in the fifth century B.C. (2007, 27).

But Aleyn is not amused. Far from it: the irritating rather than soothing and harmonious effect of this family’s bodily song are a prompt for him to seek “esement” for the theft of the corn:

Som esement has lawe yshapen us,
For, John, ther is a lawe that says thus:
That gif a man in a point be agreved,
That in another he sal be releved.
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we han had an il fit al this day;
And syn I sal have neen amendement
Agayn my los, I will have esement. (I, 4179–4186)

“Esement” has two other meanings in Middle English: entertainment and physical comforts, and the physical relief that follows bodily excretion (“Esement,” 2001; Lancashire 1972). In the passage above, Aleyn implies that “swyving” Simkin’s daughter is a kind of “esement” for him, activating all three senses of the term. Aleyn’s “swyving” Malyne also takes place shortly after Aleyn hears and responds to the “melodye” (I, 4168), which keeps him awake and which he jokingly calls a “complyn” (I, 4171). The “complyn” seems to invite Aleyn to seek and express his own “esement.”

The “complyn” is not the only song or lyric in the Reeve’s Tale. Aleyn follows his rape of Simkin’s daughter with a lyric, or at least, words highly reminscent of those of an aubade, a song sung by lovers at dawn, at their parting. Given the events of the evening, this might seem absurd, distasteful, even horrifying. But just as the strange parody of a
compline has an effect—it irritates the students so that they take their revenge—so does the aubade: Malyne weeps in response to it (Cooper 1996, 113). Music for medieval aubades survives, suggesting they were often sung, but Aleyn seems merely to speak his aubade here:  

\begin{quote}
Aleyn wax wery in the dawenynghe,  
For he had swynken al the longe nyght,  
And seyde, “Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight! 
The day is come; I may no lenger byde;  
But everemo, wher so I go or ryde,  
I is thyn awen clerk, swa have I seel!”  
“Now deere lemmman” quod she, “Go, far weel!  
But er thow go, o thyng I wol thee telle:  
Whan that thou wendest homward by the melle,  
Right at the entree of the dore bihynde  
Thou shalt a cake of half a bushel fynde …!  
And, goode lemmman, God thee save and kepe,”  
And with that word almost she gan to wepe. (I, 4234–4248)
\end{quote}

Precisely because this dawn-song lyric elicits an emotional response from its listener, it is difficult for the reader to categorize it as a straightforward parody, as some would have it. Perhaps the main effect of Aleyn’s lyric is that it forestalls any easy response. It becomes harder to condemn Aleyn’s rape of Simkin’s daughter as rape if she sees him as her “deere lemmman” and if he sings love songs to her. It’s hard to see how one night of sex, consensual or otherwise, and just a few “wery” words from a familiar lyric tradition, would cause Malyne to hold Aleyn “deere.” The aubade does introduce just a touch of lyricism and generosity to this disquieting tale of revenge, cruelty, and failures of care, but its effect is perhaps to make the process of interpretation itself more difficult and disquieting.  

\begin{quote}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} See Robert Perrin for a discussion of the music of the “Reis Glorios” aubade by troubadour Guiraut de Bornelh (c.1138-1215) (1956, 16).
\item \textsuperscript{142} Kaske argues that Aleyn’s reference to himself as a clerk is a parody of the knight of the “tradition-hallowed aube” (1960, 309). It is not clear, however, that the knight-archetype was a universal convention. Judging from A. T. Hatto’s collection of European dawn songs, the aubade regularly featured just a “lover”—\textit{amic} in Old Provençal (Woledge 1965, 358) or \textit{amore} in Italian (Faithfull 1965, 401) of no particular status. Moreover, in many French love-lyrics extant from the thirteenth century onward, the boundary between popular and courtly entertainment was increasingly blurred. In the pastourelle, entertainers and authors relished crossing “barriers of decorum, class and gender” (Butterfield 2002, 143).
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}
complines in the cynicism and destructiveness that critics have found so distasteful. Neither religious song nor love-lyric can right what is wrong in this tale.

3 The Merchant’s Tale: Letters and Song

The Merchant’s Tale does not appear in the same fragment as the Miller’s and Reeve’s Tale and does not have the same “quiting” relationship that exists between the latter tales. The Merchant’s Tale is also less commonly discussed in conjunction with those tales, and only rarely has its representation of music been considered in relation to those tales. The tale contains many similar elements in the depiction of lyric, however. The tale depicts cures for lovesickness in that January and Damyan are both cured by May, in some sense. In this tale love-lyric again signals lovesickness, and the material that Chaucer uses to situate the idea of a lyrical cure is drawn partly from the Consolation of Philosophy, partly by way of the Merchant’s allusions to Orpheus, which associate song with marriages that end unhappily. The Merchant’s satire of the Song of Songs and of January’s aubade also work to associate the spoken and sung lyric with inversion, parody, and failure in love. Unlike the Miller and Reeve, however, one character in the Merchant’s Tale does use lyric to the effect that he wants. Whereas, in the Miller’s Tale, love-lyric fails entirely to entice the beloved, in the Merchant’s Tale a written love-lyric actually works to woo May—although the wooer’s attractive and youthful appearance

143 Like the Reeve’s Tale, the Merchant’s Tale has been criticized for its harsh views of either old age or sexuality—what G. L. Kittredge once called its “savage and cynical satire” of January (1915, 201) and what, more recently, Derek Pearsall calls the Merchant’s “shocking and disorientating” tendency to dwell on disgusting details, such as January’s “houndfyssh”-like beard against May’s skin (2003, 173). Norman T. Harrington also points out a problem for many critics in that the Merchant “makes a wide range of literary, philosophic, and mythological allusions” that are hard to reconcile with the “stolid Merchant of the General Prologue” (1971, 27). Harrington nevertheless identifies the generic approaches in the tale that establish a unique tone for the Merchant: “mock encomium, débat, romantic narrative, mythological episode, and fabliau ending” (1971, 27); and Harrington sees the tale’s “cool, controlled … tone” as evidence of Chaucer’s “full and coherent” approach (1971, 29–30). Certain images in the tale strike many critics as completely repulsive: Harrington imagines May reading Damyan’s letter in the privy as “graphic and grotesque” (1971, 30), while Mary C. Schroeder sees the beard rubbing up against May as “hyper-naturalism bordering on the grotesque” (1970, 172). Despite these opinions, Bertrand Bronson finds it funny (1961, 583–96) and Carol Falvo Heffernan identifies the “irony, hilarious puns, and physical humor” that the tale has in common with the Comedia Lidie (2006, 338). The more one sympathizes with May, the more funny the tale seems today.
helps too.\textsuperscript{144} Even Damyan’s lyric-driven success, however, comes at a cost: in the case of this fabliau, the cost is January’s whose blindness may be remedied in a rather Ovidian fashion—the sight of his unfaithful wife should work its cure—but who ends the tale as the dupe of his wife and her lover anyway.

Like the Miller’s Tale, the Merchant’s Tale consists of the stories of several couples: January and May’s marriage; Damyan and May’s courtship; and Pluto and Proserpina’s argument. The Merchant opens by presenting the question of whether the elderly man January should seek a wife. January’s friend Justinian advises against marriage, but another friend, Placebo, advocates for it. Their debate is followed by the marriage of January and May (IV, 1700–1805). At the wedding, the Merchant introduces the character of Damyan, January’s squire, who pines with lovesickness for May, courts her via love-letter, and eventually arranges to meet her secretly in January’s walled garden. After copying the key to the garden gate and clandestinely entering the garden, Damyan climbs a tree to await May, who arrives in the garden with the now-blind January. By chance, the Merchant says, the deities Pluto and Proserpina are in the garden watching the events unfold (IV, 2226–2229); horrified, they argue the relative villainy of women and men and end their argument by committing to support the different goals of January and May. Pluto resolves to give January back his sight (IV, 2313), while Proserpina promises to provide May with an answer for whatever infelicitous act January will witness (IV, 2317).

The wedding of January and May provides the tale’s first instance of classical references to music. The Merchant says January and May’s wedding is heralded by “mynstralcye,” and musical “instrumentz” that appear to trump even Orpheus’s “melodye” in their power to bring down walls:

Biforn hem stoode instrumentz of swich soun  
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun,

\textsuperscript{144} R. E. Kaske once commented that there is a very brief aubade-parody in the tale, where January wishes the night “to lasten evermo” (IV, 1763) and, shortly after, May then is glad that the “I may no lenger wake” (IV, 1856) (1960, 1–2). Charles Muscatine also notes its “lyricism” but finds that it only makes the tale “doubly revolting” (1957, 234).
Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.  
At every course thanne cam loud mynstralcye  
That nevere tromped Joab for to heere,  
Nor he Theodomas, yet half so cleere. (IV, 1715–1720)

The narrator’s allusion to Orpheus in his telling of the story of January’s wedding is notable because it forebodes, at the very least, an unhappy ending for the marriage.  

Orpheus is famed for having his lost his wife despite his persuasive singing. Another salient similarity between the couples is the involvement of Pluto. Pluto allows January to see May, but only before the husband is figuratively separated from his wife by this very sight of her with her lover. While Orpheus’s and Eurydice’s story involves no adultery, Orpheus was allowed to see Eurydice in Hades, but only before that sight separated them forever and consigned her to the underworld. By mentioning Orpheus, the Merchant foregrounds marital troubles January later faces, as well as the intervention of a pagan god in January’s conjugal affairs.

Singing in the Boethian Orphic story has powerful effects but in the end it cannot avert fate or a god’s decision, despite its immense power to sway listeners. In the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Philosophy’s metra beautifully describes how Orpheus’s “weeply songes” influence inanimate objects, (rivers and woods); animals (harts, hinds, lions, hares, and hounds) (3 m. 12, 7–12); and even monsters, shades, and gods:

…And he sang with as mochel as he myghte of wepynge, and with as moche as love that doublide his sorwe myghte yeve hym and teche hym, and he commoevde the helle, and requyred and bysoughte by swete preyere the lordes of soules in helle of relessynge, that is to seyn, to yelden hym his wyf. Cerberus, the porter of helle, with his e the hevedes, was caught and al abasschid of the newe song. And the thre goddesses, furiis and vengeresses of felonyes, that tormenten and agasten the soules by anoy, woxen sorweful and sory, and wepyn teeris for pite. (3 m. 12, 25–37)

The beauty of these songs gets Orpheus into hell, but they cannot get his wife out; they can shape her behavior to a point, but they cannot go beyond that.

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145 Philippa Hardman claims Orpheus is here referred to because he is a “superlative” musician (1990, 545) and the Merchant’s reference has no particular relation to Boethius’s version of the myth. Orpheus is also referred to in *Troilus and Criseyde* and in the Knight’s Tale.
Other classical allusions in the passage about January’s wedding music also suggest the power of music over listeners and inanimate objects, its apparent lack of utility for its performer, and its association with disastrous marriages. The allusion to the story of Thebes must encompass, however obliquely, the story of Oedipus’s elaborate but calamitous marriage to Jocasta, whom he never recognizes (I, 456), and for which he punishes himself by blinding himself (I, 497)—problems that seem to figure January’s own real blindness, and metaphorical blindness to Alison’s infidelity. The allusion to Amphion also associates music with a frightening marital story. While Amphion is able to build the walls of Thebes with his magical lyre, his family life was famed for its unhappy end, which could not be prevented by his musicianship.¹⁴⁶ Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (6, 177ff) and the *Ovide moralisé* (6, 1581–1920) tell the story of Amphion’s wife Niobe, whose boast of her husband’s power brings the wrath of Latona upon her, resulting in the death of all the couple’s children. The mention of the destruction of walls by Theodomas’s invocation and trumpets (IV, 1720) foregrounds other breached walls in the tale, including January’s “gardyn, walled al with stoon” (IV, 2029) where May and Damyan commit adultery. It also recalls the ineffectual wall between forbidden lovers Pyramus and Thisbe: “Thogh they were kept ful longe street overall / They ben accorded, rownynge, thurgh a wal” (IV, 2129–30). The classical allusions to these useless walls, and to Oedipus, Thebes, and Amphioun, together associate music with stories of disastrous marriages, as well as January’s coming blindness.

So the music that is so often associated with lyric augurs badly in this tale. Lyric also proves fruitless for the withered January; it fails to win him May’s love, and then it fails to offer any sort of cure for his lovesickness. January is not initially described as suffering from lovesickness, but the night he consummates his marriage, January does sing very loudly:

And after that he sang ful loude and cleere,

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¹⁴⁶ Amphion and Niobe’s children were all killed by Apollo’s mother for Niobe’s overweening pride, and Amphion committed suicide; that Chaucer knows the story is clear in *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Pandarus compares Troilus to Niobe (1, 699–700).
And kiste his wyf, and made wantown cheere.
He was al coltissh, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.
The slakke skyn aboute his nekke shaketh
Whil that he sang, so chaunteth he and craketh. (IV, 1845–1850)

January’s “slakke” skin marks the singing as bird-like rather than human; indeed, Paul Battles sees January as a rooster who crows at dawn (1997, 322). However, the bird the Merchant identifies here is a “flekked pye”—a spotted magpie—and his “jargon” signifies bird chattering (“jargoun,” MED 2006). The image of January’s neck shaking thus specifically recalls a magpie’s neck vibrating as it sings. Moreover, the ability to “chant” and “crake” evokes the ability of magpies and other birds to chatter and sing simultaneously. Like Absolon who “chaunteth” in the Miller’s Tale (I, 3367), and John’s chanting of the night-spell, this bird-like “chaunt” of January seems inappropriate and ridiculous. (When January sings to May again like a “papejay” (IV, 2322), the moment is equally silly.) When January “chants,” the Merchant mocks the world of the aubade by spatially and temporally rearranging its well-known characters. More commonly, the lover hears the bird heralding the dawn. A bird usually sings outside the window, waking the lovers, who must separate at first light to preserve the secrecy of their encounter.¹⁴⁷

In most examples, the lovers are sad to be separated at dawn. Chaucer, by comparison, figuratively puts the bird in bed, and temporally rearranges the situation to the evening, for January and May “werken in hir wyse / Til evensong rong” (IV, 1965–66). Dusk, not dawn, puts an end to Venus’s workings. Finally, there is no secret about the couple’s tryst that necessitates a dawn separation. On the night of the couple’s wedding, January explicitly asks the wedding guests to leave the house: “And to his privée freendes thus seyde he … Lat voyden al this hous in curteys wyse” (IV, 1813–1815). Whereas the dawn song would usually be a marker of an erotic union and sorrowful parting, January’s song is far from erotic.

¹⁴⁷ For example, in Ovid’s Amores (I, 13, 8) a bird “chants liquid song from slender throats” (“et liquidum tenui gutture cantat avis”) just as Aurora is waking the lovers who are reluctant to be separated (tr. G. Showerman); and in Boccaccio’s Il Filostrato III, stanza 42, the cocks’ crowing also brings torments (Faithfull 1965, 407). B. Woledge notes that a “watchman” character announces the dawn in an Old Provençal song (1965, 345).
Song is also ineffective in the Merchant’s distorted paraphrase of the Song of Songs (IV, 2138–2148): \(^{148}\)

> “Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!
The turtles voyis herd, my dowve sweete;
The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete.
Com forth now, with thyne eyen columblyn!
How faierer been thy breستes than is wyn!
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;
Com forth, my white spouse! Out of doute
Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!
No spot of thee ne knew I al my lyf.
Com forth, and lat us taken oure disport;
I chees thee for my wyf and my confort.” (IV, 2138–1248)

January’s paraphrase repeats the refrain “Come forth” (IV, 2141, 2145, 2147), echoing the Song of Songs’ invitation (“come with me” [1:8, 1:13]) and the statement that the beloved sees him coming (“Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains!” [1:8]). But this allusion ironically highlights January’s inability to see anything, including the physical or moral substance of his wife. \(^{149}\) He cannot see May coming, for he is blind. Whereas in the Song of Songs the lover asks the beloved “Let me see thy countenance,” (2:14), January cannot do the same. January’s song omits much non-visual imagery from the Song of Songs where, for example, the lover says “vines with the tender grape give a good smell” (2:13) and imagines the beloved’s voice to be sweet, providing imagery of touch and sound. Instead the Merchant has January envision only the visual delights of the Song: an enclosed garden, a white spouse, and breasts fairer (not sweeter) than wine (IV, 2142). This biblical song’s visual delights, which January cannot see, only emphasize January’s difficulty seeing May.

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\(^{148}\) The view that the Song of Songs was in some sense a “song” rather than exclusively a text for reading is very evident in Richard Rolle’s work; Rolle reads the Song as if it were a melodic song, “canor” (Astell 1990, 107; Albin 2011, 112).

\(^{149}\) This passage is interpreted by Douglas Wurtele as a “grotesquely ironic” parody of the Song of Songs (1977, 485).
Finally, January does describe a love-wound when he has gone blind and sings to May in his garden. January’s is then a conventional lyric outburst, “Out of doute / Thou has me wounded in myn herte, O wyf” (IV, 2144–5):

… whan that I considere youre beautee
And therewithal the unlikely elde of me
I may nat, certes, though I sholde dye
Forbere to been out of youre compaignye
For verray love; this is withouten doute. (IV, 2179–2183)

In stating that he will die unless he is in May’s company, January uses the conventional phrasing of one who is lovesick. January evidently desires, and asks for, the cure of May’s love. It is precisely this love that he and his songs never win—an outcome seemingly predicted by the ominous classical allusions to failed marriages at the start of the tale.

While instrumental music, song, and lyric utterance is associated with January’s and May’s unhappy marriage, a kind of lyric does serve to unite the other couple in the story, May and Damyan. Damyan, January’s squire, secretly admires May. Damyan finally decides to give her a love-letter which he has written and kept close to her heart. This “bille” (IV, 1937), a love-letter to which May responds, is written in verse and, like Absolon’s love-lyric, is used to invite the beloved to a love-tryst. It is however much more effective than song was for Absolon. Damyan’s first letter is described in terms of privacy:

… prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wroot he al his sorwe,
In a manere of a compleynt or a lay,
Unto his faire, fresshe lady May; (IV, 1879–1882)

The “sorwe” of Damyan’s love letter is not matched by any historical examples of love letters in English (there are no verifiable love letters in English extant from the fourteenth century or earlier).150 As such, we have little historical information about how Damyan’s

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150 One possible exception appears in Gonville 54, a canon law book mentioned in Chapter One, in which a verse English letter appears among French verse epistles, on the flyleaves (James 1907, 47–48; Camargo 1990, 29–32). It is unclear whether the love letter is authentic or fictive.
lyrical love letter might have been thought of by Chaucer’s audience. Nevertheless, three terms in the Merchant’s Tale let us imagine Damyan’s lyric: “bille,” “complaint,” and “lay.” The “lay” means Damyan’s letter could have been either a narrative tale or the words of a song, for lays were usually sung and could be accompanied by harps (“Lai,” 2006). “Bille” is defined in the Middle English Dictionary as “(a) A formal document (embodying a will, a permit, etc.); fig. a list or inventory”; Def. 1.a, 2006). Chaucer’s use of “bill” has been noted by Joseph A. Hornsby (1988, 73, 79, 155) and Charles Nolan (1979), who analyze different kinds of legal discourse in this tale and elsewhere in Chaucer. The term “bill” is important particularly because it is associated with “complaint”: both complaints and bills were legal documents by which people might publicly plead their case. According to Wendy Scase, “plaintiffs were encouraged to sue by plaint or bill” from Edward I’s reign [1272] onwards (Scase 2007, 9). Nolan and Hornsby recognize that the words “bill” and “complaint” allude to specific legal documents, as do the terms “scrit and bond” (IV, 1697). A plaint or bill would have been a public letter, as Scase points out; and yet the letter that Damyan writes is a private one, since he writes it “prively” (IV, 1879), and it contains material that May must dispose of “in the pryvee” (IV, 1954). Damyan also initially hangs it on his body “at his herte” (IV, 1884), indicating that he gives it the status of a textual amulet. Likewise, May keeps the letter close to her “bosom” (IV, 1944). The association of the verse letter with the amulet signals that this is a different kind of love-invitation than the one found in Absolon’s love-song, one with a different and intriguing potential for efficacy.

151 The rhyming association of “bill” with “will” is perhaps conventional; for example, the same rhyme is found in the Physician’s Tale (VI, 189–90). The rhyme may also have a wider allegorical significance, which would be interesting to explore further. See, in the Physician’s Tale, “Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille, / Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille” (VI, 189).

152 The practice of hanging a document on one’s body is well attested in the period. A document hung on the body might have been a letter, a charter of pardon, or a prayer: textual amulets were worn against the body for protection, as in the case of a woman who wore an amulet made from a parchment book-page (Skemer 2006, 191). The power of the amulet is based on its status as a prayer, according to Skemer (2006, 190), a power that is in many ways similar to the power attributed to the night-spell charm in the Miller’s Tale (for which, see Section One).
As it turns out, the letter has an erotic power that is not present in the initial face-to-face interactions between May and January. For example, the suggestion that Damyan’s “purse” is put into May’s “bosom” (IV, 1944) is more erotic a statement than the encounter of May with January’s houndfish-beard: “purse” denotes not only a wallet, but also the scrotum or testicles (“purse,” Def. 4a, 2006). The furtive erotic power of the letter and its sensuality reappears in May’s writing (“right of hire hand”) and her delivery of it, when she “threste[s]” the letter “sotilly ... / Under his pilwe” (IV, 2003–4).

Chaucer’s interleaving of descriptions of the written love-letter (IV, 1937–8, 1952–4, 1971), and the couple’s encounters (IV, 1946–1950, IV, 1956–65) heightens the appearance of this letter having power to affect May, by comparing it with the ineffectual, though strenuous, attentions of her husband. The Merchant carefully describes May’s response to the letter:

But sooth is this, how that this fresshe May
Hath take swich impression that day
Of pitee of this sike Damyan
That from hire herte she ne dryve kan
The remembrance for to doon him ese. (IV, 1977-81)

The letters seem to have a power to make a lasting “impression” in her heart that she cannot “dryve” away, and as the tale eventually shows, this “impression” invites a physical encounter: as a result of the information in the letters, Damyan and May arrange to meet in the garden (IV, 2030). The letter, as a private and material object, is also associated with another physical object that also gives the lovers access to January’s garden and May’s body: the key. January’s key is supposedly unique, giving him exclusive entrance to the garden, but May manages to find and give Damyan a wax imprint with which he can counterfeit the key (IV, 2116–21); like the lasting “impression” made by the letter, the wax imprint and the key also facilitate the lover’s intimate tryst. The letter is also read, like the visual “sign” that May gives Damyan to allow him to open the garden gate with his “clicket” (IV, 2151). Damyan uses secret written texts to court May, and May uses secret impressions and signs to respond and allow Damyan to secretly meet her.
While the Merchant shows January as lovesick, mouthing a parody of the Song of Songs, Damyan is also seen to be lovesick, and in this tale he appears to be cured by May herself of his lovesickness. Damyan’s lovesickness is described after May’s marriage:

He was so ravysshed on his lady May
That for the verray peyne he was ny wood.
Almoost he swelte and swowned ther he stood,
So soore hath Venus hurt hym with hire brond
As that she bar it daunsynge in hire hond. (IV, 1774–8)

Damyan’s lovesickness is also described later as a motivation for writing his love letter and for taking the chance of giving the letter to her:

This sike Damyan in Venus fyr
So brenneth that he dyeth for desyr,
For which he putte his lyf in aventure. (IV, 1875–1877)

Then, after May answers the letter and goes to Damyan’s bedside, the Merchant notes that Damyan’s lovesickness is gone, and Damyan preens happily as a result: “Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe / He kembeth hym, he preyneth hym and pyketh (IV, 2010–11). May has “bad hym been al hool” (IV, 2007). In having met privately with Damyan, and in this way having responded to his lover’s complaint, May has cured him. In contrast to the Miller’s Tale, then, a lover receives the exact cure for lovesickness that he desires—the private attentions of his beloved.

The cure of Damyan is important to the tale and to the argument of this chapter, which is that in fabliaux the lyric’s effects are parodied, or shown to be false, and are replaced by scenes of bodily violence or just bawdy melody. Love-lyrics work a kind of cure for Damyan; he keeps them private and in writing, and they win him the private attentions of his beloved (although it is surely also important that he is the very opposite of the old age that, the text suggests, should never have been married to May’s youth). It is partly January’s aging body that makes his lyric ridiculous and ineffective. Indeed, at the end of the tale, May says to January that she has cured him of one marker of that agedness as well as his ridiculousness and his lovesickness—his blindness:

I have yow holpe on bothe youre eyen blynde.
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lyen,
As me was taught, to heele with youre eyen,
Was no thyng bet, to make yow to see,
Than strugle with a man upon a tree. (IV, 2370–2374)

May does not actually cure January of his blindness; according to the Merchant, it is Pluto who does this (IV, 2354–5).\(^{153}\) But May’s answer to January, inspired by Proserpine (IV, 2266), allows her to couch the change in terms of her own medicine, help, and healing. She *seems* to work a cure (IV, 2380), and indeed she assumes the credit for it. Nevertheless, January’s regaining of his sight fails to serve as a cure for lovesickness; instead, it echoes the Ovidian cure for such sickness described in Chapter Two, by showing January and May in an awkward position. In fact, Pluto’s gift of sight to January is first calibrated in order to cure January of love for his wife: “Thanne shal he known al hire harlotrye / Bothe in repreve of hire and othere mo” (IV, 2260–3). Pluto hopes that, by giving January back his sight, he will help the husband to learn to recoil and so lose his lovesick ways. Just as Pluto allows January to *see* Damyan and May together in broad daylight, Ovid advises the lover to look at his lover in daylight to cure lovesickness. For example, in the *Remedies for Love*, Ovid encourages the lover to “open all the windows, and by the admitted light observe unseemly limbs” in an attempt to cure one of lovesickness.\(^{154}\) January does indeed see May in broad daylight, limbs askew, but this treatment is completely ineffective. The Merchant ends by pointing out,

> This Januarie, who is glad but he?  
> He kisseth hire and clippeth hire ful ofte,  
> And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful softe, (IV, 2412–2414)

January is still blind to his wife’s adultery and still, therefore, lovesick.

In the final analysis, lyric facilitates adultery in the Merchant’s Tale. It works a cure for Damyan. But the effect of lyric’s success in the text is to leave January as ridiculous as

\(^{153}\) January is described as both lovesick and blind, and his blindness appears to grow out of a deeper malady. James M. Palmer convincingly argues that January’s physical blindness “results in large part from his appetite for food and sex” (2006, 199), and that Chaucer’s knowledge on the causes of blindness comes from Benvenutus Grassus’s *De probatissima arte oculorum* and other texts like it, which stress the causes of blindness as erotic and alimentary overindulgence.

\(^{154}\) “Tunc etiam iubeo totas aperire fenestras / Turpiaque admissa membra notare die” (ed. and tr. Mozley, ll. 410–11, 206)
ever, adoring the wife whose love he has been unable to win, despite all his singing, despite all his poetic outbursts.155

4 Conclusion

In Chaucer’s fabliaux, love-lyric is closely associated with the malady of lovers. In the Miller’s Tale, lyric is symptomatic of sickness and it invites remedy; the cure effected in this text is ultimately physical rather than lyrical, bawdy and parodic rather than philosophical, even as the text draws on literary and philosophical discourse about cures for love and for sorrow. In the Reeve’s Tale, a “complyn” is subject to grotesque parody, one that provokes the clerks to take their planned revenge on Simkin, revenge that spoils even the brief lyrical interlude provided by a few aubade-like lines from Aleyn at the tale’s end. In the Merchant’s Tale, however, January, whose song is made to seem ridiculous in part because of his aging body, has his blindness cured. Meanwhile, thanks to the Damyan’s youthful success as a writer of lyrical letters, January seems doomed forever to absurd and unrequited lovesickness. Chaucer’s fabliaux are narrative texts, but lyric has a powerful effect within these narratives. Lyric is crucial to these texts’ satirical, bawdy, carnivalesque schemes, and yet those same schemes most often depend on the failure of lyric to woo, to harmonize, or to heal.

155 The spiritual allegory present in the tale between the Adam/Eve/the snake, and January/May/Damyan adds a further layer of complexity to the tale’s representation of lyric. The cure of January is aligned with the Fall, and the opening of Adam’s eyes to the knowledge of good and evil (Kolve 2009, 94; Bleeth 1974, 45; and Jager 1993, 241–2). January’s blindness thus alludes not only to Oedipus, but also to the opening of Adam’s eyes. The Fall and its implications for music and lyric are beyond the scope of this chapter, unfortunately.
Chapter 3
Song and Prayer in the Knight’s Tale, Marian Poems, and
Troilus and Criseyde

Introduction

This chapter continues to consider the role of lyric in Chaucer’s narrative texts and discusses how different kinds of effects are brought about by lyric songs, lyric prayers, and lyric requests. Some of the lyrics described in the last chapter were used deliberately by their performers, to woo or to enchant for example. This chapter is also concerned with the ends for which characters use lyrics in the Knight’s Tale, the Second Nun’s Prologue, the Prioress’s Tale, and Troilus and Criseyde; and as in Chapter Two, my argument is that lyric rarely, if ever, achieves those ends.

The relationship between all kinds of medieval lyric and lyrics and prayers that address the Virgin Mary is central to the particular concerns of this chapter. Some of the lyrics I describe below—those in the Second Nun’s Prologue and Prioress’s Tale—are directly addressed to or directly praise Mary. But I also show, as many other critics have, that the idiom of supplicants’ prayers to pagan gods in the Knight’s Tale and Troilus and Criseyde, the language of love-lyric and its account of the beloved, and even the words with which the Second Nun turns to her readers, all draw on or resonate with prayers to and poems upon the pre-eminent medieval Christian intercessor, the Virgin. Mary’s importance in medieval theology, and in vernacular writing that develops theological themes, is one reason for the pervasiveness of Marian imagery that I describe. For Dante Alighieri, whose Paradiso provides much Marian imagery for Chaucer, “Mary is the human medium of man’s salvation as foreordained by God” (Boitani 1987, 89). However, my argument is that even Marian lyric becomes problematic in the context of Chaucer’s narrative poems. This argument develops in two ways. First, I am concerned with the effects of reception, and especially with the accidental overhearing of lyric; that is, its impact when its audience is unexpected or unintended. The Knight’s Tale begins with May songs; draws on Italian and French lyric traditions; has lyric outbursts by lovers who see the divine in the beloved, and use Marian language in describing her; and
it comes to its conclusion after characters pray in lyrical interludes to pagan gods for outcomes they desire. In each of these cases, it matters who listens to lyric, and it matters that the speakers and performers of lyric do not have control over the responses of those listeners.

Section Two of the chapter explores the idea of “making amends” in the Second Nun’s prologue. I claim that the idea of “making amends” in that poem wavers ambiguously between the idea of performing penance and of providing relief—a wavering that invites reflection upon the meanings of amendment. In order to provide some context for the concept of amendment, I set William of Shoreham’s Marian lyrics against Chaucer’s text. These poems, like many Marian lyrics of the fourteenth century share diction with Chaucer’s poetry. They also make for useful comparison with Chaucer’s work because of their syntactic similarities to the Second Nun’s Prologue and because of the way William describes amends and amendment. I use this discussion to contextualize the conventional ending of the Second Nun’s Prologue: her request that readers amend the text (VIII, 84). I suggest that as Chaucer forges a connection between Marian lyric and this appeal to readers, he positions Mary as an ideal recipient of any pious text, but at the same time implicitly raises questions about what happens to such texts in the hands of worldly readers and listeners.

In Section Three I take up the same question in my reading of the Prioress’s Tale. I argue that the performance of Marian lyric by an innocent child subjects that lyric to risks, to its being overheard and responded to with hostility. The Prioress depicts the clergeon singing in a “free and open” street that runs through a Jewry (VII, 494); Mary does ultimately respond to this song, but before she does, Satan responds by rising up “in Jues herte” (VII, 559). The openness of a space in which a song or lyric poem is heard closes down potential for its innocent, non-violent reception.

The auditors of lyric, and those to whom they respond, matter greatly in the narrative contexts Chaucer establishes for lyric. In Section Four, I bolster this argument by turning to overheard prayers in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In that poem, those who overhear Troilus’s prayer to Love and his beloved and its overtly Marian idioms, including Criseyde herself
and Pandarus, are extremely skeptical and either dismiss or mock Troilus’s piety. In the end it appears that the poem’s narrator take a similar position to Criseyde and Pandarus, for the narrator criticizes Troilus’s for seeking “feynede” loves instead of love of God (5.1848).

1 The Knight’s Tale: Lyric Traditions and Lyric’s Effects

The moment that Palamon catches sight of Emily singing “hevenysshly” in the garden (I, 1055) has a central importance to the meaning of the Knight’s Tale. In this “Maying” episode, Emily, the younger sister of Duke Theseus’s wife Hippolyta, has gone out to the garden in May, and roams back and forth, singing to “doon honour” to May (I, 1047). Unbeknownst to her, two Theban nobles, Palamon and Arcite, are watching in a chamber high above her (I, 1065). Thomas A. Van sees this Maying episode as an important index of how these two men are “victims of the indifferent chance which governs the world of men” (1971, 89). Charles Muscatine identifies Palamon’s address (I, 1104–1111) after the May sighting as a significant lyric monologue, and Arcite’s following address (I, 1118–1122) as another, and suggests these are just some of many structural parallels in the tale. This address “balance[s]” Palamon’s claim to priority of possessing Emily (Muscatine 1950, 925). For Muscatine, such symmetry in the tale furnishes it with poetic pageantry (1950, 919).¹⁵⁶ Muscatine also identifies the prayers of Emily, Palamon and Arcite before the tournaments as lyrics, and sees them as contributing to the poem’s “slowness” (Muscatine 1950, 917).

¹⁵⁶ Critics recognize the Maying episodes as having various kinds of structural or symbolic importance. The location of Arcite’s Maying episode—the grove—takes on a special symbolism for Peter Elbow, who points out that this is not only where Palamon and Arcite first fight, but where the tournament and funeral of Arcite take place (Elbow 1972, 98; *Canterbury Tales* [I, 1862] and [I, 2858]). Jeffrey Helterman notes that Emily’s Maying episode, and Palamon’s response to Emily as Venus “transfigure[d]” (I, 1105) commences the rivalry that initiates a series of images of bestial metamorphoses (1971, 494). For Bruce Moore, both Maying episodes are rituals that allude to late medieval spring and summer festivals (1991, 286). For Lorraine K. Stock, Emily’s singing evokes two pagan goddesses, Flora and Diana, “who represent two very different versions of love” (1986, 212).
Emily’s song (I, 1055) is given no words in the Knight’s Tale. There are, nevertheless, good reasons for seeing Emily’s brief song as as a lyric. Perhaps the most important reason is the similarity between the situation of her song, sung in a garden (I, 1051) near two men who see and desire her (I, 1096; I, 1118), and the narrative situation of the pastourelle, a popular Old French lyric genre in which a woman is wooed outdoors by a knight. Emily’s song particularly recalls the narrative situation of the pastourelle rondet “Bele Aeliz.” This song survives in a narrative context in Jean Renart’s *Roman de la Rose* (Huot 1997, 57) and in *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, a poem that includes other songs and musical notation, and that was composed by Adam de la Halle at the Angevin court of Naples before 1287. Robin and Marion are characters in the poem and sing the songs. In the narrative of the song “Bele Aeliz,” a woman, Aeliz, wakes up and goes to make a garland of flowers. In the version from the *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, she goes to an orchard:

Fair Alice rose in the morning, she dressed and adorned herself; she went into an orchard and found five flowers there. She made of them a garland of flowering roses. (Butterfield 2002, 145) If not the whole work, at least some of the lyrics in Adam de la Halle’s work could have been available to Chaucer (and to Boccaccio, writing the source for the Knight’s Tale, the *Teseida*), either in Italian or French in the fourteenth century. A saltarello (Italian folk-dance) tune in the fourteenth-century Italian music manuscript London, British Library Additional MS 29987 (BL Add. 29987) has music that appears in the *Robin et Marion* song “Vous l’orés bien dire,” suggesting that the *Robin et Marion* songs

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157 In Jean Renart’s *Rose*, a courtier sings the song “Bele Aeliz” (Huot 1997, 57).

158 The French text is as follows: “Belle Aalis mainz s’en leva / vesti son cors et para; / en un vergier s’en entra, / cinc florestes i trova / un chapelet fet en a / [de] rose florie.” vdB rond 42, 1–6 (from Oxford, Bodleian MS Douce 308). *Robin et Marion* also contains a song that explicitly refers to the month of May, “En mai, quant roisier sont flouri / L’autre jour, par un matin / He, resvelle toi Robin.” The month of May has many symbolic associations. Chaucer sets Arcite’s Maying on May 3; in this May setting, Henry Savage argues, Chaucer is alluding to the Duc de Berry’s *Hours of Turin*, which contains a calendar illustration for May of young people snapping off branches (1940, 208). John P. McCall suggests May 3 is an allusion to the goddess Flora, whose celebrations extended from April 28 to May 3 (according to Ovid’s *Fasti*). McCall suggests that “irrational love” is most strongly felt at this time (1961, 203).
circulated in both Italian and French versions in the late medieval period.\(^{159}\) The song “Bele Aeliz” is also known to have circulated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in an English sermon manuscript (discussed below).

Emily’s May song—and the episode in Boccaccio’s *Teseida* that lies behind Chaucer’s version—especially evoke “Bele Aeliz.” In “Bele Aeliz,” a woman wakes up early, goes to gather flowers for a garland, all the while singing in a forest grove; there she encounters a man who attempts to woo her (but who is unsuccessful because she already has a lover); thus there several narrative elements common to the three accounts: the early morning, a pleasant natural setting, flower-gathering for garland-making, singing, and a heterosexual love triangle involving the woman who sings alone. Emily’s May song thus enacts only one aspect of the *Robin et Marion* situation, but one that would have been quite familiar to the audience. Arcite’s lusty May song (“loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene” [I, 1509]) brings to mind another element of a *Robin et Marion* situation: namely, the man’s attempted wooing of the woman in the forest grove.

Chaucer has shortened the *Teseida* significantly here:

Chaucer condenses some five dozen stanzas … into fewer than one hundred lines by omitting the discovery of Arcita by Palemon’s servant and by reducing considerably Arcita’s three lengthy complaints … He replaces these with a little three-line song which Arcite apparently addresses to the month of May. (Stock 1986, 213)

Despite its brevity, in Chaucer’s version Arcite’s song is a valiant effort at courtship *in absentia*. Arcite sings a “roundel” (I, 1529), makes a garland, and asks to get some “grene.” He wants to have his erotic desires met:

And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:
“May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,
In hope that I som grene gete may” (I, 1509–1512).

\(^{159}\) Frederick Crane (1979, 33) indicates that a *saltarello* tune in BL Add. 29987 is performed as part of a performance of *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*; for more on the manuscript, which is the earliest witness of Italian vernacular song, see Gilbert Reaney’s 1958 article.
The sense of “grene” is glossed as “something green” by Benson (I, 1512, n), who does not subscribe to the word’s erotic connotation in this passage. According to the Middle English Dictionary, the noun “grene” comes from the verb “grenen,” or “To desire, long [to do sth.],” from Old English giernan, to yearn or long for. In the immediate context of these lines, the “grene” which Arcite desires could simply be the garland itself made of “thy floures and thy grene”; but it could also be taken as a sign for the thing Arcite desires most and desires sexually, Emily herself. The erotic meaning of the garland is reinforced by its use in association with Venus’s statue later in the poem. Venus, like the “Bele Aeliz” singer, wears a garland of roses (I, 1961). Other suggestions of lust in this episode include the remark that Arcite is “on the poyn of his desire” (I, 1501), is “riding” on a horse (I, 1503), and has a “lusty herte” (I, 1512) when he rides out. Finally, Chaucer situational change in Arcite’s prayer from the Teseida also evokes the erotic context of the pastourelle. In the Teseida, the corresponding prayer is Palamon’s prayer to the virgin moon goddess Phoebe (5, 30–32). Chaucer’s removal of the virginal goddess and the night setting distinctively changes the sense of the Teseida’s prayer. Arcite’s prayer is at dawn where sun suffuses the scene, evoking the dawn conquests of the pastourelle and the aubade.

In Robin et Marion, song is part of a dialogue between lover and beloved. Arcite’s sung desires, however, are heard not by his beloved—Emily—but by Palamon:

And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke
And seide: “Arcite, false traytour wikke” (I, 1577–1580)

160 See for example Benson’s notes to line I, 1509. David Harrington sees the “grene” as signifying desire (1987, 158).

161 According to the Middle English Dictionary, the adjective or adverb “grene” ranges in meaning from the obvious (green, greenly) to the less obvious—lusty, colourless (invisible?), deceitful, and grassy, among others—thus prompting a range of potential puns on “green” in the anti-woman poem “Hood of Green” by Lydgate or pseudo-Lydgate. That author, like Chaucer, uses courtly commonplaces such as a fair lady “fressh of hewe” (echoing Chaucer’s “fresshe May,” 1511) and “fressh so cleer” (ed. Halliwell, 1840, 199–205).
Arcite’s song leads not to love or even to disappointment in love, but to a confrontation with Palamon (I, 1654). The song makes Palamon aware that Arcite has returned from Thebes, and Arcite’s expression of lust is read as betrayal by Palamon. The ensuing fight and Theseus’s intervention (I, 1829) ultimately lead to the tournament in which Arcite dies. In the Knight’s Tale, songs evoke French and Italian traditions of amorous verse, but when they are overheard by an unexpected auditor, the same songs lead to conflict rather than to love.

Emily meanwhile seems caught up in another lyric tradition—that of Marian poetry. Emily is depicted, by those who see and hear her, and by the Knight’s narrative, as somehow divine. On seeing Emily sing, Palamon suggests that Venus has “transfigure[d]” herself into a human woman (I, 1105), and Arcite complains that Palamon loves Emily through “affeccioun of hoolynesse”:

[Palamon:] “…Venus, if it be thy wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure
Bifore me, sorweful, wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.” (I, 1104–1107)

…

[Arcite:] “What wiltow seyen? Thou woost nat now
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse!
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love as to a creature;” (I, 1156–1159) 162

The lovers’ responses to their beloveds reinforce an impression given earlier by the Knight’s terms for Emily. She sings “hevenysshly,” and is like an “aungel” (I, 1055). The language of devotion used here would be familiar to a medieval audience from Marian as well as from love poetry. Sylvia Huot points out that it is a commonplace that the language of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is so similar to that used to express love and devotion to ladies of this world that at times the two registers can scarcely be distinguished. (Huot 1987, 85)

The analogy I have drawn between the Knight’s Tale and the song “Bele Aeliz” may also suggest this blurring of the distinction between religious and worldly love. I have

162 Minnis points out as well that in writing the Knight’s Tale Chaucer draws on Pierre de Bersuire’s Ovidius Moralizatus, which allegorizes Venus’s qualities as those of the Virgin Mary (1982, 115).
described “Bele Aeliz” as a love song, but it also appears in clerical and devotional
manuscript settings. By Chaucer’s time, the song “Bele Aeliz” was being copied into
English books that contained sermons, sermon material, and English prayers. “Bele
Aeliz” is extant in four English manuscripts antedating Chaucer (Arundel 292, Trinity
323, London, Lambeth Palace MS 71, and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS
136). Devotional and religious didactic uses of these books are evident.163 Arundel 292
was compiled c.1300 at Norwich Cathedral Priory.164 In Arundel 292, “Bele Aeliz”
appears at the start of a Stephen Langton sermon in Latin on the Virgin Mary.165 This
manuscript context for the song could thus have been an important one for Chaucer’s
readers. Robert Taylor, W. Pfeffer, R. Rosenfeld, and L. Weiss note that the Langton
sermon takes pains to “stress the legitimacy of both singing and dancing in exegetical
terms as a form of approach to God” (2008, 178).

A reading of “Bele Aeliz” that attends to the religious context for its reception lets us
think further about Palamon’s response to Arcite’s song. In allegorical readings of Le Jeu
de Robin et Marion, such as those in the sermons that included “Bele Aeliz,” the
characters Robin and Marion represent Christ and the Virgin Mary. David Rothenberg is
among those who argue for,

the interpretation of Robin and Marion as allegorical representations of Christ and
the Virgin Mary, who themselves were understood in the Middle Ages to be
depicted as lovers (sponsus and sponsa) in the Song of Songs. (Rothenberg 2006,
326)

One way to think about the “Bele Aeliz” topos in the Knight’s Tale is, then, to consider
how its oblique suggestion of a Christian framework for interpretation of scenes of
wooing is transformed by the reception of lyric in the context of the narrative itself. The

163 Arundel 292 and Trinity 323 both contain Middle English lyrics as well.
164 Trinity 323, which contains much devotional prose and verse, contains the earliest English ballad,
according to Greg (1913, 64). London, Lambeth Palace MS 71 (fourteenth century) is from Llanthony
Priory (see James 1932).
165 That sermon immediately precedes two unique English alliterative poems, one of which satirizes the
difficulty of learning church music. The book also contains five Middle English verse prayers.
pastourelle-like songs of the text may have Marian overtones, but any move to understand them in Christian, allegorical terms is confounded by the way Arcite’s song becomes an invitation to violent combat with Palamon.

Like the songs, the prayers in the Knight’s Tale have unintended effects, but these prayers involve a direct address to those who react to them, in contrast to the songs. Charles Muscatine views the prayers, like the parallel Mayings, as elements of the symmetry of the tale contributing to its air of pageantry (1958, 916). In this interpretation I dwell upon the differing symbolism of the prayers. While these prayers are highly structured rhetorical performances, some critics recognize that the prayers also attempt to shape future events and behaviour—the three supplicants make specific requests. Lorraine Stock’s suggestion that all three supplicants get what they want raises that very question: do all the characters effect change in their favour with their prayers?

After the initial fight between Arcite and Palamon, and prior to the tournament between them that is set up by Theseus, the three young people all pray to gods: Emily to Diana, Arcite to Mars, and Palamon to Venus. They all receive some kind of answer from their deities. It is an important element of the story that Palamon’s and Arcite’s prayers are both accepted by their respective gods, for, in accepting the prayers, Venus and Mars appear to grant the men competing claims to Emily. When Mars says to Arcite, “Victorie!” (I, 2433) and Venus gives Palamon a sign that his boon is granted (I, 2268), it is precisely the granting of both the prayers that causes the conflict among the gods. This conflict requires Saturn to intervene. He does so slightly sophistically, allowing Mars to “helpe” Arcite in the way he promised (I, 2473), and by giving Arcite a martial victory,

166 Frederick Turner meanwhile calls the seeking of help from Mars and Venus “as absolute a binary opposition as one could wish—love and war, generation and destruction, female and male” (Turner 1974, 280); for him, the prayers to Mars and Venus play an important role in setting up definitive mythical distinctions in the poem. For Lorraine Stock, by contrast, the prayers illustrate the Boethian principle that “prayer is man’s only link with or communication with God” and, moreover, Providence and free will are compatible (Stock 1986, 220). According to Stock, all three characters are granted what they request in their prayers; thus, prayers illustrate the verity of Boethian principles that are articulated in the Consolation 5 pr. 6 (1986, 220). For Roney, as well, the efficacy of Palamon’s and Arcite’s prayers is paramount, but Roney contrasts them, saying Palamon’s is “all piety, praise, obedience, and tender heart” with a “reverential mood,” while Arcite’s prayer is business-like with “Greek” references, such as “Arcita the stronge” (Roney 1990, 77).
but making sure Arcite dies so that Palamon gets final “posessioun” of Emily (I, 2242–3). Arcite then becomes the victor but does not get to have his beloved. In the sense that these requests are accepted and acted upon by gods, the prayers are seen to have at least some efficacy.

Just as the granting of Arcite’s wish is dubious, so is Emily denied the boon she requests. Emily’s prayer is like Arcite’s and Palamon’s in that it succeeds in getting a god’s attention, but it is rejected outright by Diana, who says it has already been decreed that Emily will be married (I, 2350). It appears that Emily’s prayer is not considered by Saturn. Emily’s prayer is therefore turned down twice, both directly and indirectly. The rejection of the prayer also is striking because of how Chaucer changes the prayer from that in the Teseida. Whereas in the Teseida, Emilia asks for her heart to be turned toward the one who loves her most (7, 85), in the Knight’s Tale Emily asks Diana to keep her a virgin: “My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve, / And whil I lyve, a mayde I wol thee serve” (I, 2329–2330).167 Despite its conventionality, the act of asking a virgin “queene” for help to remain virginal recalls the sentiment of the “Inviolata” prayer that concludes the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary: “Inviolate Mary … keep our hearts and bodies pure” (“Inviolata … Maria … Nostra ut pura pectora sint et corpora”) (Rothenberg 2011, 213). Emily also refers to Diana as queen of the reign of Pluto, and, likewise, in the Little Office, Mary is described conventionally as “regina coeli,” queen of heaven.168 Another phrase that marks Emily’s prayer to Diana as borrowing the conventions of Marian piety is the description of Diana as visible to “bothe hevene and erthe and see” (I, 2298), a phrase from the popular hymn to Mary that begins, “Quem

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167 “Grant that the one who loves me more, the one who desires me with greater constancy may come to my arms, for I myself do not know which one to choose, so winsome does each one seem to me.” [Boccaccio 1974, tr. B.M. McCoy).

168 R.N. Swanson notes that the designation of Mary as Queen of Heaven took hold from the twelfth century onward (1995, 144), and that Mary could also be known as the Empress of Hell (1995, 145).
An important distinction between Emily’s prayer and the Marian Inviolata is, however, that Emily specifically asks to remain a virgin, while the prayer speaks very generally of purity rather than virginity per se. Diana responds that Emily must be married (I, 2351–2). Emily’s then questions the value of her devotion (“What amounteth this, alas?” [I, 2362]) and her rhetorical question makes her subsequent comments seem like a reproach to the divinity. It is as if she is asking why she ever put herself in the protection of a god who rejected her prayer and “made a vanysshynge” (I, 2360):

“What amounteth this, alas?
I putte me in thy proteccioun,
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun.” (I, 2362–4)

Emily’s request to remain unmarried has gone unsatisfied. Emily’s attempt to influence Diana to prevent any subsequent marriage has thus failed (even though she has succeeded in getting Diana to appear). The episode illustrates how a supplicant’s prayers can be appropriately phrased, the boon worthwhile, and yet the prayer is not only unsuccessful but completely ineffective; Emily is ultimately possessed not by “oon” man (I, 2351), but by two—first by Arcite, and then, when he dies, by Palamon. This outcome, and Diana’s insistence that she will be “weded” only to one man, are betrayals of the confidence Emily placed in the goddess, and Emily recognizes this.

Emily is not the only supplicant to borrow Marian discourse for a pagan prayer. Palamon uses phrases evoking the “ruth,” a word for pity commonly found in insular Marian poems. He uses the term “Ladi bright,” a term from both Marian poetry and secular poetry, found in Chaucer’s “ABC” (62, 182); the anonymous lyric, “Haile be thy, Mari maiden bright” which sustains a rhyme with the “ight” of “bright” throughout the first

169 The epithet appears in secular texts too. For example, in Machaut’s Remede de Fortune, in a description of Esperance; the narrator says there was no sweeter thing than her, “En chiel, en mer, n’en terre enclose” (“In sky, in sea, nor in earth encompassed”) (1548). Carleton Brown (1911–12, 6) notes that “Quem Terra” is a source for this phrase in the Second Nun’s Prologue.

170 My interpretation of Emily’s reaction is thus quite different from that of Alastair Minnis, who says that Emily displays “perfect faith” in her response to Diana (1982, 133).
stanza (Saupe 1998, 140–141); and the secular Harley 2253 lyric “Annot and John” with a lady like a “beryl so bryht” (Brown 1932, 136–138). In addition, one of Palamon’s lines from the supplication of Venus (“I am so confus that I cannot seye” [I, 2230]) looks to be a translation of a line from Guillaume de Deguileville’s “ABC”: “Tout confuz, (quar) ne puis miex faire” (10896) (“All confused, so that I can do no better” [ed. Sturzinger 1893, 338]).

Arcite’s prayer also draws on same stock of imagery as prayers to Mary. Arcite characterizes his sacrifice as “pitous” (I, 2378) and asks Mars to “rewe upon my pyne” (I, 2382). Arcite also asks Mars to have “routhe” on him based on Mars’s own pitiful experience at the hands of Vulcan (I, 2389–2392) and complains of his “sorwes soore” (I, 2419). The ending of his prayer asks for mercy, as does the liturgy’s “Domine, miserere nobis.” Like Emily’s prayer, Arcite’s and Palamon’s prayers evoke the conventions of late medieval piety.

The supplications in the Knight’s Tale evoke Marian piety, but unlike Mary, the supplicated intercessors are capricious and partisan. One might argue that none of the prayers could succeed: Chaucer is a Christian poet writing for a Christian audience and these are pagan deities. As Alastair Minnis suggests about Troilus and Criseyde, pagan characters may know of the possibility of divine love, but are excluded from its offer of ultimate salvation (1982, 4). The Knight’s approach differs, however: the Knight “emphathizes with his characters and allows them to define their pagan standard without direct interference … there is no thoroughgoing condemnation of paganism” (Minnis 1982, 108). Moreover, one character gets exactly what he prays for: namely, Palamon gets the “possessioun” (I, 2242) of Emily. The problem is that this supplicant gets this “possessioun” on the whim of Saturn, and not because lyrical prayer has consistent effects in this text. Saturn’s response is also figured as “remedie,” but as Marc Guidry

171 Figuratively, the sense is that the speaker cannot go on, as in, “So confused that I can hardly go on.”

172 By contrast, in the Teseida, Arcita’s prayer to Mars focuses on victory; he mentions “mercy” only once in connection with Vulcan (“piate,” 7.25) and does not close his prayer with the request for mercy; instead, the closing lines promise to decorate Mars’s temples and hang arms in them (ed. Limentani 1964).

173 Helen Cooper also points out that Chaucer’s work is “marked by a distinct lack of piety” and a sincere intellectual curiosity towards the pagan sources he is using (Cooper 2005, 256).
points out, his remedy is sophistic and displays no concern for “the needs of Thebes or Emelye” (2008, 146) and thus projects “the worst impulses of temporal governance” (2008, 147). Saturn does not actually judge the three supplicants based on the merits of their prayers or their actions; instead, he makes a decision about their lives based upon his inclination to fulfill Venus’s wishes (I, 2478) and his desire for peace between Mars and Venus (I, 2474).

In this sense, the lyrical prayers of the Knight’s Tale, like the May songs, and even like the uses to which Chaucer puts motifs from French, Italian, and Marian lyric traditions, cast doubt on the efficacy of lyrical extrospection. The responses that lyric elicits when it reaches the ears of unintended auditors subvert its speakers’ amorous intentions, but lyric that is carefully, purposively, and successfully directed fails in its purposes too.

2 The Second Nun’s Prologue: Marian Lyrics and Making Amends

The second section of the chapter develops the discussion of Marian lyric begun above. My particular concern is the use of the word “amenden” in the Second Nun’s Prologue (VIII, 84) and what it says both about the relationship of the Second Nun’s text to Marian lyric conventions, and about the work that lyric does for the Second Nun. The verb “amenden” means to provide relief, to fix, and to make amends in the sense of performing restitution or reparation (“Amenden,” Def. 5, MED 2006) and atoning for sin (Def. 12c, MED 2006). In the latter sense, the act of making amends appears in many late medieval lyric prayers, often at the end of the prayer. The Second Nun’s Prologue and Tale use formal prayer in conjunction with rhyme royal. Barbara Nola argues that the stanza form Chaucer adopts here implies completion and finality (Nolan 1990, 23). My argument builds on this point by suggesting that the Second Nun’s Invocacio, which concludes with the use of the verb “amenden,” draws on contemporary insular discourse in which a poet conventionally asks Mary to help amend his soul at the end of a lyric of supplication. The request for the reader to amend her work is usefully understood within a discourse of Marian amendment. The Second Nun’s work, like the human soul,
flawed and must be mended.\textsuperscript{174} However, whereas sin is forgiven by God, partly through the intercession of Mary, the poem must be directed to worldly readers, whose authority is much less certain.

In order to understand the way in which the Second Nun asks for her work to be amended, it is helpful to turn to earlier Marian supplicatory lyrics that request Mary to make amends, or that demand that the sinner amend him or herself. One example—selected because it has productive similarities to the Second Nun’s Invocacio—is William of Shoreham’s “Mary Mediatrix.” This lyric of 84 lines comes from William’s commonplace book of the mid-fourteenth century, London, British Library Additional MS 17376.\textsuperscript{175} The lyric has as its first line the invocation “Marye, mayde mylde and fre.” Chaucer deploys a similar technique at the beginning of other Marian lyrics he authored: the “ABC” line 49 (“Glorious mayde and mooder”), as well as a line in the Prioress’s Prologue (“O mooder Mayde, O mayde Mooter free!” [VIII, 467]).\textsuperscript{176}

The idea of amendment, present at the end of the Second Nun’s Prologue, is also apparent in the final stanza of Shoreham’s poem. There the narrator offers his poem to “leuedy” (perhaps Mary, perhaps a patron) and as he does so, he links his song with his own state of sinfulness. The final line requests “amendynge” for this sin:

\begin{quote}
Haue, leuedy, þys lytel songe,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{174} Bruce Rosenberg (1968, 282) and Glending Olson (1982, 223) trace the importance of the word “werk” in the symbolic discourse of both the Second Nun and the Canon’s Yeoman, in reference to alchemy and to God’s work. Russell Peck (1967) also discusses the importance of alchemical imagery in the Second Nun’s Tale, as does Joseph E. Grennen (1966). Karen Arthur points out that the Second Nun’s appeal in the Prologue “concentrates on Mary’s power as a ‘cure’ for souls” (1998, 220). John Livingston Lowes points out a correspondence between both the House of Fame’s journey through the air and the Second Nun’s Prologue, both of which draw on Alain de Lille’s Anticlaudianus’s fifth Distinctio, a panegyric upon the Virgin (Lowes 1917, 193); this correspondence is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{175} For more on this manuscript, see Appendix 1. No music appears in the manuscript but the “Mary Mediatrix” lyric refers within it to its being a “song.”

\textsuperscript{176} The M stanza of Chaucer’s “ABC” also contains an address to Mary that tells her, like Shoreham’s poem, “Thou art the bush” of Moses (89–94). A similar image appears in the Prioress’s Tale. Here again, the direct address to Mary in “ABC,” “Thou art the bush,” directly recalls not only the image but also the phrase of Shoreham’s poem: “Thou art the bossche of Synay / Poo art þe rytte sarray” (19–20).
Þat out of senfol herte sprong;
Aȝens þe feend þou make me strong,
And ȝyf me þy wyssynge;
And þaȝ ich habbe y-do þe wrang,
Þou graunte me amendynge
(Shoreham 1902/1973, lines 79–84, p. 129).

In Shoreham’s poem, the word “amendynge” means absolution from sin (sense 3b). The word is semantically similar to the verb phrase, “to make amends.” Like “amenden,” the phrase “to make amends” also can mean atonement (Def. 3a, MED 2006) and this sense has several examples in the Middle English Dictionary, including one in the Vernon lyric, “Bi a wode,” that appears on f. 411v–412r (NIMEV 563). Another Vernon lyric about making amends is “Bi a wey wandring” (NIMEV 562, also on f. 409r). Here the speaker remarks on the amends, or atonement, that God provides in addition to lessening our sorrows:

For goddys loue so do we
And þynk on him þat all schall make;
Wat wo oþer care we in be,
He haþe my3t oure sorowys to slake;
Ful gode amennys he wol ous make
and we gode hert on him to call.
þi tyme with gode entent þou take
And euer more þank þi god of all. (lines 49–56, ed. Brown 1924, 159)

It was common to end a religious lyric with a reference to amends (meaning penance) as is suggested by the refrain that appears in “Bi a wode as I gon ryde” (NIMEV 563) which appears on f.411vb–412ra of the Vernon manuscript.177 “Bi a wode as I gon ryde” depicts a man walking in the woods accosted by a bird singing “make amends.”178 The second stanza depicts the man attempting to construe the meaning of the birds’ instructions:

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177 Both “Bi a wey wandryng” and “Bi a wode” share a rhyme scheme (ababbebe), refrain, and the conceit “As I was walking alone in the woods one day.”
178 The poem “Make Amends” or “Bi a Wode as I Gon Ryde” (NIMEV 563) appears on ff. 411v–412r of the Vernon manuscript (Bod. Eng. Poet a.1) and in three other medieval books including the Simeon manuscript (London, BL Add. MS 22283, f. 133r) and Princeton, UL Garret MS 143, ff. 49r–51v; for an edition of the Vernon witness, see Carleton Brown (1952, 196-9).
“Make amende trewely,"
Than song that bryd with federes gray,
In myne hert fulle woo was y
Whan “make amendes” he gan to say;
   I stode and studyede alle that day,
Thees word made me alle ny3th to wake,
   Than fond I by good schyle, in fay,
   Why he sede “amendes make.” (lines 9–16, ed. Brown 1924, 196)

The man reflects and realizes that there are several reasons to make amends—that is, to atone for one’s sins—but the one repeated throughout the poem is that one never knows when death shall come. The meaning of the “amends” in the refrain thus turns out to be not relief, but penance.\(^{179}\) Indeed, the narrator’s confusion at being encouraged to “make amends” signals the potential confusion that could arise from the word amends, which could indicate penance as well as non-theological solutions. The final stanza finds the singer appealing to Mary to make herself visible to Christ in heaven and in so doing encourage Jesus to make amends for the singer as well as everyone else on earth. Here, the phrase “to make amends” points to the way in which Mary can encourage God to make amends for human sins:

   God that was of Mary bore
      And deth suffred on rode tre
   Lette us never byfore lore,*  (be for-lorn)
   Jhesu, 3yf thy wylle be;
   Comely quene, that art so fre,
      Pray thy sone fore oure sake
   In heven a sy3th of 3ou to se,
      And here to amendes make. Amen.

The poem’s juxtaposition of “amendes” and “Amen” suggests the poetic and religious finality that “amends” gains from its aural similarity to “Amen.”\(^{180}\) The anonymous Middle English lyrics cited here and Shoreham’s “Mary Mediatrix” suggest that when the Second Nun asks the reader to “amende” what she writes (VIII, 84), this request

\(^{179}\) The Middle English Dictionary glosses the word “amende” in this poem as penance (“amende,” Def. 3.a., MED 2006).

\(^{180}\) The words are not from the same root, of course; “Amen” is from Hebrew, while “amende” is from the French amender and the Latin amendare.
draws on a tradition in which lyrics include appeals for amendment, in some of which the Virgin Mary in particular is asked to help amend sin.

Chaucer’s and Shoreham’s poem share some common syntactical strategies as well as this discourse of making amends. The last part of Chaucer’s *Invocacio* shares syntax and a system of organization with Shoreham’s “Mary Mediatrix.” Shoreham’s poem is dominated by anaphora: the repetition of “thou” at the beginning of many of the poem’s lines. In stanza four, “thou” begins four of six lines:

```
þou art þe bosche of synay,
þou art þe rytte sarray,
þou hast ybrou3t ous out of cry
  Of caleng* of þe fende;  challenge
þou art crystes o3ene drury*  sweetheart
And of dauyes* kende.  David’s (lines 19–24)
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The anaphoric structure is present in half the stanzas in Shoreham’s poem and it is similar to the structure of stanza six of Chaucer’s Second Nun’s Prologue. The first two stanzas of the Second Nun’s *Invocacio* repeat “thou” or “thee” nine times. In this stanza, “thow” begins four of seven lines; moreover, like Shoreham’s stanza, the “thow” sequence is interrupted by a relative clause (“In whom…”)—perhaps to relieve the monotony of the repetitions:

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Thow Mayde and Mooter, doghter of thy Sone,
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
  In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,
Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,
Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,
  That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde
  His Sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde. (VIII, 36–42)
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The second-person pronoun in both poems suggests the intimacy of a divine address. “Thou” in Middle English was used for divine or holy persons probably because it connotes the intimacy of addressing a friend or family member; this is perhaps why it was conventional in such poems, for “thou” to continue to be used after the introduction of “you” (see Metcalf 1971, 166). Shoreham’s penultimate stanza’s last line meanwhile begins with the phrase, “Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde”; and follows up with the proviso, “Though that I, unworthy sone of Eve / Be synful, yet accep...
bileve,” thus sharing a logical structure (“Now… for… yet…”) with Chaucer’s *Invocacio*. Both passages also end with either the verb “to make amends” or “amenden”:

Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Foryeve me that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite,
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
Of hym that at the seintes reverence
The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,
And pray yow that ye wole my werk amende. (VIII, 77–84)

Thus the Second Nun’s tone shares with Shoreham’s prayer one of supplication: “preye I yow…”; “Foryeve me that…”; “pray yow that…”

The Second Nun’s request for amendment from the reader, which ends the *Invocacio*, exists in a context of Marian amendment in that it follows on from an extended Marian appeal; nevertheless, it also shares conventions with many other appeals made by writers to God to help one’s textual work along, as well as appeals to readers to correct one’s work. Asking for prayers for the writer’s soul was a convention from the time of Saint Wulfstan and was often attended by concern about the work itself (Gameson 2002, 10, 14, 18). Richard Gameson gives examples of scribes praying to Mary for help (2001, 22–3) but Christ and God were also supplicated for assistance. Mary was of course held to be intercessor par excellence:

Among the saints the Virgin Mary was unmatched …. What secured Mary’s status among intercessors was her relationship with God and his Son, which gained increasing attention during the period. (Swanson 1995, 144)

Gameson also gives examples of scribes asking readers to correct their books (2002, 19), asking readers not to blame the scribe (2002, 20), and asking for the reader to pray for the writer’s soul (2002, 22–23).

The Second Nun’s turn, from an address to Mary to an address to readers, is usefully read alongside other lyrics that appeal for amendment, and that appeal to the Virgin in particular; and within the broader tradition of appeals by scribes and writers for reader’s correction. The poem, I would argue, begins by seeking help from Mary and then turns to seek help from the reader; it begins by asking, in highly conventional language and using
familiar poetic forms, for Marian intercession—something in which the sinner, or author, might trust. It ends by returning to the worldly context for lyric making and the reception of such texts by ordinary readers. This move is consistent with the treatment of lyric elsewhere in Chaucer’s narrative texts, where Marian lyric serves as a resource for lovers and where Mary herself is an idealized audience for song and prayer, but where the uses and effects of lyric tend to fall short of all ideals.

3 The Prioress’s Tale: Overheard Song

The Second Nun’s call for Mary to help her as she turns to her work (VIII, 77) recalls the Prioress’s request to Mary to “gydeth my song” (VII, 487): both narrators ask Mary to assist their poetry. The Prioress asks that Mary facilitate the hearing and reception of song and Mary does, ultimately, “gyde” the song and lyric away from the violence towards which it tends in this tale. The Prioress’s Tale begins with the account of a young schoolboy who sings the Marian hymn “Alma Redemptoris” on his way to and from school, despite not understanding its Latin words (VII, 523). Having heard the song, Jewish townspeople cut his throat and throw his body into a pit (VII, 571). Jesus helps the clergeon’s mother find his body (VII, 603); the boy’s body is conveyed to an abbey, and then he miraculously announces that Mary has interceded and enabled him to sing his song of praise even in death, with a severed throat (VII, 659–669).

In this section, I argue that that Mary’s guidance is requested, and her intervention finally necessary to avoid conflict, partly because the tale models the problems associated with lyric’s extrospection in narrative contexts. The poem describes the open and worldly contexts in which songs are sung and it also suggests the risks song itself poses. The place where the clergeon sings is one in which he is surrounded by those who do not share the faith that motivates his singing. In that context, meaning of the lyric can easily slip, so that its intended effect—praise of Mary—is perceived as a provocative threat. My reading differs from that of critics who identify the potential for pain as residing in the music itself. For example, Nicolette Zeeman argues that song’s “subversions of gender” in this tale and elsewhere elicit violence (2007, 167), and Bruce Holsinger identifies Christ’s “dying moans on the cross” with “the very nature of music” (1997, 162).
Holsinger attributes music’s association with pain to the widespread use of violence in musical pedagogy and the Boethian alliance of music and violent speech (1997, 165). In this section, I argue that the worldly situation in which lyric is overheard shapes lyric’s musical and verbal power to reverse any intended meaning of the song, and to elicit unexpected violence.

The antiphon *Alma Redemptoris Mater* that the clergeon sings in the Prioress’s Tale (VII, 518, 554) is explicitly described as performed in public and in the open. Not only is the location of the clergeon’s song outdoors, it is a street in a city in “Asye,” that runs through a “Jewerye”:

> Ther was in Asye, in a greet citee,  
> Amonges Cristene folk a Jewerye,  
> ....  
> And thurgh the strete men myghte ride or wende,  
> For it was free and open at eyther ende. (VII, 488–494)

The presence of these communities of Jewish and Christian listeners and the space in which they listen are vital to understanding the effect of the clergeon’s song. The Prioress makes it clear that the clergeon learns the song and sings it in the street that runs through this community, “twies a day” (VII, 548). The clergeon also sings it very loudly: “Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie / O Alma redemptoris everemo” (VII, 553–554).

The song is potentially provocative when, sung loud and so widely heard, it reaches outwards into the world around the singer. The antiphon *Alma Redemptoris* is innocent of overt insult, but its words still make a claim that are potentially objectionable to medieval Jewish listeners. The words of the antiphon (not giving by the Prioress, but

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181 The words of the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* antiphon, a part of the liturgy from Advent to the Feast of Purification, would have been well known by Chaucer’s audience: “Loving Mother of our Redeemer, who are the doorway that opens to heaven, and star of the sea, come to the aid of a fallen people which desires to rise up again; you who gave birth to the holy Creator while Nature looked on, a virgin before and after, who heard from the mouth of Gabriel that joyful greeting, take pity on sinners!” (“Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia caeli porta manens, et stella maris, succurre cadenti, surgere qui curat, populo: tu que genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud ave, peccatorum miserere”) (in Broughton 2005, 633).
probably familiar to Chaucer’s readers) address Mary as “you who gave birth to the holy Creator while Nature looked on, a virgin before and after” (in Broughton 2005, 633). These words offer an important point for disagreement between medieval Christian and late medieval Jewish theology. As Lisa Lampert shows, in the writings of early Jewish and Christian theologians, debate about the relationship between the letter and the spirit frequently manifested itself in claims about the body of the Virgin Mary. According to Christian doctrine, God’s spirit had descended into flesh; Jewish theologians criticized the idea of the Virgin birth as filthy, disgusting, and ungodly—a claustrophobic entrapment of spirit (Lampert 2004, 50). Christian theologians responded in defence of the doctrine by arguing that, despite the appearance of bodily filth, God created the body and made it good (Lampert 2004, 52). Seen in the context of this dispute, the clergeon’s singing of the *Alma Redemptoris* is ostensibly innocent but provides material likely to seem controversial to those unconvinced of the virgin birth of Christ. The performance of the song out in the open, where it can be heard by several different communities (both the Jews and the Christians) provides a situation in which this disagreement might occur.

Satan’s reception of the clergeon’s song, by contrast, occurs in a figuratively closed space, namely, the wasp’s nest “in Jues herte” (VII, 559). In fact, this wasp’s nest is a vivid inversion of and twist on a Marian image. The wasp’s nest might well remind a medieval audience of the popular association between Mary, beehives, and honey. Among medieval Marian miracle stories there were some that established this association, for instance, one song from the *Cantigas de Santa Marias* tells of a peasant who placed a consecrated host in a beehive and then saw the Virgin Mary inside, holding Christ in her hands (Alfonso 1980).\(^{182}\) The Prioress’s depiction of wasps seems to draw on this image, but by describing wasps instead of bees she implies that there are no bees, there is thus no honey, and—by implication—no holy sweetness in this nest. Satan’s verbal response to the song also transforms its traditional Marian significance, since his

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\(^{182}\) This song is listed as No. 128 in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* database (Parkinson et al. 2011). The *Cantigas* are thirteenth-century rondeaux and virelais written in Portuguese-Galician. They recount mostly Marian miracles, and one song, “The Murdered Chorister” (Cantiga No. 6) is an analogue of the Prioress’s Tale (Cantigas de Santa Maria 2002; Fernández-Corugedo 1996).
spoken words take the form of a complaint. Satan implies that his intervention is necessary to right a legal wrong done to the Jews. The boy’s song is said to be “agayn youre lawes reverence”:

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas
That hath in Jues herte his waspes nest
Up swal, and seide, “O Hebrayk peple, allas!
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest
In youre despit, and syng of swich sentence
Which is agayn youre lawes reverence?” (VII, 560–564).

The incitement to murder is thus framed by Satan as a necessary intervention in response to an insult, one given in the open, worldly context in which the clergeon “walken as hym lest.”

The reaction of Satan, and then the murderous response of the Jews, to noise or song, evokes the Prioress’s allusions to Psalm 8:3 that appear in the Prologue and Tale, both to children’s “heriynge” and as well with the associated “myght” of God. In the Prologue the children’s praise of God is foregrounded:

But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukynge
Somtyme shewen they thyner heriynge. (VII, 457–459)

While this passage mentions only children’s apparently innocent praise, the Prioress’s Tale specifically mentions the associated “myght” of God (VII, 608). Chaucer here alludes to Psalm 8:3, in which severe violence results from praise:

Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, because of thy enemies, that thou mayst destroy the enemy and the avenger.

Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem propter inimicos tuos, ut destruas inimicum et ultorem (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, Psalmi 8:3).183

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183 In fourteenth-century England, Childermas or the Mass of Innocents was performed on December 28 by young boys (Broughton 2005, 589). The mass commemorates the story of a failed attempt to kill the boy Jesus. Similarities between the biblical sources of this mass and Chaucer’s tale are established by Zieman (2008), Wenk (1955) and Hamilton (1939) among others.
In Psalm 8:3, the cries of infants are closely associated with God’s glory and His destruction of His enemies. Psalm 8:3 clearly associates God’s “laude”—renown, praise and glory—with war. By referring to Psalm 8:3, the Prioress subtly reminds the reader that the noise of the children can have an immediate and a violent effect on the world.\footnote{Indeed, “infantium” means those who cannot speak, and appears to come from in + fari, to speak or to say (Rambuss 1997, 86).}

Asking Mary for help to guide her song, then, the Prioress implicitly admits that her song needs guiding, and this admittance in turn implies that songs and their meanings can be risky undertakings. Songs are worldly things and as such are inherently susceptible to corruption. In the tale the Prioress tells, a song is sung in a risky space and its singer becomes very vulnerable. The song’s intended effect of praising Mary appears to go astray; the song is initially heard not by Mary but by Satan “in Jues herte” (VII, 559), and the effect is not pleasing to the listeners but instead aggravates them and precipitates violence. If the song had had the sort of holy guidance that the Prioress requests for her tale from the first—if Mary had interceded earlier—perhaps it would not have presented such a risk. Instead, though, this song’s meaning is transformed and it is heard not as praise but as being “agayn youre lawes reverence” (VII, 564) and an incitement to murder.

4 \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}: Overheard Prayers and Requests

I began this chapter by describing allusions to Marian and secular lyric in the Knight’s Tale; next, by exploring the Marian trope of amends; and then discussing the effects of song overheard in an open space in the Prioress’s Tale. It is appropriate to end the chapter with \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, in which the discourses of remedy, Marian prayer, and the motif of overhearing combine to suggest the inefficacy of prayer-like language in an erotic relationship.\footnote{Prayer in \textit{Troilus and Criseyde} has been approached in several different ways. Piero Boitani considers how Chaucer draws from Dante and Petrarch for Troilus’s prayer to Love in Book 3 and concludes that the Second Nun’s Prologue “brings to completion Chaucer’s detachment” from pagan “corsed rites” (1987,} In \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, there is a strain of Marian discourse
similar to that seen in Chaucer’s “ABC” and the Second Nun’s Prologue, and Troilus draws on the idea of “amends” in the sense of penance. In this text, however, ominous references to “remedy” in connection with the departure of Criseyde illustrate the disastrous failure of a kind of intercession that follows lyric requests: that is, the substitution of Pandarus’s limited perspective and manipulative interference for true Christian intercession. I am also interested in the way Troilus’s persona develops in the text. Where others see him as fatalistic or passive, I note his continuing attempts—partly through his seemingly introspective lyric outbursts—to get responses and find out more about his situation. Finally, the section considers the narrator’s dismissive attitude toward Troilus’s sorrows at the end of Book Five. There, Troilus’s earthly piety, expressed in part in the pious register of his lyrics on love and the beloved, seems quite out of place.

In Troilus and Criseyde Troilus’s supplications are thwarted, and Troilus’s Marian-style worship of Criseyde is critiqued. Marian lyric used to woo a beloved cannot avert the a painful ending for the lover.

Troilus makes a lyrical prayer to Love before he kisses Criseyde for the first time, a prayer that is unusual in two ways. First, it expects a very great deal from Love, for Troilus implies that Love is very gracious (as gracious as someone like the Virgin Mary, although this meaning of the text, available to a medieval Christian reader, cannot be intended by the pagan Troilus, who invokes other deities). Second, the prayer is addressed to Love but delivered in the presence of Criseyde. Not only is the prayer delivered in her presence (3.1254–1274), but having completed his prayer to Love and kissed his lady (3.1275), he immediately addresses his next lyrical outburst to Criseyde herself (3.1276–1295).

127). Sumner Ferris compares the proem to Book 3 as a “model” for the Prologue of the Prioress’s Tale (1993). Song in the poem illustrates for Nicolette Zeeman that male singers in Chaucer are always punished: “from the moment he sang, things were bound to end badly for Troilus” (2007, 178). James Wimsatt compares the prayer to Love in Book 2 (827ff) with a Guillaume de Machaut ballade (1976, 288–9). Interestingly, the Cantus Troili at line 1.400, ostensibly a sung prayer, appears in a fifteenth century treatise as an example of what to avoid in fleshly love (Wager 1939, 62). The Cantus Troili itself has attracted much attention, particularly in how it differs from the Petrarchan source (see, for example, articles by E.H. Wilkins [1949] and Patricia Thomson [1959]). Thomas C. Stillinger, in The Song of Troilus: Lyric Authority in the Medieval Book (1992) considers how Troilus’s second Cantus Troili “drifts free” of its Petrarchan moorings (1988, 251) and thus is imagined to circulate indefinitely.
Some similarities between the address to Criseyde and to Love are salient. Troilus begins by addressing “Benigne Love” (3.1261), but later uses a similar term for Criseyde, saying she has “benignite” (3.1285). Troilus says that Love’s “grace [has] passed oure desertes” (3.1267); similarly, he believes the felt experience of Criseyde’s presence is evidence that “mercy passeth right” (3.1282). Troilus initially says he “koude leest disserve” (hardly deserves) the grace of Love (3.1268), and later asks Criseyde to “teche” him how to “disserve” her thanks (3.1293). He says he was likely to “sterve” without Love’s grace (3.1270); similarly, he will live or “sterve” dependent upon Criseyde’s preference (3.1292). Criseyde’s presence is made particularly apparent because at the end of the prayer Troilus kisses Criseyde (3.1276).

When Troilus’s prayer is to Love, Criseyde is, in a sense, an eavesdropper, for she is hearing a prayer that is not addressed to her. Eavesdropper or addressee, her reaction to both lyrics is crucial, for she has the power to grant Troilus the things he asks of Love and she has the power to hear his words any way she likes. Criseyde’s response to the prayer to Love is openly skeptical. She implicitly dismisses Troilus’s attempt at piety, suggesting that he has said enough and offering for all his language of devotion just “o word,” “[w]elcome”:

“It suffiseth, this that seyd is heere,
And at o word, withouten repentaunce,
Welcome, my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce!” (3.1307–9).

She takes a noticeably different approach to the love affair than Troilus does, saying that they should proceed “withouten repentaunce,” in contrast to her lover, whose prayer apologizes for how “unworthi” he is (3.1284). While Criseyde accepts her position as addressee, she hears the prayer as she wants to, rather than as Troilus wants her to hear it. She certainly does not hear in these prayers the tone that Troilus uses to deliver them. She does not even seem to hear his speech as a supplication. She expresses gratitude (“Gramercy” [3.1305]) but gives no sign that she is going to grant any requests.

The potential confusion between the corporeal beloved (Criseyde) and the incorporeal divine (Love) also expresses itself in the Marian idiom of Troilus’s prayers, prayers that are overheard skeptically not only by Criseyde but also by Pandarus. Prior to meeting
Criseyde, the syntax of Troilus’s prayer to gods corresponds to that of the Second Nun’s Prologue (which itself has similarities with William of Shoreham’s and other medieval Marian lyrics, discussed above in Section Two). Troilus repeatedly ends the supplications to the gods Venus, Jove, Apollo, Mercury and Diana with the exhortation “Now help!”

“Now, blissful Venus, thow me grace sende!”
Quod Troilus, “For nevere yet no quale
Hadd ich er now, ne halvendel the drede.”
Quod Pandarus, “Ne drede the nevere a deel,
For it shal be right as thow wolt desire;
So thryve I, this nyght shal I make it weel
Or casten al the gruwel in the fire.”
“Yet, blisful Venus, this nyght thow me enspire,”
Quod Troilus …. (3.705–712)

“O Jove ek, for the love of faire Europe…
Now help! O Mars, thow with thi blody copie….
Yet for hire love, O help now at this need! (3.722–4)

“Mercurie, for the love of Hierse eke…
Now help! And ek Diane, I the biseke….
So helpeth to this werk that is bygonne!” (3.729–735)

Just like the Second Nun, Troilus wants help for his “werk” (3.735). The last line of his prayer “So helpeth to this werk that is bygonne!” is in fact quite similar to the last line of the penultimate stanza of the Second Nun’s Invocacio, which is addressed to Mary:

“Now help, thow to my werk I wol me dresse” (VIII, 77).186 In an earlier stanza of the Invocacio, the Second Nun’s Prologue depicts the nun as unworthy and yet desirous of acceptance:

Now help, thow meeke and blissful faire mayde,
Me, flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;
Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde
That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle
That from hir lordses table been yfalle;
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
Be synful, yet acete my bileve. (VIII, 57–62)

186 Troilus’s exhortation to “help” recalls an early prayer of Troilus’s to the god of Love: “But now help, God, and ye, swete, for whom / I pleyne, ikaught, ye, neveere wight so faste!” (1.533–4).
However, unlike the Second Nun’s *Invocacio*, the prayer of Troilus to Venus, Jove and other gods receives an immediate verbal response from a character within the text, namely, Pandarus. In that Pandarus is present but not addressed in the prayer, he occupies the role of eavesdropper, and as an eavesdropper, Pandarus is a zealous intervener.187 Shortly after Troilus begins the prayer to Venus and other gods, Pandarus interrupts with a response, “it shal be right as thow wolt desire” (3.708). Not only does Pandarus interrupt Troilus’s prayer; he appears to answer it pre-emptively, to take Troilus’s desire and “make it weel” (3.710). Troilus appears to ignore Pandarus’s words; instead, he continues praying to Jove, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, and Diana. Pandarus’s skepticism is apparent when Troilus finally ends this prayer, when Pandarus treats the elaborate address as fear of carnal encounters rather than a sign of piety: “Thow wrecched mouses herte, / Artow agast so that she wol the bite?” (3.736–7).

Both Pandarus and Criseyde, then, display a skepticism toward Troilus’s lyrical outpourings. Pandarus sees them as an expression of Troilus’s weakness or fear, whereas Criseyde thinks his ornate address unnecessary. These judgments by eavesdroppers—people overhearing prayers that were not addressed to them—suggest that in *Troilus and Criseyde* there is a disconnect between a prayer’s pious intent and its reception by people who overhear the prayer.

The persistent Marian allusions in Troilus’s lyrics about and addressing Criseyde also suggest that there is a contrast to be made between Troilus and a Christian supplicant. Stanzas “B” and “I” of Chaucer’s Marian poem “ABC” hail Mary as “oure sucour,” full of bounty and love. Compare Troilus’s depiction of Love’s bounty:

> I wot it wel, thou wolt ben oure socour,  
> Thou art so ful of bowntee, in certeyn (“ABC” 65–66)

> For noldestow of bownte hem socouren  
> That serven best and most alwey labouren,
Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn, certes,
But if thi grace passed oure desertes. (*Troilus and Criseyde* 3.1264–1267)

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the syntax is complex and the mood subjunctive. Troilus’s prayer suggests that his addressee might not succour him, that all might be “lost” (3.1273) until the last line’s turn of “But,” whereas the “ABC” simply hails Mary’s bounty. Troilus states that Love’s grace “has passed oure desertes” (3.1267)—implying that lovers get more than they deserve; indeed, he says of himself he “koude leest disserve” Love’s grace (3.1268). When this lyrical passage is set against the lines from Chaucer’s “ABC” the contrast is a little like that established by the Second Nun’s address to her readers. Mary’s grace is certain; the beloved may be addressed in the same language, but the result of such lyrical supplication is a matter of considerable doubt.

There is meanwhile a discourse of “remedy” associated with lyric throughout the poem that works in similar ways to those described in Chapter Two; that is, this discourse of remedy casts doubt upon the efficacy of Troilus’s language of devotion and on his hopes of lasting love. The idea of remedy first appears interwoven with the story of Apollo in Book One, where Oenone’s complaint is retold by Pandarus:

> “Now,” quod Pandare, “herkne, it was thus:

> ‘Phebus, that first fond art of medicyne,’
> Quod she, ‘and couth. in every wightes care
> Remedye and reed, by herbes he knew fyne,
> Yet to hymself his konnyng was ful bare,
> For love hadde hym so bounden in a snare,
> Al for the daughter of the kyng Amete,
> That al his craft ne koude his sorwes bete.’ (1.658–665)

Pandarus intends, by citing the complaint, to encourage Troilus to confess what is the matter (namely, his lovesickness for Criseyde). Oenone’s song is not about her own sorrow, but about how “craft”—that is, Phebus’s “medicyne,” “remedy,” and “reed” (I,

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188 Succour, or help, is an important theme of de Dégueville’s poem, in which the ABC “helps to rescue the central character,” Martha Rust points out (2007a, 57).
fails to protect him from falling in love with a woman who is later unfaithful. In this Apollonian anecdote, remedy appears in a negative context, associated with the lack of a solution rather than the implementation of one. The failure of music and song may be caught up in this critique of medicine, for Apollo is not only the god of medicine; he is also the god of music. (The Manciple’s Tale carefully outlines the failure of Apollo’s musical talents to protect him from anguish; for more on this, see Chapter Four.)

The word “remedy” is not seen again until Book Four of *Troilus and Criseyde*, when it repeatedly occurs in connection with the departure of Criseyde to the Greek camp, a departure that a reader anticipating the tale’s “double sorwe” (1.1) would equate with imminent disaster. First, Pandarus conveys to Criseyde Troilus’s words asking for the company of Criseyde for the night. Pandarus wants to provide a “remedie” for Troilus’s desire, and asks Criseyde’s help in “devys[ing]” this remedie:

And semeth me that he desireth fawe  
With yow to ben al nyght, for to devyse  
Remedie in this, if ther were any wyse (4.887–8).

Later, after much talking, Criseyde agrees. She says “bid hym come” (4.909), and says she would be glad to help heal his pain in some way: “If to his sore ther may be fonden salve, / It shal nat lake, certeyn, on my halve” (4.944–5). Once the lovers meet, and while they talk about what will happen next, Criseyde says she will come back to meet him and here again the word “remedy” is used in association with their meeting: “But what is thanne a remede unto this, / But that we shape us soone for to meete?” (4.1272–4). When Troilus asks her to run away with him, however, “remedy” comes to be associated with Criseyde’s departure to the Greek camp. Here Criseyde implies, by a strange turn of phrase, that she knows she will be able to return. If she did not know this “remedy,” she would die: “Ye, nere it that I wise remedie / To come ayeyn, right here I wolde dye!”

“For if ye wiste how soore it doth me smerte,  
Ye wolde cesse of this; for, God, thou wost,  
The pure spirit wepeth in myn herte  
To se yow wepen that I love most,  
And that I mot gon to the Grekis oost.  
Ye, nere it that I wiste remedie  
To come ayeyn, right here I wolde dye!” (4.1618–1624)
In Book Five, however, the narrator’s use of “remedy” suggests there is no solution to the lovers’ parting. Here the narrator uses the phrase in a doomsaying context:

Criseyde, whan she redy was to ride,  
Ful sorwfully she sighte, and seyde “Allas!”  
But forth she moot, for aught that may bitide;  
Ther is non other remedie in this cas.  
And forth she rit ful sorwfully a pas.  
What wonder is, though that hire sore smerte,  
Whan she forgoth hire owen swete herte? (5.57–63)

Later, in Book Five, when Troilus is particularly lovesick, he refers to a “maladie” that he believes is so serious it will kill him (5.316). Pandarus responds that the signs that Troilus notices should be paid no attention—whoever believes in “fantasie” (5.329) receives no “remedie” (5.328). Finally Troilus dreams of a boar, and realizes, through this dream, that Criseyde has abandoned him. He asks Pandarus for help, “Syn that ther lith no remedye in this cas” (5.1270).

Troilus’s final use of “remedy” intersects with the effect of his lyrical request to Pandarus, showing the association of “remedy” with a terrible failure of the appeal for intercession. The boar dream suggests that Troilus’s attempts to appeal to Criseyde have, in the end, been wholly inadequate. After invoking Venus, Jove, and many other gods, Troilus dreams of a boar with “tuskes grete” (5.1238) that, Troilus believes, Jove showed him to foretell Criseyde’s unfaithfulness (5.1446–9). Troilus correctly interprets the dream in a subsequent speech to Pandarus (5.1245–1260). The many lyrical apostrophes in this speech are addressed to Criseyde as well as to entities such as Trust and Faith:189

“O my Criseyde, allas, what subtitle” (3.1254)

189 I include both present and absent addressees in the definition of apostrophe, following the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition (“Apostrophe,” OED 1989): “A figure of speech, by which a speaker or writer suddenly stops in his discourse, and turns to address pointedly some person or thing, either present or absent; an exclamatory address. (As explained by Quintilian, *apostrophe* was directed to a person present; modern use has extended it to the *absent or dead* (who are for the nonce supposed to be present); but it is by no means confined to these, as sometimes erroneously stated).”
“O trust, O feyth, O depe asseuraunce!
Who hath me reft Criseyde, al my plesaunce?” (3.1259–60)

“God wot, I wende, O lady bright, Criseyde,
That every word was gospel that ye seyde!
...
But who may be more bigile, yf hym lyste,
Than he on whom men weneth best to triste? (5.2164–7)

“What shal I don, my Pandarus, allas?
I fele now so sharp a newe peyne,
Syn that ther lith no remedye in this cas….
For thorugh the deth my wo sholde han an ende,
Ther every day with lyf myself I shende.” (5.1268–1274)

These examples illustrate Ann Astell’s point that apostrophe occurs when characters are experiencing a sense of loss (1991, 88). These apostrophes are distinct from the apostrophes to Mary in the Second Nun’s Prologue, the Alma Redemptoris addressed to Mary in the Prioress’s Tale, and the Middle English lyrics cited above, in which the addressee (holy or not) is imagined to hear the prayer and to be aware of the supplicant’s predicament. In Troilus and Criseyde, Criseyde, Trust, and Faith, are manifestly absent. Here, though, the prayer also turns to someone present; in fact, there is a sense in which Pandarus is the final addressee. The addresses to those absent are followed closely by Troilus’s desperate question, “What shal I don?” and this question is for Pandarus, who is undoubtedly present. Whereas Troilus began by appealing to Jove and other gods, here his prayed lyric appeal goes to Pandarus, in a more pragmatic, wordly request for help.

In Troilus and Criseyde, Pandarus’s “judgment” of Troilus’s lyric appeal is, again, skeptical, suggesting that the lyric appeal is not received in the manner its performer intends:

Pandare answere and seyde, “Allas the while
That I was born! Have I nat seyd er this,
That dremes many a maner man bigile?
And whi? For folk expounden hem amys.” (5.1275–8)

In the exchange, Troilus addresses Pandarus by presenting him with a correct interpretation of his dream. Pandarus tells Troilus he is wrong, providing a different interpretation than Troilus has divined (the boar means Cassandra’s father, Pandarus
suggests). Troilus continues to ask “How myghte I than doon?” (5.1289) and Pandarus must come up with a concrete solution, which turns out to be writing a very long letter to Criseyde (5.1293). However, the letter garners only a short response: “fynaly she wroot and seyde hym thenne, / She wolde come, ye, but she nyste whenne” (5.1427–8). The inefficacy of the letter is, in fact, compared to inefficacy and inadequacy of music: Troilus might as well “go pypen in an ivy lef” (5.1433).

Troilus’s lyric appeals ultimately fail to comfort him, whether they request the return of Criseyde, or whether they seek to procure relief from his fears about her. When he asked Pandarus for help because he thought there was “no remedye in this cas” (5.1270), he was unfortunately accurate in his estimation. There is no remedy that will get Troilus what he wants: wordly affairs are inherently sorrowful. After his death he finally acknowledges the futility of his love for Criseyde. At the end of the poem, Troilus looks down upon “this litel spot of erthe” (5.1815) and laughs at the “wo” of those who weep for his death. Troilus’s condemning attitude is paralleled by the poem’s narrator, who dismisses “payens corsed olde rites” (5.1849). The narrator here decries Troilus’s efforts to love Criseyde in the way one would worship a god or holy figure. As Piero Boitani says, at the end of the poem, God’s love “is finally preached in purely Christian terms and opposed to ‘feynede loves’” (Boitani 1987, 116). But although this judgment is left until the end of the poem, a skepticism of intense “feynede loves” has already been modeled in the poem by Criseyde and Pandarus, who eavesdrop upon Troilus’s prayers and scoff at or just dismiss them. The narrator goes further: he equates worship of the beloved with a “payen” attitude toward “earthly” or erotic things, which he says will all pass away. He concludes, “al nys but a faire, / This world that passeth soone as floures faire” (5.1840–1), and his words echo or develop the same rhyme of “fare” found in the popular Middle English lyric, “Al hyt is fantom” (Brown 1924/52, 56):

Al it is fantam þat we mid fare  
Naked and poure henne we shul fare  
Al shal ben oþer mannes þat we fore care  
But þat we don for godes loue haue we no mare. (ed. Brown 1924/52, 56)

“All hyt is fantom” is a short lyric (NIMEV 190) that appears on a flyleaf of Cambridge, University Library MS Ee.I.5 and in several other manuscripts. It disdains earthly things
as empty vanities. The lyric, like the narrator at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, suggests that “God’s love” is a remedy for this emptiness. Just as the narrator disdains Troilus’s “payen attitude,” to earthly things, the lyric suggests all earthly things are “fantom,” and will pass away.

In this chapter I have described a number of scenes in Chaucer’s narrative poems in which people come to listen to lyric utterances that are not intended for them. I have also described Marian lyric as a model for lyrical addresses that seek something—amendment of sin, intercession, or simply praise of the Virgin herself. I have, equally, shown that even lyrics that set out to achieve good ends often fail. Chaucer sets them in narrative contexts in which they elicit doubt, dismissal, and even discord and murderous violence. The medieval commonplace that earthly things are fleeting and transitory is a context for this way of thinking about lyric and its effects in Chaucer’s narrative worlds, as is the commonplace request for correction with which the Second Nun ends the Marian lyric with which she presents her tale. Worldly things, lyrics included, are imperfect; and the humans who respond to them, imperfect and changeful themselves, cannot be relied upon to set them right.
Chapter 4

Lyric, Birdsong, and Cosmic Music in the Book of the Duchess, the Manciple’s Tale and the Parliament of Fowls

Introduction

In Chapter Three I discuss lyric and the effects it has upon characters in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde. I argue that the outcomes of episodes of song, prayer, and lyric utterance can be connected to their situations—for example, to skeptical or hostile auditors, to instances of accidental overhearing, and to the vagaries of reading. In Chapter Four, I ask how the effects of prayer and singing are changed when the singers of songs are birds in the Book of the Duchess, the Manciple’s Tale and the Parliament of Fowls.

In discussing the Book of the Duchess I consider the effects of prayers and requests and also the harmonious qualities of birdsong in the poem. In this poem the dreamer overhears the song of the Black Knight about his lost love and in response offers to help; his offer and his responses parallel the earlier response of a pagan god, Juno, to a supplicant’s prayers. In both cases, questions arise—as in earlier chapters—about the power of lyric to remedy a speaker or writer’s sorrow, either by providing a venue for the expression of that sorrow, or by eliciting outside help. Here as elsewhere in Chaucer’s narrative, lyric’s extrospection is connected to its failure. I also notice that in the Book of the Duchess, overheard birdsong seems to convey to the reader reassuring ideas about the music of the spheres and thus divine order and cosmic harmony. However, just as prayers and lyric complaints tend not to provide the consolation that their speakers seek in this poem, so is the Book of the Duchess’s birdsong finally a doubtful source of comfort.

My discussion of the Manciple’s Tale begins with the poem’s allusion to Amphion; it suggests that this allusion, in which Amphion sings the walls of a city into existence, serves to undercut any notion of the constructive power of song or the ability of a singer to put song to work in the way he wishes. In the Manciple’s Tale, Phebus-Apollo’s song
is ineffective in shaping his beloved’s behaviour. Even more important to my argument is the way that the tale handles the matter of birdsong—the crow’s outburst “Cokkow!” and his verbal explanation of the meaning of that “song.” Phebus overhears the crow’s music, and the crow’s loses control of the effect of his song: it becomes a pretext for Phebus’s murderous rage and for the revenge he takes upon the crow himself.

In the *Parliament of Fowls*, the roundel sung by the birds at the conclusion of the poem is central to my account of the ways Chaucer’s narrative texts raise doubts about the efficacy of lyric. As in the *Book of the Duchess*, the chorus of birdsong at first seems immensely comforting. It recalls the choral birdsong at the beginning and middle of the poem, and the generative and Edenic harmony of the garden itself. The choice of birds as singers of this lyric roundel, however, adds layers of complexity to the work that lyric does in the poem. The roundel is part of a brilliant allegory by which Chaucer fuses the multiple meanings of *concentus* as birdsong and heavenly harmony, and then suggests that even the most harmonius birdsong—or the most well-wrought lyric—is ultimately just animal sound (*sonus*) rather than music (*musica*). The roundel is tied to the world and its doubtful pleasures rather than to the divine.

In this chapter, then, birds serve as performers of lyrics and singers of songs and their music provides a setting for other kinds of lyric expression, including complaint and prayer. On the one hand, these birds point to a positive account of the harmony that lyric might achieve in the world. On the other hand, their lyrics, like all those in Chaucer’s narrative texts, come up against limits. They reach the ears of auditors whose reactions are either useless, or bring disaster down upon the lyricist. They invite the reader to call to mind medieval ideas about music, poetry, and performance that equate these not with divine harmony, but with the problems of the worlds that Chaucer’s lyric makers inhabit.

1 The *Book of the Duchess*: Prayer and Birdsong

In the *Book of the Duchess* the narrator opens by complaining that he cannot sleep, and then relating a story, from Ovid, of how Alcyone prayed to Juno for news of her husband Seys so that she might sleep. Having told this story, the narrator prays to Morpheus and Juno or “som wight elles” (244) so that he too might sleep. Finally he does sleep, and he
dreams of going down into a green meadow and overhearing a man dressed in black complaining about his sorrow. The lay (475–486) and song (1175–80) of the Black Knight in the Book of the Duchess have been discussed as lyrics by James Wimsatt (1975, 1981). My interest here is first, in the structural and thematic relationships of the Black Knight’s lay and song and Alcyone’s and Seys’s supplications. Additionally, I am concerned with what birdsong suggests about lyric in the Book of the Duchess. I argue that it points to the possibility of a spiritual amendment that might help characters such as Alcyone and the Black Knight—but that the poem finally cast doubts upon the idea of a worldly remedy for sorrow.

The prayer of Alcyone and subsequent prayer to Morpheus are innovations that expand into longer supplications the very short mentions of prayers in the French sources to the Book of the Duchess. The prayers borrow recognizable conventions from late medieval insular devotion, particularly from the practice of praying to saints and praying on behalf of departed souls. These Chaucerian innovations are essential to the narrative structure of the Duchess because they are integral to the frame story within which the dreamer first overhears the Black Knight’s lament. In Le Paradis d’amour by Jean Froissart, Chaucer’s immediate source at this point of the poem, the prayer to Morpheus is not given in direct speech, and there is no prayer to Juno. Froissart includes much about how the gods respond to the prayer, but all he says of the prayer itself is that the dreamer prayed so hard that the gods eventually sent him messengers. Froissart’s

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190 Ian Bishop, among other critics, note that Alcyone’s story mirrors the Black Knight’s tale of his lady’s death and argues that the abrupt ending of the tale mirrors the abrupt conclusion of the poem, without proper consolation; this is part of the elegiac nature of the poem (1983, 40).

191 James Wimsatt (1975, 1981) notes that the Book of the Duchess borrows heavily from Jean Froissart’s Paradis d’amour and Guillaume de Machaut’s Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse, Remede de Fortune and Le Roy de Behaigne, all dits amoureux that are verse narratives containing inserted lyrics. Machaut’s lyrics are sung by both the lover and Esperance whereas Chaucer’s lyrics in the Book of the Duchess are sung by the lover—the Black Knight. The similarity with the dits amoureux has prompted at least one study comparing the use of lyric in Machaut and in Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess (Butterfield 1991b). Jean Froissart, Guillaume de Machaut, and Chaucer are also familiar with the Ovide moralisé’s account of Cey and Alchione (11, 2996–3787). In the Ovide moralisé account there are lengthy speeches but they are not between humans and gods; they include Cey’s/Morpheus’s address to Alchione (11, 3573–3601), and Alchione’s subsequent laments (11, 3615–3619, 3641–3661, 3664–3704). Alchione prays to Juno and other gods (11, 3408–3424) but the prayer is not given in direct speech.
dreamer says, “Nonetheless, long ago, I had such a great desire to sleep that I prayed to Morpheus, to Juno, and to Oleus, that they would send me messengers of sleep.” In Chaucer, the dreamer decides to follow Alcyone’s example in praying to a god, and the sleep that follows produces the dream. The supplications made by characters in the Ovidian tale, moreover, parallel the dialogue between the dreamer and the Black Knight. In that dialogue the dreamer asks the Black Knight for permission to “amend” his sorrow in response to the Black Knight’s sorrowful lay, whereas Alcyone makes supplication to Juno in the hopes of amendment of her sorrow, and Juno, like the dreamer, responds.

In addition to having parallel supplications, Alcyone and the Black Knight both suffer due to the loss of a beloved. Alcyone’s prayer, the first supplicatory prayer in the Book of the Duchess, is addressed to Juno and asks the goddess to bring her sleep and knowledge, in that order. Drawing the prayer from Machaut’s Fonteinne Amoureuse, Chaucer expands into twelve lines Alcyone’s brief “I pray you, rich goddess, hear my sad supplication”:  

“Helpe me out of thys distresse  
And yeve me grace my lord to se  
Soone, or wite wher-so he be,  
Or how he fareth, or in what wise,  
And I shal make yow sacrifise,  
And hooly youres become I shal  
With good wille, body, herte, and al;  
And but thou wolt this, lady swete,  
Send me grace to slepe and mete  
In my slep som certeyn sweven  
Wherthough that I may knowen even  
Whether my lord be quyk or ded.” (110–121)

192 “Et nonpourquant, n’a pas lonc terme, / Que de dormir oc voloir ferme, / Car tant priai à Morpheus / À Juno et à Oleus / Qu’il me noyoyrent les messages / De dormir” (Froissart 1870, 13–18).

193 In the Book of the Duchess, like the Manciple’s Tale, there is a subtle conflation of song and speech in that the dreamer asks to hear “the manere … which was your first speche” (1130–1), but the Black Knight responds not by retelling his first speech, but by repeating his first song to his lady White.

194 “Je te pri, Riche deesse, oy mon dolent depri” (Fonteinne 559–560). The prayer is not given in direct speech in the Ovide moralisé (11, 3408–3424).
Alcyone’s prayer uses phrases familiar from the Marian lyrics discussed in Chapter Three (for example, “Helpe me out of thydistresse” and “yeve me grace”). Despite the similarity, there is a clear distinction between the approach of Marian supplicants and the method of this prayer to a pagan god. In “ABC” and in William of Shoreham’s Marian prayers, for example, supplicants assume postures of total humility. Mary’s grace will be given only because she is completely benevolent, not because the supplicant has anything with which to reward her. By contrast, Alcyone offers Juno a “sacrifyse”: I will become “hooly yours,” she says (115).

Alcyone’s prayer invites an interpretation that considers its meanings in terms of late medieval Christianity in other ways. Alcyone prays to one god, as a Christian would, and this is an innovation of Chaucer’s. By contrast, the Ovide moralisé author says that Alchione prays to “all the gods” (“touz les diex” [11, 3405]) and honours “gods and goddesses” (“diex et deesses” [11, 3419]). Alcyone’s prayer is also reminiscent of a specific kind of late medieval prayer. In late medieval Christian culture, saints were asked to intercede on behalf of living and dead souls—to help win sinners a share of God’s grace. Medieval Christians did not, of course, make “sacrifyse,” but they did make material donations to saints, some of these on behalf of those departed, waiting in Purgatory. There was a sense of spiritual reciprocity between supplicant and certain intercessors—an expectation that something would be given in exchange for prayers (Duffy 1992, 356; Swanson 1993, 154). There are also ways in which Juno and minion Morpheus appear to wield the power of saints. For example, Juno, via Morpheus, brings knowledge to Alcyone of her husband. It is one thing to go “into the Grete Se” to get Seys’s body (140) but it is quite another for Morpheus to animate the body itself in Alcyone’s dream. In his intercession for Aleyone, Morpheus resembles a saint able to bring about a quasi-miracle for Alcyone—to rescue Seys’s body from a sort-of Purgatory and bring it back to a sort-of life. The outcome of this miracle and thus of Alcyone’s lyrical prayer is crucial to the Book of the Duchess’s interest in grief and consolation. Morpheus and Juno together intercede effectively for Alcyone; they give her just what she asks for, unlike so many of those who respond to lyric in Chaucer’s narratives. Her husband himself returns to her; three days later she dies of sorrow and is thus, at last, at
rest. But undoubtedly these outcomes—a visit from an animated corpse and death that involves no promise of eternal life to follow—are not happy ones. Indeed, precisely because the language and structure of the poem invites a comparison between Alcyone’s prayers and Christian prayer, and between Juno’s responses and saintly intercession, Ovid’s tale seems to subvert the most basic principles of Christian consolation. In a Christian paradigm, death brings eternal life, and prayer and intercession can help to win that joyful ending for any soul. In the tale of Alcyone and Seys, prayer brings death to the living, however life-like the dead body may be. The result is simply despair and more death.

This interpretation of the function of Ovid’s tale in Chaucer’s poem is a conventional one and one that engages the reader’s interest in the dreamer’s tolerant attitude toward Alcyone’s supplication of Juno. By making the dreamer apparently oblivious to the fact that the tale offers no real consolation and no real rest, Chaucer begins to build the naïve and inept narrative persona so important to the rest of the dream narrative. Alcyone’s attitude is not silly or fatuous simply because she prays to a pagan god, as Chaucer’s contemporary Robert of Holcot would have it (Minnis 1982, 37). Moreover, when the narrator imitates Alycone’s prayer in what he calls his “game” (238), he appears to produce a prayer that is irreverent where hers was just hopeless. Part of the “game” of his supplication involves addressing more than one pagan divinity: “Morpheus, / Or hys goddesse, dame Juno, / Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who” (242–244). Whereas Alcyone offers to sacrifice herself “hooly,” the narrator offers a serious of mundane household goods in return for sleep: “a fether-bed,” of “down of pure dowves white” (250–1) dressed in “fyn blak satyn doutremer” (253) and “many a pilowe” (254), among other things. He bargains more materially and more crassly than Alcyone. Here Chaucer parodies pagan idolatry; he may even, more subtly, mock the late medieval supplicatory practices in which devotees gave gifts to the Church and in honour of the dead in return for spiritual and earthly favours:

“And thus this ylke god, Morpheus,
May wynne of me moo feës thus
Than ever he wan; and to Juno,
That ys hys goddesse, I shal soo do,
I trow, that she shal holde hir payd.” (265–269)
There may be a real target for Chaucer’s “game” here. There is certainly a familiar Chaucerian, narrative framework for lyric. The prayers of Alcyone and then the narrator himself are lyrical, they draw on religious lyric tradition, but they also seem to mock or query that tradition, and their efficacy is called into question. Alcyone’s prayers cannot bring her rest, and the reader is meant to find the narrator silly or fatuous for thinking he can win sleep from an imaginary god in exchange for household stuff.

Alcyone’s prayer is important, among other reasons, for how it sets up and parallels other supplications in the poem. For example, Juno and Morpheus’s response to Alcyone’s supplication parallels the dreamer’s later response to the Black Knight’s lyrical song. The Black Knight and the dreamer draw on a discourse that I discussed in Chapter Three, and that appears elsewhere in Chaucer’s supplicatory poetry: that of seeking and making amends. This discourse is an extension of the theme of consolation so important to the poem. (On the theme of consolation in the text see for example Boardman 1977, 576; Bronson 1952, 871.) The Black Knight’s first lyric is overheard in the Book of the Duchess, when the dreamer encounters him sitting with his back to an oak tree, making a “compleynte to hymselve,” “of rym ten vers or twelve” (463–4). This rhyme is presented to the reader by the dreamer:

“I have of sorwe so gret won
That joye gete I never non,
Now that I see my lady bryght,
Which I have loved with al my myght,
Is fro me ded and ys agoon.
“Alas, deth, what ayleth the,

195 Phillip Boardman sees the dreamer’s offer of amends as an offer of help that puts him in the role of Philosophy in Boethius, Virgil in Dante, and the Pearl maiden in Pearl (Boardman 1977, 576). Bertrand Bronson finds the poem ultimately consolatory in that the dreamer’s weight of sorrow is lifted, and associates the heavenly birdsong with this consolation (1952, 871).

196 This complaint is both a song and something more (or less) than a song, for even though the narrator calls this lay “a maner song,” it is as the same time “withoute song” (472). Here the repetition of “withoute” suggests the other important lack in the poem—the absence of the beloved, and the state of being without her. But the song-without-song is also a useful illustration of the multiple meanings of the word song, which in this period can refer to a story, a long poem, or a short poem—that is, a lyric. More practically, lays were usually sung to the harp (“Lai,” 2001); the narrator perhaps implies that the Black Knight’s lay sounds as if it should be sung to a tune, but there is no tune.
That thou noldest have taken me,
Whan thou toke my lady swete,
That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,
So good that men may wel se
Of al goodnesse she had no mete!” (475–486)

This “song” prompts the dreamer to go closer, and, when he does, he apologizes, saying, “Foryive me, yif I have mystake” (525) but the Black Knight says it is nothing to be sorry for: “th’amendes is lyght to make” (526). Here the Black Knight uses the word “amends” in the sense of reparation (“Amendes,” Def. 1a, MED 2006). He indicates to the dreamer that reparation is unneccessary: he does not mind the interruption. However, the word crops up again with the sense of “relieve,” at the moment when the dreamer himself asks permission to “amende” Black’s sorrow:

But certes, sire, yif that yee
Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,
Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.
Ye mowe preve hyt be assay. (548–552)

So the poem’s account of amendment begins with Black Knight’s polite deflection of the narrator’s concern, “th’amendes is lyght to make,” but then this account is further developed. The narrator may “make” amends for his instrusion easily, but he has it all wrong if he things he “kan or may” “amende” what is really going on here—that is, “cure” the Black Knight’s sorrow. The word itself explains the dreamer’s error. Its semantic range includes, as I showed in Chapter Three, penance or the spiritual intercession that forgives sins. There is a source of consolation for the Black Knight in Christianity: its teaching that sinful souls are saved and death brings eternal life for the penitent. The Black Knight grieves because he has lost his lady White, but precisely because a “wys God” sent his son to “help” the world, this loss is no real loss at all. However, the bumbling narrator never gets close to offering this sort of reasoning, and thus never close to really amending the Black Knight’s “woo.” In response to the narrator’s offer of help, the Black Knight simply says, “Nay, that wol not be” (559).

197 R. A. Shoaf briefly notes the penitential significance of “amends” in his reading of the poem’s hunt scene as an allegory of confession (1979, 314).
As far as the Black Knight is concerned, no amends of any kind are possible for him. His lyric is entirely introspective; it expresses his feelings, but he does not expect it will cure them; he addresses no one except “deth” itself. The narrator’s intrusion seems to serve to make this point another way. Even when the Black Knight’s complaint becomes extrospective it fails to do any good for him. Like so many of the lyrics in Chaucer’s narratives, the knight’s lay inadvertently reaches an audience. But that audience offers no more consolation that the poem itself does. In this context, the dreamer’s adoption of a discourse of amendment seems unconvincing. There are no human characters in Chaucer with the true power to amend sorrow; this power is uniquely ascribed to God, saints, and the Virgin (and much more ambiguously and problematically pagan gods). Chaucer’s readers would probably have found the dreamer’s offer presumptuous or amusingly wrong-headed.198

The presumptuousness of the request is not actually why the Black Knight rejects it, however. The Black Knight goes on to list all the things that will never amend him. He states that no earthly or divine phenomenon can heal him (563–72). The phenomena he describes are remedies:

No man may my sorwe glade ....
May noght make my sorwes slyde,
Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde,
Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
Ne Dedalus with his playes slye;
Ne hele me may no phisicien,
Noght Ypocrates ne Galiyen;
Me ys wo that I lyve houres twelve.
But whooso wol assay hymselfe
Whether his hert kan have pitee
Of any sorwe, lat hym see me. (563–576)

To the Black Knight, it appears that the “remedyes of Ovyde,” melodies of “Orpheus,” and “playes” of Daedalus are equally unsatisfying: the self-reflexive effect of this is to call into question the efficacy of the Black Knight’s own poetic and melodious utterance.

198 This conclusion thus counters readings of the poem (such as Ian Bishop’s [1983, 41]) that see the dreamer’s attempt to help Black Knight as failing despite the dreamer’s own experience of sorrow, and his apparent knowledge of the lady’s death.
Poetry offers no help; and the response elicited by poetic performance, the dreamer’s offer of amends, cannot take away sorrow either.  

The Black Knight’s lament goes on at length, but eventually returns to the topic of amendment. At this point in the poem the reader discovers more about the corporeal nature of amendment. The Black Knight says the only experience that has ever been able to relieve his sorrow is the sight of White herself. The sight of her “amended” him:

So mochel hyt amended me  
That when I saugh hir first a-morwe  
I was warished of al my sorwe. (1102–1104)

The Black Knight has previously been mended by the “remedy” of the beloved herself, as recommended by commentaries on Constantine the African’s chapter of the Viaticum (discussed above in Chapter Two). This was a curative amends: the Black Knight says he was “warished” of his sorrow, or relieved of it (the word “warishen” originates from the Old French garir, or “cure”; this word connotes salvation and rescue as well as healing relief”) (“warishen,” Def. 1, MED 2006). The Black Knight says that White figuratively “syt so” in his heart (my italics, 1108), and while she sits there, he cannot feel sorrow. The figure of White inhabiting his heart points to the solace he feels from the idea of her corporeal presence. In other words, the sort of amends he seeks is not an image but a sense of tangibility—White’s actual body—and without that, something that is also somehow tangible. Nothing else can occupy her place in his heart; nothing can replace her presence. The Black Knight tells the dreamer that the only solution for the beloved’s absence is the beloved herself. In terms of narrative structure, this desire for the lover’s body and the logical impossibility of returning the dead lover’s body recalls Chaucer’s

199 The word Chaucer uses for Daedalus’s inventions, namely, “playes” (570) suggests songs and entertainment or crafted items, and here denotes a magic trick (“Pleie,” Def. 7.b, 1.b, MED 2006)

200 Ovid also stresses the desire of Ceyx to be seen and held by Alcione’s hands (11, 565), and this longing for physical contact is a particular feature of the Ovide moralisé account as well. Ceyx wants to “reach a place where he can hold her” (“arriver et venir / En leu que la puisse tenir” [11, 3376–7]). The element of physical touch is also evident during Alchione’s transformation into a bird, when Alchione kisses the dead body of her husband, and he feels it: “Upon him she sighs and groans / And kisses her lover with her beak / Ceys feels that she has kissed him … he clearly feels it” (“Sor lui souspire et vait gemant / Et baise o son bec son amant. / Ceyz sent qu’ele le baisoit … la sent il apertement” [11, 3764–3770]).
use of the Seys-Alcyone story to open the dream vision. It also suggests that the real source of the Black Knight’s despair may be, paradoxically, his erroneous ideas about the true source of consolation and comfort. The body of Alcyone’s beloved was returned to her; the result was a sorrow so profound that she ended her own life. 201

In this narrative in which lyric is so consistently associated with death and despair, the singing of birds in the Book of the Duchess provides a contrasting and partially comforting backdrop. The dreamer first hears the birds when he wakes from sleep within his dream: they are gathered on the roof and sing in chorus. The birds’ multiple but unitary “steven” is very sweet: 202

\[
\ldots\text{for som of hem song lowe,} \\
\text{Som high, and al of oon acorde.} \\
\text{To tell shortly, at oo worde,} \\
\text{Was never herd so swete a steven} \\
\text{But hyt had be a thyng of heven (304–308)}\ 203
\]

The “acorde” of low and high notes in the depiction of birdsong draws upon ancient and medieval ideas of the music of the spheres, musica mundana. These ideas are articulated in one of Chaucer’s sources for his dream vision poetry, Macrobius’s Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. In Cicero’s dream as told by Macrobius (fl. 400 AD), Africanus refers to the harmonies, concentus, of the spheres as being uniformly generated from the relative heights of the planets:

That … is a concord of tones … the blending of the high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies. Of course, such swift movements could not be accomplished in silence, and, as nature requires, the spheres at one extreme

\[\ldots\text{That … is a concord of tones … the blending of the high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies. Of course, such swift movements could not be accomplished in silence, and, as nature requires, the spheres at one extreme}\]

201 This is certainly a different kind of result than that found in the Ovide moralisé, where death appears to console the couple because it allows them to re-experience physical love. For example, in the Ovide moralisé, Alchione feels relief when she kisses Ceyes’s dead body. The Ovide moralisé author also emphasizes that, once transformed into birds, Alchione and Ceyes again have intercourse with each other (“S’entr’asamble cil charnelment” [11, 3777]) as they did when they were human.

202 The “steven/heven” rhyme also appears elsewhere in Chaucer’s depictions of apparent harmony: in the Knight’s Tale, Chaucer places the rhyme in a musical context, saying Theseus’s subjects acclaimed him with “murie steuene” when their voices “touched the heuene” (I, 2562).

203 This heavenly song is echoed in Troilus and Criseyde, when Troilus, at the end of the poem, hears heavenly music: “And ther he saugh, with ful avysement, The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye / With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie” (5.1812).
produce the low tones and, at the other extreme the high tones. Consequently, the outermost sphere, the star-bearer, with its swifter motion gives forth a higher-pitched tone, whereas the lunar sphere, the lowest, has the deepest tone. (2, 1, 2, tr. Stahl 1990, 185)

Hic est, inquit, ille qui intervallis disiunctus imparibus sed tamen pro rata parte ratione distinctis, impulsu et motu ipsorum orbium efficitur, et acuta cum gravibus temperans varios aequabiliter concentus efficit. Nec enim silentio tanti motus incitari possunt, et natura fert ut extrema ex altera parte graviter, ex altera autem acute sonent. quam ob causam summus ille caeli stellifer cursus, cuius conversio est concitatior, acute excitato movetur sono, gravissimo autem hic lunaris atque infimus. (2, 1, 2, ed. Willis 1963, 95)

The Latin word Cicero uses for harmony, *concentus*, has several meanings, all of which are particularly appropriate for Chaucer’s purposes here: birds singing and playing together; harmony; concord; a tune; and a choir according to Cassell’s Latin Dictionary (Simpson 1968, 125). In a medieval Latin lyric, for example, the word *concentus* is used to describe birds in a chorus: “Letabundus rediit / avium concentus” (“The happy chorus of birds has returned”) (ed. Waddell 2008, 214).204 By comparison, Boethius in On Music refers to cosmic *armonia*, the phenomenon that denotes that which is *consentaneus* (is agreeable or in harmony with) and which is analogous to the pitches of the strings of musical instruments:205

Iam uero quattuor elementorum diuersitates contrariasque potentias nisi quaedam armonia coniungeret, qui fieri posset …. Et sicut in gravibus chordis is vocis est modus, ut non ad taciturnitatem gravitas usque descendat, atque in acutis ille custoditur acuminis modus, ne nervi nimium tensi vocis tenuitate rumpantur, sed totum sibi sit consentaneum atque conveniens…. (ed. Meyer 2005, 32)

If a certain harmony did not join the diversities and opposition forces of the four elements, how would it be possible that they could unite in one mass and contrivance? … And just as, on the one hand, adjustment of pitch in lower strings is such that lowness does not descend into silence, while, on the other hand, adjustment of sharpness in higher strings is carefully monitored lest the

204 Lewis and Short (1879) do not gloss “concentus” as birdsong, but birds appear in their examples, in Ovid’s *Fasti* (1, 155) “et tepidum volucres concentibus æëra mulcent” (“Birds delight the warm air with their melodies”) and in Cicero’s *De Legibus* (1, 21) “concentum avium” (“the singing of the birds,” g. pl.) (ed. Keyes 1928, 321).

205 “harmonia” is not understood as birdsong in Cassell’s Latin Dictionary (Simpson 1968, 272) and no examples of birdsong-as-harmonia are found in Lewis and Short (1879).
excessively stretched strings break because of the tenuity of pitch, but the whole corpus of pitches is coherent and harmonious with itself.…. (tr. Bower 1989, 9–10)

Chaucer’s harmonious birds on the roof, above the dreamer, are analogous to the heavenly spheres in their position in the sky, also above the dreamer.

Another Macrobian reference to music in the birds’ musica mundana is suggested in the dreamer’s comparison of birdsong to the “toun of Tewnes” (310). This line, “That certes, for the toun of Tewnes / I nolde but I had herd hem synge” (310–311) is usually interpreted as meaning that the dreamer would not trade the town of Tunis for the experience of hearing this birdsong. Here the allusive context strongly suggests that Chaucer chooses “Tunis” not only for its rhyme but because it is Carthage, the city upon which Cicero looks as he hears cosmic harmonies with his grandfather Africanus.

The association of this birdsong with Christian harmony is often noted by critics. As Huppé and Robertson observe (1963, 45) birds’ ability to fly is mentioned in St. Ambrose’s Hexameron, Gregory’s Moralia (commenting upon Job 39:25) and in Alain of Lille’s Distinctiones (PL 218, 1009). The association between song and heaven is not immediately apparent in Ambrose’s sermon on the characteristics of birds and flying creatures in the firmament (6, 23). In the Hexameron Ambrose does nevertheless say that the birds at sunset sing “the praises of the creator” (5, 8, 12). Another source, Hugh of Fouilloy’s Aviary, is a pedagogical clerical manual that draws upon bird imagery found in both Ambrose and Gregory’s work, as well as other sources. The Aviary depicts doves lifting themselves to heaven on the wings of an active contemplative life (Clark 1982, 66) and associates the voice of the turtledove with heaven (1982, 66). The pious associations of birdsong are thus evident in many sources that may have been available to Chaucer.

206 Benson translates, “Certainly, even to gain the town of Tunis, I would not have given up hearing them sing,” and comments that the choice of Tunis is due to its convenient rhyme with “tune.” Exegetical interpretations of this passage see Tunis as a Town of Towns, such that Tunis is the New Jerusalem, or the Song of Songs (Huppé and Robertson 1963, 46–47).
The association between heavenly harmony and birds may also have been suggested by the meanings of the word *concentus*, which, unlike the word harmony in English, in Latin can denote birdsong, and which Macrobius uses to describe cosmic music. Africanus says, in Cicero’s dream, “the high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies” (Macrobius tr. Stahl 1990, 185). It is perhaps there that Chaucer finds a semantic possibility: a conflation of harmony and birdsong. He then playfully presents a scene in which the blending of high and low tones produces birdsong that is, equally, cosmic music. Chaucer’s rhyme of “sweet” and “mete” reinforces the connection between the “sweet” sound of birdsong, and the “mete” harmony of cosmic music:

For all my chambre gan to ring  
thurgh singing of hir armonye  
for instrument nor melodye  
was nowher herd yet half so swete  
nor of acorde half so mete. (312–317)

Here the dreamer also puns on the potential of the adjective “mete” to mean “equal” as well as “suitable,” and in doing so suggests the harmonious sound of different pitches or voices (“mete,” MED, Def. adj. 4.a).

It is at this point in the text, however, that the hopeful possibility for lyric implicit in this elaborate framework—the idea that song and music may be associated not with death and despair but with harmony and the heavens—finds its limit. Chaucer’s statement that no instrument was heard like that of the birds’ voices and no melody heard that was “half so swete” evokes Cicero’s statements that *musica mundana*, “tam dulcis sonus” (ed. Willis 2, 2, 21) (“such a sweet sound”), is never actually heard in the world: “The ears of mortals are filled with this sound, but they are unable to hear it.” In this sense, birdsong is suitable background music for Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, and just the right sort of lyrical sound for the narrator to wake to. Chaucer’s text does not deny the

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208 “Hoc sonitu oppletae aures hominum obsurduerunt” (Cicero, *De re publica*, 6, 18, 19, ed. Keyes 1928).
possibility of consolation or comfort or of poetic beauty or musical harmony. But these meanings for lyric and song—like the advice that might really amend the Black Knight’s sorrow—is just out of reach. There is a Christian answer to the problem of grief and suffering; there are even songs that speak of this answer, but in the *Book of the Duchess*, characters are simply “unable to hear it.”

2 The Manciple’s Tale: Overheard Song

In the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer avoids telling the part of Ovid’s story in which Alcyone and Seys turn into birds. The only full account of an Ovidian metamorphosis in Chaucer’s work is in the Manciple’s Tale, notes Helen Cooper (2005, 260). In this tale the transformation of physical traits is an important part of the narrative: the crow at the beginning is white and speaks and sings beautifully, whereas the crow at the end is black and inarticulate. The Manciple begins with a portrait of Phoebus Apollo, called “Phebus,” a wealthy married merchant who owns a talented white pet crow. The wife has an affair, the crow witnesses it, and the crow gets Phebus’s attention by performing another bird’s brief call or “song” (“Cokkow). When Phebus asks for an explanation, the bird rudely tells Phebus how has been cuckolded. Phebus responds by killing his wife, and next decides that the crow has lied to him. In order to punish the crow for his ostensible lies, Phebus plucks the crow’s feathers and slings it out the door. The tale is often understood as a warning against unseemly or rash speech, although David Raybin argues that the crow’s short-lived verbosity enables a “kind of liberation” (1996, 26). I will argue that the tale suggests at once the power, but also the utterly unpredictable effects, of lyric.

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209 See for example the *Ovide moralisé* (11, 3772).

210 The Middle English word “Cokewold” or “cokold” derives from the Old French “cucuault,” the female of whose species was said to be unfaithful to her mate (“Cokewold,” 2006).

211 For example, John Scattergood discusses late medieval contexts for “jangling” and the moral problem of self-control in speech (1974, 124–6), and John Fulk points out the traditional associations between anger and sins of the tongue (1979, 489). Morton Donner also notes the Manciple’s emphasis, in the prologue, that the word must accord with the deed, and the tale’s anxiety about “knavyssh speche” (1955, 247).
At the tale’s beginning the Manciple introduces the power of song with a reference to Amphion, “That with his syngyng walled that citee” of Thebes (IX, 117). There are, however, subtle implications that Amphion’s powerful song is associated with a lack of power in other areas of his life. In the Merchant’s Tale, the reference to Amphion heralded marital unhappiness, and Theban walls figured walls around January’s garden that failed to guard his unfaithful wife May. A similar marital pattern is at work in the Manciple’s Tale, where Phebus would have preferred to keep his wife apart from other men even inside his home, but when Phebus “was absent / His wyf anon hath for hir lemmman sent” (IX, 203–4). If one thinks, too, of the ultimate end of Amphion’s family, there too the sense of his power is diminished and his song is made less impressive. Amphion was thought to have committed suicide after his wife Niobe offended Phoebus Apollo’s mother Latona, resulting in the murder of all their children (Ovide moralisé 6, 973–1378). Another family is also later seen to be at risk in the Manciple’s tale, where Phebus, like Amphion, eventually wants to commit suicide, saying, “Allas! For sorwe I wol myselven slee!” (IX, 291). Although he does not carry out this threat, he does murder his wife. Amphion’s song has the power to build civic structures but it heralds domestic disasters still to come.

212 See Chapter Two for more discussion of these figurative walls. David Raybin notices narrative similarities between the Merchant’s and Manciple’s Tales, and an unpublished paper compares them (1996, 21). Jane Chance argues that Amphion “becomes a model of fidelity to truth” (1995, 9) for Dante and Chaucer; Chance thus argues Amphion illustrates by antithesis January’s sexual “impotence in creating the enclosed garden for his bride” (1995, 8). Louise O. Fradenburg argues that the Manciple’s reference to Amphion is a veiled reference to a text of presumption and death (1985, 100), relevant particularly because the wife and the crow, too, will commit the sin of presumption, and be punished for it.

213 Chaucer’s knowledge of Niobe and Amphion could have come from several sources, and his awareness of their marriage and mortal ends is clear in Troilus and Criseyde, where Pandarus compares Troilus to Niobe (1, 699–700). Amphion’s ability to use the lyre to “soften” stones (lapides mollescere) at the building of Thebes is mentioned in Alain of Lille’s Anticlaudianus in his account of musica mundana (3.401), as well as in medieval accounts of Thebes. Amphion’s ability to play constructive music, his marriage to Niobe, and their family’s fate, are found in the Ovide moralisé 6, 973–1378. Amphion’s story was also transmitted in the Roman de Thèbes and he is a significant character in John Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes (Battles 2004, 153–8). Boccaccio’s story of Niobe in De Claris Mulieribus says all her children died and Amphion killed himself (ed. and tr. Brown 2001, 66–71).
Amphion’s singing builds walls of a city: it civilizes. The crow’s cage is built to civilize it and also to encourage it to sing. The Manciple’s Tale’s crow learns to mimic human song and speech in its cage:

Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe  
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,  
And taughte it spokens, as men teche a jay.  
Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,  
And countrefete the speche of every man  
He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.  
Therwith in al this world no nyghtyngale  
Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,  
Syngen so wonder myrily and weel. (IX, 130–138)

If the crow were not caged, he might have learned to sing, but not for the entertainment of his human jailors. As the Manciple observes, birds would prefer to be in a “rude and coold” forest (IX, 170) and would rather eat “wormes and swich wrecchednesse” than domestic food (IX, 171); uncaged, they fly away. The cage’s bars ostensibly force the crow to speak and sing for those who cage him; they certainly encourage him to do so, for there is little else to do in a cage.214

The cage is also a significant factor in the crow’s witnessing of the adultery and thus in the problem with, and then collapse of, the domestic order that it symbolizes. It seems to be the cage’s position that allows the bird to witness the affair. That is, the Manciple says the crow, who “heeng ay in the cage, / Biheeld hire werk” (IX, 240–241). Undoubtedly there are other factors in the crow’s witnessing of the adultery, such as the location of the adultery itself, but the narrator says nothing of that. This version of the speaking bird tale, which mentions the place of the cage, is quite different from the version in the *Ovide moralisé*, where the raven by chance sees Coronis’s indiscretion, and then flies to Apollo to tell him what she has witnessed, against the crow’s advice (2, 2160–72). The Manciple’s tale more resembles a fifteenth century French analogue by Thomas de Saluces, where the position of the cages of the pet parrots is also an important factor in

214 Michaela Paasche Grudin, however, sees Phebus (rather than the cage or the crow) as responsible for the crow’s development of song and speech; in her view, Phebus punishes himself by punishing the crow (1991, 337).
their witnessing the adultery. Saluces’s narrator says of the husband, “And so there were three parrots that he had in a corridor which ran outside his bedroom” (1984, 983). These parrots witness the adultery because the wife “had no memory of the parrots who were in the corridor”: “elle n’avoir memoire dez papegaiz qui en la galerie estoient” (1984, 985). The bars of the cage have a dual quality, then; on the one hand, they entitle and encourage the crow to sing, while on the other hand, the position of the cage places them in the presence of the adultery.

The tale seems to go out of its way, however, to say that the walls that song builds, and the cages that enable and domesticate song, are frangible precisely because their prisoners will endeavour to destroy them. The Manciple counsels that birds would prefer to be out in the cold forest rather than a cage and will always try to escape: “His libertee this brid desireth ay” (IX, 174). A bird will always work to get its liberty, even if that means being in a “forest that is rude and coold” (IX, 170). In fact, we may view the crow as actually escaping his cage at the end of the tale, when he is slung out of the door.

As for walls themselves, their fragility is also of concern in the speech of the Manciple’s mother reported at the end of the tale. Her speech advocates that we remember and avoid the example of the crow’s “rakel tonge” (IX, 339). She compares a teeth and lips to walls that should be kept up around a tongue, saying that the crow’s mistake was to let down these bodily walls and to speak too much: “The firste vertu, sone, if thou wolt leere, / Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge” (IX, 332–3). Certain things should be kept inside, for if “Thyng that is seyd is seyd, and forth it gooth, / Though hym repente, or be hym nevere so looth” (IX, 355–56). The mother exhorts readers to keep the “thyng” inside, but the text itself seems to present this as an impossible goal. The Manciple’s Tale shows that a “thyng” repeatedly escapes: Phelus’s wife takes a lover and escaped the confines of her marriage even within her lord’s household; the crow speaks freely from

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215 “Adonc s’en va trois papegaiz qu’il avoit dedens une galerie qui aloit vers sa chambre.”

216 As Fradenburg memorably says, the crow’s tongue is a “language wholly given over to another who speaks without measure … by being so far from interrupting as to be that which is forever interrupted” (1985, 110).
behind his cage bars, and ultimately he is put “out at dore” (IX, 306) beyond these same bars. If song is seen to build walls, and if those walls or bars are used to get song’s unruly possibilities under control, then song’s efficacy is sharply limited: for walls come down and cages are fled.

The tale can be thought of as juxtaposing ideas about the reach and power, even the unruliness, of song or lyric, with evidence of the constraints on or limits to that power. It is important that the Manciple appears to distinguish carefully between the singing and telling of the crow. The crow’s “Cokkow!” is repeatedly called a song by Phebus, the Manciple, and the crow himself:

And whan that hoom was come Phebus, the lord,  
This crowe sang “Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!”  
Ne were thow wont so myrily to synge  
That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge  
To heere thy voys? Allas, what song is this?” (IX, 242–7)

In contrast, the crow’s words following “Cokkow!” are not a song; they involve the crow telling Phebus about his song: “By God, quod he, “I synge nat amys” (IX 248), explains the bird, who is able not only to sing, but also to tell of his singing. Afterward the bird is said to have “tolde … By sadde tokens and by wordes bolde” of the adultery” (IX, 258–9).

For the reader, who already knows of the wife’s adultery, it is not difficult to understand the crow’s sung “Cokkow” and its subsequent tale. Phebus by contrast does not understand the pun on cuckold. The “Cokkow” outburst thus affects him not because of its verbal meaning but because the sound evokes his surprise and leads him to ask a question; this question then results in the crow’s tale-telling. So song here prompts narrative, and together the lyric and the tale, meeting a particular auditor in Phebus, one without lack of self-control, eventually lead the auditor Phebus to kill his wife and then to take revenge on the idea of song itself. He breaks “his mynstralcie, / Bothe harpe, and lute, and gysterne, and sautrie” (IX, 267–8). The song and tale are certainly not the sole cause of Phebus killing his wife, but the Manciple does present them as inciting his murderous ire, before relating that Phebus blamed the crow. According to the Manciple,
Phebus ultimately decides that the crow’s “false tale” (IX, 292) is somehow responsible for the rage that precipitates him killing his wife, and thus the tale is worthy of being “quite[d]” (IX, 293). As Jamie Fumo says, Phebus takes the meaning of the tale both ways—first as truth, and then as a lie (the truth results in Phebus killing his wife, while the apparent lie results in the defeathering of the crow) (Fumo 2010, 214). Phebus’s reasoning is faulty; he is wrong that the tale was false, and wrong also that the tale has anything to do with the death of his wife, but only the reader, as overhearer, understands this.

Phebus targets song just as much as speech at the end of the tale. The Manciple says Phebus “refte hym al his song” [IX, 305] just after the bird has been plucked, and before its speech is taken. Song has had too much influence over him, or at least he believes it has. And yet at the same time as he resents the effects of lyric song, Phebus appears to fear his inability to influence his wife with his own song. The crow himself points this out in his “telling” of the adultery, suggesting that song and minstrelsy have been ineffective in persuading Phebus’s wife of certain things:

For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,  
For al thy waitynge, blered is thyn ye  
With oon of litel reputacioun (IX, 251–3).

Song’s inefficacy is damningly associated with Phebus’s cuckolding in the above passage. The Manciple has already made it clear that Phebus was less than pleasing to his wife:

This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan  
To plesen hire, wenynge for swich plesaunce,  
And for his manhede and his governaunce,  
That no man sholde han put hym from hir grace.  
But God it woot, ther may no man embrace  
As to destreyne a thing which that nature  
Hath natureelly set in a creature. (IX, 156–163).

The passage carefully suggests that Phebus did all he could to please his wife but no one can influence someone so as to restrain what nature has caused in him or her. (The meaning of “influence” for “embracen” is not apparent until the end of the clause.) Following hot on the heels of “plesaunce” and “manhede,” the Manciple’s comment on embracing has an evident pun on the French meanings of “embracer”—to bribe or unduly
influence, or to have sexual intercourse with. The Manciple crudely insinuates that Phebus’s human form, his “manhede,” (IX, 158) is found wanting in his marriage; as much as he tries, he cannot please his wife by embracing her. Thus not only does the crow insult Phebus that song failed to keep his wife safe; he insinuates that Phebus’s song—and Phebus himself—failed to prevent the adultery. The crow’s accusation insults the efficacy of Phebus’s song and provides one more motive for Phebus taking revenge on the crow’s own song.

Phebus’s response to the crow’s song is akin to the violent reactions of auditors to songs, or parodies of them, in the Prioress’s Tale and the Reeve’s Tale. Like the little clergeon’s song, the crow’s song is overheard. It is not addressed specifically to Phebus, though it is sung within his earshot, and it lacks a context in that it is not said as part of a dialogue: the crow seems to sing it spontaneously. The song “Cokkow” lacks context, and this leads Phebus to ask about it. Once the crow has told Phebus about the song, and once Phebus begins to interpret that telling, chaos ensues. The multiple and unexpected interpretations of the overheard song incite in Phebus a murderous rage, for which he then blames the crow. Like Satan’s response to the clergeon, the overhearer’s unexpected reaction leads to disastrous consequences for the singer.

Phebus’s final revenge on song takes a specific form in the Manciple’s Tale, and one that seems to be Chaucer’s innovation.217 While turning the bird from black to white is an Ovidian concept, the detail of plucking feathers is not apparent in Gower’s talking-bird tale, the Ovide moralisé, or the Seven Sages of Rome. There is one other tale in which plucking occurs—the French analogue by Thomas de Saluces, where feathers are left

217 Brian Harwood notes that the colour change in the Manciple’s Tale is “subordinated … to the vengeance taken by Phebus upon the bird’s voice” (1972, 270). The Ovide moralisé author says Apollo “gave the crow black feathers / and turned his whiteness into black” (“Noire plume li a donnee / Et sa blanchour en noir tornee [2, 2453–4]). The bird is beaten, burned, soaked and eventually killed in the Seven Sages of Rome tale (2250), but its feathers are not mentioned there. John Gower’s story also mentions only the change from white to black, minus the plucking: “That ther he was snow whyt tofore, / Evere afterward colblak therfore / He was transformed” (Confessio Amantis 3, 807–9).
behind. In this tale, however, the bird is already dead when its feathers are taken.\textsuperscript{218} It is probably significant, therefore, that the Manciple says that the crow’s feathers were plucked out “everichon” (IX, 296). With \textit{all} its feathers gone, including its flight feathers, the crow will be unable to fly. Flying with or without wings is a common metaphor for devout or amorous prayer and appears in Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer (Boitani 1987, 84, 106, 114). Given this association of feathers and wings with lyric prayer, the plucking of the crow seems particularly important as a symbolic removal of lyric and of any potential for some sort of redemptive reading of the text. Plucking, and the plucking of all the feathers, seems particularly appropriate in Chaucer’s representation of Phebus’s revenge upon song, where he breaks “his mynstralcie” (IX, 267), and then appears to destroy the bird as a symbol of lyric, and of the potential of lyric for good, as well.

3 \textbf{The Parliament of Fowls: Cosmic Birdsong}

Ancient and medieval accounts of song saw contemporary instrumental music and song as corrupt and debased, a poor reflection of cosmic music and of old, purer music. These ideas are important as a context for the lyric roundel sung at the end of the \textit{Parliament of Fowls}, which I will argue is connected to a kind of memory and to harmony among disparate species of birds. But if there is in the \textit{Parliament of Fowls} an allegory of cosmic musical harmony, there also arises a problem—the problem alluded to in my account of the \textit{Book of the Duchess}. How can humans begin to experience cosmic music, when human instrumental music has strayed so far from its pure origins? Macrobius’s \textit{Commentary on the Dream of Scipio}, an acknowledged source for the \textit{Parliament of Fowls} (71–98), purports to offer an answer, which is that one can experience cosmic music as if in a dream, and then remember this music when one awakes. The evidence for our memory of cosmic music, suggests Macrobius, lies in the power of contemporary music to captivate us, ugly and “lascivious” as it might be in a worldly setting. The

\textsuperscript{218} The narrator says of the wife,“she killed it and left it inside the cage and removed a few feathers and left them underneath the cage” (“le tua et le laissa dedens sa cage et li osta un petit de la plume le laisa desoubz la cage” (de Saluces 1984, 999).
precise mechanism of music’s power—for good and for bad—was, however, still a conundrum for Chaucer, as it was for ancient and medieval philosophers, and this conundrum is evoked by Chaucer’s representation of birdsong as lyric song, even though birdsong was conventionally understood to be noise rather than music. My thesis thus concludes with an argument that in Chaucer’s work lyric can have great efficacy, partly through its association with music and its conflation with song in the medieval period. But even as Chaucer makes the extrospection of lyric important to his texts, he raises doubts about what lyric utterance does in the world. The contexts for lyric that are established by Chaucer’s narratives call its efficacy into question.

The start of the *Parliament of Fowls* tells how the narrator encounters a book in which he reads Macrobius’s *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, its account of cosmic music (61–62); then, falling asleep, he dreams that Africanus takes him to a garden where he hears a noisy argument between birds. The argument is mediated by Nature, although she postpones her judgment for one year. The end of the *Parliament of Fowls*, with its roundel sung by a chorus of birds, recalls its earlier allusion to music. However, I will suggest that Chaucer’s representation of the roundel as harmonious is juxtaposed with the soundless dancing of the Temple of Venus, a scene that introduces additional complications into the poem’s account of music.219 Meanwhile, the roundel has attracted the attention of critics not only for its manuscript variance but also in its structural importance in ending the poem with an apparently harmonious song that is immediately followed by shouting. For many critics the roundel signals the idea of harmony, particularly of the cosmic and civic varieties.220 But that harmony, I argue, is a problem

219 Critics have identified the birds’ choral singing at the end of the *Parliament of Fowls* as a lyric particularly because the narrator refers to it as a roundel (675).

220 David Aers argues that the roundel cannot be read as “an authoritative image of metaphysical and cosmic harmony” because of the predominance of Venusian imagery in the poem (1981, 140). John P. McCall, on the other hand, argues that Chaucer borrows the suggestion from Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus* that there is harmony in disharmony (1970, 30). The task of achieving harmony is a certain problem in the poem, say many critics, including R. M. Lumiansky, who sees the *Parliament* as expressing the philosophical incongruity between “love-poetry and the hope of salvation” (1948, 89). Other critics see civic harmony as entering into the poem’s meaning: Bruce Kent Cowgill suggests the poem’s “unifying theme—and the key to the poem’s dichotomous allegory—[is] a contrast between the ordered state wisely
where the roundel is concerned. The concept of harmony in both human settings and the cosmos is impossible to fully grasp in this text, because Chaucer refuses to domesticate its complexities.

In what sense can we grasp cosmic music if the music we hear today is degraded? This problem challenges Boethius and is apparent in his treatise On Music. It is also apparent in Chaucer’s Parliament of Fowls. Immediately prior to overhearing the bird debate, the dreamer’s attention is drawn to a temple of Venus around which women dance. They dance “in kertels al dishevele”—bareheaded, with their hair hanging down (235). For David Chamberlain this is lechery and a representation of Cicero’s hell. While the picture need not be so sinister it is clear that the women seem reckless and disorderly, and the music they dance to is similarly reckless and disorderly:

Aboute the temple daunsedyn alwey
Women inowe, of whiche some ther weere
Fayre of hemself, and some of hem were gay;
In kertels, al dishevele, wente they there:
That was here offyce alwey, yer by yeere. (232–236)

There is no music here, but at least the idea of music is evoked by dancing. The dancing of the women “alwey” in the passage connotes a particular lack of choice: no-one would dance forever unless compelled to do so, for dancing is physically tiring. Such dancing may be usefully thought of in context with Boethius’s comments about music and bodily movements in the treatise On Music. There Boethius says that the body reacts to song governed according to natural law and the chaos of a state whose leadership is selfish and irresponsible” (1975, 315); for Cowgill the roundel’s apparent harmony is deceptive (1975, 333). H. M. Leicester points out that in trying to “harmonize” the materials of his dream the poet constantly encounters “dissonance” (1974, 20) and the roundel “acts as a reauthorization” of the idea that the ordering project of Natura continues despite earthly conflicts (1974, 31). David S. Chamberlain sees the roundel and the apparent numerology of the poem as expressing several late medieval concepts of musical harmony; ultimately, Chamberlain thinks, in the poem “God’s order embraces cacaphony as well as harmony” (1970, 54). Leslie Kordecki argues that Chaucer turns Nature into its opposite; namely reason, rational will, and harmony (2003, 109). Thomas P. Campbell says the choice of a roundel is particularly felicitous since this type of lyric demands harmony in its double rhyme scheme and its double refrain (1990, 276). James M. Dean argues that the roundel presents with a fleeting image of perfection and resolution, as does art (1986, 23).

221 Chamberlain argues that Venus’s temple “coheres will [sic] with Cicero’s ‘helle’ and the devotees resemble Africanus’s ‘lykerous folk’” (1970a, 46). He argues that the dancers have no music (1970a, 52).
with movements that imitate the tune. It is a real question for him as to how this phenomenon works:

How does it come about that when someone voluntarily listens to a song with ears and mind, he is also involuntarily turned toward it in such a way that his body responds with motions somehow similar to the song heard? (I, 1, 187; tr. Bower 1989, 8)²²²

Boethius clearly believes in a direct relationship between song and dance, but does not explain how it comes about. He sees rhythmic movement as evidence that music evokes an involuntary response, or at any rate, a response that appears physically, without any conscious will being involved in its appearance.²²³ So too does Chaucer omit explaining how the women dance.

In addition to the confusion about how music evokes effects, Boethius’s *On Music* reveals that he is challenged by an ethical problem. The involuntary element of music’s response means that despite contemporary music’s special power (derived, all authorities agree, from cosmic music) it has become degenerate. Boethius comments on this music at length:

> Whence Plato … states that there is no greater ruin of morals in a republic than the gradual perversion of chaste and temperate music, for the minds of those listening at first acquiesce. Then they gradually submit, preserving no trace of honesty or justice—whether lascivious modes bring something immodest into the dispositions of people or rough ones implant something warlike and savage.…

> Since the human race has become lascivious and impressionable, it is taken up totally by representational and theatrical modes. Music was indeed chaste and modest when it was performed on simpler instruments. But since it has been squandered in various, promiscuous ways, it has lost its measure of dignity and virtue. (I, 1, 181; tr. Bower 1989, 3–4)²²⁴

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²²² “Quod, cum aliquis cantilenam libentius auribus atque animo capit, ad illud etiam non sponte convertitur, ut motum quoque aliquem similem auditae cantilenae corpus effingat?” (I, 1, 187, 3–6)

²²³ This phenomenon is referred to as auditory-motor entrainment and has been identified in birds as well as humans (see for example, Schachner 2009, 2010).

²²⁴ “Unde Plato … Negat enim esse ullam tantam morum in re publica labem quam paulatim de pudenti ac modesta musica inuertere. Statim enim idem quoque audientium animos pati paulatimque discedere nullumque honesti ac recti retinere uestigium—si uel per lasciuiores modos immurecundum aliquid uel per asperiores ferox atque immane mentibus illabatur ….” (I, 1, 180, 22–29)
Calvin Bower’s footnote to this passage says that complaints such as these were fairly common and are associated with the rise of “popular” theatrical innovations in music around the fifth century B.C. Boethius finds contemporary music immodest, lascivious, undignified and unvirtuous—all words that can be used to describe the temple dancers above. The Boethian view of the degradation of contemporary music is apparent not only in *On Music* but also in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, in the images of the Muses who visit the prisoner’s bedside:

> “Who,” qua sche, “hath suffred aprochen to this sike man thise comune strompettis of swich a place that men clepen the theatre? The whiche nat oonly ne asswagen noght his sorwes with none remedies, but thei wolden fedyn and noryssen hym with sweete venym.” (*Boece* 1 pr. 1, 47–53)

Chaucer’s translation renders the muses of rhetoric and music as “strompettis” who have failed to heal Boethius (in place of their ineffective healing, Philosophy must provide a sharper cure, discussed in Chapter Two). The Venusian dancing of the *Parliament of Fowls* is thus usefully contextualized by this Boethian picture of degenerate contemporary music and its effects.

In addition to seeing the Venusian dancing, the dreamer hears a series of harmonies in the *Parliament of Fowls*. The first harmony in the poem is described in the retelling of Scipio’s experience of *musica mundana*. Here the dreamer is shown the nine spheres and hears their “melodye,” which is a “cause of armonyne”:

> Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is,  
> At regard of the hevenes quantite;  
> And after shewede he hym the nyne speres;  
> And after that the melodye herde he  
> That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,  
> That welle is of musik and melodye  
> In this world here, and cause of armonye. (57–63)

“Quod uero lasciuum ac molle est genus humanum, id totum sceniciis ac theatralibus modis tenetur. Fuit uero ac modesta musica. dum simplicioribus organis ageretur. Ubi uero uarie permixteque tractata est, amisit grauitatis atque iuritutis modum....” (I, 1, 181, 8-12)

225 Boethius, or his source, may be repeating “a literary topos which was popular in musical writings of a more philosophical bent,” apparent in the writings of Athenaeus (second-third century A.D.) and Plutarch (c.46 to 120 A.D.), among others (Bower in Boethius 1989, 3 n11).
Although the nine spheres are apparently Macrobian, Chamberlain notes, he says Chaucer creates the details in the last two lines of this stanza (Chamberlain 1970a, 32). I would argue that the details of these two lines are also suggested by Macrobius.\(^{226}\)

Whereas Cicero refers to the noise of the spheres as “tam dulcis sonus,” “such a sweet sound” (ed. Willis 2, 2, 21), Macrobius uses the words melody *(melodiae)* and music *(musica)*. He does not use the latter words in discussing this episode of the dream, however; instead he uses them much later in his commentary, when he discusses the earthly effects of music upon people (see below). The word “melody,” as I have explained in other chapters, is an important one for Chaucer. In other poems it has a double valence. It suggests erotic acts and the music made from both singing and bodily productions. The word here foregrounds the concern of the poem not only with music but also with the problem presented by erotic “melody”—particularly, desires that conflict (such as the competing desires of the eagles to mate with the formel, and the formel’s desire to remain alone).

The second instance of harmony is an account of heavenly birdsong before the dreamer exits the temple of Venus, which accords with other sounds, including stringed instruments and a breeze:

> On every bow the brydde herde I synge,  
> With voy of angel in here armony;  
> Some besyede hem here bryddes forth to brynge;  
> The litel conyes to here pley gonne hye;  
> And ferther al aboute I gan aspye  
> The dredful ro, the buk, the hert and hynde,  
> Squyrels, and bestes smale of gentil kynde.  
> Of instruments of strenges in acord  
> Herde I so playe a ravyshyng swevenes,  
> That God, that makere is of al and lord,  
> Ne herde nevere beter, as I gesse.  
> Therwith a wynd, unnethe it myghte be lesse,  
> Made in the leves grene a noyse softe

\(^{226}\) In Calvin Bower’s modern English translation of *De Musica*, “melody” is used for several Latin words, including *cantilena*, which can mean a saying, refrain, or little song; and *modulatio*, which encompasses singing, melody, and marching in tune.
Acordaunt to the foules song alofte. (190–203)

Two aspects of this account bear comparison with Boethius’s *On Music*: Chaucer’s emphasis on generativity, and the mention of stringed instruments. The accord in the *Parliament* appears in a fecund heavenly and/or Edenic space: birds bring forth other birds (“Some besyede hem here bryddes forth to brynge”) while rabbits cavort on the ground (“to here pley gone hye”). The dreamer espies squirrels and *small* beasts, probably small because they are juvenile, and juvenile because it is springtime. (Chaucer may allude here to the problem of fecundity in the prelapsarian garden, as discussed in Augustine’s *City of God*, Book 14, Chapters 23–24.) There is also a passage about fecundity and visual and aural harmony in Boethius’s *On Music*. Here Boethius compares the harmony of stringed instruments to a cosmic harmony that allows plants to bear fruit:

> And just as, on the one hand, adjustment of pitch in lower strings is such that lowness does not descend into silence, while, on the other hand, adjustment of sharpness in higher strings is carefully monitored lest the excessively stretched strings break because of the tenuity of pitch, but the whole corpus of pitches is coherent and harmonious with itself, in the same way we discern in cosmic music that nothing can be so excessive that it destroys something else by its intemperance. Everything is such that it either bears its own fruit or aids others in bearing theirs. For what winter confines, spring releases, summer heats, and autumn ripens, and the seasons in turn either bring forth their own fruit or give aid to others in bringing forth their own. But these things ought to be discussed later more studiously. (ed. Bower 1989, 9–10)²²⁷

Not only do Boethius’s plants bear fruit in this temperate world; there is also a seasonal balance to all events. Winter, spring, summer and autumn all have their roles according to cosmic harmony. The attitude to winter and summer in this passage, moreover, anticipates the variety of weathers later to be found in roundel.

The third episode of harmony in the poem is the roundel itself. This lyric evokes the ancient notion of cosmic harmony in that it shows disparate things—like distinctly

²²⁷ “Et sicut in gravibus chordis is vocis est modus, ut non ad taciturnitatem gravitas usque descendat, atque in acutis ille custoditur acuminis modus, ne nervi nimium tensi vocis tenuitate rumpantur, sed totum sibi sit consentaneum atque conveniens. ne nerui nimium tensi uocis tenuitate rumpantur. sed totum sibi sit consentaneum atque conveniens” (ed. Meyer 2004, 32).
different seasons—working together even as they work against each other: “Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe, / That has thes wintres wedres overshake” (680–1). The mention of summer in the roundel—given that the poem’s occasion is apparently Valentine’s Day (309)—has likewise confused readers. “Somer” may actually simply have meant the warm season in general (Moore 1949, 82). In the mention of both summer and winter, though, there is an additional similarity to Boethius’s visualization of the seasons in On Music: summer has worked against winter and mitigated its long nights and dreary weather, which has resulted in the generative potential of the little animals, the fruit-bearing of the plants, and an orderly balance between seasons—“what winter confines, spring releases, summer heats, and autumn ripens.”

The roundel’s evocation of harmony and seasonal conflict is then concluded with a remark that at first seems out of place: the birds will sing “ful blissful,” each having “recovered” her mate. This “recovering” is identified by A.J. Gilbert as a neoplatonic anamnesis that Chaucer encounters in Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy:

To return again to one’s “nature” is to recognize the desire for immortality innate in all things created by an immortal being …. The cyclic renewal described in the closing lines of the Latin hymn explain [sic] the structure of the roundel, where the repeated refrain gradually picks up the opening lines again in their entirety. Within the song, the line “Sethe ech of hem recouerede hathe his make” (l. 688) seems in the context, to be a typical neo-platonic commonplace; “reouerede” can then mean “to get back, or find again” as OED suggests. (1978, 301)

Gilbert does not comment on any relationship between anamnesis and the roundel’s musical mode. But the recovery of their mates certainly makes the birds feel glad and sing very blissfully:

Saint Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,  
Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:  
[Now welcome, somer….]  
Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte  
Sith ech of hem recovered hath hys make.  
Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake. (683–689)

228 By “Latin hymn” Gilbert means metra 3 m. 2 in Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy.
The verb “recoueren” is used here and elsewhere in Middle English specifically to refer to the mating practices of birds. But in the context of the roundel, given its overt concern with cyclical time, the word seems to do more, to imply that the birds “regain” or “return” to their mates, and as such, recover some past moment of completeness and happiness. There is a wavering here however between the several meanings of “recoveren,” which can also mean to simply acquire (“recoveren,” v.2, Def. 8, MED 2006). The word’s common meaning of restoring something to a particular state (“recoveren, v.2, Def. 1, MED 2006) may imply however that Chaucer here draws on an idea of remembered cosmic music that he found in Macrobius. Macrobius, in a discussion of music’s effects on people, says the soul carries into the body a memory of the *musica mundana* it once knew in the sky, and that this memory is what captivates us when we hear or produce song:

Every soul in this world is allured by musical sounds so that not only those who are more refined in their habits, but all the barbarous peoples as well, have adopted songs by which they are inflamed with courage or wooed to pleasure; for the soul carries with it into the body a memory of the music which it knew in the sky, and is so captivated by its charm that there is no breast so cruel or savage as not to be gripped by the spell of such an appeal. (tr. Stahl 1990, 195)229

If the birds have in some sense recovered happiness, then the song they sing does the same thing—it connects joy to an idealized past, a “memory of music.” The poem’s description of the birds’ habitual dawn chorus is also interesting. The reader is told that they may sing blissfully on waking in future, just before he or she is told that the dreamer wakes, and just before he remembers and recounts the dream and snatches of the roundel with it “as I now have in mynde” (679). Chaucer’s ending the dream with the roundel reminds the dreamer of the harmony at the start of the poem and the birdsong occurring within the poem. The birds’ recovery of happiness and the dreamer’s memory of the

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229 “Namideo in hac uita omnis anima musicis sonis capitur, ut non soli, qui sunt habita cultiores, uerum uniuerae quoque barbarae nationes cantus, quibus uel ad ardorem uirtutis animentur, uel ad mollitium uoluptatis resoluantur, exerceant: quia anima in corpus defert memoriam musicae, cuius in coelo fuit conscia; et ita delinimentis canticis occupatur, ut nullum sit tam imnite, tam asperum pectus, quod non oblectamentorum talium teneatur affectu” (ed. Willis 1963, 105).
roundel once he wakes together suggest a Macrobian view of the harmony of remembered, cosmic song.

However, the problem of how humans can actually hear cosmic harmonies is only potentially resolved by this Macrobian reading of the roundel. According to Macrobius, the soul remembers the music it knew in the sky, and this is why human souls cannot avoid hearing and being affected by worldly contemporary music. But human memory is flawed in the _Parliament of Fowls._ The dreamer only remembers snatches of the roundel: in no manuscript witness is it given completely. Moreover, Chaucer presents us not with music as harmony but with birdsong as harmony, and in many ancient and medieval accounts, birdsong did not qualify as music. Consider for example the late medieval distinction between *vox articulata* and *inarticulata,* found in Priscian’s sixth-century grammar, _Institutiones Grammaticae,_ a text read widely after the early ninth century (Leach 2007, 33). Priscian is particularly interested in *vox articulata literata,* voice that can be written down and that is meaningful (Irvine 1994, 95). Priscian also identifies other categories of *vox,* or sounds made by creatures: *vox inarticulata illiterata* (meaningless sounds that cannot be represented by letters or words); *vox literata inarticulata* (meaningless sounds, which _can_ be represented by letters or words) and *vox articulata illiterata* (meaningful sounds which are not words) (Leach 2007, 33; Irvine 1994, 94). *Vox inarticulata* is made by animals; any sound made by an animal is said to be meaningless, including birdsong (Leach 2007, 36). Human music is *vox articulata*—meaningful sound—produced by humans. The presentation of harmony as

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230 Several manuscripts have, instead of or in addition to the line “Now welcome somer,” another line or a marginal note, “Qui bien aime a tard oublie.” This line is a French refrain that appears in several French lyrics as well as longer poems. J. A. W. Bennet says that in some manuscripts “there stands written above the roundel the words: «Qui bien aime a tard oublie» [“whoever loves well is slow to forget”] (1982, 46). Thomas P. Campbell points out that there is a Machaut _lai_ that opens with this line (1990, 276) (lay 22, “Le Lay de Plour”). James Hassell’s list of French proverbs lists thirteen occurrences of this line in French poetry after 1381 by Guillaume de Machaut, John Gower, Eustache Deschamps, Jean Molinet, Jean Régnier and Phillipe de Mézières, including four witnesses dated post-1500 (Hassell 1982, 33–34). Alexandra Gillespie comments on the roundel’s importance to the idea of the book as a memorial technology, albeit an imperfect one, in her forthcoming book _Chaucer’s Books._

231 Leach notes that the Marchetto of Padua’s _Lucidarum,_ written around 1317–1318, uses Priscian in theorizing the “caw, caw” of birds as nonarticulate but literate voice (Leach 2007, 36).
birdsong on Chaucer’s part therefore seems to be an elaborate joke about the music of the spheres. Birdsong is not music; as all the cackling and shouting of the birds reminds us, it is just noise.

Despite the conventional distinction made between birdsong and heavenly harmony, Chaucer’s presentation of harmony as birdsong is in another sense very apt. The singing of different birds in harmony illustrates the principle by which harmony unifies otherwise disparate elements. Cosmic harmony is like this, too, in that it unifies different sounds. Boethius in On Music acknowledges a harmony that unites the body and soul, and likewise, a cosmic harmony joins the “diversities of the four elements”—including the low and high notes, making sure that they do not get too high or too low and thus “destroy something else by their own intemperance” (I, I, 188, pr.10, tr. Bower). Musica mundana is thus analogous to birdsong because it too is generated from differently placed and differently sized bodies generating different relative pitches. Finally, Macrobius’s word for cosmic harmony is “concentus” which means, not only harmony, but also birdsong itself (see above). If the reader understands the Parliament’s birds allegorically, then birdsong is, for several reasons, partly an allegory of the music of the spheres.

The problem is that the relationship between cosmic and earthly harmonies is still inadequately explained. In Book I of On Music, Boethius says he will speak about the relationship between cosmic and earthly harmonies later—and then never does. This lacuna has the effect of a lasting separation between medieval theories of cosmic harmony and ethics, argues Gary Tomlinson (1993, 72).232 Boethius, Macrobius, and other writers “maintained the distance between Plato’s musical cosmology and his musical ethics,” avoiding attempts at explaining the exact relationship between the

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232 In ancient Greek thought, music and ethics were practically separated, although ethics seemed to be based on music, says Edward Lippman: “Like the metaphysics of harmony, the philosophy of ethos is based on a generalized conception of music, but the generality is of a different type: not that of the harmonic structure of nature and man, but that of the rhythmical art encompassing dance, poetry, and melody” (1964, 87).
harmony of the cosmos and musical harmony on earth (Tomlinson 1993, 72). Because this very relationship was unexplained, so too was another musical principle unexplained: the disjunct between ancient virtuous music and lascivious modern music. (Above, I pointed out that Boethius idealizes ancient music’s simplicity, in On Music [I, 1, 181]). One might wonder, if we remember cosmic music, why do we not remember that music so that we can perform it today? Moreover, music’s contemporary state of disrepair presents a moral problem for Boethius, since, despite its degradation, it continues to exert strong effects upon its auditors: “While from all these [reports] one cannot doubt that it appears, clearly, that we are naturally joined to music, so that we would not be able to be without it if we wanted” (I, 1, 187, tr. Bower). Neither the idea of cosmic harmony and musical ethics nor the idea of contemporary music’s degeneracy are theorized in full by Boethius or any other philosopher. Macrobius’s “memory” of cosmic music is the only explanation of the relationship between the harmony of the spheres and the moral effects of music upon humans.

Chaucer could have chosen to represent a Macrobian harmony of the spheres without any ambiguity. He did not, however, and evidence of this remains in the critical controversy regarding the roundel. Critics wonder if the lyric is harmonious (since it is followed by noisy shouting), and, if so, whether the harmony of the song is due to the affective power of music upon human and animal bodies. The poem also presents much bird speech as well as birdsong, and this bird speech is represented in this poem as disputatious. For example, the eagles present their cases for marriage (415–483) and other birds argue for a quick resolution (491–518). The goose threatens an ominous “remedie” (502) with his

233 Certainly, as Chamberlain points out (1970a, 37), Chaucer is familiar with Boethius’s idea that, “al this accordaunce [and] ordenaunce of thynges is bounde with love” (Bo. 2m8 13–15), but pointing to love as a cause for cosmic harmony hardly elaborates on the exact relationship between cosmic and earthly harmonies.

234 “Ut ex his omnibus perspicue nec dubitanter appareat, ita nobis musicam naturaliter esse coniunctam, ut ea ne si uelimus quidem carere possimus.”

235 Kathryn L. Lynch notes the number of critics who treat the poem as primarily philosophical in intent; in her essay on the will and understanding in the poem she affirms that the Parliament of Fowls is perhaps the “most clearly and straightforwardly ‘philosophical’” of all of Chaucer’s poems (1990a, 5).
spoken “verdit” (503). The conflict that then arises must be mediated by Nature, who tells them to “Hold youre tongues there” (521). The problem is made more pressing in that the poem itself is fundamentally concerned with ideas of civic harmony as well as musical harmony, more so than the Book of the Duchess and the Manciple’s Tale, in that it presents debate between multiple characters—a parliament, no less (Cowgill 1975, 13). The assembly is even presented in “quasi-bureauratic” terms (Giancarlo 2007, 155). In the Parliament of Fowls there are three male suitors, and Nature, God’s “vicaire,” grants the wish of the female eagle herself, which is to institute a delay of one year. The sung harmony of the roundel in the Parliament is flanked by speeches that reveal civil disagreement.

Critics have disagreed about whether the harmony of the roundel is cancelled out by the potentially violent and raucous shouting of birds at the poem’s end. The most powerful recent readings of song in the Canterbury Tales, those of Nicolette Zeeman (2007) and Bruce Holsinger (2001), have found that Chaucer’s music or song brings about violence in Chaucer’s narrative settings. In Chapter Two I discussed ways in which remedies for love associated with lyric and song tended towards cruelty and violence; in Chapter Three’s section on the Prioress’s Tale, and in discussing the Manciple’s Tale above, I showed that in other moments in Chaucer’s work, lyrics provoke the murderous ire in their audience. David Chamberlain argues (1970a, 33) that Chaucer’s view in the Parliament of Fowls is that God’s order embraces cacaphony and violence as well as harmony. John P. McCall argues that Chaucer borrows the idea of music articulated in Alain de Lille’s Anticlaudianus, with its conjoining of “laughter and tears” (1970, 30), and thus McCall also suggests that dissonance is part of Chaucer’s harmony. The “answer” to understanding the Parliament of Fowls, McCall argues, is in heaven, with Africanus, where “All things counter, original, spare, strange” (1970, 31). And yet H. M.

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236 Bruce Kent Cowgill sees the shouting as “cacaphony” which has an “ominous tone” hinting at the shock of the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381 (1975, 333). James Dean points out that the Parliament of Fowls does not conclude with the roundel; the shouts waken the dreamer, making the climax rather anticlimactic (1986, 23). David Aers suggests the birds’ knowledge is grounded in “conflicts and violently egotistical behaviour” (Aers 1981, 10) and concludes that the final roundel cannot possibly serve a “highly generalized natural theodicy” (Aers 1981, 14).
Leicester responds to McCall’s view by showing that the *Parliament of Fowls* is particularly aware of the threats to the sense of unity and agreement, which is why the poem presents “many voices” rather than a “single unfolding vision” (1974, 19). For Leicester, the poem’s conflicts are unresolvable.

The way in which the roundel works is thus noticeably different from most other treatments of song in Chaucer’s poetry. It is similar in many ways to the choral birdsong in the *Book of the Duchess* in its expression of optimism, joy, and harmony, but the harmony it presents is simultaneously unifying and divisive. The roundel invites us to think of the soul remembering the music of the spheres but at the same time presents doubts. It suggests that the music of the heavenly realm may be degraded by temporal change in an earthly setting, that is, by the very fact it has to be remembered, and by human incapacity for perfect recall. It suggests that disharmony—shouting and discord—may follow and may finally drown out what is harmonious about lyric.

In this sense, the *Parliament of Fowls* provides an ideal ending to my discussion. There is nothing introspective or isolated about the roundel with which Chaucer brings that poem to a conclusion. It is a communal expression of joy, one that suggests the power of lyric to forge connections—between performers, between a timeless past and the cyclical time of the present, between the heavenly and sublunary realms. At the same time the text of the roundel is a sign of the limits to lyric power that have been my concern throughout my discussion of Chaucer’s work. In each early manuscript witness, its fragmentary form is a reminder of the unpredictable work of human memory. Embedded in the narrative of the longer poem—framed by the noise of raucous and unruly birds—its promise of harmony is ambiguous at best, and perhaps meant only as an ironic representation of what, in the complex allegory and the strange dreamworld of this poem, can never be.

The argument of this discussion has been that as lyric becomes extrospective in Chaucer’s narrative work, as it takes a place in the worlds of his dream visions, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *Canterbury Tales*, its limitations are revealed. Sometimes lyric is implicated in disharmony, disgust, retribution and revenge. Sometimes it precipitates bodily violence. Chaucer’s lyric is often involved in the failure of the lyricist or the
performer to achieve whatever end she or he had in mind. It fails to woo, to enchant, to relieve, and to redeem. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, lyric is evidence of the way that worldly creatures may aspire to but will never reach and will every day forget heaven’s own harmonies.
Works Consulted

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237 The style of this Works Consulted uses two APA features: the year following author name, to help distinguish multiple publications by the same author; and no quotes for article, poem, and chapter titles. In other aspects it uses standard MLA style.


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Appendix 1
Descriptions of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Lyrics

Canterbury

Canterbury Cathedral Ch.Ant/M2S1/1  s. xvii. Imitation of insular script, dated c.1298, in s. xvi or s. xvii hands. Rhyming charter recording the will of William the clockere Robert’s son. (Source: Louis 2010, 1.)

Cambridge

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 327  s. xiii–s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 3 + 228. 215 x 145 mm (175 x 130mm; varies). Sermon collection. The English lyric (NIMEV 2194) appears on endpapers from f. 226r and 228v. The hand is likely early fourteenth century if not later (with distinctive forked ascenders and an early secretary aspect) and the page is quite differently ruled than the rest of the folios of this quire; finally, the page is narrower, suggesting that the lyric comes from a different manuscript than that of the sermon. The subject of this fourteen-stanza lyric is obscure, since the beginnings and endings of the lines are illegible. Probably compiled by William de Auli. Manuscript image available online via Parker on the Web. Date: James (1912a, 148).

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 405  s. xiii–s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 1 + 253. 210 x 145 (162 x 108 mm; varies). In one column; lines 5.5 mm tall; 29 lines; writing on top line. Pricking visible (17 holes, others trimmed off). The English lyric on f. 10v uses

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238 I compiled this list to gain a sense of the size and range of the corpus of manuscripts of Middle English lyrics. The New Index of Middle English Verse (NIMEV) has a very helpful manuscript index, but does not indicate in this index which manuscripts contain long or short poetry. The following descriptions give the manuscript dates, contents, folio size, written space, the position of English lyrics within quires in the book, and other characteristics such as music notation, where known. Selected cross-references with other witnesses of the same lyric are given if known, as are selected bibliographic and published sources, although complete references are available in the NIMEV. Where the description is based on another source instead of my own notes, this is noted at the end of the description. The date given is the date the lyric is thought to have been copied into the manuscript, and the published source for the date of the manuscript is also indicated at the end of the description. Manuscripts that already have a wealth of data published about them (for example, Harley 2253) receive only cursory descriptions. Written space, if fairly regular (and if known) is in brackets after the folio measurements.
a chancery hand found elsewhere in booklet one (a quire of 10 pages). Contains three English lyrics. Manuscript image available online via Parker on the Web. Date: James (1912a, 277).

**Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 8**  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 268 + 1. 430 x 290 mm (390 x 180 mm). The leaf with songs is a flyleaf made out of a biofolium from a music book that has been unfolded and trimmed; the leaf from the original illuminated music book might have measured around 580 x 240 mm. An English song (“Worldes Blisce”) and a French song are copied onto the bifolium along with musical notation. The contents of the book are a Vincent of Beauvais *Speculum Historiale*. This flyleaf appears similar to a flyleaf in another Cambridge manuscript (Cambridge, St. John’s College MS F.1) which also contains a French song (but no English lyric). Other parts of the music book appear to have been used as patches throughout the manuscript (Parker Library on the Web, 2009). Manuscript images are available online via Parker on the Web. Date: James (1909, 20).

**Cambridge, Emmanuel College MS 27**  s. xiii / Vellum. 244 + 1 ff. 244 x 159mm. Written in one and two columns. Contains the *Templum Domini*, the *Twelve Abuses*, sermons, saints’ legends, miracles of the Virgin Mary, and English verse prayers such as the *Pater Noster*, as well as many Latin religious prose and verse items. The Sompting church dedication is dated 1246. English verse forms of the *Pater Noster*, *Creed*, *Ave Maria*, *Confiteor* and *Ten Precepts* occupy the same quire as “Lessons for the Conception of the Virgin,” “Sermons on Gospels,” and the legend of St. Margaret. (Source: James 1904, 22–23.)

**Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean MS 123**  s. xiii\^ex / Vellum. 279 x 177 mm. ff. 122. In two columns of 31 and 26 lines. Called the Nuneaton book due to its listing as the Nuneaton Codex in a nineteenth-century catalogue. Contains Robert Grosseteste’s *Chateau d’Amours*, a bestiary, and some English lyrics including the *Poema Morale*. (Source: James 1912, 262–269.)

**Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 261**  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 211 + iii. 400 x 240 mm. Written in two and three columns, 80 lines to a page. Contents include the
**Corpus glossatorum iuris civilis**, on civil law, and Roffred of Benventuto’s *Quaestiones sabbatinae*. Contains, on f. 234, five lines (“Spend and god schal sende”) also in four other manuscripts (NIMEV 3209). Lyrics are written in verse lines. Date: James (1908, Vol. 1, 315).


*Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 512* s. xiiiex / Vellum. ff. 265 + vi. 250 x 187 mm. In double columns of 50 lines. Contains the start of the *Legenda Aurea* (f. 52r); miscellaneous *Quaestiones*; poetry in English and French; and music. There are 27 quires of 12 leaves each, and the English lyrics appear in the last two quires of the book which each have 8 leaves. Music notation (f. 249v). Contains a lyric that also appears in Harley 2253 (NIMEV 1922, “Lytel wotyt onyman”). Belonged to Friar John Rudham. Rudham is in East Anglia and the language appears to be from Norfolk. Date: James (1908, Vol. 2, 581).

*Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 54* s. xiii – s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 156. 302 x 215 mm. In double columns of 60 lines. Contains the *Decretals* and verse letters in English and French on f. 154r (a flyleaf) on which are found three stints. Upside-down, there is a verse letter in french, unruled, unpricked, with no margins. Fifteen lines down in stint 3, the language changes to English: “Haue godday nou mergrerete . With gret loue y the grete.” Stint three of the scribal hand has pronounced forks, is thinner and spikier and less round than stint two, but still might be the same scribe writing after some time has passed. The book has its old binding and marks of chaining. Belonged to Walter of Elveden. Date: James (1908, Vol. 1, 47).

*Cambridge, King’s College Muniment Roll SJP 50 (olim 2.W.32) s. xiv /* Vellum. Contains music notation. Two membranes stitched together, the first measuring 277 x 210 mm (narrower at the bottom, about 195 mm wide) and the second 272 x 208 mm long. Membrane A at the top has a fold (the roll seems to have been kept folded up sometime after the two membranes were stitched together). On the recto of Membranes
A and B is copied, in a s.xiv hand, a grant of privileges to St. James Priory in Exeter, dated 1199/1200. On the recto sides, membrane A has a written space of 300 x 163 mm and membrane B, a written space of 205 x 174 mm. Lines are about 10.5 mm high, but the top line, on membrane one, has an illuminated I measuring 60 x 12 mm. On the verso of Membrane B, three staves of music occupy a written space of 171 x 190 mm and the English words are copied between the staves. Below the music staves a space of 34 x 190 mm is taken up with the song words; this hand is more currens the one above. The hand of the lyric has circular anglicana “w” letterforms resembling the Harley 2253 scribe’s distinctive “w.” On the dorso of membrane A is a name, John de [?Twypetre] in s.xv secretary. There are 90 other such charters and grants in similar hands to the hand of Membrane A, recto, relating to St. James Priory.

**Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 258**  

**Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 62 (C.12)**  
S. xiiiex / Vellum. Ff. 147 + 11. 242 mm x 180 mm (192 x 130 mm in three columns). In quires of 8, 12, 14 and 16. Contains the *Templum Domini*, a pastoral manual by Robert Grosseteste, and the *Life of St. Edmund*. The English lyric “Lord thy passion” (NIMEV 1977) is on f. 126v in the same hand as other material in quire thirteen (originally of eight folios, missing four folios), with sermons and a short narrative (“*Vindicta salvatoris*”) that begins with Herod and the flight into Egypt and ends with the siege of Jerusalem. The six-line lyric is written in wrapping lines with puncti dividing rhyming phrases and the first line of the lyric is marked with a red paraph. The lyric also appears in Oxford, Bodleian Ashmole MS 360.VII and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 408. Date: James (1913, 82).

**Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 15 (A.15)**  
S. xiii – s. xv / Vellum. Ff. 149 + 19. 248 x 180 mm. Contains material by Robert of Grosseteste. In a s.xiii quire, in the lower margin of f. 72r in a hand contemporary with the text, are six and a half lines of English, “Wenne hic soe on rode idon ihesus mi leman …” (NIMEV 3965, unique). Following that is NIMEV 1943, also found in Harley 913 (“Loke to thi louerd man thar
This manuscript has been microfilmed by St. John’s College library. Owned by Robert Elyot (Beadle 1977, 371–2). Date: James (1913, 19).

Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 111 (E.8) s. xiv–s. xiii
Vellum. ff. 107 + 11. 180 x 130 mm (150 x 105mm). In 27–28 lines to a page. In fourteen quires, mostly of eight leaves. Contains “Excerpta” (James 1913, 144). The musically notated song “Stond Wel Moder” (on f. 106v) is copied in quire thirteen immediately after the cancelled fifth leave of the book’s last quire, so, originally leaf six of eight. The flyleaves of this book are from a psalter. Nine staves of music appear; the page has been trimmed before rebinding; see also f.102r where threading on the illuminated initial is cropped. Date: James (1913, 144).

Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 127 (E.24) s. xiv
Vellum. ff. 121 + 2. 215 x 145 mm (137 x 90mm). With 26 lines to a page. Miscellany with the Speculum Ecclesiae of St. Edmund of Abingdon. Fol. 44r has a version of “Erthe” (NIMEV 3939) not in Hilda Murray’s edition (1964), in a fourteenth-century textualis hand. A rubricated initial “W” begins the poem, and line-initial letters are rubricated throughout. The book also contains works of St. Bernard; papal indulgences granted by John XXII (thus, not before c.1316–1334); notes on Augustine; notes on miracles, accounts of Roman emperors (Octavian, Herod, Gaius, Claudius and Nero), and a sermon. Contains several illustrations: on f.45v, a wounded hand; and on f.59r, a seraph. Date: James (1913, 159).

Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 204 (H.1) s. xiv–s. xv
Vellum. ff. 280. 405 x 310mm (303 x 194). In two columns of 38 lines. Contains John of Trevisa’s 1387 translation of Ranulf Higden’s c.1320s Polychronicon, and over fifteen English lyrics, which are Trevisa’s translations of rhymed Latin couplets. Trevisa uses English rhyme in only three of these (such as a quatrain translating Virgil on folio 66) but “attempts to reproduce some of the poetic figures of the original and to introduce Middle English poetic diction” (Higden 1978, 206). Parkes designates this scribe as “Scribe Delta” Date: Parkes (1978, 206).

Cambridge, St. John’s College MS 256 (S.30) s. xiv
Vellum. ff. 135 + iii. 275 x 168 mm. With 22–30 lines to a page, in two columns, writing below top line. In two
hands. A *Somme le Roi* with *Speculum Guy of Warwick*. Contains a Marian lyric (NIMEV 1030) not found with the *Speculum Guy of Warwick* elsewhere. Belongs to the Queen Mary group due to its illuminations (see Dennison [1986]). Once belonged to Peterborough Cathedral—a flyleaf has lists of names, payments, and placenames. Date: James (1913, 291).

**Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 1105 (O.2.1)**  s. xiiex / Vellum. [9 x 6.5 in] ff. 256 + 2. 29 lines to a page. Liber Eliensis, the Book of Ely [containing the Canute Song, NIMEV 2164] Source: James (1902, Vol. 3, 79–82).

**Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 323 (B.14.52)**  s. xiii, s. xiv, s. xv / Vellum. 178 x 134 mm. Two volumes bound together; the s.xiii part is folios 1–87, and the s. xv part is folios 88–162. Contains Latin stories, the *Life of St. Margaret*, various English poetry and lyrics. Date: James (1902, Vol.1, 438).

**Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 375 (B.15.39)**  s. xv / Vellum. 205 x 155 mm (trimmed—original pages perhaps 250 x 180 mm) (190 x 122 mm). Bound with B.7.4, a paper manuscript. Contains over 35 English verse items. The section containing “Erthe” (NIMEV 3939) is a quire of its own (originally a quire of ten, wanting the first two leaves; this differs from James’ collation (James says the first quire is of 8 leaves and is missing 1–5, [Vol. 1, 511]). There are two hands in the “Erthe quire” and the poem is written as wrapping lines with puncti separating rhyming phrases. Date: James (1900, Vol. 1, 510).

**Cambridge, University Library Additional MS 2764**  s. xivex–s. xv / Vellum. 283 x 30 mm. Binding fragment and, formerly, a roll. Contains a carol, “Of Mary de ... with all ther noo...” (NIMEV 2636.5) with music staves and notation in ink (9 staves with 4 lines of text (2 lines written on the stave, leaving one music line in between text lines). Words are written inside music lines, as in CUL 5943, but the hand in CUL 2764 is neater. A double-bowled *a* signals the *anglicana formata* hand of the scribe, while the ascenders of h and k are hooked, not split suggesting a date of late s. xiv or early s. xv.
Cambridge, University Library Addtional MS 4407 1307–1350 / Vellum. 115 x 95 mm (102 x 75 mm). Six binding fragments (Fragments a and b are about 65–70 x 100 mm, with a writing space about 60–80 mm wide). Contains the “Proverbs of Hendyng” and the “Elegy on the Death of King Edward I,” both of which poems occur in Harley 2253. In “Hendyng” the paraph on the first line extends the width of the line about 75 mm. The hand has a rounded aspect and is reminiscent of professional anglicana hands. All the fragments are in the same hand. Date: Cambridge University Library files.

Cambridge, University Library Addtional MS 5943 1390–1425 / Paper. ff. 182 +3. 215 x 145 mm (127 x 80 mm). Contains music notation. Watermarks visible on ff. 65 (star); 77 and 83 (horns); 180 (two dogs or wolves); others are undetermined. Songs are copied in quires sixteen and seventeen and the music notation is found in quire seventeen. A manuscript description is available in Cambridge University Library files (unpublished) and Dobson describes the music and manuscript in detail. Date: Dobson (1979, 215–6).

Cambridge, University Library MS Edc. 1/B/1/53  s. xii–s. xiv / Vellum. 225 x 145 mm (153 x 106 mm). Contains “Merie singen the muneches binnen Ely” (NIMEV 2164) on f. 73v, the Canute Song, quoted by Thomas of Ely. It is found in two other manuscripts: Cambridge, Trinity College MS 1105 (O.2.1) and Oxford, Bodleian Laud Misc. MS 647. This is a planned copying, not a marginal lyric: the verse is written inside the ruled space (in wrapping lines, with puncti). Folio 73v is the first in quire 12, which has 10 leaves (most quires in the book are of 8 or 12 leaves, although quires 24–5 are also of 10 leaves). E. Blake (1962, xix) lists twelve copies of the Book of Ely Cathedral but does not list one at Cambridge University Library; it is possible, however, that CUL Edc is Blake’s “Ely, Diocesan Registry MS, Liber M” as the Diocesan records are now at the Cambridge University Library. The NIMEV lists only two witnesses of the song, neither of which are Liber M or CUL Edc.

Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.I.1  s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 633. 215 x 142 mm. The English lyrics are predominantly songs against the Scots. Thomson and Morgan (2008a, 29) categorize the book as a trilingual miscellany of religious, moral, and
didactic texts. The size of the book and its elaborate illuminations (such as the image of the three faculties on folio 490v) make the book an expensive production. Both English and French rhyming lines are carefully marked with tail-rhyme red braces. Date: James (1980, Vol. 3, 1)

Cambridge, University Library MS Li.III.8 s. xiv. Paper. ff. 170. 290 x 220 mm (220 x 156 mm). Contains treatises and sermons. Peter Erb dates some sermons to between 1388 and 1408 (1971). The first part of the book has four Latin treatises on the ten commandments and some exempla with English and Anglo–Norman couplets interspersed (ff.1–40v), while the second part, where lyrics are found, contains 56 sermons. About 120 short lyrics are threaded into sermons. Many of the lyrics are edited by Theo Stemmler (1975). Date: James (1980, Vol. 3, 411).

Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.IV.32 s. xiv / Vellum. 240 x 170 mm (200 x 140 mm). In two columns. The English lyrics are clustered together in quires two and three on folios twelve to fifteen amid other French and Latin verse prayers, and are immediately followed by treatises on confession and penitence. The image on folio 8 (in quire 1) very much resembles the Queen Mary illustration “Wheel of the Attributes of Human Existence” in London, BL Arundel MS 83, the De Lisle Psalter. Lynda Dennison (1990, 122) regards CUL Gg.IV.32 as one of the thirty “Queen Mary Group” manuscripts, associated with Andrew Horn, London Chamberlain from 1320 to 1328. Parkes (2008, 108) notes that scribe of CUL MS Gg.4.32 copied part of the Corporation of London Record Office, Liber Custumarum 6; this is a different hand from that of the English lyrics however. Date: CUL (1980, Vol. 3, 177).

Cambridge, University Library MS Ee.I.5 s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 275 + viii. 235 x 160 mm. Contains statutes and the Magna Carta, with other charters. No music notation. Folios 189–192 are inserted in the hand that writes the flyleaf poem. The main book hand appears at the top of folio 191v. At the bottom of f. 191v is a s. xiv med hand which is quite similar in aspect to the “Al it is fantum” poem on the flyleaf. On f. iiiir is a copy of a dedimus potestatem writ, tested 4 July [1346], 20 Ed. III. The Lating verse (in a different hand) on f. iiiiv is “Linquo coax ranis”; next follows “Al hyt is fantom” and then four
lines of Latin verse beginning “constat in altari carnem de pane sacrari”; other verse beginning “virgo parens vixit sexaginta cum tribus annis.” On f. 98, “Incipiunt Notabilia,” a Latin poem, 10 lines, with tail-rhyme braces in brown and red ink. For a full description of the contents of the manuscript see Baker and Ringrose (1996). Date: James (1980, Vol. 2, 6).

Cambridge, University Library MS Ee.VI.29 s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 131. 165 x 120 mm. About 22 lines to a page. Owned by Thomas de Suwell, prest de Wyngfeld, f. 76v. Date: James (1980, Vol. 2, 267). No music notation. This is a book entirely in verse—Latin exclusively, except for one Latin-English poem (“Esto Memor Mortis,” NIMEV 3122) on f. 17r (marked as f. 22r in the manuscript). The catalogue description is brief, though it gives the Latin titles, and editions for some of these poems.

Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.VI.15 s. xviiin / Vellum. ff. 250. 164 x 135mm. With 26–34 lines to a page. No music notation. James describes this as a collection of theological tracts in different hands but these are later additions to an earlier chronicle, the Chronicle of Louth Park Abbey. Verse contents include the ten commandments in verse (six couplets, on f. 21r, not unique). Laing (1993) indicates the manuscript is s. xviiin with Latin material from s. xii – s. xv. The language is Louth Park, northerly English. Date: James (1980, Vol. 2, 521).

Cambridge, University Library MS Li.III.8 1388–1408 / Paper. ff. 170. 290 x 220 mm. With 35–46 lines to a page. Date: James (1980, Vol. 3, 411). See Stemmler (1975). No music notation. Has 125+ lyrics as couplets or short stanzas in English within the exempla and sermons. Contents are four anonymous treatises on the ten commandments, ff. 1–36v; exempla with couplets in English and Anglo-Norman and an ars praedicandi (ff. 37–40). The rest of the manuscript includes 56 sermons. The book’s sermons may be work of Thomas of Wimbledon, says Peter Erb. Date: Erb (1971, 65)

Cambridge, University Library MS Li.I.8 s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 207. 192 x 92 mm. With 40–41 lines to a page. Contains the Speculum Vitae and Passione Christi. No music notation. Contains five NIMEV items (NIMEV 11.5; 42.51; 245, 556). Writing inside the top line and past right margin. On f. 204v the English lyric begins 13 lines down, and is
marked by a red paraph measuring 7 x 4 mm. The hand is anglicana formata (early s.xv, possibly). Verse is written in wrapping text lines. The rest of the book has scribal features similar to f. 204 and the paraph is the same as that on f. 198r and f103r. Date: James (1980, Vol. 4, 4).

Cambridge, University Library MS Oo.VII.32 s. xiv / Vellum. Roll in two parts, each c. 442 x 286 mm. Genealogical table of kings since Egbert. See Bovey (2005) for a discussion of this roll’s relation to the Chaworth roll and the common training this illustrator probably shared with the Chaworth illustrator. No music notation. Contains illustrating English kings’ genealogies in Anglo-Norman along with illustrations. Contains “The lady Dame Fortune is Bothe Frende and Fo” (NIMEV 3408) written around an illustration of the Wheel of Fortune measuring 235 mm in diameter. There are several other copies of this quatrain. They also appear as stanza 4 of the “Lullay” poem. The hand of the English poem is quite different from the textualis of the French genealogy. Whereas the French (textualis) is very faded the English text is anglicana and is quite a bit darker; perhaps added later. The piece of the roll containing the English poem is more worn and faded than other pieces.

Dublin

Dublin, Trinity College MS 301 s. xiii – s. xiv / Vellum and paper. ff. 301 + i. 206 x 141 mm. English lyric on f. 194r (a Stabat iuxta poem) is in part A, the earlier part of the manuscript. The book is in many hands. Source: Colker (1991, Vol. 1, 559–595).

Durham

Durham University Library MS Cosin V.III.2 s. xiii/ Vellum. ff. 128. 250 x 190 mm (180 x 140 mm). Cropped. Contains “Cycles of early scholastic sermons, some at least by Roger of Salisbury (d. 1247), with some additions including English verses on ff. 127r–v.” The lines from the “Poema Morale” occur at the very end of the book. Source: Durham UL (2012).
Edinburgh

National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 18.7.21  c.1372 / Vellum. 3 + 166 + 2.
Written space and page organization varies throughout the manuscript. With 31 lines to a page (varies). For example, f. 4v has an 8 mm margin at the left, 18 mm at the bottom, and two columns ruled, each of 48 and 62mm. Lyrics are sometimes written sideways on the page next to other lyrics copied within the ruled space. The National Library of Scotland has a summary catalogue description that is unpublished. See also Wilson (1973). The manuscript has been microfilmed.

National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS 19.2.1 (Auchinleck)  c.1331–1340 / Vellum. ff. 331 + 11 stubs. 10 detached folios exist. 250 x 190 mm (has been trimmed).
See Burnley and Wiggins (2003) for the online facsimile and detailed description, including a list of English lyrics.

Glasgow

University of Glasgow, Hunter MS 512 (olim V.8.15)  1385–6 / Vellum. ff. 226.
171 x 117 mm. In single columns of 17 lines each. Hours of the Virgin. Contains “Crist made to man a fair present” (NIMEV 611 [ed. Brown 1952, 113]) on f. 34r. Source: Glasgow UL (2012).

London

London, British Library Additional MS 11579  s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 151. 143 x 95 mm (118 x 75mm). Contains sermons and the fables of Odo of Cheriton (c.1185–c.1247), commonly used for teaching (Jacobs 1985, 10). Notes on falcons on ff. 98v and 99r (Wright 1842, 227) point toward the book’s use in tutoring a wealthy male student. Several of the ten lyrics in this book are unique and unedited, such as NIMEV 1415.5 (“Thyf ye love in thee”), a four-line lyric on folio 26v. Date: BL (2012).

London, British Library Additional MS 17376  s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 220. The first 149 leaves are a prose version of the Psalms, Canticles, and Athanasian Creed in Latin and English. Copied sometime after 1327. The inscription domini Wilh de Schorhem in the
book suggests he was a vicar in Shoreham, Kent (Shoreham 1902/1973, xi). Shoreham’s book contains six unique devotional poems. The longest poem, on the seven sacraments, takes up thirty-two folios; the Marian lyric “Marye mayde mylde and free” is shorter, at 84 lines. Pamela Gradon compares Shoreham’s poem “Mary Mediatrix” with Marian poetry by Chaucer and Lydgate in order to illustrate that Shoreham does not use the “aureate” style (1974, 352–4). The aaabcb rhyme scheme Shoreham uses in this particular poem is distinctive in that it makes use both of couplets and alternating rhymes; it is not unique but is much less common than tail rhyme, couplet, and monorhyming rhyme schemes in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Another Marian poem by Shoreham, about Mary’s five joys, uses tail-rhyme. Date: Shoreham (1902/1973, xi).

London, British Library Additional MS 27909  s. xiii – s. xvii. Vellum. ff. 21. 310 x 238 mm (210 x 160 mm). In two columns. A flyleaf (f. 2r) has a unique poem addressed to the Virgin in eleven quatrains (NIMEV 1839), s.xiii. An elaborate L in “leudi” extends 14 mm into the top margin and is rubricated in green. Other initials are inked in red and green. The brown ink of the earliest scribe’s hand has been amended by another hand with blacker ink, of a later date due to its insertion of a single-bowled a. The earliest hand on this leaf is protogothic with anglicana. Date: BL (2012).

London, British Library Additional MS 46919  s. xiv / Vellum. ii + 211 ff. 230 x 170 mm (185 x 130 mm). In one column of 31 lines. In several hands including Friar William of Herebert’s (d.1333). Trilingual miscellany, with treatises, poems, and sermons in Anglo-Norman French (items 12, 13, 19, 29, 30, 32 are Continental French), Latin and Middle English. Contains 19 English religious lyrics. Also contains Bibbesworth’s French grammar, used for teaching noble or gentry children who might need French in order to run an estate (Kibbee 1991, 44). An Anglo-Norman version of Boethius’s Consolatio is bound with these texts. Date: Herebert (1987).

London, British Library Additional MS 61901  s. xivex–s. xv / Vellum. ff. 90. 370 x 255 mm (255 x 160 mm). In two columns of 28 lines. Illustrated; contains the Life of St. John of Beverley as well as Latin charters of Beverley Minster to 1380. The book was originally in 12 quires of 8. Some illuminations resemble initials in the Furness Abbey
Cartulary (Morris and Cambridge 1989, 21) and are of the late s.xiv or early s.xv. Morris and Cambridge suggest this book was commissioned by a dignitary of the Minster and would have been used for display in the church. Date: Morris and Cambridge (1989, 21); British Library (2012).


**London, British Library Arundel MS 248** s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 201. 209 x 152 mm. Contains music notation and the song “Angelus ad Virginem” as well as English lyrics. Hands on f. 154r, containing “Jesu Cristes Milde Moder” are quite compressed, with 44 lines of text and 5 staves of music. Facsimiles of the folios containing music can be found in Wooldridge and Hughes (1897-1913, Vol. 1, plates 32-6). See also Helen Deeming’s thesis (2005a).

**London, British Library Arundel MS 292** s. xiii / Vellum. ii + 115 ff. 145 x 120 mm. In quires of 8 and 10 leaves. Compiled at Norwich Priory. Contains the *Middle English Physiologus*, eight Middle English lyrics such as the rhyming *Pater Noster* and the Blacksmiths’ poem (NIMEV 3227), and the French “Bele Aeliz” embedded in a sermon by Stephen of Langdon, as well as other Old French moral poetry. The lyrics are in several hands from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries. See H. Wirtjes (1991) for a description of the manuscript; R. Taylor (2008) for more on “Bele Aeliz”; and J. Greatrex (2002) for more on the manuscript’s Norwich connections.

**London, British Library Arundel MS 57** s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 108. 305 x 195 mm (240 x 150 mm). Contains the *Prick of Conscience*. An inscription says the book belonged to the monk “Dan Michelis of Northgate” and resided in “the bochouse of Saynt Austines
of Canterberi.” Although not the same hand, the textualis-anglicana hybrid of Arundel 57 recalls that of Trinity 323. (Source: Gradon 1979, 4-5.)

London, British Library Cotton Caligula MS A.IX   s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 259. 212 x 150 mm (trimmed) (163 x 120 mm). Two columns of 60 mm each, with 32–34 lines. In 16 quires of 12 leaves each. See N. Cartlidge (1997a, 1997b) for a detailed discussion of this manuscript. Contains La3amon, the Owl and the Nightingale and eight Middle English lyrics. Source: Ker (1962, i).

London, British Library Cotton Charters MS IV.18   s. xiv / Vellum. Single. 168 x 266 mm (135 x 230 mm—it is wider than it is long). In 19 wrapping lines, with semicolons dividing rhyming phrases. The charter has been stored while folded (it was folded four times) and stained with liquid while was folded. The hand is anglicana formata, and some forked ascenders are visible, though a secretary single-bowled a appears on the dorso in “Æthelstan,” perhaps indicating a s.xivex or s.xvin date. Date: Morris & Cambridge (1989). Contains the rhyming Charter of King Æthelstan (NIMEV 3300) and no other texts. An unbound piece of vellum, like a charter would be. Probably from Yorkshire; associated with Beverly Minster. For date and description, see Witty (1921, 36-44) and Morris and Cambridge (1981, 21).

London, British Library Cotton Cleopatra MS B.VI   s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 251. 195 x 140 mm (150 x 115 mm for f. 205v). In 2 vols: one contains Latin treatises on the writing arts, including the Poetria Nova by Geoffrey of Vinsauf and the Anticlaudianus by Alan of Lille; the other contains the Cistercian monk Aelred of Rievaulx’s Twelve Abuses of the Cloisters. The four English lyrics are all on two folios (f. 204-5) that are part of a quire at the end of Aelred’s Twelve Abuses. The hand of this folio is unlike the one from the Twelve Abuses. On f. 205v, the page is ruled, but the scribe writes on the top line. Writing is in one column with margins of 7 and 4 mm (very narrow) with 32 lines to a page. The lyric on f. 205v is “Bidde hue with milde steuene,” and the acrostic for the four lines is “BUHM” (NIMEV 519). For more on this manuscript of Vinsauf, see Camargo (1999). Date: BL (2012).


London, British Library Egerton MS 613  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 74. 225 x 145 mm. This manuscript has been described by Betty Hill (1978b, 408). It contains five English lyrics. NIMEV 3221, “Somer is comen and winter gon” on f. 1v is copied in a small, cramped hand (32 lines in a written space 121 mm long) with tail-rhyme braces (messy, dashed horizontal-ish lines meeting a horizontal line at the third line, indicating the same rhymes for the four lines of each stanza).

London, British Library Harley MS 2339  s. xiv–xv / Vellum. ff. 128. 132 x 95 mm. With 17 lines to a page. Contains Wycliffite material (Item 18 has “A profitable Mirrour for synful Men & Wymen to biholde ynne,” on f. 49r; f. 62v has another Wycliffite tract, “A Tretis of þre arowis tha schulen be schot on Domesday.” The quire with English poetry is ff. 118-126 and the poetry is copied with nested tail-rhyme braces.

London, British Library Harley MS 3775  s. xivmed / Vellum. Dean and Boulton (1999) note that this manuscript contains an “Sonques nuls hoem,” an Anglo-Norman song with music attributed to three continental poets. Also contains the “Short Charter of Christ” (NIMEV 4184).

London, British Library Harley MS 7322  s. xivex / Vellum. ff. 150. 170 x 125 mm (136 x 79 mm on f. 145r). Ruled finely in pencil, single columns, with 30 lines to a page. A lyric acrostic of “LOVE” (V is W, “Werkeþ”) is copied on f. 145r; these four
letters are rubricated above and within the poem and there is a paraph of 5 x 10 mm. Folio 145r begins a new quire of 8, but is in the same anglicana formata hand as the previous quire. Tail-rhyme braces (angular) are used to mark rhyme.

London, British Library Harley MS 2253 s. xiv / Vellum. 293 x 188 mm (215 x 130 mm). Carter Revard (2000) discusses the hand of the Harley scribe in detail; see also the facsimile edited by N.R. Ker (1965) for a detailed manuscript description.

London, British Library Harley MS 2316 s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 64. 160 x 105 mm (125 x 80 mm). Contains 19 lyric items, one of which overlaps with the Vernon manuscript. Many of these lyrics cluster together on folios 25 and 26, which are the first two folios of the book’s third quire. The book consists of three quires of 12, one of 14, and one of 11. Contains the Legenda Aurea and didactic tales. NIMEV 673, “Ded is strong and maystret alle thing” on f. 25v is written in verse lines with a rubricated first initial. Tail-rhyme braces are like inverse scolloping; they indicate couplets rather than larger arrangements of lines. This page has been trimmed; red Latin marginalia is cut off. Brown ink marginalia also visible. “Ded” starts all the lines. For similar braces and hand see Latin poetry on f. 36r; the inverse scolloping applies to two and four-line stanzas here. English verse follows here, not written in verse lines but there is an ink brace around the lines. The manuscript is catalogued by the Wellcome trust. Several poems are shared with other manuscripts, including NIMEV 1179 with Edinburgh, NLS Adv. MS 18.7.21.

London, British Library Harley MS 978 s. xiii \textsuperscript{c}x / Vellum. ff. 163. 190 x 130 mm (145–160 x 113 mm). May have been copied by a student or master at Oxford. This miscellany contains only one English lyric: “Sum is icumen in” (NIMEV 3223), a four-part canon which is accompanied by music, but it contains four monophonic Latin songs and a polyphonic conductus (for which, see Gilbert Reaney [1966, 505–08]). Also contains lays by Marie de France, medical texts, laments for Thomas Becket, a celebration of a victory by Simon de Montfort, and a large collection of French verse, and Goliardic satiric and ribald Latin verse (Taylor 2002, 83). Taylor says this manuscript came into the Reading Abbey library as the commonplace book of William of
Winchester, who spent some time at Oxford prior to becoming a Reading monk (2002, 121). Possibly compiled from 1261 to 1265. Date: BL (2012)

**London, British Library Royal MS 12.E.1** s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 197. In two volumes: s. xv Latin metrical arithmetic and s. xiv saints’ lives (including St. Katherine and Saint Dominic). The English lyric “Stond Wel Moder” has music notation (three staves) and words appear on f. 194r. The pages of the “Stond Wel Moder” quire have been enlarged; that is, they have been pasted onto larger vellum so they can be bound with the other quires which were larger. A French song or poem follows “Stond Wel Moder,” “[a]mer me estut a tute fin e mun quoiz uen”.

**London, British Library Royal MS 17.B.XVII** s.xiv / Vellum. ff. 108. 185 x 130 mm (135 x 90 mm), written in a single column. Contents of the book include sermons and other theological material in prose and verse, in Northern English. Contains the lyric “Al hyt is fantom” on f. 2v, a flyleaf. Above it two other English lyrics are copied, including “Abuses of the Age” and “When pride is most in prise.” Date: BL (2012).

**London, British Library Royal MS 8.F.II** s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 181. 265 x 190 mm. In two columns (each 255 x 75 mm.) With 53 lines to a column, lines are 4 mm high. The folios have been clipped. The flyleaf on which “Stond Wel Moder” is copied is attached at the end of a quire of 12 leaves, the last two leaves of which are blank. Date: BL (2012).

**London, British Library Royal MS 12.C.XII** s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 123. 230 x 146 mm (185 x 125 mm). In single columns of 31 lines. Contains three English lyrics. Carter Revard estimates that the Harley scribe copied Royal from c1316-1322 (Revard 2000, 73); so, earlier than Harley 2253, which he dates c.1330–1340.

**London, British Library Royal MS 2.F.VIII.** s. xiiiex / Vellum. This is a flyleaf in a Latin psalter that once belonged to St. Alban’s Abbey. Contains two lyrics; one lyric that appears on a flyleaf (NIMEV 3963) appears in Harley 2253. Source: Boffey (1985, 17)
London, British Library, Harley MS 913  c.1335 / Vellum. 140 x 95 mm (120 x 75 mm). In single columns in a textura quadrata hand. The book is believed to be a Franciscan production because Piers of Bermingham, subject of one of Harley 913’s texts, is buried in the Franciscan priory at Kildare, and is known as the Kildare manuscript because another lyric is attributed to a Frere Michel Kyldare (Cartlidge 2003, 37-8). See Angela and Lucas (1990) and Lucas (1995).


London, Lambeth Palace MS 487  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 67. 177 x 133 mm. With 28 lines to a page. Sermons. Source: James (1932, 673).

London, Lambeth Palace MS 499  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. ii + 301. 233 x 177 mm. With 48 lines to a page. Source: James (1932, 691); see also Pickering (1992).

London, Lambeth Palace MS 522  s. xiiiex / Vellum. ff. iii + 320 + iv. 203 x 130 mm. With 18 lines to a page. See also Barratt (2008). Contains the *Chateau d’amour*. Source: James (1932, 715).


London, National Archives DL 41/270 1220–1450 / Vellum. Roll. Contains Æthelstan’s charter to the Abbey of Ripon in North Yorkshire (Duchy of Lancaster, 1399 onwards). The rhyming couplets are copied in wrapping lines (ed. Fowler 1881, 89-93). The charter is copied into a roll containing four membranes, onto which are copied containing many pleadings at Ripon relating to lands and privileges, in dispute between Walter, archbishop of York, and the chapter of the church of St. Wilfrid.
London, National Archives E 175/11/16  s. xiv\textsuperscript{in} / Vellum. Roll. Three versions (Latin, French, and English) of the “Erthe” poem are copied onto the dorso of this statute. The roll is in two membranes 512 x 283 mm. The poems are copied with a written space of 275 x 153 mm in two columns of 60–90 mm and 60–80 mm wide, with a 10–15 mm gap between the two columns, and a margin of 10–12 mm at the left and right. The Latin is copied in the left column; the French is copied in the remaining space to the right, and the English is copied below. A hand using darker ink corrects the earlier hand. The 60–80-mm wide column and the spiky anglicana hand are similar to those in the fragment Cambridge, University Library Additional MS 4407.

London, National Archives KB 9/144 m31  c.1392–1393 / Vellum. 150 x 285 (90 x 250 mm). Sheets of varying sizes are loosely bound together. Folio 31 is copied in one column of twelve lines. The book contains records of indictments from the trailbaston, a regional court, at Nottingham and York; this folio is from the York indictments file. Folio 27 (dated 1392 by Hawkes 2007, 120) has an account of a night prowler, while Folio 35 (also 1392) is an account of a rape case.

Maidstone

Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. iv + 242 + viii. 267 x 188 mm (237 x 162 mm) on f. 93r. In three columns of 50 mm each, with 5 mm between each column, 68 lines to a column. Ruled in pencil; pricking not evident. Folio 253r measures 269 x 192 mm and is in two columns, 73 lines to a column; columns are 71-78 mm wide. Writing is below the top line. The book retains its original boards (272 x 195 x 5 mm) with two spaces indicating removed clasps measuring 25 x 18 mm. Folio 243v measures 266 x 195 mm with only a 3-mm margin at the top; this folio has nine different stints and there may be three different hands. Date: Ker (1969, Vol. 3, 317); see also Brown (1926). Contains music notation. See Photographs A and B in Appendix 2.

Oxford

Oxford, Balliol College MS 149  After 1331 / Vellum. ff. i + 221. 292 x 203 mm. Folios 1-106 with 44 lines to a page; the remainder in two columns of 33-43
lines. In two parts: Latin sermons in part 1, folios 1-106; and in part 2, a commentary on
Isaiah, letters, papal bulls, dispensations and didactic religious texts. All the lyrics in this
book are embedded in sermons, most of them in either the Good Friday sermon on
Christ’s passion, or in the Amore Langueo sermon. These sermons occur in several other
manuscripts, all of them fifteenth-century, though not all of the sermons contain the same
selection of English tag-lyrics. Thus, like the lyrics in Langtoft or Trevisa, these verses,
which are copied widely, are short interludes that never appear outside of sermons.
Unlike the Lady Fortune verses, or the devotional lyrics in Jesus 29, these lyrics do not
connect to a wider network of lyric, but to networks of sermons. Date: Mynors (1963,
130)

Oxford, Balliol College MS 230 s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 254. 220 x 160
mm. Sermons. In two columns each of 40–45 lines and mostly in quires of 12. In two
hands. Folios 1–98 are the Latin Compendium (c.1268) of Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg
(c.1205–1270). Following this is a sermon on confession and notes for another
sermon; the Elucidarium by Honorius of Austun (d. c.1151); more sermons; treatises on
miracles, and miraculous stories—such as one about a Pope who slept with a recluse, and
had one of his shoes taken by the Devil (Mynors 242). The lyric on f. 153 appears in a
sermon on “Illa qua sursum est Jerusalem” in which Christians who relapse are compared
to boys who play a game, saying “How many miles to Beverleyham,” and replying “Ha
ha petipas, 3uot ich am ther ich was.” Date: Mynors (1963, 240).

Oxford, Bodleian, Additional MS E.6 c.1293–1320. Vellum. Roll with four
membranes. 590 x 77 mm (530 x 72 mm). In two hands. The hand of the “Sayings of
Saint Bernard” is Anglicana of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century; tail-rhyme
braces apparent. Thin aspect; rounded; not dissimilar to the Harley 2253 scribe’s hand,
with pronounced forked ascenders. No initials begin the lines; no illuminations; no ruling
is evident. The first membrane begins with “The Sayings of Saint Bernard” (NIMEV
3310) which continues onto the second membrane until 55 mm from the bottom. A new

239 The Compendium treats the Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, Grace, the Sacraments, and the Last
Four Things.
hand begins here, and a new poem, the “Fifteen Signs” (NIMEV 1823). This poem appears to have slightly different dialect spellings (scal for shall in membrane one, and ssal in membrane two). No music notation. Date: Monda (1970, 299).

Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole MS 360.VII. (SC 6641) s. xiii / Vellum. 170 x 135 mm (112 x 108 mm [f. 145v]). In double columns of 44 lines. Writing on the top line. Contains sermons and lyrics in Latin and English. The lyric “Lord, thy passion” (NIMEV 1977) appears next to “My Leman on the Rood,” another English lyric about the sight of the passion. Date: Laing (1993, 14).

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS 26 (SC 1871) s. xiii / Vellum. 148 x 105 mm (128 x 80 mm). In single columns of 41 lines. No pricking evident; no ruling visible; folios have been trimmed. Folio 202v is narrower because it has been cropped differently than f.107r. On f. 202v, square brackets link each English verse line, where the scribe has copied NIMEV 29 (“A child is boren”) in three four-line stanzas with a four-line burden. See also Fletcher and Hudson (2008).

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS 42 (SC 1846) s. xiv in / Vellum. ff. 287. 177 x 130 mm (150 x 101 mm). In two columns with 60 lines. The second section, with Middle English lyrics, is s.xiii ex/s.xiv in, and though it has no sermons it has lists of sermons for holy days, the Meditations of Bernard, Augustine’s Liber florigerus, and an anonymous treatise on De preceptis Decalogi, all of which point to its use by friars—especially “The Rule and Life of the Minor Brothers. Part three of Section Two includes notes on Roman, Greek, and Hebrew months; the Greek alphabet, and English recipes. See Brown (1924, 242). Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 2, 81).


Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS 57 (SC 2004) s. xiii. Vellum. ff. iii + 219. 157 x 125 mm (120 x 89 mm). No music notation. Contains a unique passion lyric (NIMEV 3961) on f. 102v in one twelve-line stanza. The English hand may be the same as the hand of the Latin on poem on the facing page, but using a slightly different script. The lyric is copied in verse lines in two columns. The lines under the text are in red and extend only as far as do the words. Rubricated initials begin each line. Hand is anglicana with a protogothic aspect. Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 2, 156).

Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley MS 622 (SC 2156) s. xiiiex / Vellum. ff. iii + 118. 184 x 137 mm. Geoffrey of Monmouth. On folio iii-v and f. 116 are found NIMEV 3280, “That in thi mischief forsakit the no3th,” four monorhyming lines, also in CUL 5943. Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 2, 234).

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby MS 2 (SC 1603) s.xiiiex / Vellum. ff. 152. 105 x 75 mm (75 x 50 mm). In one column of 22-25 lines. On f. 15r is copied NIMEV 2293 (“No more ne will I wiked be”), a lyric in three six-line stanzas. This book is listed in Watson’s 1997 Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts. On folios 1-4 are predictions of eclipses 1281-1300. Date: Laing (1993, 147).

Oxford, Bodleian, Digby MS 86 c.1272–1282 / Vellum. ff. 207. Written space of 165–175 x 110–130 mm and 160–165 x 120–125 mm (depending on scribe and folio). A trilingual miscellany and Southwest Midlands production, with evident appeal to a lay context (with secular tales such as Dame Sirith and devotional content such as the Legend of Saint Eustace). Judith Tschann and Malcolm Parkes describe it as the commonplace book of a layman—not a luxury book, but not poorly made; it is consistently rubricated and carefully written. The written space sizes vary but Scribe A ranges from 175–165 x 130–110 mm, while Scribe B ranges from 165–160 x 125–120 mm (Tschann and Parkes 1996, xlvii). Scribe A’s ruling is similar to Cotton Caligula A.IX’s measurement of 163 x 120; interestingly, Caligula A.IX also shares one lyric with Digby 86: “On Doomsday” (NIMEV 3967). The size of Digby 86’s pages (220 x 150 mm) meanwhile approach Egerton 613’s (225 x 145 mm) but the written space is
very different, since Egerton 613’s scribe crams in 32 lines to 120 mm vs Digby 86 (Scribe A)’s 175 mm. Date: Tschann and Parkes (1996, i–lxii).

**Oxford, Bodleian, Douce MS 139 (SC 21713)**  s. xiii / Vellum. ff. v + 203. 250 x 187 mm. Several late s. xiii manuscripts bound together. It contains two unique musical lyrics, both on worldly love. Folio 5r measures 140 x 170 mm and on it are found four staves of music with English writing between the staves. Only the top part of the page (120 x 157 mm) is ruled. The facing page, f. 4v, is ruled for text and contains 36 lines of Latin in an Anglicana hand. On folio 5v there are 9 staves for music, but not words. The lines are ruled more narrowly, and the notes are oblique rather than oblong, suggesting a different stint. Brown notes (1932, 170) that in the margin appears a Latin quatrain, possibly by Jean de Garland, which is also found in TCC 1109 (s. xiv). Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 4, 534). See also Deeming (2011).

**Oxford, Bodleian, Douce MS 381 (SC 21956)**  s. xiii – s. xv / Vellum. ff. vi + 184. 292 x 214 mm. A compilation of separate leaves from several s.xiii-s.xv books. There are four leaves (ff. 20-23). The hand on f. 22 (vellum) contains “With ryth,” a song with music notation. The hand has long secretary threads with an anglicana w, and is probably late s.xiv if not s.xv. Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 4, 614).


**Oxford, Bodleian, Hatton MS 107 (SC 4031)**  s. xiiiex / Vellum. ff. ii + 276. overlaps NIMEV 2145 with Merton 248. Its folios are about 162 x 112 mm and it dates from s.xiii to the s.xiv. It is written in mostly double columns. Part A is late s. xiii and written in double cols. It contains Latin sermons. At fol. 91 is a homily on the 7 virtues, 7 gifts etc; following this is a list of eight sets of sevens. Latin, French, and English verses appear on folio 1v in a hand of about 1300. Source: Dean & Boulton (1999). Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 2, 804).
Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Lat. MS 95 (SC 1485) s. xiii / Vellum. 270 x 80 mm (219 x 35 mm). Folio iv is a flyleaf, 270 x 75 mm, and the written space measures 106 x 35 mm. This book was a psalter for Ely Cathedral. The 60 lines of tail rhyme look as if they were written on the flyleaf after the book was bound. See Harrison (1958) for more on this manuscript. Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 2, 63).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 108 (SC 1486) s. xiii – s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 238. This book is a devotional miscellany produced probably for a lay household. It contains the romances King Horn and Havelok the Dane (also in Cambridge, UL Additional MS 4407; see above) and hagiography, as well as several English lyrics. Laing distinguishes three hands. Hand A copies the South English Legendary as well as the lyric “The Sayings of Saint Bernard,” (NIMEV 3310), while Hand B copies the “Body and Soul,” and Hand C copies Havelok and King Horn. Source: Laing (1993, 165).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 111 (SC 1550) s. xv. ff. 188. 185 x 135 mm (142 x 90 mm). In one column, 36 lines to a page. Contains English verse interspersed throughout a Fasciculus Morum collection; for example, NIMEV 3683 overlaps with CUL Ii.3.8. The folio size is 185–190 x 135 mm and the written space is 140–142 x 90–95mm. The verse is written in wrapping lines (thus, as prose) and the hand is a secretary hybrid with formata features including broken strokes and a single-bowled a. There are two paper flyleaves but the rest is vellum and in quires of 8 (quires 1–4) and 12 (the rest of the book); the English poetr in quires 5 and 20, is in quires of 12. Date: Coxe (1973, Vol. 2, 117).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 471 (SC 1053) s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 183. 185 x 130 mm (145 x 92 mm). In two columns 44 mm wide, 30 lines to a column (f. 65r). The binding is original; flat spine and covers of tawed leather (white, shows follicles)—detached, showing five bands. In column B, writing continues past the ruled edge of the right margin. Owned by Jacobi Ward. Contains Kentish sermons and Grosseteste’s Chateau d’Amour. The Brut and Chateau d’Amour are written in verse...
lines. The lyric “Death’s Wither Clench” is written in wrapping lines with puncti. Date: Laing (1993, 168).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 511 (SC 969) s. xiii. Vellum. ff. 204. 215 x 150 mm (165 x 110 mm). In two columns. This book contains two short English lyrics. One is a couplet, while the other is a couplet normally found in another lyric. Both are embedded in Dominican sermons. Three author names are mentioned: Simon de Hentona, R. de Fisacre, and H. de Mordon. Date (Laing 1993, 138; Wenzel 1986 225–6; Coxe 1973, Vol. 2, 369).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 601 (SC 1491) s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 116. 310 x 210 mm. Original s.xiv binding. Contains the anonymous Prick of Conscience, and English lyrics appear on flyleaves at the end. On folio 115v, five hands are evident. NIMEV 1399 (“I wold ffayn be a clarke”) appears also in Balliol 34, a s.xv book. Date: Greene (1977, 245-6).

Oxford, Bodleian, Laud Miscellaneous MS 647 (SC 1595) s. xivin / Vellum. ff. 188. 370 x 236 mm (316 x 165). In two columns 73-82 mm wide, 44 lines to a column. “The Canute Song” on f.45v is copied in wrapping lines (NIMEV 2164). This is the Liber Eliensis and the song is also found in Trinity 1105 (O.2.1) and CUL MS Edc 1. Date: Coxe (Vol. 2, 472).

Oxford, Bodleian, Liturgical MS 104 (SC 30605) s. xiv / Vellum. ff. v + 125. 215 x 152 mm. Hours of the Virgin. Date: Madan (1953, Vol. 5, 848).

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson MS A.273 (SC 11159)  s. xiv / Vellum. ff. 145.
Contains saints’ lives, the *Twelve Abuses*, the Magna Carta, material on Alchemy, Papal letters, as well as NIMEV 2787, the macaronic “On the Evils of the Times.” Source: Aspin (1953, 161-4).

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson MS D.913 (SC 13679)  s. xv / Vellum/Paper.
(The English lyrics are on vellum.) A compilation of leaves from many different books, including s.xv copyings of John Lydgate’s *Siege of Troy* and Chaucer’s *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, and a s. xiv copy of the *Roman de la Rose* by Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris. Item I(a) on which we find the secular lyric “Everykune tre” was once stuck to a board as pastedown, or so we might judge from its discoloured white edges, but the neat 5-mm margin and “cc” markings (indicating stanza breaks) show our lyric scribe giving the lyric a margin of blank space to the left, and taking care to mark the beginnings of stanzas: his copy is anything but random. Date: Robbins (1952, 232).

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson MS G.18 (SC 14751)  s. xiii ex / Vellum. ff. 106. 160 x 100 mm (105 x 45 mm). One column of 33 lines. Folio 105v has music notation and text copied in two hands (A and B), while f. 6r has an English lyric in the hand of B below a music stave.

Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson MS G.22 (SC 14755)  s. xiv in / Vellum. 207 x 139 mm (170 x 120 mm). A book of psalms. Its original binding is now partially detached. Folio 1r/v contains French and English songs set to music. It may have been a binding fragment and appears torn at the bottom of the page. It has been added to a stub of the old folio 1. Whereas the main hand of the book is text rotunda, or text with a carolingian aspect, the hand on the flyleaf is Anglicana. The verse is copied in two columns; on f. 1r, the left top half of the column is taken up with four staves, each with one line of French between them; at the bottom there are fifteen lines of French (in wrapping lines). In the right column there are 9 lines of French with 6 staves below and one line of French between the staves. On f. 1v, the English lyric, there is a similar organization: two staves in the top left of the column followed by 21 lines of French; in the left column, 6 lines of
These French songs are unique. Date: Deeming (2011).

**Oxford, Bodleian, Selden Supra MS 74 (SC 3462)**

s. xiii / Vellum. ff. ii + 126. 222 x 165 mm (196 x 124 mm). In double columns of 60 mm wide, 33 lines to a column. Ruled in pencil; no prickings evident. The book is a copy of the *Speculum Ecclesiae*. The “Nou goth sonne under wode couplet” (NIMEV 2320A3) is found embedded fourteen lines down on f. 55v in the *Speculum Ecclesiae*, and is the only English lyric tag in the book other than NIMEV 2698 (two couplets embedded in Walter of Henley’s *Book of Husbandry*). Date: Madan (Vol. 2, 642).

**Oxford, Bodleian, Tanner MS 169 (SC 9995)**


**Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 218**

s. xv<sup>ex</sup> / Vellum. Contains the *Fasciculus Morum* from Wenzel’s Group Z, which is “consistently longer or more expanded” than the three other groups of FM manuscripts (Wenzel 1989, 5). Date: Thomson (2011, 104).

**Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 59**

s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 122. 210 x 130 mm (150 x 110 mm). Contains Alan of Lille and Boethius. No pricking visible. Quires nine and fifteen contain English lyrics. The hand of two lyrics on folios 66r and 116v may be the same scribe. Date: Thomson (2011, 30). See Dobson (1979, 166) for “Edi be thu” music.

**Oxford, Jesus College MS 29**

s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 261. 185 x 240 mm (143 x 118 mm). The leaves have been trimmed. Most of the manuscript is copied in one column, but the *Owl and the Nightingale* is copied in two columns. Source: Ker (1963, xii).

**Oxford, Merton College MS 248**

s. xiv, s. xii, s. xiii / Vellum. ff. 231. 280 x 200 mm (240 x 155 mm). Written in two columns. Lyrics written as prose in a

**Oxford, New College MS 88** s. xiv / Vellum. ff. i + 491 + iv. 147 x 108 mm. Owned by the Archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Cranley. Cranley (d.1417) gave New 88 to Oxford. Its s.xv evidence of patronage at Oxford is discussed by Cole (2007, 427–8). One of the smallest manuscripts containing English lyrics. Date: Coxe (1852, 28).


**Windsor**

Appendix 2: Photographs

A: Maidstone A.13, f. 93r, “Poema Morale” excerpt

Printed with permission of Maidstone Museum and Bentlif Art Gallery
B: Maidstone A.13, f. 36v, “Poema Morale” excerpt

Printed with permission of Maidstone Museum and Bentlif Art Gallery
Photograph C: Maidstone A.13, f. 93v, music notation

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