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"MERCY AND JUSTICE": THE ADDITIONAL MS 31042 VERSION

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This version of the poem "Mercy and Justice" is to be found in BL MS Additional 31042,¹ and a punctuated text was printed by K. Brunner in *Archiv* 132 (1914) pp.319-21. Of the other three versions, that in MS Harlech 10 (in the National Library of Wales) was edited under the title "Mercy and Righteousness" in *NM* 73 (1972) pp.181-91 by Auvo Kurvinen, with some discussion of the problems raised by comparing that version with those in Lambeth Palace MS 853 (L)² and the present version (A). She refers to Harlech 10 as P, since it was earlier catalogued as Porkington 10; in this and my other article I refer to it as H/P. I have edited the fourth version, found in Chichester MS Cowfold (C), in *NM* 83 (1982) pp.178-91, and tried to relate it to some of the problems posed by Professor Kurvinen. All versions are placed within the fifteenth century (see e.g. Kurvinen, p.184).

The A-version, to be found on ff.122v-123r, is written in one hand with two columns to a page, and headed *A Song how þat Mercy passeth Rightwisnes*. (I prefer to translate *Rightwisnes* as 'Justice' rather than Kurvinen's 'Righteousness'.) There is a guide-letter *B* in the margin before the large initial *B* of the first line of the poem. In the following stanzas, except for stanza 2, there is a mark in the margin to indicate the beginning of each new stanza on f.122v; on f.123r only the final stanza shows this, the other three marks having no doubt been obscured by the binding.

Apart from a few examples, final *n* has a flourish that could be regarded as a mark of abbreviation for *e* or *n*, but doubling of final consonants is not a regular feature, and *-e* is not generally etymologically necessary in these words, though it is often found unhistorically in other forms, e.g. *forthe* 8. The sign has therefore been ignored, apart from one instance, in 52. This version of the poem contains 14 stanzas, against C's 15, L's 20 and H/P's 26.

To facilitate comprehension of the correspondence between the stanzas of the four versions the following table³ is provided:

(Numbers in this table refer to stanzas.)

H/P	L	A	C
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	-	5	5
6	-	-	6
7	-	-	7
8	-	6	8
9	5	7	9
10	6	8	10
11	7	9	11
-	-	10 (=H/P6)	-
-	-	11 (=H/P7)	-
12	8	-	12
13	-----		
14	9	-	13
15	10	12	14
-----			15
16	11	-	
17	12	-	
18	-----		
19	13	-	
20	14	-	
21	15	-	
22	16	-	
23	17	-	
24	18	-	
25	19	-	
-----			13
26	20	14	

Thus, of the first fifteen stanzas in H/P (the longest version), apart from 13, which is unique to H/P, C has equivalents for all; L omits H/P 5-8 completely; A rearranges H/P's 6 and 7 and omits 12 and 14. Of the remaining stanzas of H/P (16-26), L contains all but 18, A only 26 (though it precedes it with one peculiar to itself), and C has none equivalent to any of H/P's, but has a unique concluding stanza.

Dialectally A shows many northern features, whereas the other three versions are more southerly, C apparently as far south as the Cowfold (Sussex) area (Bazire, *NM* p.180). (Although in this article variants may seem to be attributed to the scribes of the four manuscripts, it should be remembered that a previous transmitter may in fact have been responsible. When variants are cited which are shared by two or three manuscripts, the spelling is that of the first mentioned.)

In the following list of dialectal features in A an asterisk precedes a word or form of a word that is peculiar to A, since this version by no means always corresponds to the other three; the asterisked form has therefore greater significance, supporting the suggestion that the pronounced northern dialectal colouring has been acquired in the course of transmission. Significant features in A (with examples quoted by line-number) are:

- (i) 3 pers.pron. nom.pl.: *þay* *3 4 55 *92.
- (ii) 3 pers.pron. nom.sg. fem.: *scho* *45.
- (iii) Infinitive: no ending.
- (iv) 2 sg.pres.indic.: *-s(e)*.
- (v) 3 sg.pres.indic.: *-the* 35 (also *passeth* in the title); *-e* 10 18 (both in the construction *me thynke*); otherwise *-e)s(e)* (mainly *-es*). (NB *has* *98).
- (vi) Pa.pa.: *-n(e)*. (NB *loken* *101).
- (vii) Verb 'to be', 3 sg.pres.indic.: *es*.

All these morphological features point to a northerly dialect, and there are other significant supporting features of phonology or vocabulary:

(i) Although the reflex of OE \bar{a} appears internally as *o*, it is *a* in the rhyme-word *sare* 12, and there is the substituted rhyme *att/hate* *90/92 (see 90n). The former suggests that A was preserving the original northerly rhyme, and the latter that it was substituting a rhyme that could be true only in a northerly area. Elsewhere the reflex of OE \bar{a} in a rhyme is spelt *o*, e.g. *more/lore* 81/83, and the reflex of OE \bar{a} is spelt *old*, e.g. *tolde/folde/solde/bolde* 58/60/61/63. It may be that A's rhyme *tho/goo* 41/43 (both from OE \bar{a}) (cf. C H/P 57/59 *þoo/hoo* OE \bar{a} /ME \bar{o}) reflects substitution to make the rhyme perfect, but see also 43n.

(ii) Although the reflex of OE \bar{o} generally appears as *o*, it is found as *u* in *gude* 19 57 (which rhyme respectively with *mode* and *blode*), *gudly* *98, and *lukede* 73.

(iii) OE *ht* appears as *ght*, except *rou3te* 93.

(iv) *mon* 8 22 54 etc., as opposed to *schall*, *wole* in other versions, although A also has some examples of *schall* and *moste*.

(v) (*for*)*giffe* 106 108; *ilke* 14 (other MSS *euery*); *mekill* 71; *thies* (see 27n); *till* 53 (other MSS *to*) *97.

Now that three versions of the poem have been edited, and the fourth, L, printed by Furnivall, some minimal indication of the dialect of the original poem, deduced from the rhymes of stanzas common to at least three versions, can be given; since only fourteen stanzas fall into this category, there is, however, not a great deal of evidence of dialectal significance. The following points emerge:

1.a. The reflex of OE \bar{a} rhymes with itself in *more / lore* 81/83 (A; CH/P 49/51); the reflex of OE *aw* rhymes with the reflex of ON $\bar{a}g$ in *knowe / low* 89/91 (CH/P; L 57/59 spoils the rhyme). (References to stanzas for which A has no equivalent, but which are found in C, are given in square brackets and reference should be made to my article in *NM*.)

b. The reflex of OE \bar{a} rhymes with itself in *tho / goo* 41/43 (A), but with ME \bar{q} in *boo / hoo* (CH/P 57/59). (See also 43n.)

c. The reflex of OE \bar{a} rhymes with ME \bar{q} in *goste / boste* 74/76 (A; CH/P 42/44); *woste* 77 (A; H/P 45) and *gost* (CH/P 47, where A's equivalent rhyme is *loste*) likewise represent the reflex of OE \bar{a} , but *loste* A 79 represents the reflex of OE *o* and *cost* C 45 that of OF *o*. It appears unlikely that the original poem used the same word twice in a rhyme-pattern, so A *loste* may represent the original rhyme-word.

d. ME \bar{a} from OE \bar{a}/a rhymes with itself in an open syllable, where lengthening would be expected, and also with the reflex of OE \bar{a} in *bare/sare* (C *sorr*) / *fare/care* 10/12/13/15. (H/P's *lore* 10, with OE *o* lengthened in an open syllable, spoils the rhyme-pattern *a b a b c b c*.)

These rhymes suggest that the dialect of the original was that of an area in which the reflex of OE \bar{a} could rhyme with ME \bar{q} (§c, perhaps §b), and ME \bar{a} (§d).

2. ME \bar{e} and ME \bar{e} are presented as a rhyme, e.g. *cher / lere* 9/11 (ACH/PL) (OF \bar{e} , OE \bar{e}_2). This may be an imperfect rhyme, or it could be a SE rhyme on \bar{e} , but, in view of §1, the latter is unlikely.

3. The rhyme *drawe / fawe / sawe / lawe* 26/28/29/31 (ACL) shows that an infinitive without final *n* is needed and this would indicate a northerly rather than a southerly dialect. This is likely to represent the form of the original poem, since H/P *drawyn / fayn / sawe / lawe* establishes a different rhyme-pattern, and, in addition, the *b*-rhyme is only approximate.

4. The reflexes of OE \bar{y} and OE \bar{i} rhyme together in *kynde / fynde / vnbynde / wynde* 66/68/69/70 (A; CH/P 82/84/85/87; L 50/52/53/55), and the reflexes of OE *y* and OE *i* rhyme in *blynne / kyn / synne / wynn* 106/108/109/111 (H/PC; L 66/68/69/71); therefore the original dialect would not have been SW, WM or SE.

5. The rhymes with *rightwisnes* are generally with the reflex of OE *i*, but that with *messe* 14 (AL), *masse* (CH/P) (OE *mæsse*, OF *messe*) suggests a rhyme on *e*, which would indicate a SE or WM development (F. Mossé, *Handbook of Middle English*, trans. James A. Walker (5th printing, Baltimore, 1968) §24, Remark).

§§1 and 3 show a northerly dialect, §4 undoubtedly excludes WM, SW and SE, though §5 seems to suggest SE or WM. The evidence therefore is very tenuous, and one could only tentatively suggest an area towards the west of NEM.

Text

The capitalization and punctuation are editorial. Alteration to the text is minimal; the substituted letter is in square brackets.

(f.122v, col.1) *A Song how þat Mercy passeth Rightwisnes.*

1

By one foreste als I gan walke,
 Withowtten a paleys appon a ley,
 3 I herd two lewde men how þay gan talke;
 I thoghte to here what þay wolde saye.
 Dat one stode one a rewoffull araye;
 6 His dedly synnes he did defye.
 "Allas", he sayde, "I drede the daye
 Dat righte mon forthe and no mercye".

2

9 Then sayd Mercy with sobire chere,
 "Righte, me thynke thi witt es bare.
 With godnes I will the lere;
 12 The nedis noghte to mourne so sare.
 I rede þou fonde to mende thi fare:
 Go ilke a daye and here a messe,
 15 Schryue þe clene and haue no care;
 His mercy passes his rightwisnes".

3

18 Then ansuerde Righte with angry mode,
 Sayd, "Nowe me thynke þat þou dose raue.
 I knowe now wele þou kan no gude;
 Thou bare neuer statte, so God me saue.
 21 Als I hafe seruede I moste nedis haue;
 Full bitterly I mon haby.
 There es no helpe þat me may saue,
 24 Bot righte schall forthe and no mercy".

4

Then sayd Mercy meke *and* mylde,
 "If þou will frome thi synnes drawe,
 27 Al if þou speke ȝet thies wordes wylde,
 De to helpe I will be fawe.
 Luffe wele God - this es my sawe -
 30 Repent the wele of alle thy mysse.
 Mightfull God es ouer the lawe;
 His mercy passes rightwysnes".

5

"Telle me" quod Righte, "þat I neuer knewe -
 Dou wolde speke and þou hade lighte -
 For God hathe ȝitt euer bene trewe.
 36 He dide neuer thyng bot it was righte,
 And I hafe bene a synfull wighte;
 Therefore I drede when I schall dye
 (f.122v, col.2) That God þat es so full of myghte
 40 Schall do me righte and no mercy".

6

"Mightfull God", quod Mercy tho,
 "Dou trowes no resone þat I saye;
 Off thi beleue I rede th[e] goo,
 And fond to serue God to paye.
 45 Beseche oure Lady, als scho wele maye,
 To be thi helpe to rede *and* wysse.
 My soule for thyne þan dare I laye,
 48 Þat mercy schall passe rightwysnes".

7

"What", quod Righte, "thou lewde clerke,
 Kane thou noghte bothe rede *and* spelle?
 51 I wroghte neuer Goddes werke;
 Whatt righte *in* heuen hafe I to duelle?
 I haue diseruede to go till helle.
 54 Full bitterly I mon habye;
 Mi wikkede dedys þay will me quelle,
 There righte mon forthe *and* no mercy".

8

"Iwysse", quod Mercy, "þou kan no gude;
 For God schewes kyndnesse, as I the tolde.
 For the *and* me he schedde his blode,
 60 And suffrede woundes a thousande folde;
 Vnto þe Iewes his body was solde.
 For rightwys soules he ordeynt blysse.
 63 Dou arte his, þou may be bolde.
 His mercy passes rightwisnes".

9

66 "Iwisse", quod Righte, "this knowe I wele
 Dat God es bothe curtays *and* kynde,
 And trewe he es als any stele.
 He loues wele trowthe, þat mon we fynde.
 69 Bot how may God my kare vnbynde?
 He loufes wele trouthe *withowtten* lye.
 Let be, man, þou wastys mekill wynde,
 72 For righte mon forthe *and* no mercye". /

10

Mercy lukede into his face,
 Sayde, "Righte, þou arte a dolefull goste;
 75 Þou hase witt *withowtten* grace.
 Þerfore be meke and leue thi boste,
 For God es gracyous, wele þou woste -
 78 Soules to duelle alle in his blysse -
 He wolde neuer þou scholde be loste;
 His mercy passes his rightwysnes".

11

(f.123r, col.1) "Iwys", quod Righte, "I may no more.
 82 Sumtyme I wende to hafe schewed my face.
 What nede es me to lere thy lore?
 84 Þou sayse I ame *withowtten* grace.
 I am bytidde a sely case
 Dat I myghte neuer no grace bye.
 87 I ame afferde to come in place,
 Whare righte schall forthe *and* no mercye".

12

Mercy sayde, "I proue by skill
 90 Dat witt es not worthe bot grace be att;
 Þe fende hase witt, clergy at will,
 And he and his þay welle full hate;
 93 He felle in wanhope as neuer rou3te,
 And thoureh pride he loste þe blysse.
 And he ones mercy wolde hafe soughte,
 96 Mercy scholde hafe passede rightwisnes".

13

"Till his mercy I will me triste,
 99 Dat so gudly has grante me grace,
 And made me man of mayne *and* myghte,
 And fourmed me faire aftir his face.
 His loue schall be loken with my lace;
 102 I will hym loue now lelly.
 Bot I wolde noghte byfore his face
 Dat righte scholde forthe *and* no mercye".

66. bothe] followed by or crossed out.

- 105 Now mightfull God, withowtten fable,
 Giffe vs grace wele forto spede,
 And ouer vs all be mercyable.
- 108 Forgiffe vs, Lorde, oure mysdede.
 Now helpe, Marie, at oure moste nede,
 And brynge vs, Ladye, vnto 3oure blysse;
- 111 With 3oure freschly face vs fede,
 And thus mercy passes rightwysnes.

Amen

Explicit Cantus. Amen.

Notes to the edited text:

2. *appon a ley*: 'in a clearing / glade'.
11. *With godnes I will the lere* makes inferior sense to the others, e.g. H/P *Yfe þou wyll lystyn, I schall þe lere*.
20. *so God me saue* renders the line relatively pointless (as opposed to e.g. H/P *but as a cnave*), and the stanza also employs *saue* twice as a rhyme-word.
21. *seruede*: OED *serve* v² notes that this apparently aphetic form of *deserve* is chiefly northern in use.
27. *thies*: the unusual spelling may have been influenced by *thi* in the previous line, or could be a northern spelling.
29. *God*: it would not be impossible to read this in A and L as *god* = 'good', but not in CH/P, where *God* is preceded by "thy".
43. *goo* may be a substitution for CH/P's less common *hoo*, 'cease' (59); it does, however, provide a true rhyme with *tho* (41) as both are reflexes of OE *ā*, whereas CH/P's rhyme would be ME *ō* / *ō̄*.
45. *als scho wele maye* seems to derive from a misunderstanding of a phrase such as CH/P's *þat best may*, 'that best maiden' (61), as 'who best can'.
54. The repetition of 22 may point to oral transmission.
62. Although the line makes sense, it differs from CH/PL, which express the idea differently and more correctly, e.g. L 46 *To bie oure synful soulis to blis* (quoted in MED, *bien* v.6c).
71. *wastys*, like C's *spekyst* (87), is a more common word than H/PL's *spyllyst*.
78. The line has no finite verb nor is there a verb for *to duelle* to depend on; consequently the punctuation is only tentative.
85. One would expect the 3rd sg.pres. of 'to be' plus a dative pronoun.
90. *att* has a meaning comparable to CH/P *bowth* (106; 114), but its use destroys the rhyme-pattern, producing a b a b c d c d.

92. *hate* is presented as a rhyme for *att*, a rhyme possible only in the North: *att* (OE *āhte*, ON *átt-*) and *hate* (OE *hatian*) with lengthening of *a* in the disyllabic form. The line bears little resemblance to that in the other versions:

C 108 Euyr he setteth het nawth
 H/P 116 And euyr he settys hys soull at no3te
 L 76 And euere he settip it foule at nou3t

As *haten* can have an intransitive meaning, it may be translated simply as 'feel hatred'.

93. Since the line is difficult to interpret as it stands, the second half could be emended on the pattern of H/P's *as he ne ro3t* or L's *as him neuere rou3te*, with *rou3te* meaning 'cared'.

97 and 99. *triste* and *myghte* barely approximate to a rhyme in this stanza peculiar to A.

101. 'His love shall be secured / enclosed with my band.'

103-4. 'But I should not wish, before his face, that justice should go forth and no mercy.'

105-12. This, found as the final stanza in AH/PL, has considerable 'variation on a theme' in lines equivalent to 110-11, which are worth quoting to illustrate how the versions can run roughly on the same lines and yet give different meanings:

H/P Vnto thy Sonn pat he vs bles
 And wytt his face full vs fede.
 L To pi Sone oure soullis pou wys,
 And with his mercy fulli us fede.

The meaning of A111 (from which that of the other versions can be deduced) is 'Nourish us (spiritually) with your radiant face / appearance'. 110-11 from A are cited as an example of *freshli* in *MED*.

In regard to rhyme-patterns which are peculiar to A (i.e. no other version shows an identical pattern, although some elements may be the same), we find:

Stanza 3: the *b*-rhymes show a repetition of *saue*, whereas CH/PL have *cnave* 20.

Stanza 6: the *a*-rhymes show a different word, *goo*, as opposed to CH/P *hoo* (L has no equivalent stanza) (see note to 1.43).

Stanza 7: the *c*-rhymes show a different first word, *habye*, as opposed to C *crye*, H/PL *I*.

Stanza 8: the *b*-rhymes are *tolde / folde / solde / bolde*, as opposed to the other three versions H/PL *folde / colde / solde / bolde*, and also C, except that it spoils the rhyme-pattern with a final *sewre* (which does, however, fit in with the sense).

Stanza 10: the *b*-rhymes agree with H/P on *goste / boste / woste* but have *loste* for H/P's *Goste*; C has *goste / bost / cost / Gost*, and L has no equivalent stanza.

Stanza 12: the *b*-rhymes in CH/PL agree on the second, third and

fourth words, with variety on the first (CH/P *bowth*, L *sou3t*), but A has *att/hate/rou3te/soughte*, completely destroying the rhyme-pattern. (See note to 92.)

Thus, although the rhyme-pattern itself is preserved in most stanzas, some variety among the four versions is to be noted in the actual rhyme-words, and a closer examination of sections where there are at least three versions extant emphasizes the variety. This I have briefly demonstrated in "*Mercy and Justice*" (Bazire, *NM* pp.188-9), showing that, although the rhyme-word may be the same, the preceding words often differ, or alternatively the rhyme-words differ, though the preceding words are practically the same. Again, the rhyme may be preserved but different rhyme-words are used, and the preceding words of the line are completely altered.

A appears to be the version with the most individuality in its lines, whether the variation is (a) relatively small:

75 Dou hase witt withowtten grace
 C 43 Dou hast moche weyt withoute grace
 H/P 43 Thow hast myche wytt wyttoutyn grace

or (b) of arrangements of words:

52 Whatt righte in heuen hafe I to duelle
 C 68 What ry3th haf I in heffne to dwelle
 H/P 68 What ry3t haue I in heywyn to dwell
 L 36 What ri3t haue y in heuen to dwelle

or (c) more extensive, as in:

3 I herd two lewde men how þay gan talke
 C Y herde twey men togedyr gan talke
 H/P I harde ij men togeddur talke
 L I herde two men togidre talke

79 He wolde neuer þou scholde be loste
 C 47 Ffadir and Sone and Holy Gost
 H/P 47 Thorow prayer of þe Holly Goste

85 I am bytidde a sely case
 C 53 Alas þis is a sory kasse
 H/P 53 Alas þis is a sylly case

Groupings of one version against the other three are apparent for each version, but these criss-cross each other, so that it is not possible to decide which versions are more closely connected; to attempt to determine which is closer to the original may be possible in some cases, but in others it is more likely to be a subjective exercise, particularly as it cannot be known whether the original was a good poem or whether successive transmitters - in copying or orally - have tried to improve upon what they knew. The preservation of rhyme-patterns (though the rhyme-words used may be quite different or else in a different order), together with the fact that the preceding part of the line may show variation, do

suggest some oral transmission. However, rather than seeking to establish which lines may be closest to the original, it is best simply to regard the four versions as demonstrating how the actual words of a poem could alter in the course of transmission; though the differing versions can, none the less, suggest the basic structure of that poem.

For the sake of comprehension it is necessary to rehearse some conclusions concerning the original reached in one or both of the two previous articles, viz. that the debate must have been between Mercy and a Sinner (the disputants in L); that the rhyme-pattern was *ababbcbc*; that, apart from the first and last stanzas, where the poet himself speaks, the stanzas alternate as speeches of Mercy (unusually a male personage) and the Sinner; that the stanzas end alternately in lines akin to A's *Pat righte mon forthe and no mercy* in the odd stanzas, and *His mercy passes his rightwisnes* in the even; that the verb of speaking in the second and third stanzas was answered, and thereafter, as far as the penultimate stanza, it alternated between *sayd* (Mercy as the speaker) and *quod* (the Sinner).

A omits two stanzas (H/PC 6 and 7) between A 5 and 6, but inserts them after A 9. It then omits, before A 12, two stanzas found in the other three versions (e.g. H/P 12 and 14). Although the rearrangement of stanzas, and likewise the omission of the first stanza which would have followed A 11, seem to have little effect on the argument, the second omitted stanza (H/P 14) provides a much better introduction of the devil into the argument, as Justice's outburst in that stanza shows how much he is under the devil's influence, and it also comments on the devil's power. As a result, Mercy's comments (= A 12) on the devil's fate have more significance, and he points out that had the devil once sought mercy, that quality would have superseded justice. A possible explanation for the omission/rearrangement of stanzas thus far is that an oral transmitter had not the exact order in mind, and since there is no radical distortion of the theme of the poem, he was unaware of what he had done.

He may also have been responsible for the omission of stanzas equivalent to H/P 16, 17, 19-21. His final stanza corresponds to the final stanza in H/PL, which concludes in H/P *For mercy passys ry3ttusnys*. (I reject the stanzas H/P 22-5, L 16-19 as part of the original poem. Although they are by no means inappropriate to the subject (as in them Mercy asks for more specific information concerning the wickedness of Justice/Sinner, and gives him penance), yet they all end in the same type of line as the above-mentioned concluding line of H/P, instead of having the usual alternation; this suggests that they are an interpolation.) However, H/PL's five stanzas (H/P 16, 17 and 19-21; L 11-15) develop the situation of the devil (mentioned in A 12, H/P 15, L 10); Justice seems impressed by the mention of the devil's downfall, rejects him and asks how he himself may obtain mercy. In this desire Mercy encourages him and instructs him what to do to gain forgiveness. After this, Justice/Sinner acknowledges his past misdeeds and prays to God for mercy and to Christ to save his soul. This would seem a not inappropriate point for the final stanza (= A 14) as it

would round off the poem in thought, and also in structure, since the first stanza also is in the poet's voice.

These five stanzas would seem to have been missing in the exemplar of A - or a predecessor - where the scribe, realizing that A 14 was not a suitable stanza to follow immediately on 12 (as no conclusion in the debate has been reached), composed a stanza, obviously to be ascribed to Justice/Sinner, although no name is mentioned. This shows that he has now repented and will love God truly, though God is not mentioned by name, and the referent for *his* (97) has to be sought in A 10. The final line is also of the correct type.

Unique composition in this stanza is suggested by the style, which differs from that in other stanzas of A. Apart from the last line, there is alliteration in every line, sometimes on less important words, but in 98-103 it is very pronounced. Although elsewhere in the poem - and in the other three versions - alliteration is to be found (not necessarily on exactly the same words), yet nowhere else is it as obvious as in this, presumably, additional stanza. Further, the *a*-rhymes can barely be described as such (compare C 15, which also seems to have been composed to provide some appropriate ending for that version) and the *b*-rhymes use one word, *face*, twice, which is unlike the presumed practice of the original, although some versions do occasionally show such rhymes.

There are thus in A enough features to demonstrate a fairly close descent from a common original, but sufficient also to show that in the course of transmission, whether written or oral, deviations of several kinds, omissions, additions, rearrangements, as well as alterations of individual lines and words have occurred, not resulting, one would think, on comparing it with H/PL, in the creation of a better work of art, but at least providing an interesting illustration of the possible fate of a short Middle English poem.

NOTES

- ¹ For a more detailed description of this manuscript and its language, see *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. M.Y. Offord, EETS 246 (London, 1959) p.xi ff. The scribe of the manuscript was apparently Robert Thornton, also the scribe of Lincoln Cathedral MS A.5.2. (See also the introduction to *The "Liber de Diversis Medicinis"*, ed. M.S. Ogden, EETS OS 207 (rev. repr., London, 1969).)
- ² Printed by F.J. Furnivall in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ* EETS 24 (London, 1867) pp.95-100. I use this for line references.
- ³ This is identical with the Table in my article in *NM*, p.186. [We are grateful to the Editors of *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* for permission to reproduce this material:- Eds.]