

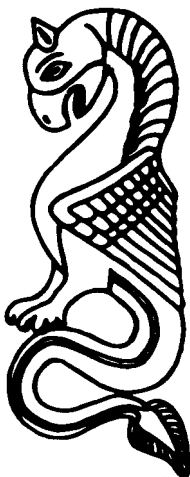
# Leeds Studies in English

**Article:**

Bruce Dickins, 'Two Worcester Fragments of a Middle English Secular Lyric', *Leeds Studies in English*, 4 (1935), 44-46

**Permanent URL:**

[https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=134478&silos\\_library=GEN01](https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=134478&silos_library=GEN01)



*Leeds Studies in English*  
School of English  
University of Leeds  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

## TWO WORCESTER FRAGMENTS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH SECULAR LYRIC.

On a recent visit to the Worcester Chapter Library (17-18 July 1935)<sup>1</sup> I came upon two fragments of early Middle English verse which do not seem to have found their way into any collection of the Middle English secular lyric, or to be noted in Wells' *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*. Their affinities in style, dialect and spelling to other Middle English lyrics<sup>2</sup> will be obvious to the well-informed reader.

1. F. 64, f.8 (xiii cent).

This was printed, with a couple of queries and as many slight departures from the original, by J. K. Floyer and S. G. Hamilton, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Chapter Library of Worcester Cathedral*, pp. 30-31 (Worcestershire Historical Society 1906). I arrange it in metrical lines:—

He may cume to mi lef bute by þ<sup>e</sup> watere.  
wanne me lust slepen þanne moti wakie  
Wnder is þat hi liuie.

2. Q. 50, f.46r<sup>2</sup>.

In this volume are bound together at least three separate manuscripts of different dates. The second item in the second of these is a copy of the "Expositio Donati"; written in the same hand are two familiar Latin pentameters with internal rhyme and six lines of Middle English.<sup>3</sup> The *Catalogue*, p. 133, describes them in the following terms:—

'Explicit explicat,' etc., followed by five apparently amatory, but (as they are written) unintelligible, English verses, subscribed, 'dixit Robertus seynte Mary clericus.'

<sup>1</sup> I have to thank Sir Ivor Atkins, the Chapter Librarian, for much kindness.

<sup>2</sup> Notably, as Dr. G. L. Brook reminds me, to the Rawlinson Lyrics printed by W. Heuser in *Anglia* 30, 173-9.

<sup>3</sup> The *Catalogue* dates it xiv cent., but my colleague, Professor Hamilton Thompson, would place it earlier—about 1270-80.

The eleven lines in question may be transcribed:—

Explicit expliceat ludere scriptor eat  
 Qui scripsit carmen sit benedictus amen  
 Ne saltou neuer leuedi tuynklen  
 Wyt þin eyen hic abbe ydon al myn youth  
 ofte . ofte . ant ofte . longe yloued ant  
 yerne ybeden ful dere it his a bout.  
 dore go þou stille go þou stille e yat hic  
 abbe in þe boure ydon al myn uyllee. dixit  
 Robertus  
 seynte Mary  
 Clericus

Below is drawn a hand<sup>4</sup> with the index finger pointing to the second *e* in *uyllee*, which seems as otiose as that which follows *stille* in the line above—unless it be in either case echoic. I should arrange in metrical lines:—

Ne saltou neuer, leuedi,  
 Tuynklen wyt þin eyen.  
 Hic abbe ydon al myn youth,  
 Ofte, ofte, ant ofte,  
 Longe yloued ant yerne ybeden;  
 Ful dere it his a-bout.  
 Dore, go þou stille,  
 Go þou stille, -e,  
 Yat; hic abbe in þe boure  
 Ydon al myn uylle, -e.

*Notes.*

1-2 may be a prose introduction to the following eight lines, but their rhythmical quality persuades me to arrange them as verse.

2. *Tuynklen* is probably earlier in this sense than any example in NED, where the first quotation is from c.1374.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. MS. Digby 86, which has "long index fingers directing attention to certain items in the contents—usually pieces specially useful for homiletic purposes" (Carleton Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p. xxxv).

(Chaucer's *Boethius*); the verbal noun is recorded however from c.1300 in *Minor Poems from the Vernon Manuscript* (EETS. 98 and 117, pp. 519/1).

3. 'All my youth is past,' or perhaps 'I have wasted all my youth' (NED. *do*, B.II, 3).

4-6. The rhyme *ofte* : *a-bout* (OE. *oft* : *aboht*, p.p. of *abyrgan* 'to pay the penalty for') can be paralleled from Havelok 883-4 *bouht* : *oft*, and, nearer home, in CB. 91, 7-8 *þohte* : *ofte*,<sup>5</sup> and 16, 31ff. *on-loft* : *iwroust* : *aboust* : *noust*.

5. *ybeden* (OE. *gebeden*, p.p. of *biddan* 'to entreat'); cf. Owl and Nightingale 1437.

6. Cf. CB. 65, 60 *þat was so der hi-boit*, and 74, 18 *duere hit haþ aboht*.

8-9. *stille*, *Yat*; To avoid the enjambement Dr. Brook would punctuate *stille*, *e. Yat*, . . .

*Yat* (WS. *geat* or Old Anglian *gæt*) 'gate'; cf. the place-name Symond's Yat on the borders of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. *Dore* and *Yat* are no more synonymous than in the Cynewulf and Cyneheard episode in the Chronicle (755 A).

10. Cf. De Clerico et Puella (CB. 85) 36 *þou art myn, to don al þi wille*.

BRUCE DICKINS.

<sup>5</sup> I owe this parallel to Dr. Brook.