

SIR ISRAEL GOLLANCZ MEMORIAL LECTURE

## Yorkshire Writers

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I BEGAN MY MIDDLE ENGLISH work long ago by editing a minor alliterative poem, ‘The Awntyrs off Arthure’, one of whose fascinations was that it was a North of England text. And through thick and thin, in large measure because of a raising which runs far deeper than academic indebtedness and which can be heard in every vowel I utter, I have been fascinated by the force of locality—and as my choice of how to while away my time as a graduate implies, usually by dispersed localities, odd chunks of Northern (and later Western) English real estate. So Yorkshire will be the theme of my lecture.

I of course, did not invent my title, which has a venerable history in Middle English studies. I follow Carl Horstmann, for whom the phrase ‘Yorkshire Writers’ defined the Pickering/Hampole hermit Richard Rolle’s central role in the literary culture of northern England.<sup>1</sup> And his intervention, more than a century old, in certain respects provided a constructive model for literary-historical studies. Horstmann sought Rolle by working outward from the ascriptions in a selected range of northern codices: Cambridge University Library MS Dd.v.64 (and the non-Yorkshire Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A.389), British Library, MSS Arundel 507 (a Durham book of the 1380s) and Harley 1022, and parts of Lincoln Cathedral MS 91. But Horstmann erred on the side of exuberance in an effort to draw texts associated with Rolle’s epistles in

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<sup>1</sup> *Yorkshire Writers*, ed. C. Horstman, 2 vols. (London, 1895–6). A good many of the excesses I describe in this paragraph were corrected through the offices of a fine scholar, Hope E. Allen, in her *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, and Materials for his Biography* (New York, 1927).

manuscript into the hermit's ambit. More recent students, for example Michael Sargent and Jonathan Hughes, have followed Horstmann's emphasis, while insisting on Rolle as a catalyst for more moderated versions of the Christian life. Hughes, in particular, is a great advocate of York Minster clergy and of the central role to be ascribed to archbishop John Thoresby in the development and dissemination of Northern religious culture.<sup>2</sup> I shall examine these contentions.

For a good case can be made for the precocity of vernacular literary composition in the North of England. The history of Middle English in the thirteenth century can, in the main, be written as a history of literary production in Worcester and Hereford dioceses. And although this continued as a vital centre well into the fourteenth century, this area's leading role in vernacular literary production diminished.<sup>3</sup> At a relatively early date, Worcester's position as the dominant vernacular English culture had passed to Yorkshire, and this transition is marked, not by the devotional prose always associated with the locale, but, as one expects at this date, by the production of instructional verse.

I shall begin by examining the selective procedures underlying a narrow range of later fourteenth-century Yorkshire books. In doing so, I follow up a typically elliptical discussion from one of the great founts of knowledge, Ian Doyle's Cambridge dissertation, supplemented by perhaps the unique unpublished portion of his famous 1967 Lyell Lectures.<sup>4</sup> I take as my primary instance a culturally central and largely unexamined volume, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E.ix; the book, although certainly Northern and inferentially from Yorkshire, has no discernible provenance before its appearance in the Cottonian library.

Galba is a very large book, about 335 mm × 220 mm, 111 folios; it is written in double columns, and its three scribes follow a common format,

<sup>2</sup> Sargent, 'Contemporary Criticism of Richard Rolle', *Analecta Cartusiana*, 55 (1981), 160–205; Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late Medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> At the end of the thirteenth century, the *South English Legendary*, for which see Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, NS 6 (Leeds, 1974); some early alliterative poetry, particularly *William of Palerne*, see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 40–1, and perhaps *Winner and Waster*; eventually, *Piers Plowman*, written by an expatriate hanger-on from the diocese, but resident in London, a lineage shared by several of his early scribes.

<sup>4</sup> 'A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and Early 16th Centuries with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein', 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1953), 2, 47–9; I know the full Lyell Lectures through a xerox of Doyle's draft loaned me by Richard Beadle, and in the last two months by the author's gift of a much fuller version of the relevant portions. I remain grateful to them both for a variety of information and kindness over many years.

the page arranged for a regular forty-seven or forty-eight lines to the column, a regular twelve leaves to the quire. But while their sense of format is similar, the scribes—as we will see, in this context, typically—work quite independently of each other, with original blank leaves between their stints. Scribe A copied quires 1–4 in *anglicana formata*, scribe B quires 5–6 in *textura semiquadrata*, scribe C quires 7–10, again in *textura*. Moreover, each unit has its distinctive fashion of finishing—alternate coloured lombards for scribe A,<sup>5</sup> pen and ink initials with a wash for scribe B, painted champes (one a dragon) for scribe C.<sup>6</sup>

The one bit of evidence suggesting cooperative production comes at the end of scribe A's stint, fols. 48<sup>v</sup>–51<sup>v</sup>, leaves left blank at the end of the two large poems which he copied. These have subsequently, but not long subsequently, been filled with texts, first in *anglicana* of a fifteenth-century mien by a fourth scribe (D); but he breaks off in the middle of the poem 'The Prophecies of Merlin' at fol. 50<sup>ra</sup>/8, and scribe B completes this work and adds two additional passion lyrics. So this individual might be associated with two runs of Galba quires.

The Galba MS testifies, at the least, to a diverse sense of what should belong between two boards and to the rich stock of texts available in Yorkshire in the later fourteenth century. Scribe C's contribution is *The Prick of Conscience*, a long (some would say eternally interminable) poem on the Four Last Things; ever since Richard Morris used Galba as the basis of his edition, the MS has been recognised as a central example of this text, distinctly Northern in origin but with the widest circulation of any Middle English poem.<sup>7</sup>

But the contributions of scribes A and B (not to mention scribe D's additions) are rather different in mode, although again texts distinctly

<sup>5</sup> The alternation is between blue lombards with red flourishing and red ones with flourishing in the purple pigment known as 'folium'; see John B. Friedman, *Northern Books, Owners, and Makers in the Later Middle Ages* (Syracuse, NY, 1995), pp. 227–36. On the contribution made by this volume, which ignores all the books here discussed, see further *Speculum*, 73 (1998), 177–8.

<sup>6</sup> See the description, *Ywain and Gawain*, ed. Albert B. Friedman and Norman T. Harrington, Early English Text Society, 254 (1964), pp. ix–xii, with a reproduction of scribe A as frontispiece. The scribes are presented in Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986), 1, 106, as B, D, and E, respectively; the fill-in scribe mentioned in the next paragraph is LALME scribe C; LALME scribe A is responsible for post-production additions.

<sup>7</sup> *The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae): A Northumbrian Poem by Richard Rolle de Hampole*, ed. Richard Morris (Berlin, 1863). On the dispersal and text-types, see further Robert E. Lewis and Angus McIntosh, *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of the Prick of Conscience*, Medium Ævum Monographs, ns 12 (Oxford, 1982); and, with considerably greater detail, Derek Britton, 'Unknown Fragments of *The Prick of Conscience*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 80 (1979), 327–34.

Northern and with ample Northern analogues. As bound, the book opens (scribe A's portion) with romance, of a fairly sophisticated stripe: for those unfamiliar with *The Prick*, Galba is likely to be known for the unique English adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes, *Ywain and Gawain*. In addition to it, scribe A also copied that assay in anti-feminist framed narrative, *The Seven Sages*, here the so-called 'Northern Version'. Scribe A, his director, or his patron, certainly responded to impulses well known in the North, ones similar, for example, to those motivating Robert Thornton, who, perhaps forty years later, could accession both distant romance texts, the alliterative *Morte Arthure* from Lincolnshire, for instance, as well as similar materials which appear of much more proximate composition, for example *Sir Percival of Galles* and *Sir Degrevant*.

And scribe B, whose briefish stint also includes religious verse more comparable to *The Prick* than to anything else in the book, copies further diverse material. At the head of his quires (fols. 52<sup>ra</sup>–57<sup>va</sup>), he preserves the unique copy of the eleven 'historical poems' ascribed to Lawrence Minot. On the one hand, one needs to see this as absolutely local literature, since the author should probably be associated with the family seat, Carlton Miniott, just west of Thirsk.<sup>8</sup> On the other, one might see this work as participating in two widespread Northern genres: like scribe D's additions, it testifies to an interest, often vehemently satiric, in contemporary political and social conditions; in the insistence on the military exploits of a noble king, Edward III, it interfaces with the text shared by scribes B and D, a unique couplet 'Prophecies of Merlin', in essence an historical account running from Henry III to Henry IV, the post-Edward III portions indeed prophetic. But equally, Minot composed five of his rancorous effusions in alliterative verse (portions of the 'Merlin' appear in similar form), and these belong within a persistent stream of Yorkshire writing. This not only included poems overtly political, the various 'Scottish prophecies', for example, but a rich vein extending from the early fragments of 'Wit and Will' (preserved as page-repairs in a printed York diocese service book) through Rollean alliterative lyrics ('My truest treasure' and 'When sal I win to that wealth') to such fullscale efforts as *The Siege of Jerusalem* and 'Susannah'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Most recently ed. Richard H. Osberg (Kalamazoo, MI, 1996); the older edn., ed. J[oseph] Hall, includes 'The Prophecies of Merlin', as well as Minot.

<sup>9</sup> For the texts, see, respectively, the references at Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival*, p. 143 n. 10; Bruce Dickins, *The Conflict of Wit and Will: Fragments of a Middle English Alliterative Poem* (Kendal, 1937); Douglas Gray, *A Selection of Religious Lyrics* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 16–17; Irma Taavitsainen, 'Ave Maria: A Meditation Connected with Richard Rolle in Uppsala MS.

Scribe B deserves further scrutiny, not simply for the remainder of his texts, to which I shall return, but because of his connections. For he is in fact responsible for producing more than the modest twenty-six folios he contributed to Galba E.ix. As Saara Nevanlinna noted, he is probably the third scribe of another complicated volume, British Library, MS Harley 4196, where he copies quires 18–21 (fols. 133<sup>ra</sup>–64<sup>vb</sup>), the opening of the ‘sanctorale’ from what is known as ‘the expanded’ *Northern Homily Cycle*.<sup>10</sup> Harley 4196 is another Northern volume, larger than Galba, 258 folios, about 380 mm × 270 mm, again in double columns of a set format, all five of its scribes again independent, their stints all quire-bound, although the texts on two occasions are continuous. Here they produce forty-eight-line columns; although all this sounds very Galba-like, the manuscript does differ in being quired in eights.

Moreover, finding Galba scribe B in the Harley MS places him in some relation to at least two other books—and perhaps again associated with Galba scribe A. First, Harley 4196 has a partial twin, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius E.vii. This book, now burnt, lacking most margins, and badly shrunk, especially at the tops and leading edges of the leaves, was apparently once comparable in size to Harley; it extends to 281 folios, and its two scribes again present their texts in double columns, forty-eight lines to the page, routine twelve-leaf quires. Again, like Galba and Harley, the scribes are engaged in independent runs of quires. The second, writing textura, after a twenty-folio runup of shorter texts, copies the same, otherwise only partly paralleled, ‘expanded version’ of *The Northern Homilies* as appears in Harley 4196.

The first scribe of Tiberius copies in *anglicana formata* the Northern *Speculum vitae*, a septenary poem ultimately derived from Lorens of Orleans’s *Somme le roi*, and usually, albeit unconvincingly, ascribed to the York diocese lawyer William of Nassington.<sup>11</sup> While shrinkage and lateral

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C.193 and BL Royal MS. 17 C.XVIII’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 91 (1990), 57–66 (ll. 16–21, 40–2, 62–5 in her prose text); *The Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. by Hanna and David A. Lawton, EETS 320 (2003); *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Turville-Petre (London, 1989), pp. 120–39, or ed. Miskimin (see below, n. 29).

<sup>10</sup> See *The Northern Homily Cycle: The Expanded Version . . .*, 3 vols. (Helsinki, 1972–84) at 1, 6 n. 2; Nevanlinna carefully describes both this book and the next at 1, 5–17 and includes reproductions of Harley scribe B and Tiberius scribe B as the frontispieces to volumes 1 and 3, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> As late as the early seventeenth century, there was a third related volume, Savile MS 32, whose contents were:

(a) Glossa in orationem dominicam et in 4 evangelia Anglice [probably *Speculum vitae* + *The Northern Homily Cycle*]

distortion make it difficult to be certain, I would only with difficulty deny the proposition that the anglicana hand which wrote the *Speculum* is that of Galba scribe A. Further, the alternate lombards resemble equally closely those of the decorator associated with his other copying.

And yet a further scribe B connection should be highlighted. *The Northern Homily Cycle* consumes most of Harley 4196, but the final independent section, quires 27–34/fols. 206<sup>ra</sup>–58<sup>va</sup>, was copied in textura by the fifth scribe. His contribution is another *Prick of Conscience*, generally viewed as that copy most closely related to Galba—as Doyle noted, with column and page boundaries identical in the two books; on that basis, Morris used Harley 4196 in his edition to fill in a lacuna from a missing Galba quire.

Scribe E's hand recurs in yet another MS with yet another *Prick of Conscience* closely related to these two, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 175, fols. 55<sup>va</sup>–132<sup>vb</sup>. This is a smaller book than those I have been considering, 134 folios in a considerably less grandiose format, dimensions 270 mm × 190 mm. But again, it is in double columns, again a regular format shared by both scribes, here forty-four lines, not forty-eight, and again a shared agreement on twelve-leaf quires.<sup>12</sup> The stints break on the recto/verso of the same leaf, but the behaviour is thoroughly compatible with a measure of independent production; the second scribe here may be practising economies, extending his companion's four-plus quires by filling the eleven blank pages left at the end of the first copyist's stint, rather than immediately creating his own set of independent quires.

(b) De morte primi parentis Adae et inceptione crucis Christi Anglice [probably a legend of the Cross]

(c) Tractatus de quodam spiritu qui dicitur spiritus Guidonis anglice [probably IMEV 3028, in Tiberius, fols. 90<sup>rb</sup>–101<sup>rb</sup>; and Bodleian, MS Rawlinson poet. 175, fols. 96<sup>ra</sup>–108<sup>vb</sup> (see the next paragraph)].

See Andrew G. Watson, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile of Banke* (London, 1969), p. 24; Watson's identification of this book with Tiberius E.vii seems unlikely, on the basis of the cited text order and the omission of several Tiberius items. Savile's 'Banke' was, of course, in Halifax (WRY), and a great many of his books were northern monastic ones; see further p. 102 and n. 19 below.

For Nassington, who d. 1359, see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957–9), p. 1339.

<sup>12</sup> The MS is described, R. W. Hunt *et al.*, *A Summary Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, 7 vols. in 8 (1895–1953), no. 14667, 3, 321–2. The penultimate quire is probably an eight and the last perhaps a ten with losses, but these are the product of the scribe trying to finish the lengthy *Seven Sages* economically and then extending his work beyond that projected ending with shorter items.

Harley scribe E copies in the Rawlinson MS a range of texts paralleled in those books I have already mentioned, for example at fols. 55<sup>va</sup>–76<sup>ra</sup>, that version of ‘The Northern Passion’ (IMEV 170) that has been inserted into the Harley/Tiberius *Northern Homilies* (the logic for describing them as an ‘expanded’ text). Rawlinson’s close connection with Harley and Tiberius is especially signalled by its inappropriate preservation of the rubric which indicates that this text is to be inserted at Good Friday into the full homily sequence, even though no more of the cycle appears here.<sup>13</sup> Or again, at fols. 109<sup>ra</sup>–31<sup>va</sup>, Rawlinson presents the same version of *The Seven Sages* found elsewhere only in Galba.

Moreover, although it is his companion scribe who copies *The Prick* in Rawlinson, the same hand supplied decorative column-opening cadel initials in both the Rawlinson copy of *The Prick* and within scribe E’s stint at Harley 4196, fols. 206–15. Rather unusually among the books I discuss, Rawlinson has a pre-Dissolution provenance; in his dissertation, Doyle identified the ‘Thomas Gyll’ who signed the book with a chaplain in the church of Adwick le Street (South Yorkshire, nr. Doncaster), recorded 1535.<sup>14</sup>

Although one can multiply further textual connections among these four manuscripts,<sup>15</sup> I want to return to Galba scribe B and his work on the second booklet there. As I have already said, he began his stint with Minot; he continued with a versified ‘Gospel of Nicodemus’ (IMEV 512, fols. 57<sup>va</sup>–66<sup>vb</sup>). This appears elsewhere in Harley 4196 (fols. 206<sup>ra</sup>–15<sup>ra</sup>), but in two additional Northern books as well: in the former Sion College MS E.25 (now a Lambeth Palace deposit), fols. 13–38<sup>v</sup>, accompanying a *Prick of Conscience* similar to but not so intimately related as those previously discussed; and a redacted version (the scribe Robert or John

<sup>13</sup> See *The Northern Passion*, ed. Frances A. Foster, EETS 145, 147 (1913–16) at EETS 147, 17. I use IMEV to refer to Carleton Brown and Rossell H. Robbins, eds., *Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943).

<sup>14</sup> He was subsequently chantry priest and schoolmaster of Wragby. Also, somewhat unusually among the books here discussed, LALME find this scribe (they take there to be only one) mappable, as LP 174 (coordinates 431/485, nr. Burneston, west of Thirsk, NRY).

<sup>15</sup> For example, the passion lyrics scribe B added on the blank end of scribe A’s booklet, IMEV 110 and 2080, appear separately surrounding ‘The Book of Shrift’ in Rawlinson, at fols. 80<sup>rb</sup> and 93<sup>va</sup>, respectively, but together, in the same order, in additions made to a Wycliffite sermon MS, Bodleian Library, MS Don. c.13, fols. 165<sup>vb</sup>–66<sup>ra</sup>. For this book, see Beatrice D. Brewer, ‘Religious Lyrics in MS Don. c.13’, *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, 7 (1932), 1–7, with a facsimile of fol. 166, facing p. 1; and *English Wycliffite Sermons 1*, ed. Anne Hudson (Oxford, 1983), pp. 87–8. The scribe is LALME LP 412 (coordinates 420/511, extreme north central Yorkshire, a little south-west of Darlington), and the book came from the library at Ashton Hall, North Ferriby (nr. Hull), formed at the start of the seventeenth century.

Farnelay was a poet in his own right) in British Library, MS Additional 32578, with a thoroughly unrelated copy of *The Prick* dated 1405 in Bolton, likely not one of three Yorkshire locales of the name but the larger place in Lancashire.<sup>16</sup>

But Galba scribe B's most interesting contribution may be the subsequent text (fols. 67<sup>ra</sup>–73<sup>va</sup>), a disordered version of 'The Book of Shrift', a detailed and very interesting confessional handbook, primarily for lay-people (IMEV 694). There is also a copy in a book I have already mentioned, Rawlinson, fols. 80<sup>va</sup>–93<sup>rb</sup>; another appears preceding a copy of *The Prick of Conscience*, textually related to those versions already discussed, in Wellesley College (Massachusetts) MS 8, pp. 5–12. This book has an erased Byland (a Cistercian house in the North Riding), ex-libris and an inscription indicating that it was at Skeeby near Richmond *c.* 1500.<sup>17</sup> The copy of *The Prick* in the Wellesley MS forms a genetic pair with that in yet another Northern book, British Library MS Additional 33995. In this volume, one scribe copies what is usually considered the best manuscript rendition of *Speculum Vitae*; a second scribe, *The Prick* and 'The Band of Love' (IMEV 11), a poem, like *Speculum vitae*, ascribed to William of Nassington.<sup>18</sup> As one moves away from the central volumes with which I began, similarities of production trail off. Sion and Wellesley are small books on paper, not membrane, in long-line format, usually under thirty-five lines to the page. But Additional retains a double column format, variable forty-two to fifty lines to the page, often forty-six to forty-eight, and all three books show substantial numbers of twelve-leaf quires, universal in Additional, varied by three fourteens in non-*Prick* portions of Sion (these two originally independent booklets), a mixture of twelves and fourteens in Wellesley.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For the Sion MS, see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969–92), 1, 289. Here three scribes, the work of each quire-bound, share copying *The Prick* (quires 5–12); two of them provided additional booklets, now bound in at the head. For Additional 32578, see *Catalogue of Additions . . . [1882–7]* (London, 1889), pp. 157–8; and Andrew G. Watson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 700–1600 in the Department of Manuscripts, the British Library*, 2 vols. (London, 1979), no. 356 (1, 75). Farnelay is LALME's LP 365 (coordinates 375/442, nr. Clitheroe, Lancs.). For his signed verse (rhymed alliterative stanzas), see R. H. Bowers, 'Three Middle English Poems on the Apostles' Creed', *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 210–22 at 217–22.

<sup>17</sup> I am grateful to Ruth Rogers, Special Collections Librarian at Wellesley, for information about this book, including a copy of the Library's description. See also Lewis-McIntosh MV 96.

<sup>18</sup> See *Catalogue of Additions . . . [1888–93]* (London, 1894), pp. 156–7. Hand B of this MS, responsible for *The Prick*, is localised in LALME as LP 468 (coordinates 387/491, nr. Hawes in Wensleydale).

<sup>19</sup> I note in passing a last Yorkshire volume with *Prick of Conscience* resembling Galba's, here with a table of topics treated, Lambeth Palace MS 260, fols. 101–39. This early fifteenth-century



The researches of John Thompson have shown that only about half the copies of 'The Book of Shrift' may be associated with the group of manuscripts I have been discussing. For this text had appeared in Yorkshire at least half a century before any of these books were copied; it is a standard feature of the early Yorkshire presentation of *Cursor Mundi*, the enormous and impressive verse biblical history of the very early fourteenth century.<sup>20</sup> One cannot tell whether earlier and later scribes are acquiring the text in the same loose form and inserting it variously, or whether later scribes are deriving the text as an excerpt from the *Cursor* manuscripts; these include British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A.iii; Bodleian, MS Fairfax 14 (SC 3894); and Göttingen Universitätsbibliothek, MS Theol. 107<sup>r</sup>. But at least one conclusion that can be drawn is that, in spite of considerably smaller pages, the formats of these *Cursor* manuscripts (as well as that of the fragmentary early Yorkshire copy, Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS, where 'The Book of Shrift', if originally present, is now lost) sound like the sort of thing which might have provided models, not simply for the texts but also for the production procedures followed in Galba *et al.*<sup>21</sup> Like the later volumes, the early Yorkshire *Cursor* manuscripts are quired in twelves, and the texts customarily presented in double columns of forty to forty-eight lines, in Vespasian forty-six and in Fairfax forty-eight lines to the column. Göttingen is the odd book out, with thirty-six to thirty-eight lines but, as Ian Doyle points out to me, has column-opening cadel initials of a sort that might have inspired the Harley–Rawlinson decorator. Similarity of transmitted texts is paralleled by physical similarity as books, a point I think my late friend Jeremy Griffiths would have appreciated.

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book, on paper, resembles Galba *et al.* somewhat more closely than do Sion and Wellesley: 139 fols., 275 mm × 205 mm, in double columns but a small cursive script with up to 70 lines, still quired in twelves. In addition to *The Prick*, it contains scribally independent portions with, first, *The Northern Homily Cycle* (thus reminiscent of Harley 4196, but here perhaps the fullest representative of the normal, rather than the 'expanded version'), extended into a mixed language preacher's handbook; and, then, with Sacrobosco on the sphere. LALME finds the language of *The Prick* mixed, a North Yorkshire or south Durham element with East Riding forms; the homilies are LP 361 (coordinates 499/430, to the west of Hull). See the description, M. R. James and Claude Jenkins, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1930–2), 1, 406–9. The book was Henry Savile's MS 42; see Watson, pp. 26–7.

<sup>20</sup> *The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts and Contexts* (Medium Ævum Monographs, ns 19, Oxford, 1998); for full descriptions of the MSS, see pp. 30–46; and for 'The Book of Shrift' as interpolated into the three copies, as well as appearing in the books I mention, pp. 23–8, 58–62, and 174–76. C. E. Wright reproduces part of a leaf from Vespasian at *English Vernacular Hands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, Oxford Palaeographical Handbooks (Oxford, 1960), plate 11.

<sup>21</sup> For another description of the Edinburgh MS, see Ker, 2, 539–40.

Thus, these later fourteenth-century books, Galba and its congeners, testify to an extensive transmissional community sharing both texts and production procedures. This community extends over three literary generations and nearly a century. This is what it means to have a literary community, a literary tradition, and a canon of works, in this case a robustly local/regional one. Centred around *The Prick of Conscience*, Galba and associated Northern volumes transmit texts both antique and contemporary, some works probably produced in the late thirteenth century and others written as recently as the third quarter of the fourteenth. Such a presentation may already have typified the Edinburgh copy of *Cursor Mundi*, the historical poem there joined with the slightly older *Northern Homily Cycle*. Among the books I have been discussing, one might see analogies between combinations of works more chronologically diverse in the Galba *et al.* conjunction of *Cursor Mundi*'s 'Book of Shrift' and *The Prick*, or Harley 4196's of 'The Northern Passion' and *Northern Homily Cycle* with the later poem. At the other end of the continuum, some manuscripts juxtapose these works and the latest of the Yorkshire long instructional poems, *Speculum Vitae*; in Tiberius, it accompanies 'The Northern Passion' etc., and in Additional 33995, yet another *Prick of Conscience*.<sup>22</sup>

But more important than the continuity of this behaviour, given modern formulations, is the focus of this tradition, in what might broadly be described as 'long instructional narrative'. In this formulation, I use 'instructional' less to indicate a tone of imagined didacticism than the reliance of all the poems on abstract schemata (the liturgical calendar, the Ages of the World, the Four Last Things, the Petitions of the 'Pater noster') to organise their diverse materials. Such a tradition, particularly in its historicising impulses (not just Bible and life of Christ, but Galba's romance-history as well), is, of course, foreign to customary accounts of Yorkshire writing, with their emphasis on Rollean prose meditation. Moreover, as the examples of *The Northern Homily Cycle* and *Cursor Mundi* imply, this is a local activity probably extending back into the last years of the thirteenth century and thus one long predating John Thoresby's instructional efforts, with their reduction of this poetic profusion to sketchy catechetical lists.<sup>23</sup> The scribes surveyed here are respond-

<sup>22</sup> And conceivably, on the basis of including 'The Band of Love' (IMEV 11), also ascribed to Nassington, the book might be construed as an incipient author anthology.

<sup>23</sup> On the circulation of John Gaytryge's English catechism, promulgated by Thoresby, see Anne Hudson, 'A New Look at the *Lay Folks' Catechism*', *Viator*, 16 (1985), 243–58. I am conscious of having here ignored a variety of other early Yorkshire writings, for example, the verse 'Surtees

ing to their own indigenous tradition, not to the archbishop's injunctions, only fulfilled—with a good deal more—in *Speculum Vitae*.

In light of these contentions, I think the Northern circulation of Rolle deserving of some reassessment. It is easy to see why one should want to prioritise him among Yorkshire writers: he is individualistic and quirky, intensely devout and vehemently contentious by turns. In contrast, according to our aesthetic criteria, versified instruction is scarcely 'literature' at all—committed to dogmatic devotional 'papisty' and, as we are prone to think, 'only translation'. But Rolle's mystic rapture still carries, if nothing else, the frisson of psychodelia about it.

Northern Rolle circulation—at least in the vernacular—rebuffs, I think, even this bit of glamour. Horstmann's presentation highlights the shorter works, most particularly the epistles of spiritual counsel. But the power of his formulation proves simultaneously to be its difficulty; Horstmann used four Northern anchor manuscripts, all mentioned in my opening, to trace Rolle circulation, and that is very nearly the entire haul of such Northern books. To them, one can add only some fragments in Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 751, and isolated epistles and excerpts in Bodleian, MS Rawlinson C.285 and its derivative, Cambridge University Library MS Dd.v.55 (both these, it should be noted, with a *Prick of Conscience* excerpt).<sup>24</sup> Instructively, only two pieces of Rolle appear in the books I have surveyed, a unique versified 'Form of Living' (IMEV 1442) in Tiberius E.vii and an independent couplet version of 'Form' ch. 6 intercalated into all copies of *Speculum Vitae*; but their communication in verse is perhaps the point—the text required accommodation to prevailing norms of canonical literary production to be transmitted here.<sup>25</sup>

The actual concentration of Rolle's writings in the North is among manuscripts of the rather starkly penitential (and translated) prose Psalter. There are at least eight Northern copies, another peripheral example, and another where extensive northernisms probably represent relicts from an exemplar. All these, given the size of the work and its

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Psalter' (IMEV 3103), most of whose manuscripts were copied shortly after mid-century and from a coherent small portion of the West Riding, a truly local text (its circulation probably truncated by the success of Rolle's more scholarly and explanatory prose Psalter).

<sup>24</sup> See Horstmann, 1, 129. There is a further Northern excerpt in Robert Thornton's Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, ed. Horstmann, 1, 372–3.

<sup>25</sup> For the first, see Horstmann, 2, 283–92, and the discussion, N. F. Blake, 'The Form of Living in Verse and Prose', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 211 (1974), 300–8; for the second, Venetia Nelson, in *A Myrour to lewde men and wynnmen: a prose version of the Speculum Vitae, edited from BL MS Harley 45*, Middle English Texts, 14 (Heidelberg, 1981), pp. 24 and 257 125/22 n.

customarily ornate presentation, involved considerable investment; always in double columns, some production features remind one of the verse anthologies I have discussed, perhaps testimony to the persistence of local habit—eight of them have forty to forty-eight lines to the column, and six are quired in twelves (but the features coinciding in only four of the books).<sup>26</sup>

Although the Yorkshire copies are among the most utilitarian of the survivors, they are often careful, and their conventional habits of layout—regular alternation of two scripts (display textura for at least the Latin, a lesser script for at least the commentary), provision of flourished lombards at the head of each psalm, and of alternate coloured versals and/or paraphs within the text, often red underlining to point the English translation—required constant attentiveness to detail. Of these, the most interesting, largely because it has been extended into a comprehensive anthology, is Huntington Library MS HM 148. In addition to a copy of Rolle's 'Commandment', the book shares texts at least resembling Rolle with the central anthologies Arundel 507 and Lincoln Cathedral 91, as well as others with Rawlinson C.285 and its derivatives. But one of its closest relations, now lost, places us back in familiar territory; Henry Savile of Banke's MS 41, a nine-item miscellany, appears mainly to have been taken up with a copy of *Speculum Vitae*, and its remaining identifiable text was the verse dialogue of Bernard and the Virgin (IMEV 771) which also appears in several of the miscellanies with which I began, Rawlinson poet. 175, Tiberius, and Sion College.<sup>27</sup>

Although Yorkshire writing certainly began late in the thirteenth century to supply a local religious culture, the second superlative example in the Middle English period, it had great success as an export commodity.

<sup>26</sup> Viz. \*Aberdeen University Library MS 243; \*!Eton College MS 10; !British Library, MS Additional 40769; \*!Newcastle Public Library MS; Bodleian Library, MSS \*Hatton 12 and \*Laud Misc. 286; Oxford, \*!University College MS 64; \*!Huntington Library MS HM 148. !Vatican, MS Reginensis lat. 320 has patches of northern relicts but these appear generally to have been retained by a (?) Suffolk or Essex scribe. And \*British Library, MS Harley 1806 is 'near northern', LALME LP 188 (coordinates 438/371, the Chesterfield area). Those MSS with forty to forty-eight lines to the column are starred; those quired in twelves marked '!'.  
<sup>27</sup> See further 'The Middle English *Vitae Patrum* Collection', *Mediaeval Studies*, 49 (1987), 411–42, with descriptions of a number of books mentioned here, including Savile 41, derived from Watson, p. 26. For the 'Rolleana' of HM 148, see Mary L. Arntz, *Richard Rolle and *pe Holy Boke Gratia Dei: An Edition with Commentary** (Salzburg, 1981); and George R. Keiser's discussion, *Viator*, 12 (1981), 289–317. For IMEV 771, see Tiberius, fols. 82<sup>ra</sup>–85<sup>va</sup>; Rawlinson, fols. 76<sup>b</sup>–80<sup>b</sup>; Sion, fols. 39–47. In the discussion in his thesis, Doyle points to another possible lost copy of the poem, in a MS then belonging to the Howard dukes of Carlisle and preserved at Naworth Castle (Cumb.), listed by Edward Bernard, *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1697), 2, i, 15 (# 672).

(Rolle's 'Form of Living' is, after all, a securely canonical text in the Middle Ages precisely because it escaped Yorkshire and had a voluminous southern circulation—at a point when it appears to have been moribund in the author's home country.) I want to examine a few of these transmissional procedures, and as a concluding move, demonstrate how this process ultimately proved self-destructive, a victim of its own success. Finally, some efforts at textual promulgation, c.1410, pretty much extinguished a distinctively Yorkshire literary production by absorbing it into a national mainstream.

The most obvious way in which Yorkshire writings escaped or were exported into national literary culture hardly needs stating. York was 'the northern capital', the largest provincial city, and linked directly to London by The Great North Road, most immediately from Doncaster south into the area of northern Nottinghamshire between Retford and Worksop, then south-west to Newark on Trent (Nottingham itself was on a spur which branched off in Worksop). And although this route allowed the infiltration of texts into Lincolnshire from the west, there was a Humber ferry (subject of the seminal legal suit *Bukton v. Tounesende*, 1348, not irrelevantly involving a man and his mare),<sup>28</sup> and northern Lincolnshire was probably not culturally distinct, just as it was not linguistically, from portions of the East Riding.

Examples of such transmission into directly adjacent north-east Midland areas are legion and scarcely need elaboration. One can simply point to Richard Beadle's analysis of *Speculum Vitae* transmission, or to the number of Rolle Psalters which cluster in Lincolnshire, or to a MS like Pierpont Morgan Library MS M818, two booklets produced by a south Lincoln scribe, one with Rolle's 'Form' and the alliterative 'Susannah', the other with *Piers Plowman A*.<sup>29</sup> But following Angus McIntosh's classic

<sup>28</sup> The subsequent discussion of medieval transit routes depends heavily upon F. M. Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 7 (1936), 1–21; and 'The Roads of the Gough Map', *The Map of Great Britain circa A.D. 1360 known as The Gough Map* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 16–20. For 'the Humber ferry case', see John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3rd edn. (London, 1990), p. 375. I am partially stimulated here by M. D. Reeve's 2000 Lowe Lectures at Corpus Christi College, Oxford; one of his discussions of the transmission of Vegetius was provocatively entitled 'A Man and a Horse'.

<sup>29</sup> See Beadle, 'Middle English Texts and their Transmission, 1350–1500: some Geographical Criteria', *Speaking in Our Tongues*, eds. Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 69–91, at 83–5 (fifteen of the thirty-eight copies Yorkshire or 'northern', two Derbys., one Notts., five Lincs.). Rolle Psalters from Lincs. include Lincoln Cathedral MS 92; Lincoln Diocesan Record Office, Maddison fragment; Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College MS 89; Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 467 (MS Tanner 1 is from the Soke). For a description of the Morgan MS, see *Piers Plowman: The A Version*, ed. George Kane (London, 1960), pp. 8–9; and the facsimile at *Susannah*, ed. Alice Miskimin (New Haven, 1969), following p. 48.

discussion, although Yorkshire seems in the fourteenth century relatively impervious to import-culture, the road ran north as well as south. Thus, to take a very early example, the Göttingen MS of *Cursor Mundi*, although mostly in West Riding language, has been influenced by a Lincolnshire exemplar. Its early portions (to fol. 74) seem of separate production and correspond to an odd joining quire, with double columns of forty-six lines, not otherwise paralleled here, in mid-text; fol. 114<sup>v</sup> bears a note implying compilation by a man who was priest of Great Limber, west of Grimsby in Humberside, 1294 × 1317.<sup>30</sup>

Transmission westward out of Yorkshire is rather problematic. It depends on those few dales which penetrate the Pennines—Stainmore Pass, Wensleydale, and the Aire-Ribble gap, and the north-west of England was probably relatively isolated throughout the Middle Ages. Considerably more productive of cultural contact was a southern route along a line first formed by a Roman *via* connecting Skipton with Preston (recall Robert/John Farnelay, mentioned above, pp. 97–8); this joined the road to Carlisle and allowed movement both north and south in Lancashire. Again, these transmission routes go back rather far in the record; the Fairfax MS of *Cursor Mundi*, for example, was copied by one ‘Stokynbrig’ for William Keruor ‘de Lanc’ (not clearly the city or the county) and has a contemporary inscription further indicating north Lancashire provenance.<sup>31</sup>

But the most extraordinary aspect of westward dispersal is overseas. For if one ignores the few texts composed locally, Hiberno-English scribes appear to have spent their vernacular copying careers almost exclusively reproducing Yorkshire texts. These imports begin shortly after 1300 with the massive Anglo-Norman miscellany Cambridge University Library MS Gg.i.1; it contains only two Middle English texts, one of them a ‘Northern Passion’ in partial literatim reproduction of its Yorkshire exemplar; moreover, its copy of the Bridlington, an Augustinian house in the East Riding, canon Pierre Langtoft’s Anglo-Norman chronicle retains the Northernisms of the English verse insertions. This Northern influence, apparently the result of settlers from Merseyside (both north and south), perhaps concentrated in the Louth area, continued through the period: *The Northern Homilies* of Huntington Library MS HM 129; the

<sup>30</sup> See McIntosh, ‘The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*’, *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien*, eds. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 231–40; on the Göttingen MS, see Thompson, pp. 34–5.

<sup>31</sup> The LALME localisation as LP 6 (coordinates 348/462) would associate the work with Lancaster City.

Rolle texts copied by a single scribe in Longleat House MS 29 and Bodleian, MS e Musaeo 232; and several textually related copies of *The Prick of Conscience* provide further examples.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, there is the fairly well-recognised seminal role of Lichfield in passing on Northern books, especially into the south-west Midlands, where they might contact the other great early English local culture.<sup>33</sup> Most northerly English roads run resolutely north and south; this will indicate the prominence of one of the very few trans-Midland routes. The Great North Road in Doncaster crossed another which linked Yorkshire, via Derby, Lichfield, and Birmingham to Worcester. And along the middle stretches of this route, Lichfield proved especially productive of cultural dissemination. Perhaps the most well-known example concerns ‘the Lichfield group’ of Rolle’s epistles, a deviant text apparently concocted in the course of preparing Bodleian, MS Rawlinson A.389 there and immensely productive in Worcestershire and Warwickshire.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, ‘the southern recension’ of *Cursor Mundi* appears to have been developed in Lichfield just after 1400; one of the two earliest MSS, Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.8, was in fact copied by one of the two scribes of the Rawlinson Rolle. And the second font of the Lichfield ‘southern recension’, London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 57, offers further testimony to Yorkshire cultural exportation; it also includes one of the eight

<sup>32</sup> See Angus McIntosh and M. L. Samuels, ‘Prologemona to a Study of Medieval Anglo-Irish’, *Medium Ævum*, 37 (1968), 1–11, to be supplemented by LALME; note especially their comments at 6–8 on the language of the two antifraternal poems of British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra B.ii. For the Longleat scribe, see *Richard Rolle Prose and Verse*, ed. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS 293 (1988), xvii–xxxiv, with a facsimile as frontispiece. The language of Dublin, Trinity College MS 158 is placed in north Lancs., but in the late fifteenth century the book was at Killeen in county Meath; closely related to it are the Irish copies Cambridge, Magdalene College MS 18; and Manchester, Chetham’s Library MS 8008; as well as another Lancashire copy, Woolhampton (Berks.), Douai Abbey MS 7. In addition, Dublin, Trinity College MS 156 was copied in Ireland and is closely related to the Galba-like West Yorkshire copy in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 131. See further Lewis–McIntosh MV 5, 7, 19, 20, 22, and 53.

<sup>33</sup> See David Lawton, ‘The Diversity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry’, *Leeds Studies in English*, 20 (1989), 143–72; and the discussion of ‘Luke in his lesson’, an alliterative stanzaic poem from Rawlinson poet. 175, ‘With an O (Yorks.) or an I (Salop.)?’ *The Middle English Lyrics of British Library Additional 45896*, *Studies in Bibliography*, 48 (1995), 290–7.

<sup>34</sup> See ‘The Origins and Production of Westminster School MS. 3’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 41 (1988), 197–218, at pp. 199–201, supplemented by Ogilvie-Thomson. Relevant West Midland offspring of the Lichfield Rolle epistles include the Simeon and Vernon MSS; Paris, Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève MS 3390; and Huntington Library MS HM 502. Ker identified the Mr Thomas Rynold and Mr John Reedhill who signed Rawlinson, fol. 105<sup>v</sup>, with two holders of the same prebend in Lichfield Cathedral, 1471/2 and 1451/2, respectively; see ‘Patrick Young’s Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lichfield Cathedral’, *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, 2 (1950), 151–68 at 166–7.

copies of *The Prick of Conscience* with a distinctly Lichfield recension of the poem.<sup>35</sup> But equally, texts might pass through Lichfield without substantial change, and a half dozen south-west Midland books show, unusually among dispersed copies, retention of the distinctively early Yorkshire form of *The Prick* I have discussed earlier.<sup>36</sup>

Among those books which testify to Lichfield redaction of *The Prick of Conscience* are of course the Vernon and Simeon MSS, a great example of the cultural intermixture I have been describing.<sup>37</sup> But this is not the only Yorkshire text that the two possibly received through Lichfield and with a Lichfield redaction. For they share a revised version of *The Northern Homily Cycle* as well; this is customarily associated with the 'standard version' of the cycle in Cambridge University Library MS Dd.i.1, a peculiar holster-book, on mixed vellum and paper, copied somewhere near Ely in the mid-fifteenth century, and also including a copy of 'The Northern Passion'. I pause briefly over this small conundrum merely to indicate the efforts at disaggregation sometimes required in an assessment of the evidence. The late date of Dd.i.1 of course indicates that its exemplar, rather than the book itself, was the source used by the Vernon–Simeon compilers, and the presence of the two Yorkshire texts indicates that exemplar's access to exported Yorkshire materials. But the intermediate western transmission of Dd's sources is marked by textual accretions to this scribe's archetypes before they reached Ely, and the western origins of the materials become demonstrable at fols. 251–94. There Dd.i.1 transmits the only full copy of the prose instructional tract *Memoriale credencium* not from the Herefordshire–Forest of Dean area.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> For the southern copies of *Cursor*, see Sarah M. Horrall, gen. ed., *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*, 5 vols. (Ottawa, 1978–2000), 1, 13–23, and colour facsimile of Arundel facing 3, xx. The two Lichfield copies are overall an average 310 mm × 215 mm, in double columns of forty regular lines, written in mixed anglicana/secretary and quired in eights. Other copies of the Lichfield recension of *The Prick* include Lewis and McIntosh's MV 23, 31, 54, 57, 68, 88, and 89.

<sup>36</sup> Dispersed copies of *The Prick* with texts resembling that in Galba etc., include the six-text group Lewis–McIntosh MV 3, 9, 10, 24 (in part), 87, 90; and the pair MV 11 and 14 (the final dispersed copy unmentioned, MV 60, has an unsurprising south Lincs. language). Tokyo, Prof. Toshiyuki Takamiya, MS 15 provides a further example of a Yorkshire book in Lichfield; produced by a West Riding scribe and including *Speculum Vitae* and a lyric (IMEV 1781) shared with Rawlinson poet. 175 and Robert Thornton's Lincoln Cathedral MS 91 (as well as others, including the Vernon MS), the book contains a Latin note dated 1486 directing that it be donated to the Lichfield Franciscans.

<sup>37</sup> For the position of Lichfield in the production of the two volumes, see Doyle's magisterial introduction to the facsimile, *The Vernon Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> For an edition and description, see J. H. L. Kengen, *Memoriale Credencium: A late Middle English Manual of Theology*. . . ([Nijmegen, 1979]), pp. 8–10, with a reduced facsimile at 34. See further 'Sir Thomas Berkeley and his Patronage', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 878–916, at 903–5.



But the sort of ready dispersal I have been outlining, and with it, I think, the notion of Yorkshire as a productive local literary community, came to an end around 1410. And it happened, rather ironically, as the by-product of the second most successful promulgation of any Yorkshire text, a quite typical local product. Although in prose, the work took a favoured local form, a whole life of Christ or extended biblical narrative, translated from learned sources (and contemporary with early developments of similar narrative topics in verse, the civic cycle drama so widespread in the North). But Nicholas Love, of the Carthusian house at Mt Grace (NRY), chose as his point of dissemination for *The Mirror of the Blessed Lyf* the centre, not the North. He had his book approved for publication by the archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel; he seems to have arranged for a model exemplar in a reasonably colourless 'central Midland standard' (the scribe of what everyone hopes is this volume, Cambridge University Library, MS Additional 6578, is placed near Brackley, Northamptonshire); and Michael Sargent's overview of scribal languages finds a preponderance of books copied in metropolitan or home counties dialects, suggesting that the majority of copies radiated from London. (A good example would be Doyle and Parkes's scribe delta at work in Oxford, Brasenose College MS 9.) In the context, it is unusual to find such a book as MS Bodley 131, produced in an appropriate dialect in York City; even books with Northern provenances appear likely to have been imported from the south.<sup>39</sup>

Love's decision is hardly lacking in parallels. The alliterative historical poem *The Siege of Jerusalem*, composed in west Yorkshire in the late fourteenth century, survives in two products of that local diffusion, as well as three other books (two of them fragments, one exiguous) testifying to normal routes of transmission from the North into the central East Midlands. But at least four copies (including one of the East Midland books already mentioned, a conflate) reflect a single Yorkshire archetype exported to London, probably at patronal initiative, and used both to produce copies there and to export exemplars for dispersed southern

<sup>39</sup> For a survey of the scribal language of Love manuscripts, see *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (New York, 1992), pp. lxxii–xxxv; and for notation of copies with Northern provenances, p. lxiii. See also A. I. Doyle, 'Reflections of [n] Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*', *Leeds Studies in English*, 14 (1983), 82–93, esp. 83–5 on the Additional MS (LALME LP 9340), particularly with reference to the third paragraph below. And for London scribe delta, see A. I. Doyle and Malcolm Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and the Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century', *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. by Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210 at 206.

copyings. The text pretty much died on the vine in the place in which it was produced, but it managed to have a vital later life elsewhere.<sup>40</sup>

Yet at least one aspect of this life, in a manner both amusing and depressing, indicates a shift in perceptions about textual Northernism. The two early London *Siege* copyists, both very experienced writers, however good they may have been with Latin legal and historical texts and with other Middle English, were sometimes unprepared to cope with the detail of their exemplar's language. For example, they were not always acquainted with the archetypal Yorkshireism *yoflþofl of* THOUGH.<sup>41</sup> Although most often they reproduced it accurately, at other points they were not so fortunate, and what should be 'though' appears on occasion as 'if', 'that', or 'of'. While the act of copying certainly points towards the productive power of the text, its imbrication in a local language has become a peculiarity and a potential sense of confusion.

Indeed, in the fifteenth-century transmission of Yorkshire texts, largely in the south, consciousness of the need to remove localising features from the texts, to naturalise them as '(southern) English', rather than 'Yorkshire', has a prominent place. Most of us were, after all, introduced to Middle English dialectology through a comparison of the West Yorkshireisms of the Vespasian *Cursor Mundi* with the culturally edited forms of a 'southern recension' manuscript. But further examples are not far to seek, for example the note which an annotating hand added to fol. 2<sup>v</sup> of the putative Love archetype, Cambridge Additional 6578, 'Caue de istis verbis gude pro gode Item hir pro heer' in pluralitate'; this individual also altered a few sporadic spellings from Northern or North Midland forms elsewhere in the manuscript. But one might note in passing that, although the annotator objects to northernisms, the second form he cites in his note is not such, and he in fact envisions a text clothed in a generally southern (although itself dialectally localisable) set of forms.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See further 'Contextualizing *The Siege of Jerusalem*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 6 (1992), 109–21. The scribes I mention in the next paragraph are Richard Frampton, associated with Latin historical texts and Duchy of Lancaster records, for whom see Doyle–Parkes, p. 192; and 'The scribe of Huntington HM 114', discussed *Studies in Bibliography*, 42 (1989), 120–33 (and responsible for some municipal records unnoted there, in addition to his literary copying).

<sup>41</sup> See Michael Benskin, 'The letters <þ> and <y> in later Middle English and some related matters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 7 (1982), 13–30, with map of the feature at 15. LALME dot map 203 and item map 32(1) (1, 355; 2, 141) show a large concentration of these forms in extreme WRY and adjacent Lancashire, indicating they may be authorial relicts in this text.

<sup>42</sup> The objectionable 'hir' cannot be not Northern (where *h*-forms are unknown for THEIR), but the Additional scribe's central Midland spelling; the annotator's preferred 'heer(e)' is distinctly East Anglian; see LALME dot maps 52, 58, and 60 (1, 317, 319).

Or consider the colophon, probably by one Thomas Barville, perhaps of Worsted in east Norfolk, at the end of the copy of Rolle's 'Form' he added c.1470 to Cambridge University Library MS II.iv.9 (which includes a 'Northern Passion' and two Love excerpts, as well as Robert Manning's *Handling Sin*): 'Here endith the informacion of Richerd the Ermyte yat he wrote to an' Ankyr' translate oute of Northarn' tunge into Sutherne that it schulde the better be vnderstandyng' of men' that be of the Selve Countr' Amen' (fol. 197<sup>v</sup>). Or consider another scribe, whose language, like those others who copied the same set of commented gospels, is that of central Nottinghamshire—and who is thus capable of writing, 'þe gospell is rewle be þe whilk ich cristen man owes to lyf and dyuers has draghen into latyn þe whilk tung is not knowen to ilk man'. Whatever one is to make of that language, the scribe nonetheless heads his text 'A man of þe north cuntré drogh þis into Englisch' and indicates that he is at least engaged in 'north-midlandising' something otherwise foreign, from somewhere in those wilds north of Doncaster.<sup>43</sup>

Strikingly, at the point the region becomes evident to those outside it, it begins to recede, to disappear. As its texts become properties of a national culture, the locale and cultural conditions in which they were originally produced are progressively expunged. Ultimately, Rolle can be prioritised as 'Yorkshire writing' only through a refusal to consider the culture which may have spawned him (mystical rapture, after all, is trans-, if not severely anti-, historical). And for such a necessary rehistoricisation of Yorkshire writers and Yorkshire vernacular community the nine or ten scribes in the four MSS with which I began provide a wealth of evidence largely unexamined.

<sup>43</sup> Both citations are from Cambridge University Library MS II.ii.12, fol. 4, the opening of a set of commented synoptic gospels known from three books, mainly copied in proximate central Nottingham language; Cambridge II.ii.12 is LALME LP 164 (coordinates 472/360); the others are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 32 (I) (LP 110, coordinates 473/376) and British Library, MS Egerton 842 (LP 235, coordinates 459/367), this last with a substantial component in a more northerly language, along the Notts/WRY border (LP 234, coordinates 452/384).