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What is Heard and What is Seen: Rhyme and Stanzaic Integrity in the A and B Versions of *The Devils' Parliament*

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A number of years ago I edited for the series *Middle English Texts* the stanzaic narrative of the life of Christ *The Devils' Parliament* or *The Parliament of Feendis*.[1] The edition examined aspects of the style of the text and features of its stanza form, as well as the functions and effects of the form. To investigate the 'effects of the form' is to explore the degree of flexibility the form of the text offered for narrative structure and style, and how the text was received and used by scribes and medieval editors. In the light of work by Susanna Fein on Middle English stanzaic verse and also the implications of the way verse texts are presented in manuscripts, it is useful to look again at *The Devils' Parliament* as an example of an accomplished and assured stanzaic narrative.[2]

 The Devils' Parliament has not received a great deal of critical attention, and so, unlike the well known stanzaic text *Pearl*, calls for a brief introduction. *The Devils' Parliament* is an account of the life and passion of Christ, narrated in large part by the Devil. Its organizing theme is the deception of the Devil, which is a medieval meta-narrative associated with the doctrine of the Redemption that is found in a range of texts from Greek and Latin patristic writing to vernacular drama. The Devil is shown to have been deceived by the Incarnation about the divinity of Jesus or to have been a victim of his own wilful ignorance as to the significance of Jesus in human history. One version of *The Devils' Parliament* ends with the couplet:

> Here ys wryten the Fendys Parlement
> How Ihesu wyȝth hys passion hem blent. (A-version, ll. 441–42)

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[1] '*The Devils' Parliament' and 'The Harrowing of Hell and Destruction of Jerusalem'*, Middle English Texts, 25 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993). *NIMEV* 3992. One of Oliver Pickering's most enduring contributions to Medieval Studies is the foundation, with Manfred Görlach, of *Middle English Texts*. The series began publication in 1975, and with great care and attention to detail the two general editors guided over thirty volumes through to publication. *Middle English Texts* continues to flourish under the second generation of general editors, and 2011 saw the publication of volume 43. It is with gratitude that I acknowledge Oliver's help and insight not only in connection with my edition of *The Devils' Parliament* but also with a number of other projects.

[2] Susanna Greer Fein, 'Twelve-Line Stanza Forms in Middle English and the Date of *Pearl*', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 367–98; 'Roll or Codex? The Diptych Layout of Thomas of Hales's "Love Rune"', in *Sources, Exemplars and Copy-Texts: Influence and Transmission: Essays from the Lampeter Conference of the Early Book Society 1997*, ed. by William Marx, *Trivium*, 31 (Lampeter: Trivium Publications, 1999), 13–23.

The sense of 'blent' here is 'deceived' (*MED* blenden *v*(1), 2(a)). The text is designed to show that the Devil is repeatedly frustrated in his attempts to discover the identity of Jesus. The truth is revealed at the harrowing of hell, which is the climax of the Devil's narrative.[3]

The textual history of *The Devils' Parliament* spans the transition from manuscript to printed book, and it is through the stages of this history that we can observe how the text was received and the effects of its stanzaic form. The two medieval manuscripts are of the first half of the fifteenth century: London, British Library, MS Additional 37492, and London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 853.[4] Linguistic evidence argues that the text is from the early part of the fifteenth century.[5] *The Devils' Parliament* was printed three times in the sixteenth century by Wynkyn de Worde (1509; STC 19305), Julian Notary (1520; STC 19305.3), and Richard Fakes (? 1521; STC 19305.5), the latter two closely following Wynkyn de Worde's edition.[6] The latest witness is London, British Library, MS Additional 15225 which is a seventeenth-century manuscript copy that can be linked to Wynkyn de Worde's printing.[7]

Editing *The Devils' Parliament* was complicated and also made intriguing by the emergence from the manuscripts of two distinct versions which I designated 'A' and 'B', the A-version in Additional 37492, and the B-version in Lambeth 853. All other witnesses are witnesses of the B-version. The discrepancies between the two versions are considerable and range from differences in readings in individual lines — some of which are the result of scribal error and some of which are the result of conscious revision — to the addition and removal of stanzas, to the large scale re-arrangement and re-ordering of stanzas.[8] The extent of the revision is such that the two versions could almost be seen as distinct texts. The stanzaic form of *Pearl* and its use of linking words mean that it would be difficult for a scribe to tamper with the order of the stanzas without ruining the text. The stanzaic form and style are part of the art and meaning of *Pearl*, but on a practical level its stanzaic form serves to prevent a perceptive scribe from interfering too much with the text.[9] On the other hand, the stanzaic form of *The Devils' Parliament* means that the narrative structure is flexible and allows for intervention and revision by an intelligent and ambitious medieval editor or scribe.

Susanna Fein has drawn attention to the ways in which modern editors tend not to respect scribal forms of presentation when these come into conflict with modern editorial conventions.[10] As a result of the application of modern editorial conventions, *The Devils' Parliament* takes the form of a stanzaic poem composed in octets rhyming a/b throughout. For example:

> ʒe! prophetys spekyn al myst,
> What they mene we neuer knewe;
> They spekyn of on scholde hote Crist,

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[3] For a discussion of the theme of the deception of the Devil, see William Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995); see especially pp. 47–58.

[4] The manuscripts are described in *The Devils' Parliament*, pp. 12–17.

[5] *The Devils' Parliament*, p. 25.

[6] *The Devils' Parliament*, pp. 18–19.

[7] *The Devils' Parliament*, pp. 17–18 and 37–38.

[8] *The Devils' Parliament*, pp. 26–35.

[9] On the art of the stanza of *Pearl* see the Introduction to: *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, York Medieval Texts, second series (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), pp. 29–36. This edition has been revised and reprinted a number of times, most recently in a 'fully revised fifth edition' published in the series 'Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies' by Exeter University Press, 2007. See also Fein, 'Twelve-Line Stanza Forms in Middle English and the Date of *Pearl*', pp. 371–72.

[10] This is one of the arguments of 'Roll or Codex?'.

> But Maryes sone hatte Ihesu.
> Cryst of godhede schulde be a twyst,
> But Maryes sone neuer in God grew.
> They bygyle us with the lyst;
> The cloth hys of another hewe.   (A8; ll. 57–64)

This stanza is characteristic of the A-version in that it is more self-consciously artful or rhetorical than might at first appear. The eight lines are integrated through the rhyme, and each pair of lines is designed to develop a contrast, producing four in all. The first four lines are linked through *spekyn*, and the two sets of contrasts are based on notions of language and understanding, which are central to the overall theme of the text, the deception of the Devil: *mene* and *knewe*; *hote* and *hatte*. Lines five and six of the stanza set up a contrast around ideas of growth and generation. The reference to the prophecy that states that Christ should be a branch (*twyst*) invokes the biblical image of Christ as a branch of the tree of Jesse (Isaiah 11. 1 and 10; Romans 15. 12), a wide-spread theme in medieval culture.[11] This is contrasted to the devils' scepticism that Jesus could have been generated by God, which further reinforces the idea of the devils' ignorance or the extent to which they have been deceived or deceived themselves. The final two lines set up a contrast using imagery drawn from cloth and cloth making: *lyst* refers to the discarded border of cloth that is cut up for use. The *MED* glosses the phrase 'The cloth hys of another hewe' as a proverb with the sense 'the case [or truth] is altogether different' (cloth, *n*. 7); this is designed again to suggest the wilful ignorance of the devils who remain sceptical about Jesus's identity. This imagery also recalls Jesus's seamless robe which at his crucifixion was not cut up or discarded (John 21. 23–24). Not all the stanzas of *The Devils' Parliament* have this density of potential meaning, but it is typical of the text that each stanza is very much self-contained; all that needs to be said *is* said within the stanza, and sentences are not carried over from one stanza to the next.

As Figure 1 shows, however, the one surviving witness of the A-version suggests in visual terms none of this kind of stanzaic integrity. It is not as though space on the manuscript page is at a premium, for the margins are generous, but there is nothing about the manuscript page to suggest that this is a stanzaic text or that the lines rhyme within a particular form. This is not an uncommon phenomenon. The scribe may perfectly well have understood that this is a stanzaic text, and this would have been evident through the rhymes and the rhetoric and syntax of the sentences, which would have been reinforced through the act of reading. The stanzaic structure of the narrative would have been most evident during reading aloud, although silent reading would have produced the same mental effect. This, we can say, is an aural understanding of the stanzaic form; it comes about from what is heard. No clues, however, are given as to the stanzaic character of the text through the way it is presented in the manuscript. On the basis of the evidence of the rhymes and syntax, however, the modern editor is compelled to present this text as stanzaic. This is because in a modern edition, our first impression of the form of a text is visual; we see the text on the page before we read it. It is important to emphasize that despite the way in which the A-version of *The Devils' Parliament* is presented in this manuscript, with no indication of stanza breaks or rhymes, not one rhyme has been lost and not one stanza is without its full complement of eight lines. The integrity of the text is established more through its aural signals than its visual signals.

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[11] On the Tree of Jesse see Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 2 vols (London: Lund Humphries, 1971–72), I, 15–22.

This is not the only way in which the text is presented in medieval manuscripts. The other fifteenth-century manuscript, Lambeth 853, presents the text as shown in Figure 2. Here visual signals or bibliographic codes are very much in evidence, with lines in the right margins linking the alternate rhymes, and paragraph marks every four lines. And this way of seeing the text carries over into the early printed texts of *The Devils' Parliament*. Wynkyn de Worde sets the form for the three sixteenth-century printings (see Figure 3). The visual signals or bibliographic codes in Lambeth 853 and Wynkyn de Worde's printing, however, give misleading information, for they suggest that the text is made up of four-line stanzas with alternating rhyme, not eight-line stanzas with alternating rhyme. Did the scribe of the Lambeth manuscript simply fail to grasp the larger stanzaic structures at work in the text as a modern editor would see it, or was it simply enough to draw attention to the alternating rhymes and the recurring patterns over four lines, not eight? Here the idea of the stanza, as we would see it, is not necessarily conveyed visually by the scribe. As Susanna Fein has argued, modern editorial imperatives do not necessarily acknowledge medieval conventions of presentation.

In terms of the textual history of *The Devils' Parliament*, it is paradoxical that the manuscript that presents the text visually as being regular and consistent contains the version of the text — the B-version — where stanzaic integrity has, in a number of cases, been sacrificed to a large-scale strategy of revision. There are numerous examples, but the textual history of one stanza and its context reveals the kinds of interventions that the B-reviser made.[12] The A-version presents the episode of the temptation of Christ in the form of third-person narrative and direct speech (A-version, ll. 97–144). In the B-version, the Devil serves as narrator of part of the temptation (B-version, ll. 53–6 and 61–80). Thus, in this episode there is in the B-version a mixture of modes of narration not found in the A-version. The direction of revision is suggested by B ll. 69–70, but this needs to be seen in the light of the larger contexts in the two versions:

> Ihesus seyde, 'Sothly bred
> Is nouȝt only mannys leuynge
> But euery word of the godhed
> To body & soule ys comfortyng'.
> He bar hym on the penacle & Ihesus bede
> Lep adoun withoute hurtynge,
> 'And saue the harmeles lyme & heued
> And preuyn maysterys whyle thow art ȝyng'.   (A15, ll. 113–20)

In the B-version this stanza reads:

> '"Forsoþe", Ihesu seide, "not oonli in breed
> Is verrili mannis propir lyuyng
> But euery worde of þe godhede
> To body and soule is coumfortynge".
> Vpon an hiȝ pinnacle þanne Y him brouȝte
> And left him þere and leep adowne
> And seide, "Saue þe harmelees lyme & heed
> And kiþe now maistries while þou art ȝonge"'.   (B9, ll. 65–72)

In the version of the stanza in B, two words in rhyming positions do not form rhymes with their counterparts in 'a' and 'b' positions, *brouȝte* and *adowne*, B l. 69 and B l. 70. Also problematic is the form *ȝonge* in l. 72. A's version of the stanza rhymes consistently a/b over the eight lines. In this context A uses third-person narrative whereas in B the Devil serves

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[12] This discussion is based on the Introduction to my edition of *The Devils' Parliament*, p. 28.

as narrator. It is significant for our understanding of the relationship of the two versions that differences in narrative point of view coincide with the loss of the rhyme scheme in a witness to the B-version. This is an effect of revision. The medieval editor was prepared also or indeed was driven to alter the sense. A117–18 read: 'He (the Devil) bore him (Jesus) onto the pinnacle and bade Jesus leap down without hurting himself.' This is close to Matthew 4. 5–6, where the Devil challenges Jesus to leap down from the pinnacle so that God will send angels to save him. B's version (ll. 69–71) reads 'I (the Devil) brought him (Jesus) up to a high pinnacle and left him there and leapt down and said […]'. The idea that the Devil 'leapt down' — not that the Devil directly challenged Jesus 'to leap down' — betrays revision in B, because the detail has no precedent in the biblical account and, in the light of A's version, is superfluous. Together these two pieces of evidence argue that B's version of the stanza is the work of a medieval editor or reviser who was prepared to ignore aspects of the sense of the stanza and the integrity of the rhyme scheme for what he considered a larger purpose, the recasting of the episode of the temptation into first-person narrative by the Devil, which he was not able to make comprehensive.

Another example of the work of the B-reviser comes from the episode of the harrowing of hell:

> 'Stalword God, strong of myȝt,
> He ys lord and kyng of blysse;
> Ouercome ys deth; myȝty in fyȝt,
> Kyng of blys forsothe he ys.'
> 'Pees, Mercy, Trouthe and Ryȝt
> I sawȝtyd and made hem to kysse;
> Euerlastyng gatys opnys in hyȝt;
> Lete in the kyng to takyn out hys.'   (A34, ll. 265–72)

> 'Strong God and king of might,
> I am lord and king of blis,
> Ouercomer of deþ, myghti in fight,
> Euerlastynge ȝatis, openeþ wight.
> Boþ Pees, Mercy, Trouþe & Right,
> I brouȝt them at oon & made þem to kis;
> Euerlastynge ȝatis openeþ on hight
> And lete in ȝoure king to take out his.   (B43, ll. 257–64)

The rhyme pattern for the stanza from the A-version is regular, a/b over the eight lines. The stanza is made up of two speeches; the first (A, ll. 265–68) has its source in the speech of David to Satan in the harrowing of hell episode of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* while the second is original to *The Devils' Parliament*.[13] The B-version of the stanza rhymes abaaaab, that is, with a sequence of three a-rhymes. What we also see in the B-version is that the reviser has changed the first half of the stanza so that it forms part of Christ's first-person speech, which is a feature of the second half of the stanza in the A-version. This involved initially the simple change of 'He ys' (A, l. 266) to 'I am' (B, l. 258). The effect is to remove any ambiguity about the speaker in the first half of the stanza and to give Christ's speech more dramatic impact. But this revision has come at the expense of the regular rhyme scheme and some repetition. The key to the reviser's problem is A, l. 268, 'Kyng of blys forsothe he ys' which would not fit easily

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13   *Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. by H. C. Kim, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), XXI, 3/7–12, p. 41.

into first-person narrative because the main verb, which is third person singular, functions as a rhyme. The reviser's solution was to replace this line with a slightly revised version of A, l. 271, the rhyme of which is an 'a' rhyme, thus producing the sequence of three 'a' rhymes. The further effect is that there is repetition in B, l. 260 and B, l. 263. Again, the evidence of the rhymes points to the direction of the revision and it is clear that the reviser's purpose was to introduce more first-person speech. For this he was prepared to ignore the integrity of the stanza.

Revision that produces this kind of effect is characteristic of the work of the B-reviser of *The Devils' Parliament*. David Burnley has drawn attention to another type of instance where a scribe sacrificed the original rhymes; this is scribe 'A' of Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.4.27, a manuscript of the works of Chaucer.[14] The evidence that Malcolm Parkes and Richard Beadle set out in their introduction to the facsimile of this manuscript reveals that in some instances of copying and re-copying *Troilus and Criseyde* the scribe destroyed eye-rhymes.[15] Burnley explains this phenomenon and indeed the nature of the copying by the scribe as the result of the attraction or pull of a perceived standard form of English. This is similar to what can be observed in Lambeth 853 of *The Devils' Parliament* insofar as it involves a scribe who was prepared to disrupt the integrity of the rhymes in response to an overriding consideration.

The instance discussed here from Lambeth 853 of the B-version of *The Devils' Parliament* and several others like them are the work of the B-reviser, and they suggest a strategy of revision to increase first-person narrative by the Devil and to give the text more dialogue. For these purposes the B-reviser was also prepared to sacrifice the integrity of the rhyme-pattern and the stanza. These disruptions to the integrity of the stanza are not scribal errors but conscious revisions that are part of a larger strategy.

In the textual history of *The Devils' Parliament* these interventions did not go unnoticed. The printing of *The Devils' Parliament* by Wynkyn de Worde in 1509 shows how he or a previous medieval editor responded to the rhyme scheme in the temptation episode:

> Forsothe Ihesu sayd not onely in brede
> Is veryly mannes propre lyuynge
> But euery worde of the godheed
> To body and soule is confortynge.
> Upon an hygh pynacle I hym brought anone
> And left hym there and adowne I spronge
> And sayd saue the harmeles both lymme & bone
> And do now maysteryes whyle thou arte yonge   (Wynkyn de Worde, ll. 65–72)

Here line 69 has the rhyme *anone*, line 70 has *adowne I spronge*, and line 71 has the rhyme *bone* for *heed* in the text in Lambeth 853. In Wynkyn de Worde's printing, therefore, the rhyme pattern for the eight lines is a/b/a/b/c/d/c/d; in the B-version in Lambeth 853 it is a/b/a/b/c/d/a/e. The regularity of the rhyme in the printed version might suggest that it contains

[14] J. D. Burnley, 'Sources of Standardisation in Late Middle English', in *Standardizing English: Essays in the History of Language Change in Honor of John Hurt Fisher*, ed. by Joseph B. Trahern, Tennessee Studies in Literature, 31 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), pp. 23–41 (pp. 26–29).

[15] *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Facsimile of Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.4.27*, introduced by M. B. Parkes and Richard Beadle, 3 vols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979); 'Scribal Practices and Orthography', III, 46–56 (pp. 50–52). See p. 51: '[The scribe] was indifferent to the fact that there was more than one way of spelling the same words he was copying (7, Wost / Wist, 14, Hyd / Hyde), a trait which led to the introduction of arbitrary orthographical variants that have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the rhymes (13, lyf / lyue, 8

a better witness to the text and that Lambeth 853 is corrupt. This hypothesis, however, is not supported by the evidence because the rhymes in the printed version are not sustained over the eight-line stanza; it is effectively two quatrains with different rhymes. Also, the reading *yonge* in line 72 is a form that earlier in the history of the text replaced the original form ȝ*ynge* which rhymes in the b-positions in A's version of the stanza. The form *yonge* was used by the B-reviser probably to provide a half-rhyme for the reading *adowne* in line 72. In other words, Wynkyn de Worde's reading *adowne I spronge* was devised probably to accommodate the rhyme *yonge* which itself is not an original reading. Wynkyn de Worde's printing reveals the work of the reviser also in the stanza, discussed earlier, from the episode of the harrowing of hell:

> Strong god and kynge of might
> I am lorde and kynge of blysse
> Usurper of dethe mighty in fight
> Euerlastynge gates open without mysse
> Bothe peas mercy trouth and right
> I brought them at one and made them to kysse
> Euerlastynge gates open on hyght
> And lete in your kynge to take out his   (Wynkyn de Worde, ll. 257–64)

The major variant between this version and that in Lambeth 853 comes in line 260; where the former has 'openeþ wight' the latter reads 'open without mysse'. The effect of this revision is to remove the sequence of three 'a' rhymes in lines 259–61 as witnessed in the Lambeth 853 text by restoring a 'b' rhyme in the fourth line, although at the expense of the rhythm of the line. On the printed page what was originally in the A-version an eight-line stanza appears as two quatrains with the same rhymes.

Wynkyn de Worde's readings here reveal two important responses to the rhyme scheme that resulted from the revisions that produced the B-version. First, what is evident in these examples is characteristic of the relationship between the text found in Lambeth 853 and Wynkyn de Worde's printed version. Where the A-version as found in Additional 37492 has a regular rhyme scheme over the eight-line stanzas throughout, the revisions that produced the B-version frequently interfere with this rhyme pattern, and in many of those instances Wynkyn de Worde's text shows the rewriting of portions of lines or whole lines in order to produce a regular rhyme pattern. Although the medieval editor of Wynkyn de Worde's text made substantive changes, the criteria for many of these changes were formal, and the form that he perceived the text to have is reflected in the way it is presented visually; that is, this medieval editor perceived the text to have four-line stanzas rhyming a/b, *not* the eight-line stanza characteristic of the A-version. In this respect, Wynkyn de Worde's in-house editor or Wynkyn de Worde himself may have taken his cue from the kinds of visual signals or bibliographic codes that highlight rhyme and stanza divisions that appear in Lambeth 853, hence the perception of the text as made up of four-line, not eight-line stanzas.

The second point, which follows from the first, is that unlike the scribe of the Lambeth 853 manuscript and possibly even the B-reviser, Wynkyn de Worde's in-house editor was concerned to make the text an accurate reflection of the visual signals or bibliographic codes. There is abundant evidence that has emerged from the examination of physical evidence, namely surviving setting-copies (that is, manuscripts) of printed texts that print-shop editors intervened in the preparation of texts in an effort, as they must have seen it, to correct the

peyne / payne).'

texts.[16] Although we lack the physical evidence for Wynkyn de Worde's setting of *The Devils' Parliament*, it is likely that the revisions that regularized the rhyme pattern or restored eye-rhyme were carried out by a print-shop editor. The evidence that print-shop editors were concerned that there should be coherence between visual codes and the text is suggestive that printed books were designed more for the eye than the ear, that is, for private reading rather than reading aloud.

Susanna Fein has shown that scribes could make errors in copying stanzas of twelve lines or even eight lines; quatrains could be left out or become detached. The eight-line stanza of a text such as *The Devils' Parliament* was vulnerable to the type of misunderstanding that we have seen, and could easily be broken up into two four-line stanzas. The manuscript that preserves the A-version of *The Devils' Parliament*, Additional 37492, has no visual codes and yet manages to preserve the integrity of the stanzas. At the basis of this is the rhetorical unity of the stanzas of the A-version. I referred to this characteristic earlier, and Oliver Pickering has written about this feature of the language of the text with reference to the A-version in his essay 'Middle English Metaphysical Verse? Imagery and Style in Some Fourteenth-Century Religious Poems'.[17] The interventions of the B-reviser are interesting in a number of ways, but poetically they weaken the text and weaken the stanzas, and make the text vulnerable to the kinds of misrepresentations of the poem's stanzaic integrity that are evident in Lambeth 853 and the Wynkyn de Worde printing. In her article 'Twelve-Line Stanza Forms in Middle English and the Date of *Pearl*' Susanna Fein drew together much useful information and insight about medieval stanzaic verse,[18] but there is scope for further investigation into how medieval scribes and readers perceived and responded to stanzaic forms and stanzaic integrity.[19]

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[16] For example, see C. M. Meale, 'Wynkyn de Worde's Setting-Copy for *Ipomydon*', *Studies in Bibliography*, 35 (1982), 156–71 (pp. 156–57, n. 1).

[17] This appears in *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry*, ed. by O. S. Pickering (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 85–104 (pp. 92–96).

[18] *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 367–98.

[19] This paper originated as a contribution to a session entitled 'Middle English Stanzaic Verse in the Fourteenth Century' that Oliver Pickering organized for the International Medieval Congress at Leeds.
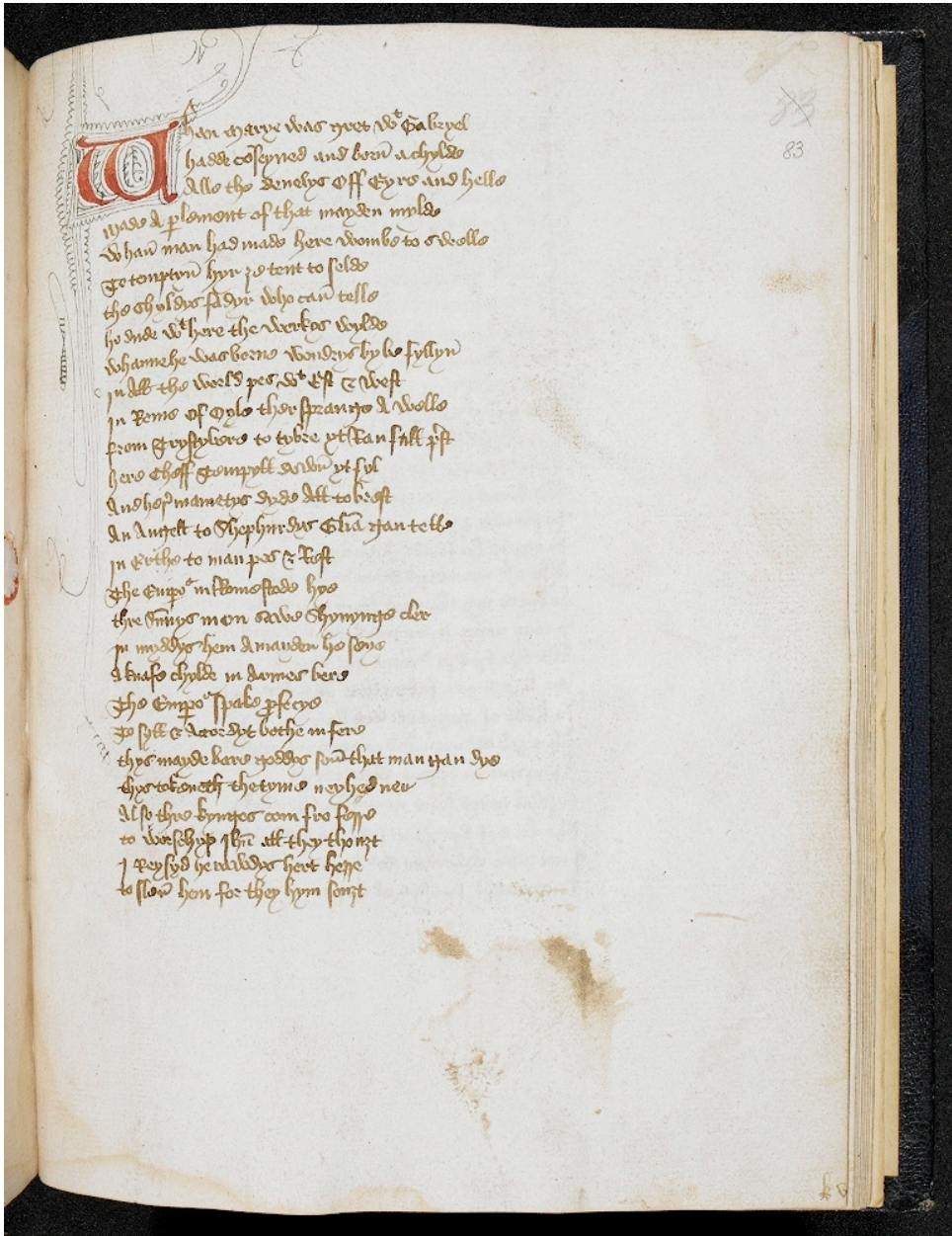
Figure 1: London, British Library, MS Additional 37492, fol. 83r. © British Library Board.
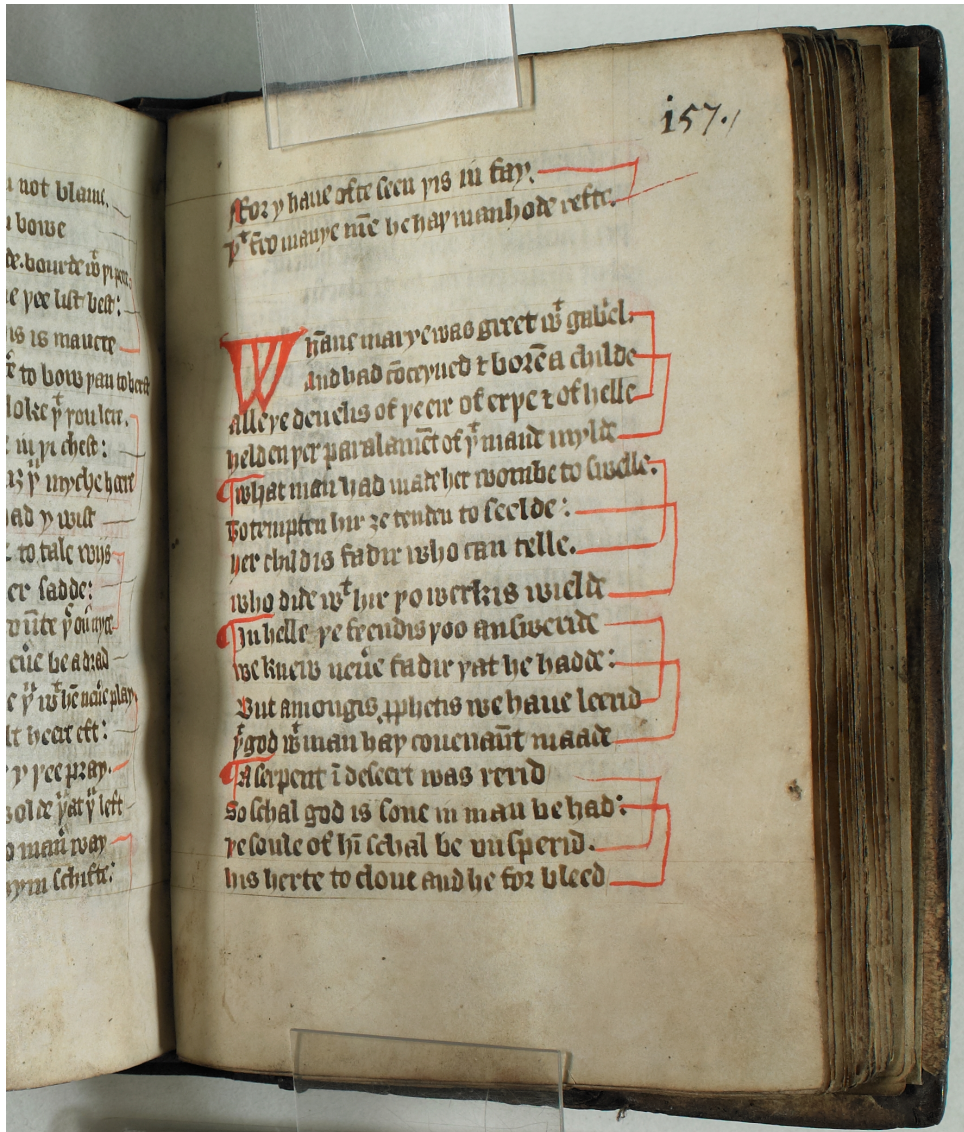
Figure 2: London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 853, p. 157. © Lambeth Palace Library. Reproduced by kind permission.

As Mary was grette with Gabꝛyell
And had conceyued and boꝛne a chylde
All the deuylles of the erthe / of ẛ ayꝛe and of hell
Helde theyꝛ parlyament of that mayde mylde
℧ What man had made her wombe to swell
To tempt her ye tende to sylde
Her chyldes fader who can tell
Who dyde with her tho werkes wylde
℧ In hell the fendes tho answered
We kne we neuer fader that he had
But amonge prophetes we haue lered
That god with man had conuenaunt made
℧ A serpent in desert was rered
So shall goddes sone in man be had
The soule of hym shall be vnspered
His herte to cloue and he forblad
℧ These prophetes speke so in myst
What they ment we neuer knewe
They spake of one sholde hyght Cryst
But Maryes sone hyght Jhesu
℧ And they sayd ẛ Cryst ꝛ god sholde be atwyst
But this Jhesu neuer in the godhede grewe
We ben begyled all without lyst
The clothe is all of another hewe
℧ And though god make his parlyment
Of peas / mercy / trouthe / and reason
And from heuen to erthe his sone be sent
In mankynde to take a ceason
℧ We shall oꝛdayne by one assent
A pꝛeuy counceyle all of treason
And clayme Jhesu foꝛ our rent
Foꝛ ẛ he is kynde of man it is good cheson
℧ Wꝛyte we his name whyder we spede
Sythen to vs he is vnknowen

11 — 14

Figure 3: Wynkyn de Worde's printing of 'The Parlyament of Deuylles', 1509, p. [2]. ©
Cambridge, University Library, shelf mark Sel.5.10. Reproduced by kind permission.

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