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## **Middle English Verse Proverbs: The Problem of Classification**

Valerie Edden and Caroline Thompson

In recent years it has become fashionable to speak of some texts, especially Middle English texts, as 'unstable', that is as being passed down by scribes and performers who saw themselves as free to adapt and expand their material and generally appropriate it for their own use. Since Paul Zumthor's coining of the term 'mouvance' for meaningful textual instability, many different forms and occurrences of the phenomenon have been uncovered and discussed.<sup>1</sup> Textual instability, so defined, is a phenomenon of textual transmission and does not in itself call into doubt the existence of original authorial texts which had unity and integrity. The 'Canticus Troili' may have had a subsequent life as an anthology piece in its own right, but this does not influence our view of the textual status of the whole poem from which it is excerpted. There is, however, a textual instability of a more radical kind. Derek Pearsall has suggested that there are texts which are unstable not just in their transmission but from their inception:

The copy of one of Lydgate's moralistic refrain poems contained in the recently published facsimile of the Winchester Anthology evidently came from someone who regarded the poem as 'un ensemble ouvert'. Stanzas are omitted, others are added, and the text is handled with the greatest freedom. The poem becomes a collection of stanzaic gnomes, linked by the common refrain, its elements capable of displacement and replacement according to personal whim or the desire for topicality – a kind of do-it-yourself-kit for a poem. There is every likelihood that Lydgate regarded it in much the same way.<sup>2</sup>

If Pearsall is correct, Lydgate would be rather unusual in his attitude to a text for

which he claims authorship, but his attitude towards versified moral dicta need not surprise us. Such verses, including this one of Lydgate's, though written down, are characteristically fluid and unstable.

This paper considers the textual status of a number of such Middle English verse texts and goes on to consider the difficulties encountered in classifying and editing them. It takes as a starting point the moral text *A Father's Counsel to His Son* (IMEV 432)<sup>3</sup> and the texts related to it;<sup>4</sup> these texts demonstrate instability in a new and rather extreme form. Study of these – and no doubt other similar texts – draws into question even the definition of the term 'text' and just what we do and do not mean when we refer to a group of words as 'a text'.

*A Father's Counsel to his Son* is, at least in the version in Harley 2252, a poem of 85 lines, mainly made up of couplets, each of which embodies a proverbial statement of moral wisdom. Topics range from the encouragement of Christian virtues (for example, exhortations to be compassionate and charitable), to commonsense statements of self-preservation, antifeminist clichés and fairly cynical statements of this-worldly wisdom, much of it relating to lending, borrowing and saving (for example, 'povert hath but frendes fewe'). As we shall see, many of these couplets can be found elsewhere, either as discrete items or combined both with other couplets from this poem or other, quite different proverbial couplets. The whole text is composed of 'building-blocks' of commonplace component units gathered into a whole as 'advice to a son'. It is one of several such compilations; one may compare *Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son* (IMEV 1540). The different manuscript texts of the Idley poem which survive vary in length, suggesting that the genre of 'Advice Poems' may be characterised as having a generously inclusive outer form, whose component parts may vary in order and in precise content rather than having a tight structure, in which the relation of individual parts to the whole is fixed.

The phrase 'these couplets', which is used in the previous paragraph and which suggests fixed and recognizable items, fails to acknowledge the fluidity and variability of the texts under discussion. One may assume that most of these proverbs had their origins in an oral culture and that their form was certainly not fixed in the late middle ages as the many written versions and variants testify. Arranged in rhyming couplets, formulaic, repetitive, in parts alliterative – i.e. 'A man with owte mercy of mercye shall mys / And he shalle haue mercy that mercifulle ys'<sup>5</sup> – these texts are easily memorable. They are words of warning and advice, frequently within the framework of a father addressing his son; today similar texts still circulate orally, for example: 'Early to bed and early to rise / Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise'. Even in our own bookish culture, orally transmitted texts co-exist in different versions. We find

'Rockabye baby on the treetop' alongside 'Hushabye . . .'; one might expect a proverb given the weighty authority of Shakespeare to circulate in a stable form but 'All that glisters is not gold' (*Merchant of Venice* II.6) is frequently cited as 'All that glitters . . .'. The situation is similar to that of Middle English romance where a minstrel may have circulated the story orally, and modified it to suit a new audience.<sup>6</sup> The form in which such a text was eventually recorded may have been more of an accident than we suppose when we talk of the work of a single author in the sense understood by modern textual editors – with a single intended audience and a unified creative urge. It seems best to consider such texts as part of a web of inter-related texts circulating in and belonging to a whole community, rather than seeking a single author or 'original' text.

It is not even true that these proverbs always circulate as couplets. Ll. 39-46 of IMEV 432 have the rhyme scheme ababbcdc. IMEV 1540 contains seven of these lines; l. 45 is omitted to produce a stanza of rhyme royale (ababbcc). The first four lines of this block of text are also found in IMEV 3195, a text written entirely in four-line stanzas rhyming abab etc. and in IMEV 3847, where they occur in a compilation otherwise mostly made up of rhyming couplets. Other occurrences of these lines (in IMEV 558, 4137, 3088) use them selectively so that they form rhymed couplets. Maybe they circulated as rhymed couplets and were refashioned later in the form in which they are found in 432. So we are dealing with material which circulates generally in rhymed couplets, but which may be reshaped when it is incorporated into longer poems.

In their written form, these proverbs behave in a manner roughly parallel to what discourse analysts term a 'discourse colony'. Such texts are defined thus:

a colony is a discourse whose component parts do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed. If the parts are jumbled, the utility may be affected but the meaning remains the same.<sup>7</sup>

Hoey distinguishes nine characteristic properties of such texts, although not all may be present in every case. Eight of these characteristics can be found to a greater or lesser extent in 432 and other related proverbial texts and may be summarised thus: the constituent parts of a colony – in this case the couplets – should be able to exist in any order without affecting the meaning of the discourse; adjacent couplets should not have a tendency to form continuous prose any more than non-adjacent couplets; an individual couplet may be separated from the others; an individual couplet may join a

different group; the couplets of any text may change through time; many of the couplets in the colony will share the same function; there should be a framing context for the colony which characterises its context – thus in the proverbs where there is a title it usually contains the word 'Instructions', or 'Proverbs' – in other words the function of the discourse is self-evident from the title; finally, 'a colony either usually has no named author or else has multiple authors who are responsible for components of the discourse but not for the whole'.<sup>8</sup> These characteristics define a kind of text which is not conventionally considered in scholarly circles, and as such bring a whole range of difficulties not frequently broached. Sermon exempla may be considered to present a somewhat similar case, since these stories, which circulated orally as well as in written versions, are recorded and re-recorded, both as individual tales and also incorporated into different exempla-collections.

The notion of a text as an agglomeration of separable units raises many questions. At what point is such a short textual unit no longer a text in its own right but just a common idea, or formula found in moral texts? An examination of IMEV 432 and the texts related to it raises this problem and also more general issues about defining individual textual items and distinguishing discrete items from 'versions' of the same text.

IMEV records two manuscripts at the entry for 432. The first is London, British Library Harley 2252, the commonplace book of the London mercer, John Colyns; here the text comprises 85 lines, mainly in rhymed couplets, as we have said. The second is Windsor, St George's Chapel E.I.I, which contains a text of eight couplets, of which only the first couplet resembles lines found in Harley 2252. Four lines found in the poem in this second manuscript are also found in the item recorded as IMEV 477. Although IMEV 477 does share lines with Harley 2252, the lines found in both the Windsor manuscript and IMEV 477 are not included in Harley 2252. It is at this point that fundamental questions of classification emerge: by what criteria does one distinguish variants from versions and versions from separate texts? We take as a starting point the necessity of distinguishing these two manuscript items as separate items and subsequently refer to the poem in the Windsor manuscript as 432.1.<sup>9</sup>

IMEV 432, thus redefined, occurs in only one manuscript; however, its constituent parts appear to have enjoyed a much wider fame. The various couplets of this 'text' have been identified, in various contexts, in over fifty manuscripts with the possibility that there may still be further undiscovered examples. These couplets are each generally extant in more than one manuscript and appear to have been widely disseminated.<sup>10</sup> It seems that we are not looking at a 'text' in 432, but rather up to

forty-two 'texts', which enjoyed some independent status, combined to form a longer piece of moral instruction. It is possible that 432 had an 'author' but what he actually did was to collect appropriate proverbial couplets together and present them in this form. His role as originator of the precise form was one more of compiler rather than author.

All the 'long' poems under consideration here are built up of other, shorter texts, usually couplets. For the purposes of classification, it is probably best to consider each compilation as a separate item and note the individual items it contains but not to list the items separately. So, for example, IMEV 77 'A man without mercy, mercy shall mysse / He shall haue mercy that mercyfulle is' is one of the couplets to be found in IMEV 3969. One of the five manuscripts containing 3969 is listed at IMEV 77; consistency would suggest that IMEV 77 is used to record only those manuscripts in which this couplet occurs as a discrete item.

Further problems of classification emerge when we consider the relationship between IMEV 432 and the other 'texts' to which it is related; these texts are listed in the Appendix. We have already pointed out that the two manuscripts items appearing under IMEV 432 are different texts with only the opening couplet shared. One text is in fact more similar to the version of IMEV 432 found in Harley 2252 than the text which we have now re-numbered 432.1. This is IMEV 430, also often entitled 'A Father's Counsel to his Son', a poem of 40 couplets, fifteen of which are also found in 432. By way of a general comparison this means that we can say that only very few of the lines present in 432.1 also occur in the longer text (432); the other, separately listed, text (430) has 37.5% of its total number of lines in 432. In each case, though these texts bear remarkable similarities, they are in many ways as different as they are similar and to classify or edit them as a single text would be to deny each one's distinctive nature. When we consider the texts related to 432, differences in length, substance and apparent usage become evident. Whilst they all appear to be of a moral or proverbial nature, not all are directed from a father to a son and whilst many focus on general moral instruction, others concentrate on one or more specific matters of moral concern. For example, whilst 432 and 430 are general in nature and addressed from a father to his son, 1640.5 lacks any framework and is specifically concerned with monetary matters, a subject which the former two texts mention only briefly.

Using 432 as a starting point, one may distinguish three main categories of text which are related to it:

1. individual couplets found in 432 which circulate independently: IMEV items 77; 81.5; 430.5; 1151; 4095.
2. Short poems which comprise moral couplets, some of which are shared by 432:

432.1; 477 (4 couplets; the final couplet is listed as a text in its own right at 513); 832; 1640.5; 3068.5; 3256.6; 3847; 3969; 4137.

3. Longer poems which incorporate lines also found in 432: 430; 558; 1540; 3088; 3195; 3502.

The complexity of the relationships between the texts is demonstrated by an attempt to chart them diagrammatically and by perceiving the shortcomings of such an attempt. Such a diagram is provided in Fig. 1. In this diagram 432 can be clearly distinguished as the central text with all its 'related' texts surrounding it. Each text is linked to 432 by a line which represents the number of lines shared between 432 and the text in question. The number of lines this line denotes is written alongside it; whilst it would be tidy if the length of the line was proportionate to the number of lines it denoted, this proved an impossible ideal to recreate – at least within the confines of a feasibly sized piece of paper. Lines are then also drawn between all other related texts, again representing the number of lines each has in common with the other. This, at least in theory, then provides a brief overview of the web-like structure of relationships between the various texts. The use of such a diagram is limited by the fact that it doesn't show exactly *which* lines are shared between the various texts, only that two texts are related to a greater or lesser extent. For example, whilst two separate texts may be related to 432 by a couplet, for example 3502 and 1151, and therefore have lines drawn in turn from each of them to 432, they may also have a line drawn between the two of them (3502 and 1151) demonstrating that they have a couplet in common. On this diagram what is not apparent is whether the couplet each of them has in common with 432 is the same one and therefore also the couplet they share with each other, or whether they each have different couplets in common with 432 and share a further couplet with each other which is, perhaps, not in 432 at all. It also fails to show how long each text is and so no indication can be gained as to whether a related text is perhaps a single couplet which has some form of independent status as well as being combined into longer texts (e.g. IMEV 77) or whether it is itself a longer text whose component parts are found in other situations. To include such figures as the length of the text would confuse still further a diagram already cluttered with numbers. Such a diagram falls short for purposes of comparison unless all the texts are available in a form to be consulted to follow up and confirm any possibilities the diagram appears to demonstrate. There is little use in a list of the links unless they can be pursued.

However, what the diagram does achieve is to make apparent the fact that little groupings appear to be occurring with various texts as focal point and so some notion of a range of 'influence' of particular texts and of shared readings is established. In

addition to the links with 432, one may notice that 4137 shares lines with 9 other texts and that there appears to be some form of inter-relationship between the group of texts 77, 832 and 3969. Most of the longer texts which contain lines in common with 432 also contain lines in common with each other which are not found in 432. The web of relationships between 432 and the 22 items listed is only one of a dozen or so such webs of proverbial verse which could be constructed after comparing similarities between related texts.

Suppose one were to approach this web of inter-related proverbial poems with an interest in IMEV 558 ('Fyrst þou sal luf god and drede'). This is a long text of 103 couplets, found in only one manuscript, London, British Library, Additional 37049 fol. 85r. It, like IMEV 432, contains a number of couplets which circulate as separate items. According to IMEV, it includes the following IMEV items: 324; 596; 900; 3088; 4177. Of these, 324 has lines in common with IMEV 317; 799; 3087 and 3102; 3088 contains two lines of 4137; since 558 contains 3088 in its entirety, it also shares lines with 4137. 4137, incidentally, begins with four lines which are found in our first text (432) as lines 23-26. 3087 in its turn is incorporated into 1418. One could continue to chart such inter-relationships, though they make for tedious reading. The point is clear.

IMEV classification is based on the assumption that each item is a single, whole text; this is fine maybe for a text such as *Patience* or even *Troilus*; for items such as these proverbial verses there are inevitable inconsistencies. In many cases a single couplet, occurring on its own in a single manuscript is given its own text number, something which in itself is sound enough practice. However, in other instances a whole group of such texts may be classed together under another single number simply by virtue, not of their being part of a single text, but simply of being placed on consecutive pages at the end of the same manuscript. 1628.8 is defined in IMEV as 'a series of disconnected proverbs'. These proverbs, which include 77, do not together form a text and one look at the manuscript confirms the fact that they are certainly disconnected with one couplet occurring here and another there, spread over a space of several folios. Additional confirmation of the unrelatedness of these texts is provided by the fact that they occur together in only one manuscript. As this manuscript is also listed under 77 with the note 'in 1628.8' it made sense to include only 77 and not repeat the same version under the heading 1628.8 with all of its unrelated texts. 1628.8 is not strictly speaking a 'text' at all.

The converse also happens. IMEV 1640.5 and IMEV 3256.6 are treated in IMEV as two separate items. However, examination of the four manuscripts containing them reveals that this is not strictly true. Cambridge Ll.5.10 and Pepys



2253 (The Maitland Manuscript) present identical texts in which the items are written in separate stanzas; the lines occur in the same order on fol. 147 in Advocates 1.1.6 (The Bannatyne Manuscript) but are written there as one continuous block of text. Elsewhere in the Bannatyne manuscript (on fol. 122) the lines occur in a different order; the first three couplets of 1640.5 are omitted altogether, the text begins with ll. 13-18; this is followed by 3256.6 and this in turn by ll. 7-12 of 1640.5. Not only do these items always occur together but they are clearly one item, not two. The decision to separate them seems to go back to Craigie's edition of the Maitland manuscript, which prints them as separate items.

It is also necessary to draw attention to the fact that differences do occur between texts in MSS grouped together under the same number. As one example, IMEV 3502 exists in four MSS which contain to all intents and purposes the same text. However, although these manuscripts contain substantially the same material, the ordering of much of the content differs between several of the manuscripts and not all of the lines which occur in one manuscript may be in another, or they may be replaced by other lines. Whether these are different versions of the same text or whether they should be classified as separate items is a matter for debate. Where this occurs we have given details in the listing of IMEV in Appendix 1.

Further than this, marginal notes and 'doodles' mean that at the most fundamental level we may encounter problems as to what was even intended to be a text. Noted in the listing of the contents of Bodl. MS Fairfax 16<sup>11</sup> – sandwiched between two works of Chaucer – is IMEV 513, one of the 'texts' which forms a constituent part of 432. It is described as follows:

This is a false item; an item of marginalia which at some stage of transmission achieved the status of a piece of verse.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, here there is little regard for this as a piece of text in its own right. Whilst one may doubt the intimation that this text was accidentally placed into the text by a scribe who mistook it, in its form as an item of marginalia, for a more important piece of verse, the possibility of this occurring is one worth recognising. And if a scribe was capable of mistaking the status of a piece of text, then it is surely a problem for us too.

If classifying these texts is problematic, editing them poses even greater problems. How does one edit a text which is really up to forty-two separate texts, whilst presenting all the separate versions to their true extent? If we limited the comparison to just two texts, say for example 432 and 430, which would demonstrate

just how different and yet similar the texts can be and the fact that the similarities apparently occur in couplets, we could perhaps present the bare essentials of part of the problem using a form of parallel text edition.<sup>13</sup> But how does one go further and show all the versions of the texts of 432 in all their apparent forms? The nature of a printed book only allows room for perhaps four or five texts facing each other, definitely not anything on the scale of twenty-two different texts, and to print texts consecutively deters a reader from close comparison of the texts because of the inconvenience of having to move repeatedly back and forth through the book. For texts such as these, which can be seen to hold only a little in the way of intrinsic literary merit on their own and whose arguably most interesting aspect lies in the relationships of the texts to one another and their background, it is vitally important that this aspect of the text is made as simple, accessible and to use an appropriate modern cliché 'user-friendly' as possible. One possible solution is to use a computer programme which enables one to present all the texts and variants and to cross-refer between them easily. Such a programme has been prepared by Caroline Thompson.<sup>14</sup>

Identification and classification of texts remains an essential task for the medievalist. We need to know what texts exist, where they survive and how different texts are related to each other. Unless we abandon the notion of individual 'texts' altogether and confine ourselves to discussing individual manuscript 'items', IMEV (and IMEP) remain essential reference tools. We need, however, to recognise the limitations of such indexes. For sound, practical reasons they use a system of classification by discrete items which cannot adequately take account of texts such as 'A Father's Counsel to his Son' and the inter-related web of texts which survive with it. What is demonstrated repeatedly by the inconsistencies of IMEV is precisely the problem of when we can call *a* text *the* text and when we can say that one section of a longer text has gained enough independent distinction to acquire the status of being a version or a complete text in its own right. Appendix 1 provides revised entries for all those texts which are related to IMEV 432, but it does not and cannot resolve the problems raised by texts such as these.

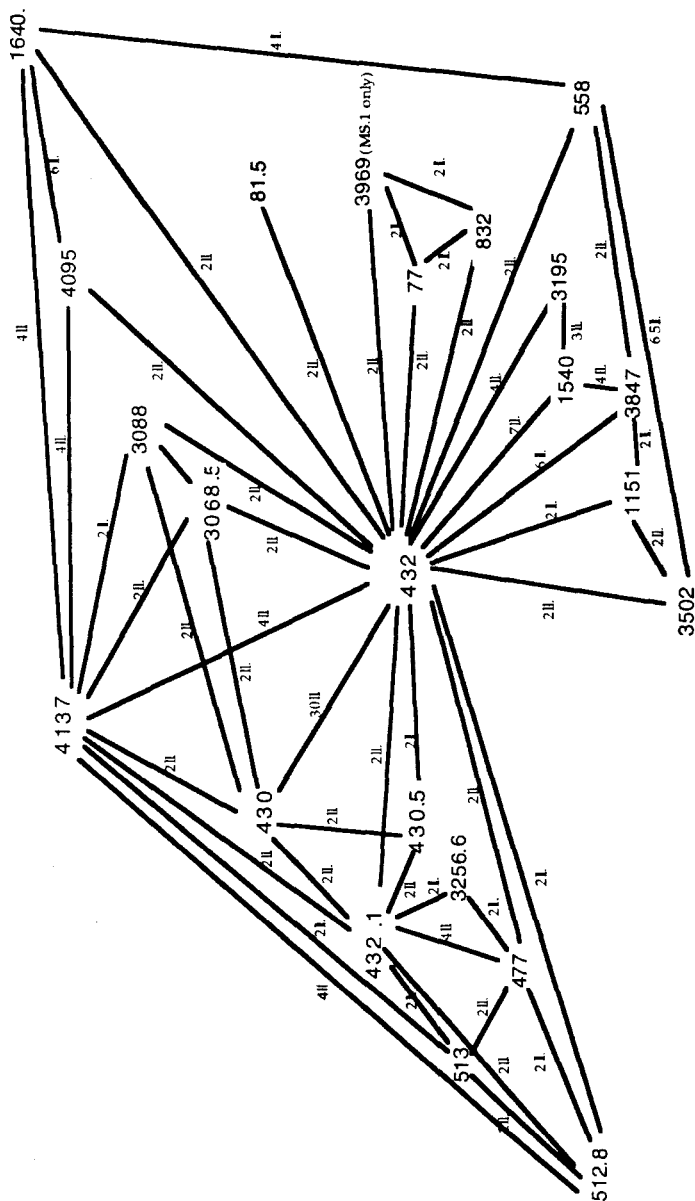


Figure 1: A Diagram of Some of the Relationships between Texts

## APPENDIX 1

### A FATHER'S COUNSEL TO HIS SON : TEXT LIST

All of the main texts listed are related to the two versions of IMEV **432** (**432** and **432.1**). The elements for each entry are as follows:

- IMEV number
- opening line
- basic description of text
- other related text numbers
- manuscripts
- printed editions of the text (listed by the manuscript number upon which the edition was based)

**77** A man without mercy mercy shall mysse / He shalle haue mercy that mercyfulle  
is

One couplet on the subject of mercy.

This couplet also occurs in: **432**, **832**, the Balliol College MS of **3969**.

#### Manuscripts

1. Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 394, fol. 90r
2. Glasgow, Hunterian 230, fol.248v
3. London, British Library, Lansdowne 699, fol. 95v
4. London, British Library, Sloane 747, fol. 58v
5. London, British Library, Sloane 3215, fol. 38v
6. Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 45, fol. 1r

#### Editions

MS 4. Carleton Brown, *A Register of Middle English Religious Verse*, Bibliographical Society I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 373.

The item recorded here as MS 4 is listed again in IMEV as part of **1628.8** – see below.

Also listed in IMEV:

Balliol 354, fol. 113v; as the text in this manuscript is also listed as a section of **3969**, it is included under this number and not as a separate item; further details can be found below at **3969**.

**81.5** A nyce wyfe A backe dore / Makyth oftyn tymys a ryche man pore

On erring wives. One couplet.

This couplet also occurs in **432**.

#### Manuscripts

1. London, British Library, Royal 18.B.xxiii, fol. 44v
2. London, British Library, Royal 12.E.xvi, fol. 34v

#### Editions

MS 1. J. G. Nichols, *Boke of Noblesse*, Roxburghe Club 77 (London: Nichols, 1860), p. lvi.

G. F. Warner & J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections II* (London: Longmans, Quaritch & Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 295.

Also listed in IMEV:

MS Harley 2252, fol. 3r; this refers to the couplet's occurrence in **432**; the item does not occur separately.

**430** At my begynning Criste me spede / in grace and vertue . . .

*A Father's Counsel to his Son*. 40 couplets.

See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Index of Middle English Verse: Corrections, Additions, Suggestions', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 49 (1948), p. 127.

Contains lines also found in: **430.5**, **432**, **432.1**, **512.8**, **558**, **1640.5**, **3068.5**, **3088**, **3195**, **3502**, **4095**, **4137**

#### Manuscript

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C.813, fol. 9r

Edition

MS 1. F. M. Padelford & A. R. Benham, 'The Songs in Manuscript Rawlinson C.813', *Anglia*, 31 (1908), 322-25.

**430.5** At my begynning Crist me spede / In vertv and lernyng for to spede

Described by IMEV as 'a tag to be learned by a child'.

See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Index of Middle English Verse: Corrections, Additions, Suggestions', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 49 (1948), 127. The first couplet of **430**, **432** & **432.1**.

Manuscripts

1. Cambridge University Library Un. Ii. 6.36. flyleaf
2. Dublin, Trinity College 340, fol. 166r
3. Durham, University Library Cosin V.iii.9, fol. 17v (one line; lower margin)
4. Lincoln Cathedral Library 189, fol. 5v (2 occurrences)
5. London, British Library, Harley 3362, fol. 89r (2 occurrences)
6. London, British Library, Royal 12.E. xvi, fol. 186v (2 occurrences)
7. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS B.5 (*Olim* Bühler 5), marginal note.

Edition

MS 3. *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, I, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 61 (1892), p. 126.

**432** At owur begynninge god be owur spede / In grace . . .

*A Father's Counsel to his Son*. 85 lines, predominantly in couplets.

L. L. Besserman, G. Gilman & V. Weinblatt, 'Three Unpublished English Poems from the Common-place book of John Colyns (B.M. Harley 2252)', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 31 (1970), 215 refer to another version of **432**. This second version is in fact IMEV **430**.

See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Index of Middle English Verse: Corrections, Additions, Suggestions', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 49 (1948), pp. 127-28.

Contains lines which are also found in one or more of all the other IMEV numbers in this list except **513** and **3256.6**.

Manuscript

1. London, British Library, Harley 2252, fol. 3r

Edition

MS 1. *Queene Elizabethes Achademy Etc.*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 8 (1869) pp. 68-70.

**432.1** At our begynyng god us spede . . . .

Eight couplets.

See Tauno F. Mustanoja, 'The Index of Middle English Verse: Corrections, Additions, Suggestions', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 49 (1948), pp. 127-28.

Contains lines which also appear in **430**, **430.5**, **432**, **477**, **512.8**, **513**, **558**, **3256.6**, **4137**

Manuscript

1. Windsor, St George's Chapel E.I.I. fol. 95v

This text is referred to as manuscript 2 of IMEV 432, but is really a completely different text with only the first two lines appearing to be somewhat similar to those in **432**.

**477** Be pou nauȝt to bolde to blame / Leste pou be founde in þe same.

Moral precepts – four couplets.

Final couplet listed separately as a text in its own right (**513**).

Contains lines which also occur in **432**, **432.1**, **512.8**, **513**, **3256.6**, **4137**.

Manuscript

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud. Misc. 108, fol. 238v

**512.8** Better it is to suffer fortoun and abyde . . .

Six couplets.

Contains lines which also appear in **430, 432, 432.1, 477, 513, 588, 1640.5, 3068.5, 3088, 3256.6, 3502, 4095, 4137.**

**Manuscript**

1. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates Library 1.1.6, fol. 75v

**Editions**

George Bannatyne, *The Bannatyne MS* (Glasgow: Hunterian Club, 1896), p. 205.  
W. Tod Ritchie, *The Bannatyne Manuscript II*, STS n.s. 22 (1925), p. 187.

**513** Better is to suffre and fortune abyde / and hastily to clymbe and sodeynly to slyde

*The Golden Mean* – a couplet.

This text is also found inscribed on an inner margin of the *Buik of Alexander*, see Ritchie, *The Buik of Alexander I*, STS n.s. xvii (1925), p. xviii.

This couplet also occurs in **432.1, 477, 512.8, 558, 3256.6, 4137.**

**Manuscripts**

1. Aberystwyth Peniarth, National Library of Wales MS 356, fol. 196 (preceded by IMEV 1941.5)
2. Durham, University Library Cosin V. iii.9, fol. 85v, bottom margin
3. London, British Library, Harley 655, fol. 281r (v.4)
4. London, British Library, Royal 17.D.vi, fol. 150v
5. Oxford, Bodleian Library Fairfax 16, fol. 194r
6. Oxford, Laud Misc. 108, fol. 238v (follows IMEV 477)

**Editions**

2. *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, I, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 61, (1892) p. 228

**558** Bot witt pas wylle / Vyce wil vertewe spylle

Moral distichs, prefixed by a quatrain: 'Fyrst pou sal luf god and drede' – 103 couplets.  
This text includes lines which are also found in: **324, 906, 430, 432, 432.1,**



**477, 512.8, 513, 1640.5, 3068.5, 3088, 3195, 3256.6, 3502, 3847, 4095, 4137, 4177.**

Manuscript

1. London, British Library, Additional 37049, fol. 85r

Edition

- MS 1. K. Brunner, 'Me Disticha (aus Hs. Add. 37049)', *Archiv*, 159 (1931), 86-92.

**832** For loue of god and drede of peyne . . .

Two moral couplets advocating mercy.

Contains lines which also occur in numbers **77, 432, 3969.**

Manuscript

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library Tanner 407, fol. 35v

**1151** He that in ȝouthe no vertu usit / In age all honure hym refusit

One couplet, here isolated, found elsewhere incorporated into longer texts.

See IMEV no. 1173. Similar lines also occur in *Fasciculus Morum*, see IMEV **4151** and *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. and trans. by Siegfried Wenzel (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989) p. 90.

This couplet and variants of this text also occur in **432, 1150.5, 1817, 3502, 3847, 4151.**

Manuscripts

1. Cambridge, Caius College 433 flyleaf
2. Cambridge University Library Ff. 5.30, fol. 167r
3. Cambridge University Library Gg. 2.8, first flyleaf
4. Durham, University Library Cosin V.iii. 9, fol. 46r (right margin; imperfect)
5. Durham, University Library Cosin V.iii. 9, fol. 79r (top margin; unclear; followed by **512.5**)
6. Glasgow, Hunterian 400, flyleaf verso
7. London, British Library, Royal 17. D. xviii, fol. 99v (variant)

8. London, British Library, Royal 17. D.vi, fol. 150v
9. Nottingham University Library, Mellish LM1, fol. 20
10. Oxford, Balliol College 354, fol. 213v (follows **1817**)
11. Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 656, fol. 115r
12. Oxford, Trinity College 49, fol. 139v (variant)
13. San Marino, Henry E. Huntington Library, HM 502, fol. 34v

#### Editions

MSS 4 & 5 *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, I, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 61 (1892), pp. 169; 218.

MSS 5, 7 & 11. *Secular Lyrics of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by R. H. Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. xxxii, 81, 254.

MS 10. Ewald Flügel, 'Die Lieder des Balliol Ms. 354', *Anglia*, 26 (1903) p. 225

*Songs, Carols and other Miscellaneous Poems* ed. by Roman Dyboski, EETS e.s. 101 (1907), p. 140

MS 12. John M. Manly & Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales I* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1940), pp. 540; 690.

#### Also listed in IMEV:

12. Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 1146 (variant) which appears to be an error.
13. Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 9, fol. 99r; whilst these lines can be found in this latter manuscript, they appear as a part of the longer text IMEV **3502** and are not a separate item.

**1540** In the begynnyng of this litell werke / I pray to God . . .

Peter Idley's *Instructions*, in rhyme royal. Divided into two books. Part of the second book is based on Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*.

Three extracts from Book II of the *Instructions* (including one listed separately by IMEV as 1287) are listed in: Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1944), nos. 22a, 41a, 93a.

The *Instructions* are discussed in *The Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja, *Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ*, ser. B. LXI.2 (Helsinki: 1948), p. 35, along with other texts in this edition.

Some of these lines can also be found incorporated in numbers **432**, **3502**, **3847**.

### Manuscripts

1. Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2030, fol. 19r (stanzas 1-7 wanting, not quite complete at end)
2. Cambridge University Library Ee. 4.37, fol. 1r
3. Dublin, Trinity College 160, fol. 14r [begins imperfectly at stanza 8; ends imperfectly; some leaves missing]
4. London, British Library, Arundel 20, fol. 43r (begins in Book II)
5. London, British Library, Harley 172, fol. 21r [Bk I only]
6. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 181, fol. 10v [Bk I only]
7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 416, fol. 1r
8. Oxford, Bodleian Library Eng. Poet. d.45, fol. 1r-37v (Book II only)

### Editions

MSS 1-7 *Peter Idley's Instructions to His Son*, ed. by Charlotte d'Evelyn (Boston and London: Modern Language Association of America, 1935), pp. 81-210.

MSS 2, 3, 5, 6 Fritz Miessner, *Peter Idle's Instructions to his Son* (Unpublished dissertation, Greifswald, 1903), pp. 34-50.

MS 7 *Queene Elizabethes Achademy Etc.*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 8 (1869) pp. 109-110.

Only one verse from Book I is a direct parallel to lines found in **432**, although other lines in the work also show some similarities to other texts in this list.

**1628.8** Yt is folly to byene a begare yf it be wyell boyghtt . . .

Includes **77**, **106.5**, **1162.9**, **2072.3**. This is a false entry, since these are clearly disconnected couplets and not a single item.

### Manuscript

1. Glasgow, Hunterian 230, fols 247r-48v

**1640.5** It þat I gif I haif/It þat I len I craiff . . .

Twelve moralizing lines on lending money.

Similar lines to the first four of this text also occur in the *Fasciculus Morum*, see:

*Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. by Siegfried Wenzel (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), p. 550.

Lines included in this text can also be found in numbers 430, 432, 512.8, 558, 1297, 3068.5, 3088, 3273, 4095, 4137. This item and 3256.6 always appear together and could more usefully be categorised as a single item.

#### Manuscripts

1. Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2553, fol. 294r
2. Cambridge University Library Ll. 5.10, fol. 57v
3. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 1.1.6, fol. 122r (last 6 lines only)
4. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 1.1.6, fol. 147r

#### Editions

MS 1. W. A. Craigie, *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, I, STS n.s.7 (1919), p. 344.

MS 3. W. Tod Ritchie, *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, II, STS n.s. 22 (1928), p. 324.

MS 4. Allan Ramsay, *The Evergreen*, I (Edinburgh: Donaldson, 1761; repr. Glasgow: Forrester, 1876), p. 107.

W. Tod Ritchie, *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, III, STS n.s. 23 (1928), pp. 43-44.

**3068.5** Salamon seyth ther is none accorde . . .

Proverbs. Fifteen couplets.

Contains lines which also appear in numbers **430, 432, 512.8, 558, 1640.5, 3088, 4095, 4137.**

#### Manuscript

1. Cambridge, Trinity College, O.9.38, fol. 70r
2. A fragment engraved on a frieze in Grafton Manor, Worcestershire.

#### Edition

MS 1. *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, ed. by Henry Person (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1953), pp. 52-53.

MS 2. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Worcestershire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 157.

**3088** Sette and saue yf thow wyll haue / Waste and wante . . .

Rhyming proverbs. The texts are of varying lengths. See Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Wall Verses at Launceston Priory', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 200 (1964), p. 342.

Contains lines which appear in numbers **432**, **558**, **4137**, **3068.5**.

#### Manuscripts

1. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 19.3.1, fol. 61v
2. London, British Library, Additional 22,720, fol. 92r
3. London, British Library, Harley 116, fol. 170v

#### Edition

MS 3. T. Wright & J. O. Halliwell, *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, I (London: Pickering, 1841), p. 316.

#### Also listed in IMEV:

4. London, British Library Harley 2252, fol. 3r. This reference refers to the occurrence of these lines as part of **432** and not to an instance of its independent existence. As this occurrence is already recorded under **432** it is not included here.
5. London, British Library Additional 37049, fol. 85r. In this instance the text of 3088 appears as a part of a longer series of proverbs listed here as **558**; it is not a separate item.

**3195** Sone y schal þe schewe now take hede / And of suche . . .

A Father's Instructions to His Son. 2 x 12 ll. and 1 x 14 ll. stanzas.

Mustanoja discusses this: *The Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja, *Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ*, ser. B. LXI.2 (Helsinki: 1948), p. 67. Contains lines also found in text numbers **430**, **432**, **558**, **1540**, **3195**, **3502**, **3847**.

#### Manuscripts

1. London, British Library, Additional 25,006, fol. 11v
2. London, Lambeth Palace 853, fol. 155r [lacks last 4ll.]

Edition

2. *The Babees Book*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 32 (1868), p. 34.

Also listed in Supplement to IMEV:

3. Buckland House – at end of *Mirror of Sinners*

It is suggested in the Supplement to IMEV that this MS is to be identified with the 'Throckmorton Manuscript' (also known as the Coughton Court Manuscript); this manuscript is now Lambeth Palace MS 3957. However, it does not contain this text.

**3256.6** Tak tyme in tyme and no tyme defer . . .

Four moralizing couplets.

This text also contains lines also found in numbers **432.1**, **477**, **512.8**, **513**, **558**, **4137**.

Manuscripts.

1. Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2553, fol. 294r
2. Cambridge University Library Ll. 5.10, fol. 58r
3. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 1.1.6, fol. 122r
4. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 1.1.6, fol. 147r

Editions

MS 1. W.A. Craigie, *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, I, STS n.s. 7 (1919) p. 344.

MS 4. Allan Ramsay, *The Evergreen*, I (Edinburgh: Donaldson, 1761; repr. Glasgow: Forrester, 1876), p. 107.

W. Tod Ritchie, *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, II, STS n.s. 22 (1928) pp. 43-44.

**3502** The wysman seyde to hys sones / Thenk in piſe prouerbis . . .

Prouerbis of Wysdom. In couplets. All texts show some variation. The 4 versions are discussed in *The Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, ed. by Tauno F. Mustanoja, *Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ*, ser. B. LXI.2 (Helsinki: 1948), p. 65. Contains lines also found in numbers **430**, **432**, **512.8**, **558**, **1151**, **3088**, **3195**, **3847**, **4034.6**.

### Manuscripts

1. Cambridge Trinity College R. 3. 19, fol. 209v
2. Netherlands, Leyden University Vossius 9, fol. 107v
3. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS 9, fol. 99r
4. Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson. poet. 33, fol. 54v (This version also includes 1416 – 'A lesson to be kept in mind by a virtuous child'.)

These 4 MSS each contain an extensive compilation of 'advice' material. Each begins with the same couplet and many couplets are contained in both texts. However, each has distinctive material and there are considerable variations in the order in which the material is presented. Each MS presents a distinct 'version' of the basic text.

### Editions

MS 3. F. J. Furnivall, 'Three Middle English Poems', *Englische Studien*, 23 (1897), 442-44.

G. Schleich, 'Die Sprichwörter Hendingis und die Prouerbis of Wysdom', *Anglia*, 51 (1927), 220-24.

MS 4. Julius Zupitza, 'The Prouerbis of Wysdom', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 90 (1893), 241.

Also listed in IMEV:

Warminster, Longleat House 29, fols 131r-46v, lower margins [var., vv. 64]. The Longleat text appears to bear no resemblance to the text contained in the other manuscripts, all of which contain a substantial body of similar material. The text indicated in this manuscript is indeed a sequence of proverbial couplets, but is not included here as none of these couplets appear to be related to any of the texts represented by IMEV **3502**.

**3847** Vtter thy langage wyth gud avisement / Reule the by . . .

One stanza rime royal followed by vv. 64-67 from Peter Idle's Instructions [1540] and four distichs. Lines 18-19 are also mentioned in Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Wall verses at Launceston Priory', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 200 (1964), 342-43.

Contains lines also found in numbers **432**, **558**, **1151**, **1540**, **3195**, **3502**.

Manuscript

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C.86, fol. 31r

Edition

MS 1. *The Babees Book*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 32 (1868), pp. 219-20.

**3969** Wanne i ðenke ðinges ðre / ne mai hi neure bliðe ben . . .

Three sorrowful things – six lines. See also **3199.5**.

A corresponding Latin text of four lines occurs in the Balliol MS (MS 4 below) and separately without the English in MSS Ashmole 1393, fol. 51v; Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.2.53, fol. 73r and London, British Library, Royal 17.B.xviii, fol. 99r. See *English Lyrics of the XIII Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 173 and *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole II*, ed. by C. Horstman (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1896), p. 65.

For other English versions see **695**, **1615**, **3711**, **3712**, & **3713**.

Manuscripts

1. Cambridge University Library Dd. 4.50, fol. 135r
2. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 18.7.21, fol. 154v
3. London, British Library, Arundel 292, fol. 3v
4. London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 499, fol. 125v.
5. Oxford, Balliol College 354, fol. 213v (followed by **2072.6** ie **3969** and **2072.6** are combined to form one poem)
6. Oxford, New College 88, fol. 31r

Editions

MS 2. E. Wilson, *A Descriptive Index of the English Lyrics in John of Grimestone's Preaching Book*, Medium Aevum monographs n.s. II (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 63.

MS 3. T. Wright & J. O. Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, I (London: Pickering, 1841), p. 235.

E. Mätzner, *Altenglische Sprachproben*, I. Poesie (Berlin: Wiedmann, 1867)

R. M. Garrett, 'Religious Verses from MS Arundel 292', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 128 (1912), 368.

M. Förster, 'Kleinere Mittelenglische Texte', *Anglia*, 42 (1918), 155.



A. J. Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation*, II, EETS e.s. 7 (1897), p. 442.

Rolf Kaiser, *Alt- und Mittelenglische Anthologie* (Berlin: Kaiser, 1954), p.

204.

Rolf Kaiser, *Medieval English* (Berlin: Kaiser, 1958), p. 294.

MSS 3 & 6 *English Lyrics of the XIII Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932) p. 19.

MS 5. Ewald Flügel, 'Die Lieder des Balliol Ms. 354' *Anglia*, 26 (1903), 226.

Roman Dyboski, *Songs, Carols and other Miscellaneous Poems*, EETS e.s.

101 (1907), p. 141.

M. Haupt & A. H. Hoffman, *Alteutsche Blätter*, 2 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1840), p. 142.

Rolf Kaiser, *Alt- und Mittelenglische Anthologie* (Berlin: Kaiser, 1954), p. 204.

Rolf Kaiser, *Medieval English* (Berlin: Kaiser, 1958), p. 294.

**4095** Who of plente wyll take no hede / Shal fynde defawte yn tyme of nede

A moralizing couplet included in a longer series of proverbs against lending money.

Variants of this text can also be found in numbers **430**, **432**, **512.8**, **558**, **1640.5**, **3068.5**, **3088**, **4137**.

#### Manuscript

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson poet. 32, fol. 55r

#### Edition

1. Julius Zupitza 'The Prouerbis of Wysdom', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 90 (1893), p. 247.

*Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 4th edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 507.

Also listed in IMEV:

2. Cambridge, Magdalene College Pepys 2553, fol. 294r

3. Cambridge University Library Ll. 5.10, fol. 57r

4. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 1.1.6, fol. 122r

In each of these manuscripts the item is included in the longer text already listed and referred to as 1640.5; they are not separate items.

**4137** Who-so off welth takyth non hede / he shall fynd default . . .

A warning against the fickleness of Fortune; 6 couplets.

See also Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Wall verses at Launceston Priory', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 200 (1964), pp. 338-43. Lines from this text are included in: **430, 432, 432.1, 477, 512.8, 513, 558, 860.3, 1587.8, 1640.5, 1829.2, 3068.5, 3088, 3256.6, 4095, 4137.**

#### Manuscripts

1. Glasgow, Hunterian 230, fol. 248v (ll. 1-2 only; variant)
2. Oxford, Balliol College 354, fol. 160r
3. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C.86, fol. 59r (ll. 1-2 only)

#### Editions

MS 2. Ewald Flügel, 'Die Lieder des Balliol Ms. 354', *Anglia*, 26 (1903), 174.

R. Dyboski, *Songs, Carols and other Miscellaneous Poems*, EETS e.s.101 (1907), p. 139.

MS 3. Joseph Ames, *Typographical Antiquities*, II (London: Miller, 1810-19), p. 225.

The two lines listed under MS I here are not given an independent existence in IMEV but are included under **1628.8**, a series of ten disconnected proverbs. The proverbial couplets grouped under **1628.8** occur rather disjointedly over several separate pages of the manuscript rather than as any form of running text – although the scribe appears to be the same throughout. Several of them have also been recorded individually in IMEV. Their disjointed appearance suggests that separate entries would be preferable to a single corporate entry for all the couplets, viz. here and at **77, 106.5, 1162.9, 2056 and 2072.3.**

APPENDIX 2  
TEXT of 432

A Father's Counsel To His Son

- 1           At owur begynnynge God be owur spede  
          In grace & vertue to prosede.  
          Be petuus & eke merciabyll;  
          To nedy folke be cherytabyll.
- 5           A man withowte mercy of mercy shall mys,  
          & he shalle haue mercy þat mercyfulle ys;  
          By mercye & mekenes all thinge chevythe,  
          By foly & hate alle wysdom remevythe.  
          The beste wysdom þat I can
- 10          Ys to doe welle & drede no man;  
          He þat yn yowþe no vertue wyll vse,  
          In age alle honour wyll hym refuse.  
          Spend no manus good in vayne,  
          Ffor borowurd thyng wyll home agayne.
- 15          Gyve thow trewe weyghte, mete & measure  
          And then shall grace with the indure.  
          Be not to bold for to blame  
          Leste þou be found in the same;  
          And yff on party wold fayne be awreke
- 20          Yat, man of ryghte, here þe toþer party speke.  
          Over þi hed loke thowe never hewe,  
          Poverte hathe but frendes fewe;  
          Whoo so of welthe takythe no hede,

14 A verb of motion is implied here, meaning: 'For a thing which is borrowed will return home again'.

15 Compare Proverbs 16:11 'A just weight and balance are the Lord's'.

19 **fayne be awreke** 'happily be avenged'

21 **hewe** 'chop' (*MED heuen* vb.1(b)). The sense of the line is perhaps best expressed in the modern phrase 'don't get above yourself'.

- 25                   He shall fynde fawte in tyme of nede.  
 "Pis world ys mvtablle," so saythe sage,  
 Perfor gader, or thow fall in age.  
 Kepe not pi tresure aye closyd in mew,  
 Suche old tresure wyll þe shame ynowe.  
 30                   Whate prophyt is plente & grete tresure  
 & in poverte a wreche alway to endure?  
 Man, sobyrly pi howse begyn,  
 & spende no more then pou mayste wyn,  
 For a nyse wyfe & a backe dore  
 Makyth oftyn tymus a ryche man pore.  
 35                   Wysdom stondyth not all by speche,  
 A wylfull shrew can noman teche;  
 He hathe wysdom at hys wylle  
 Pat can, with angry harte, be styлле.  
 What man pou serue, alway hym drede,  
 40                   And hys good, as þine awne, spare.  
 Lett never pi wylle pi witt overlede,  
 Be lowly & seruysabyll & love hys welfare.  
 And yf pou wylte be owt of sorow & care  
 Hyt ys to kepe & refrayne pi tonge,  
 45                   & ever in welth be ware of woo,  
 For pis lernyth chyldren when they be yonge.

24 **fawte** shortened form of *defaute* meaning 'lack'/'want' (*MED default(e)* n.1(a)).

25 **saythe** 'says'. The definite article and the 3rd person ending of the verb have been elided to make a single form and avoid the clumsy phrase 'sayth the sage'.

27 **closyd in mew** 'locked away' (*MED meu(e)* n.(1) 3(a))

29 **prophyt is** In the manuscript the verb 'is' has been mistaken for a verbal ending, and is represented by a mark of suspension on 'prophyt'.

30 'And always to suffer [like] a wretch in poverty'.

31 'Set up your household modestly'.

33 **nyse wyfe** 'wanton wife' (*MED nice* adj.4.(b)).

41 ie. 'Don't let your heart rule your head'. This line is in the hortative mood, allowing more impact to rest on the central contrast of 'pi witt' and 'pi will'.

- Son, yf þou wyste whate thyng hyt were  
Connyng to lerne & with þe to bere,  
Thow wold not myspend on howre,  
50 For of all tresure connyng ys flowur.  
Yf þou wylte leve in peas & reste,  
Here & see & sey the beste;  
Where ever þou be, in bowur or halle,  
Be mery, honeste, & lyberalle.  
55 Beware, my son, ever of had-I-wyste  
Hard ys to know whom on may trys[te];  
A trysty frende ys hard to fynde,  
None ys more foo þen on vnkyn[de].  
Care not to myche for ony thyng  
60 Thowghte wyll þe sone to erþe brynge.  
Serve God welle & haue no drede,  
He wyll þe helpe in tyme of nede.  
Drede owur Lord God bothe nyght & day,  
Swere none othys in ernyste or pley,  
65 For who so dothe, Scrypture sayth soo,  
Pe plage from hys howse shall not go.  
Erly in the dawnyng of þe day  
My son to God loke þat þou pray,  
& ever haue in þi memory  
70 For to seke hevyn moste besyly.  
Acompany with them þat be oneste  
And they wyll reporte of þe þe beste,  
As for þis proverbe dothe specify:

56 & 58 MS. cropped.

66 Although this appears to refer to either the plagues of Egypt in Exodus or the ritual cleansing in Leviticus 4, no such line exists in the Bible.

67 MS 'dawnyng'.

70 This is a rough transl. of the Latin lines found in 430 (1.20). See Matthew 6:33 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God . . .'.

- 75                    'Lyke wyll to lyke in eche company.'  
Grace & good maners makyþe a man,  
Woo may he be þat no good can;  
Better ys to have vertu & connyng  
Pan to be lewde with ryches of a kynge.  
Hevy of þi herte loke þou not be,  
80                    Let honeste company comfort the.  
Yf þou be trobyllyd with ynconvenyens,  
Arme þe alway with invard pacyens.  
Invre þe with them þat byn wyse,  
Then to ryches thow shalt aryse.

74 This appears to be a translation of the Latin line found in 430 (l.24): 'Similis similem sibi querit' which is often found in religious contexts. See Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 82 and Guibert de Nogent, Epis. 38 & 54.

83 **invre** 'make yourself free to associate with' (*MED* fre 1c).

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Paul Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 65-75; see also the essays in *Medieval Literature: Texts and Interpretation*, ed. by Tim William Machan (New York: Binghamton, 1991) especially Julia Boffey, 'Middle English Lyrics: Texts and Interpretation', pp. 121-38 and Sherry L. Reames, 'Mouvance and Interpretation in Late-medieval Latin: The Legend of St. Cecilia in British Breviaries', pp. 159-89.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Pearsall, 'Editing Medieval Texts: Some Developments and Some Problems', *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> For the text, see Appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> For a list of such texts, see Appendix 1. This list substantially revises the entries given in IMEV and its Supplement.

<sup>5</sup> IMEV 432, ll. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of this and other problems inherent in the romance genre see: A. S. G. Edwards 'Middle English Romance: The Limits of Editing, the Limits of Criticism', *Medieval Literature: Texts and Interpretation*, ed. by T. W. Machan (New York: Binghamton, 1991), pp. 91-104. Also: A. C. Baugh, 'The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation and Preservation', *Speculum*, 42 (1967), 1-31.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Hoey, 'The Discourse Colony: A Preliminary Study of a Neglected Discourse Type', *Talking About Text* (Birmingham: English Language Research, University of Birmingham, 1986), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> The dissimilarity between the two manuscript 'versions' of 432 has been noted before, see: Tauno Mustanoja, 'The Index of Middle English verse: Corrections, Additions, Suggestions', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 49 (1948), 126-33.

<sup>10</sup> John Colyns, the compiler of the commonplace book containing 432, was a London mercer, but the constituent couplets are extant in MSS from widely differing provenances, including Scotland. For example: IMEV 512.8 occurs in Advocates I.I.6, fol. 75v (The Bannatyne Manuscript) and IMEV 1640.5 occurs in Pepys 2553, fol. 294 (Maitland's folio manuscript). Both of these texts share lines in common with 432.

<sup>11</sup> *Bodleian Library, Manuscript Fairfax 16*, ed. by John Norton Smith (London: Scolar Press, 1979), Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> *Manuscript Fairfax 16*, p. xxvii.

<sup>13</sup> We have not included a discussion of editorial issues surrounding the parallel text edition as they have already been expressed excellently, see: Dan Embree & Elizabeth Urquhart 'The Simonie: The Case for a Parallel-Text Edition', *Manuscripts & Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 49-59. By coincidence, though *The Simonie* is a much longer text than the majority of those found here, the number of lines similar between the longest text of

*The Simonie* and its other two versions is 37%, a figure almost identical to the percentage of lines shared between 430 and 432, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>14</sup> 'At owur begynnyng God be owur spede': *Some difficulties in editing Middle English Proverbial Literature* (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 1997).