

Entertainments from a medieval minstrel's repertoire book

Abstract

National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.3.1 (the Heege Manuscript) is a large, late fifteenth-century English miscellany manuscript from the border of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Its first booklet, which existed independently of the manuscript's other eight booklets throughout much or all of its medieval life, contains three texts: the tail-rhyme burlesque romance *The Hunting of the Hare*, a mock sermon in prose, and the alliterative nonsense verse *The Battle of Brackonwet*. This essay proposes that Richard Heege, the booklet's scribe, copied these texts from the repertoire of a local entertainer, be that a gifted amateur or, very plausibly, a travelling minstrel working a regular beat. In this light, the booklet's comic, crude, and sometimes frivolous contents take on new significance in the history of English literature, as they provide close evidence for what made up the entertainments of English oral culture – or minstrelsy – at the end of the Middle Ages.

More than thirty years have passed since the publication of Andrew Taylor's 'The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript', and in that time we have seen no fresh claims to the discovery or identification of a single medieval English manuscript with plausible connections to an actual medieval minstrel.¹ It is a serious lacuna, a major category of lost literature.² Records survive, including accounts of payments issued, that reference real-life medieval *minstrels*, *harpours*, *gestours*, and *rimours*,³ yet aside from first names, instruments played, and very occasionally places of association, little evidence of their lives or work exists in written record.⁴ Literary texts are peppered with descriptions of minstrelsy and performing minstrel characters, yet no single text survives that we can confidently tether to a

medieval minstrel, as composer, owner, or performer. Many medieval works contain ‘oral’ or ‘minstrel’ tags, which address or otherwise refer to a live audience, yet all supposed ‘oral’ literature survives in manuscripts that have no demonstrable, obvious, or sometimes even plausible connections to authentic oral culture.⁵ Perhaps, some might find this state of affairs not too surprising. After all, oral literature, by definition, does not depend on a material medium for its existence or transmission. What we can surmise about medieval oral culture is that it was founded in community and survived through memory, either by convention or necessity, or both: if performers were usually unlearned peasants, possibly even illiterate, and they made their bread in the markets of live performance, there might have been little point investing in the materials of the book. Indeed, the rise of the vernacular literary manuscript across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may well have been seen as competition. What place is there for the storyteller when prosthetic technologies of the archive encroach on their terrain? How can a *jongleur* keep the cup passing round when private houses could have their own minstrels with nothing more than a book and a single literate individual?⁶ Walter Benjamin’s periodized narrative of the decline of the storyteller, of the traveller’s tall tales eclipsed by the informatics of the novel, of communal entertainment giving way to the solitude of private reading, might be said to find compressed and localized expression in the literary milieu of later medieval England.⁷ Still, the lack of *any* survival of an authentic minstrel text is surprising, and it leaves the student of medieval popular literature on shaky ground, reliant on post-medieval minstrel manuscripts, or depictions in fiction, or speculations based on texts with supposed ‘oral’ markers.⁸ In this context, any evidence that connects medieval textual witnesses to authentic minstrelsy would be illuminating, both in terms of oral communities and storytelling culture, and in terms of identifying the actual entertainments minstrels performed.

This essay does not claim to identify a manuscript written by a medieval minstrel. It does, however, make the case that a booklet in a fifteenth-century manuscript (compiled c. 1480) was copied directly from a minstrel's repertoire, or from the repertoire of a local performer adopting a minstrel's role, either from live performance or, more likely, from a now-lost book of performance pieces. The manuscript is National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.3.1 (the Heege Manuscript), and it has been extensively studied, most notably by Phillipa Hardman.⁹ The booklet in question, which is both a single quire and a separate unit of codicological production, is now the first in the manuscript, though its order may be incidental to its medieval context, since, as Hardman has shown, the nine booklets that now make up the manuscript would likely have been unbound throughout most or all of their medieval lives, and existed as a medieval 'library *in parvo*'. The booklets were bound into their current single-volume form only after their re-discovery in the early nineteenth century by Robert Southey, who got them into the hands of Sir Walter Scott, who in turn lobbied for their acquisition by his fellow Advocates. The first booklet contains three texts: a tail-rhyme burlesque romance, now called *The Hunting of the Hare*, a mock sermon in prose, and *The Battle of Brackonwet*, a nonsense verse in alliterative long-lines. The scribe of these texts is one Richard Heege, whose surname no doubt derives from the village of Heege in Derbyshire, where (or near where) the manuscript originated. In what follows I set out the case for Richard Heege's copying of this booklet from the texts of a local minstrel or amateur performer, most likely from the minstrel's own repertoire book. I then reflect on what this might suggest to us about minstrelsy and popular entertainment in England at the end of the Middle Ages.

The 'library *in parvo*' that is now MS Advocates' 19.3.1 a highly miscellaneous collection of popular and, in some cases, lowbrow writings. Among its fifty-one items you

will find nothing from Chaucer or Gower or Hoccleve, or any author whose name might have carried some literary cachet in the fifteenth century. There is some Lydgate, but its presentation suggests that his authorship was either unknown or deemed irrelevant.¹⁰ Looking into the manuscript you are also unlikely to find anything you might consider obviously or explicitly philosophical, or continental, or freighting any prestige from Greco-Roman antiquity. Nor will you find anything that would tie these texts into wider European literary traditions: nothing from the Matter of Britain; nothing from the Matter of France; nothing from the Matter of Rome or Troy. In short, it is not a book of high art, and it does not seem to have been made for the cultivation of sophisticated or polite tastes.

In this sense it could not be more different from the manuscript with which it is most often compared: the Findern Anthology (Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.1.6).¹¹ Comparisons between these books have been pursued on the grounds of their geographic proximity (both were provincial productions from the north-east Midlands), on the grounds of their chronological connection (both were made in the second half of the fifteenth century), on the grounds of their codicological congruities (both are large booklet-based assemblages of various texts), and on the grounds of their presumed gentry status (both were originally owned by families at or near the bottom of the aristocratic pile). No doubt the Findern Anthology was a large collaborative project, containing the writings of at least forty different hands, and, potentially, original compositions from some of them, but most of the manuscript's booklets are anchored by texts from recognized literary figures, including Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Hoccleve, and Richard Roos. Of its sixty-two literary items, nearly all are lyrics or courtly love poems, and its one romance, *Sir Degrevant*, is a markedly genteel expression of the genre, participating with the lyrics and the other courtly love poems

in giving the sense that this is a book of and for the world of *fin amore*, of polite society, and of fashionable literature.¹²

In the Advocates' manuscript, by contrast, we get a different cast of romances, such as the profoundly savage *Sir Gowther* (item 4; fols. 11r-27v); we get gruesome afterlife tales, such as *Tundale* (item 35; fols. 98r-157v), and *St Gregory's Trental* (item 50; fols. 213r-216r); we get crudely comic tales like *The Hunting of the Hare* (item 1; fols. 1r-7r); we get nonsense verses that dwell in largely lowbrow registers; we get instructional texts on the basics of hygiene and manners, like *Stans puer ad mensam* (item 5; fols. 28r-29v); and we get proverbs, devotional texts, and writings of religious instruction, like *The Lay Folks' Mass Book* (item 9; fols. 57r-58v). Not wishing to discount the miscellaneous nature of the collection, and the potential for individual texts to be used in multiple and various ways, the whole book, taken together, has a strong flavour of the functional and the popular.

There is a consistency, then, in the cultural milieu and the broad tenor of the whole booklet-library, just as there appears to be a congruity in its textual archaeology. Aside from the first booklet, the contents of all the other booklets appear to have derived from, and no doubt participated in, informal networks of manuscript circulation and exemplar reproduction. The other eight booklets contain thirty-five 'major' texts (i.e. excluding short charms, prayers, and medical recipes usually occupying 'filler' positions in the manuscript). Of these major texts, thirty-two survive in at least one other manuscript from the Middle Ages, and many of them in multiple copies, such as the ten witnesses of *Sir Isumbras* (item 22; fols. 68r-84r), or the nineteen witnesses of the lyric 'Ihesu þi swetnes who myght hit se' (item 37; fols. 170v-173r). Such a culture of textual exchange and vernacular (often amateur) book compilation undoubtedly led to the many so-called household books, vernacular

anthologies, miscellanies, and commonplace books that survive from the fifteenth century. Scholarship on the Heege Manuscript nearly always situates it in the context of these textual communities and conventions, with attention to exemplar circulation, educational and entertainment aims, and the aspirational ambitions of its first gentry owners, the Sherbrooke family.¹³ Richard Heege, the scribe of most items across the booklets, was likely the family's tutor as well as the household cleric, and it seems clear that he created his booklet-library by accumulating texts copied out from existing manuscripts or other booklets.

The manuscript's first booklet, however, is different. The three texts it contains betray no evidence of links with exemplar networks, and indeed, on the contrary, they exhibit many features that suggest origins in live performance and minstrel traditions. All three texts survive only in this booklet. All three are in some ways *sui generis*, or at least generically irregular (burlesque romance, mock-sermon, nonsense pastoral). All three are composed in forms suited to and conventionally aligned with live performance (tail-rhyme, prose sermon, feast meta-comedy). All three are short enough to be suitable for interludes or after-dinner entertainment. All three contain 'minstrel tags' and otherwise directly address and anticipate a live and interactive audience. All three are entertaining and light-heartedly humorous. All three are locally orientated, using local place-names, alluding to local traditions, or situating narratives in the context of present or neighbouring villages. And finally, all three (gently) mock peasants and kings alike, and show a playful awareness of possible mixed audiences, or the possibility of audiences shifting depending on location, from the village fair to the baronial hall.

At the head of the booklet's first item, Heege inscribes the title – 'Þe Hunttyng oƿ þe Hare' – presumably in order to establish a horizon of expectations that will soon be

subverted.¹⁴ There is a hare, but it makes only a brief appearance in the story, and the point is that there is really not much hunting going on. Instead, in just under 300 lines, we get a mock or burlesque romance, with jokes, punch-lines, or absurd high jinks in just about every one of its six-line tail-rhyme stanzas. Walter Scott, who discusses *The Hunting of the Hare* on several occasions, described it as a parody of the serious romance, being ‘studiously filled with grotesque, absurd, and extravagant characters’.¹⁵

Similar romances are *The Tournament of Tottenham* and the *Feast of Tottenham*.¹⁶ In the *Tournament*, the refined, highly ritualized, and extremely expensive courtly pursuit of the tournament is hammed up by the bumpkin peasants; in the *Feast*, of course, it’s the refined, ritualized, and expensive performance of the courtly feast that is absurdly acted out by the peasants, and in the Advocates’ text it is the refined, ritualized, and expensive courtly hunt that is turned on its head by the blundering common folk.¹⁷ The story is as simple as that: a bunch of peasants try to course a hare but end up in a massive tangled brawl with each other and with their mongrel dogs, and in the end the wives show up to cart off the dead and wounded in wheelbarrows. The violence here is pointless and the comedy is crude – jokes about incontinence, for instance¹⁸ – so in addition to the colophon displacing blame by implying that it might be all made up, the poem’s opening lines refuse to name or give the location of the village it describes, for fear of it someday getting the performer into trouble:

A letyll tale y wyll yow tell,
Y tro[w]e hit wyll lyke yow well,
Perat ye schall have gud game.
Bot were it was y dare not say,
For [appyly] anodur day,

Hit myght turne me to blame. (ll. 1-6; fol. 1r).

Who knows, the village full of idiotic peasants might be nearby, or indeed it could be seen as humorously targeting the audience: the unpindownable locale allows for its performance in multiple villages while maintaining the comic implication that the present audience's village is the one being lampooned. In either case, the poem's narrator implies local knowledge shared with his audience, which might – 'appyly', meaning 'possibly' or even 'unfortunately' – land him in hot water down the road on what was likely a relatively small and circular beat.¹⁹ Unlike a play such as *Mankind*, in which the place-names tether it to specific local geographies of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk, this is a poem with performance context flexibility written into it.²⁰ This is a poem adaptable to locale – a poem made for taking on the road.

Here we have, too, an example of a poem about peasants written for peasants, or at least one that anticipates audiences of mixed or varied estates – unless of course we see the entire performance-centred set-up of the poem as a construct, as faux folklore. Of course, it is entirely understandable that minstrels would develop performance materials that would chime differently with different audiences, and that would simultaneously resonate broadly with audiences that span the highborn/lowborn, learned/lewd spectra. Ample evidence survives for occasions in the fifteenth century when minstrels would have performed in front of mixed-estate audiences. Dame Alice de Bryene's household accounts from 1412-13, for instance, tell us that the Suffolk widow paid for minstrels on at least six occasions that year, all connected to visits by both distinguished guests and her labourers and tenants. On 29 April 1413 she hired a minstrel to entertain her harvest reeve, ten ploughmen, and other labourers. On New Years Day 1413 she put on a massive spread of food and minstrelsy for over 300

tenants and other locals. When her half-brother, Sir Richard Waldegrave, came to visit ten days later, he sent a minstrel in advance.²¹ Such is the socio-cultural contexts of the provincial gentry household: the calendar year punctuated with festal and even saturnalian occasions in which labourers rub shoulders with landlords, facilitated by the comic estate-based ribaldry of entertainments such as *The Hunting of the Hare*.

In *The Hunting of the Hare* we also have an evocation of, and comic revelling in, the anonymized local setting. The peasants who end up in this brawl live in a nondescript rural village and are all named with the hypocoristic names often given to caricatured peasants: Wyll of the Gappe, Davé of the Dale, Hob Andrew, Sym, and so on.²² One of the more absurd characters is the bumpkin Jac Wade. Consider the following lines, which give something of the flavour of the tale:

Þe hare þoght che wold owt wyn,
& hit Jac Wade apon þe schyn,
Þat he fell apon þe backe.

‘Owt, owt!’, quod Jac, and ‘Alas,
Þat euer þis batell begonon was!
Þis is a soré note!’

Jac Wade was neuer so ferd
As when þe hare trade on his berd,
Lest sche wold have pult owt his þrowt. (ll. 142-50; fols. 4r-v)

The plebeian diminutive nicknames help place these characters outside of official or elevated discourse, and they certainly live up to their lowbrow assignations, but the names also help to anonymize them. These could be people from just about any medieval English village, and so the locational or geographic joke works regardless of what town the performer happens to be in. The text contains further minstrel tags in all the places you would expect to find them, such as the transition between the two fits (where a break would have been presumably taken), and including a reminder at the end that it would be good to offer the performer a cup – presumably full of ale, though a cup passed round to collect coin is a possibility too.

The passing of cups, for coin and for ale, is encouraged in the booklet's next item (item 2; fols. 7r-10r), which is one of the few surviving examples of a burlesque or mock sermon in Middle English.²³ Over thirty *sermons joyeux* survive in French, but in English we have little else beyond the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and the *Pardoner's Tale*, both of which might be said to engage with similar conventions, though they do so only obliquely, and without suggesting any awareness of an existing tradition, let alone one in English. The Tudor play *Mankind*, along with Heywood's *The Pardoner and the Friar*, include satire of sermonising language and style, which gesture knowingly toward the tradition of the *sermons joyeux*, but in neither are whole parodic sermons embedded.²⁴ These plays seem to fit with the flourishing of the genre in more respectable circles in the sixteenth century, when the mock sermon became more popular in the schools and inns of court.²⁵ That Chaucer can take up the genre implies some currency in Middle English, but the fact that he gives it to his two most fallible authors equally suggests that the genre is still, in the Middle Ages, just on the wrong side of playful subversion – the kind of entertainment best suited to the less-easily-indictable ephemerality of live performance.

The Heege Manuscript sermon covers six pages of prose, and across those pages there are no fewer than twelve instances of direct address to, or invocation of, a live audience. At times those ‘oral tags’ are conventional addresses (‘sirs’, ‘syrrus’), at times comically derogatory (‘my leve cursyd creatures’, ‘cursed catyves’), at times mimetic of sermonising invocations (‘y pray you everychone [...] sey a pater noster and an ave’), and at times reflective of the assumed performance context of drunken revelry (‘Drynke þu to me, and y to þe’).²⁶ As with *The Hunting of the Hare*, the performer uses a generic convention to orientate the narrative locally – ‘and all þe sottes of þis town wer don in a dungeon [...]’ – with the possibility of ‘sottes’ meaning ‘drunkards’ as well as ‘fools’ implying that the round-up would include those present in the audience. Again the text offers, with the indefinite ‘a’ of ‘a dungeon’, the prospect that it could be performed in multiple villages and still maintain the humorous implication that the present audience of ‘sottes’ is the one being lampooned. This is a comic jab made to travel.

As with *The Hunting of the Hare*, too, the performer ends the piece by announcing himself as someone who would benefit from the charity of the cup, and with the epic bouts of eating and drinking it describes, it evokes a performance setting of a saturnalian feast at, say, a provincial manorial hall, or an epic binge-session at an alehouse or tavern, of the kind imagined in the *Pardoner’s Tale* or passus V of *Piers Plowman*. Its authorities are peasants with the sort of hypocoristic nicknames found in *The Hunting of the Hare*: a caricatured Jack Straw, Jack a Throme, and Jon Belly-Burst. Here is a flavour of its argument:

Drynke þu to me, and y to þe, and halde þe coppe in a-re. [...] yf þu have a grete blacke bolle in þi honde, and hit be full of gud ale, and þu leyve any þyng þerin, þu puttes þi sowle into grette pyne. And þerto acordes too worþi prechers, Jacke a

Throme and Jon Brest-Bale; þese men seyð in þe bibull þat an ill drynker is unpossibull hevone for to wynne; for God luffus nodur hors nor mare, but meré men þat in þe cuppe con stare. (fol. 10r)

In keeping with the tone of *The Hunting of the Hare*, once again, this sermon does not seem like a simple tool for the gentry to laugh at the peasantry. Rather, the saturnalian environment it evokes, and no doubt engenders, seems appropriate for audiences of mixed or varied estates. While conventional English sermons often embed snippets of verse to catch the ear and encourage both association and memorisation, this sermon embeds fragments of drinking songs – ‘Drynke þu to me, and y to þe, and halde þe coppe in a-re’, or ‘for God luffus nodur hors nor mare, but meré men þat in þe cuppe con stare’. They are a witness to a received understanding of linguistic texture and style in the Middle English sermon, and the immediate effect, presumably, is to encourage more rapid imbibing and therefore more jolly conviviality, even amongst potentially disparate estates. If death is a great leveller of rank, so too is intoxication.

The sermon holds up aristocrats for ridicule as much, or more, than the peasants.

Consider the following exemplum:

Syrs, y rede also þat þer was wonus a king, and he made a gret fest, and he had .iiij. kyngus at his feyst, and þese .iiij. kyngus ete but of wone gruell dysche, and þei ete so mykull þat þer balys brast, and owt of þer balys come .iiij. and xx.te oxon playing at þe sword and bokelar, and þer wer laft no moo on lyve but .iiij. red heyrynges. And þese .iiij. reyð heryngus bled .ix. days and .ix. nyghttus, as it ben þe cawkons of horse-schone. (fol. 9r)

There is little sense to be made here, though perhaps we could see it as an absurd rendition of the ‘marvel at a feast’ motif found commonly in romance.²⁷ Possibly, through the fighting of the twenty-four oxen-knights, the three kings are punished for their gluttony by somehow being transformed into the red herrings, the very ‘gruell dysche’ on which they gluttoned until their bellies burst. All we can do is speculate and differ, and no doubt trying to make too much sense of it is beside the point. What we have here is a witness of fantasy and whimsy drawing on the conventions of romance, chivalric combat, and the enigmas of the heterodox supernatural. Obviously the sermon is not a romance, and it is not in a verse form we readily associate with ‘entertaining’ live performances, like tail-rhyme, though obviously, too, sermons were designed for performance before an audience, and the best of them were meant to be genuinely engaging. We know as well, from the vices in *Mankind*, that there is fun to be had by mocking a sermon through parodying its style,²⁸ and there is evidence of a vogue for amateur mock sermons in the first half of the sixteenth century, of the kind a young Sir Thomas More was said to excel at.²⁹ Later in the century, the fine improvisations of Falstaff and Harry also show that the performance of mock solemnity can be highly entertaining. There is some anecdotal evidence of the broader existence of mock sermons in medieval England, and perhaps we should not be surprised that few others survive, given their crude postures, suspect subject-matter, and, if this and later examples are indicative, permissive attitudes toward debauched performance contexts.

Both the debauchery and the nonsense of this sermon anticipates the alliterative poem that rounds off the booklet: what Thorlac Turville-Petre has titled *The Battle of Brakonwet* (item 3; fol. 10v). Here is the poem in full:

The mone in þe mornyng merely rose
 When þe sonne & þe sevon sterrs softely wer leyd
 In a slommuryng of slepe, for-slokond with ale.
 A hoswyfe of Holbrucke owt hornus blu
 For all þo pekke was for-bedon paryng of chese;
 Do reyncus of Radforde wer redy at a nonswer
 For to expond þe spavens of þe spade half.
 Tom þe teplar tryde in þe gospell
 What schuld fall of þe fournes in þe frosty murnyng.
 At þe batell of Brakonwet þer as þe beyre justyd
 Sym saer & þe swynkote þei wer sworne breder.
 Þe hare & harþeston burtuld to-geydur
 Whyle þe hambulbe hod was hacked alto cloutus.
 Þer schalmo[l] þe scheldrake & schepe trumpyd,
 Hogge with his hornpipe hyod hym be-lyve
 & dansyd on þe downghyll whyle all þei dey lastyd
 With Magot & Margory & Malyn hur sysstur.
 Þe prest in to þe place pryce for to wynne.
 Kene men of Combur comen be-lyve
 For to mot[e] of mychewhat more þen a lytyll,
 How Reynall & Robyn Hod runnon at þe gleyve. (fol. 10v)³⁰

Once again we see the hypocoristic nicknames: Tom the Templar, Sym Sawyer, and Robin Hood. We also see Magot, Margery, and Malyn, this latter name conventionally associated with serving women, peasant women, or women of ill repute.³¹ Here too we find nonsense

images of animals engaged in the matter of romance: jousting bears; fighting hares; battling bumblebees; heraldic ducks and sheep, and merry-making hogs. As Thorlac Turville-Petre has identified, the poem gives several placenames: Holbrook, Radford, and Brakonwet, now called Brakenfield. Combur could be an erroneous or alternative spelling for the village of Codnor, or it could refer to a village now dissolved but survived through the name of nearby Cumberhills Farm. All these villages (and the farm) lie within about an eight-mile radius of each other in eastern Derbyshire and western Nottinghamshire. Less than a two-hour walk west from Brakenfield, too, is Tibshelf, where the Sherbrook family was living in the early sixteenth century, and from Brakenfield it would be another two hours' walk south to the village of Heage, from which Richard Heege almost certainly draws his name.³² Andrew Taylor has suggested that rural minstrels may have tramped fairly localized beats, as many gigging musicians do nowadays, and a Brackenfield-Holbrook-Radford itinerary forms a tidy circuit, in which stops at Heage, Codnor, and Tibshelf would not have introduced significant detours.³³ Along with the playful neighbouring-village rivalry hinted at in *The Hunting of the Hare*, this poem invites the audience to imagine the fictive and comic (indeed absurd) incidents it describes as occurring in a local and familiar geography. It also invites the audience to reflect on the position of the narrator or performer, who has knowledge of these nearby places and has travelled back to share the news: the more comic and ironic the news, all the better for its entertainment value.

The poem has two further features worth commenting on. The first is the line 'In a slommuryng of slepe, for-slokond with ale'. Here we have a rather fine demonstration of alliterative verse, and indeed a fine evocation of its more literary examples, such as the beginning of *Piers Plowman*. As with the mock sermon that cleverly apes pious and philosophical discourses, it serves as a caution against constructing neat categories of learned

and lewd, or thinking that popular entertainments are not capable of poetic achievement. Still, the higher the register, the more comic the fall, for here we have, too, the familiar tavern, alehouse, or festival trope of epic beer-drinking, and the clever double entendre of ‘for-slokond’, which can mean both ‘quenched’ and ‘drenched’.³⁴ This line is also interesting in its similarity to a line from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. At the start of the romance, after Arthur’s court witnesses the ‘fantoum and fayrye’ (l. 240) of the Green Knight, the *Gawain*-Poet gives a simile to describe how dumbstruck all the courtiers were: ‘As all were slypped on slepe so slaked her lotes / in hye’ (ll. 244-45).³⁵ Putter and Stokes note that the phrase ‘slypped on slepe’ is a common idiom,³⁶ and I would add that it is a regional idiom, with attestations from Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire. In the penultimate line of *The Battle of Brakonwet*, ‘mychewhat’, meaning to chat or make small-talk about this or that, also appears in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (l. 1280), and the *MED* offers only one other witness, from *The Parliament of the Three Ages*, which has been located to central Nottinghamshire.³⁷ Given the use of regional idioms and vocabulary, the hyper-local placenames, and the reference to the tales told of Robin hood so close to (or indeed within) Nottinghamshire, it seems like *The Battle of Brakonwet* is very much a poem of its own place, intended for a specific audience of eastern-Derbyshire/western-Nottinghamshire locals, and one that offers absurdist glimpses of folk custom and folk fantasy in ways that accord with the other two pieces in the booklet.

The case for Richard Heege copying this booklet from a minstrel’s repertoire is ultimately circumstantial. No exemplar survives, and there is no irrefutable documentary evidence. Still, there are enough fingerprints at the scene to make the argument for minstrel origins more plausible than its hitherto assumed origins in textual communities of exemplar circulation, of the kind that surely led to the creation of the other eight booklets that now

make up the manuscript. To summarize: there is no positive evidence of duplication from circulating exemplars, as all three texts survive in this booklet only; all three texts are wholly original, neither translated nor otherwise broadly derived from known sources; all three are clearly interactive pieces intended for live performance, evidently for mixed-estate audiences who are assumed to be in the throes of merry-making; and all three make play with local settings and localized audiences, with the *The Battle of Brakonwet* referring to villages within close proximity of Richard Heege's presumed locale.

The question of whether we are dealing with a professional travelling minstrel or a local amateur performer is also a matter of speculation. To suggest the two possibilities, however, does not require a binary. A 'professional' minstrel might have a day job and go gigging at night,³⁸ and so be, in a sense, semi-professional, just as a 'travelling' minstrel may well be also 'local', working a beat of nearby villages and generally known in the area. On balance, the texts in this booklet suggest a minstrel of this variety: someone whose material includes several local place-names, but also whose material is made to travel, with the lack of determinacy designed to comically engage audiences regardless of specific locale. In functional and structural ways, then, these texts seem especially suited to the trade of minstrelsy.

If we pursue this hypothesis, the question emerges of whether Heege copied from a minstrel's repertoire book, or from a minstrel's live performance (or later oral recitation). While either is possible, and the ability to capture script from live performance is well attested through sermon *reportationes* and through practices in the Early Modern theatre,³⁹ the case for Heege copying from an existing minstrel's repertoire manuscript seems most compelling. Why? Because nonsense is the antithesis of the mnemonic. Sure, tail-rhyme, with

its short lines, simple structure, frequent rhymes, and propensity for stock images and repeated phrases, lends itself to the memory requirements of the minstrel's craft. But a prose sermon peppered with nonsense sequences, and a nonsense poem in non-rhyming alliterative long-lines is another matter altogether. This, in turn, begs the question of whether the nonsense, or the prose, is the reason a minstrel would write out his texts to begin with. Surely it remains a strong hypothesis that the reason minstrel manuscripts do not survive from the Middle Ages is because few of them were created to begin with. If minstrels did not see themselves ideologically or economically opposed to trends in textual technologies, such technologies may well have been seen as an unnecessary expense and burden. Memory, after all, is free. But what if you develop a repertoire that includes nonsense, even nonsense in prose? Then, perhaps, an aide-memoire would be especially advantageous. A performer's actual aide-memoire, as opposed to a cleric's copy of one, would be unlikely to survive, though one instance might be the four-inch by eleven-inch strip of parchment now bound with Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson D.913. It contains fragments and opening lines of several lyrics and may well have served as a kind of 'set list' for a gigging performer.⁴⁰ If, indeed, this was its purpose, it stands as a scrappy witness to the prospect that minstrels could use written documents, just as it suggests how slight and vulnerable those pages might have been.

Some evidence from the fifteenth century survives of monies spent for the purposes of copying out entertainments. In the winter of 1406 Richard Milford, Bishop of Salisbury, purchased eleven quires of paper to copy out or create Christmas entertainments for his household:

xi quarternis papiri emptis ibidem per eundem pro interludiis tempore Natalis Domini
inde faciendi ii s. ix. d. ob.

[Eleven paper quires have been bought from the same place through the same person
for interludes at Christmas time and for their making ii s. ix. d. ob.]⁴¹

The record shows that not only were ‘interludes’ for household entertainments committed to manuscript, but also that by the early fifteenth century retailers (in this case, Thomas Croxby of London) were providing quires of blank paper ready-made for copying out booklets. While this account pre-dates Richard Heege’s efforts by more than half a century, the price is worth noting. Of course, the cost of a paper quire could vary by paper quality, paper size, and quire volume, but for quires of quality and size deemed appropriate for copying out entertainments, Richard Milford paid three pence each, and given that the Heege booklet under discussion here consists of a single paper quire, it gives us a rough sense of the material cost of the booklet, and indeed the approximate cost of equivalent pages in the minstrel’s repertoire manuscript from which Heege may have copied: three pennies. What kind of dent might that make on the purse of a travelling minstrel? Records of payments to minstrels in the fifteenth century show a broad spectrum of remuneration, from allowances of wine to one-off cash sums to annual stipends, but here is one representative example. In the Shropshire town of Ludlow, on 28 May 1447, two minstrels – one being a harpist – were paid for performing at the feast of Pentecost, ii s vi d, or, if indeed they split it evenly, fifteen pence each.⁴²

Examples such as this, among many others like it, suggest that purchasing pages to copy out a repertoire would have been a substantial cost of doing business for a travelling minstrel in the fifteenth century. The extra expense, in other words, might be one reason among many that

such scripts would be rare, but cost would not have been an insurmountable barrier for many minstrels: paper, in this mid-fifteenth century context, was not prohibitively unaffordable.

All evidence considered, it seems most likely that the creation of the first booklet in MS Advocates' 19.3.1 is the result of an apparently rare manuscript of minstrel entertainments, presumably travelling with its owner, landing in the hands of a provincial collector of literature and entertainments: Richard Heege. In this scenario, the isolated booklet provides a tidy material witness to Heege's penchant for performance texts, but it may be the case that he had a nose for minstrel entertainments when compiling other booklets as well. For starters there are two texts across the remaining eight booklets that survive only in this manuscript and leave no evidence of circulation through exemplar reproduction (item 21; fols. 66r-67v, item 33; fols. 95v-96r). They are both secular lyrics of contemporary affairs, lamenting various injustices, and so may be thought of as good contenders for live performance scripts due to their topical and occasional content, and to their first-person voices. The most obvious contender for a script with origins in minstrel traditions, however, is another nonsense verse, found in what is now the manuscript's fourth booklet (item 11; fols. 60r-v). Nonsense verse in extant Middle English is extremely rare. Aside from the occasional short lyric, *The Land of Cokayne*, snippets of nonsense in other verse (for instance, the 'rum, ram, ruf' of Chaucer's Parson), or the garbled macaronic nonsense of caricatured peasants found in the mystery plays), there are few other examples of surviving nonsense poems. In addition to Heege's copy, it survives in National Library of Wales, Brogyntyn MS ii.1 (formerly Porkington 10), fols. 152r-154r, a near-contemporary miscellany from around the border of Cheshire and Shropshire.

The principle scribe of Brogyntyn ii.1, designated Scribe ‘O’ by Daniel Huws, seems to have shared Heege’s tastes for humour, nonsense, and performance pieces, as along with their shared nonsense verse, he also copied out a mock love lyric and two satirical letters, one of which being humorously nonsensical.⁴³ The nonsense poem they have in common is sixty-six lines as copied by Scribe ‘O’ and forty-nine lines in Heege’s copy. The broad narrative, insofar as one can be deduced, is the same in both, but every one of the overlapping or ‘shared’ lines contain verbal variation across the two witnesses, of the sort that suggests transmission through memory, or copying from live performance, or transmission through oral means at some stage between the two textual reproductions. Consider variations in the following ‘shared’ lines: ‘Pen wax I as pore as þo byschop of Chestur’ (Heege) / ‘I wolde I were as bare as þe beschope of Chester’ (Scribe ‘O’); or ‘When Mydsomer evyn fell on Palmes Sounndey’ (Heege) / ‘Pe Pame Sunday be-fele þat yere one Mydesonday’ (Scribe ‘O’).⁴⁴

This poem consists of a first-person narrative in which the performer is also the travelling protagonist, and it has many of the hallmarks of minstrelsy that we have witnessed already. It begins (according to the Heege copy): ‘Herkyn to my tale þat I schall to yow schew, / For of seche mervels have ye hard bot few’ (ll. 1-2; fol. 60r); and at a transition in the action we get, ‘Fordurmore I went and moo marvels I founde’ (l. 27; fol. 60r). The final lines offer, in repeat of lines at the start of the poem (ll. 3-4; fol. 60r) an ironic claim that the performer has been telling the truth, and it ends with a prayer for something to drink:

Yf all these be trwe þet bene in þis tale,

God as he madde hus mend hus he mey,

Save hus and sende hus sum drynke for þis dey. (ll. 45-47; fol. 60v)

The poem chronicles two absurdist ‘marvels’. In the first, the travelling minstrel walks into a church populated entirely by fish; in the second, the minstrel attends a feast in which terrestrial animals, as well as some fish, cook the meal and provide the service and entertainment. In terms of minstrelsy, a sow sits on a high bank and harps tales of Robin Hood; a fox plays the fiddle; and a bumblebee the horn-pipes. The feast is gargantuan, but just as in *The Feast of Tottenham*, not only is the narrator also a participant, but everything goes wrong; most kitchen utensils end up in the dishes themselves – ladles in the soups; tankards in the tartlets, and so on. At the poem’s conclusion, in the Advocates’ manuscript, is an ‘amen’, and an ‘Explicit’, followed by a colophon from Richard Heege:

Per me Recardum Heegge quod ipse fuit ad istud conviuum & non habuit
potacionem. (fol. 60v)

[By me, Richard Heege, because I was at that feast and did not have a drink.]

It seems like there are two plausible interpretations here. On the one hand, Heege could be making a joke by imagining that he himself is the narrator of the poem who was at the absurdist feast with the animals and despite his concluding prayer for a drink he managed to stay sober enough to remember it and write a poem about it. In this scenario the question of whether he was the actual author of the poem or comically aligning himself with the voice of the copy-text remains a mystery. On the other hand, Heege could be referring to an actual feast he attended, in which this poem was performed by a travelling minstrel, during which he actually stayed sober enough to remember it and write it down, or copy it out from the minstrel’s repertoire manuscript. There is a certain logic, and meta-comedy, to a poem about

a topsy-turvy feast – with its own minstrelsy and tales of Robin Hood – being performed during the service of an actual feast.⁴⁵ In this light, it is possible to see how the line ‘Po beyr was þo gud kowke þat all þis meyte makes’ (l. 41; fol. 60v) could bridge the gap between the fiction of the poem and the performative space of the dining hall. In either case, we can say that the colophon plays self-reflexively with occasions of festivity in which comic nonsense poems were performed and in which the happy (and perhaps rare) circumstance of relative sobriety was the *sine qua non* of scripts from those live performances being captured in manuscript.

What emerges from this colophon is an image of Richard Heege – a scribe with a sense of humour. What emerges, indeed, is a playful indeterminacy between text and paratext. What emerges is an ironizing of the scribe’s role as mediator between source material and the manuscript’s readers. It may be that the colophon is a confection, an extension of the meta-comedy that stretches the fictive frame to include the scribe in the absurdist goings-on of the poem. Conversely, it may be scribal *reportage* in the most straightforward sense of a dutiful cleric at a festive occasion. But of course it is too knowing, too teasing, to be reducible to one or the other. Like all texts in the first booklet, the colophon plays a game with the relationship between text, performer, and audience, and like several of the comic texts that Heege copies, it is a joke that hinges on the prospect of a debauch.

Yet, despite Heege’s ironizing and meta elusiveness, he still leaves us with witnesses, with an archive. The booklets he copied and compiled preserve contemporary poems that dramatize and thematize feasting and merry-making, drinking, and story-telling, and in the first booklet (and the fourth booklet’s nonsense verse), it seems we find preserved some examples of what kind of stories were being told. In ‘The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript’

Andrew Taylor shows how no surviving medieval manuscript can be confidently ascribed to a minstrel, either as owner or copyist. What Taylor also suggests is that we should not hold out hope of finding one, given the unlikelihood of survival and the fact that the ‘wear and tear’ evidence of travelling scripts is not alone proof enough. The conclusions of this essay do not contest that position. Rather, they suggest that we might look to other kinds of survivals for evidence of live-entertainment material – of minstrelsy – in later medieval England.

Richard Heege left us scripts more mediated and less mobile than a travelling minstrel manuscript, he left us a record of materials for minstrel performance rather than the materials themselves, but for all that his record seems hardly less an authentic witness to live storytelling from later medieval England.

One of the more striking corollaries of this essay’s claim is that the repertoire preserved by Heege does not contain the sorts of texts most often associated with minstrelsy. It does not include a romance, or at least a conventional romance of heroism and adventure.⁴⁶ It also does not contain a Robin Hood ballad, despite the proximity to Sherwood Forrest, and despite the fact that two of the booklet’s three texts refer to minstrel performances of Robin Hood tales. It also does not contain a play, or a straightforwardly dramatic interlude, though of course in the mock sermon the minstrel would presumably don the guise of a priest. Of course, this is not to question the prospect that medieval minstrels performed romances, or drama, or Robin Hood ballads, but rather that the witnesses preserved by Heege expand the parameters of a performance repertoire beyond what we have hitherto deemed conventional, to include prose as well as verse; to include the satiric, ironic, and nonsensical; the topical, the interactive, the meta-fictional and meta-comedic. The picture that emerges is one of a performer’s willingness to poke fun of audiences across the spectrum of estates hierarchy within individual performance pieces. A picture also emerges of folk consciousness and folk

lore: of folk speech, of folk custom, and folk fantasy. What we find in these texts is a vestige of medieval life lived vibrantly: the good times being as good as they ever have been, and probably ever will.

¹ See Andrew Taylor, 'The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript', *Speculum*, 66 (1991), 43-73; also, Andrew Taylor, 'Fragmentation, Corruption, and Minstrel Narration: The Question of the Middle English Romances', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 22 (1992), 38-62; P. R. Coss, 'Aspects of Cultural Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society, and Robin Hood', *Past & Present*, 108 (1985), 35-79.

² R. M. Wilson considers references and allusions to minstrel texts in *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (New York, 1952; 2nd edn. London, 1970). For an intriguing study on the scale of lost manuscripts from medieval England, see Mike Kestemont, et al, 'Forgotten Books: The Application of Unseen Species Models to the Survival of Culture', *Science* 375.6582 (2022), 765-9, doi:10.1126/science.abl7655.

³ Ad Putter, 'Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition', in Karl Reichl (ed.), *Medieval Oral Literature* (Berlin, 2012), 335-51; also, Linda Marie Zaerr, *Performance and the Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 2012), esp. 52-77.

⁴ On names, instruments, and places of association, see Taylor, 'The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript', 65-67. See also the records listed in Richard Rastall, 'The Minstrels of the English Royal Households, 25 Hen VIII: An Inventory', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 4 (1964), 1-41; Constance Bullock-Davies, *Menestrellorum Multitudo: Minstrels at a Royal Feast* (Cardiff, 1978) and *A Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels, 1272-1327* (Cambridge, 1986).

⁵ Daniel Wakelin makes this point in ‘The Carol in Writing: Three Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century Norfolk’, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 9 (2006), 25-49.

⁶ On the possibility of household-based, amateur performances in the fifteenth century see George Shuttleton, ‘Is there a Minstrel in the House: Domestic Entertainment in Late Medieval England’, *Philological Quarterly*, 87 (2008), 51-76.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov’, in Hannah Arendt (ed.) and Harry Zohn (trans.), *Illuminations* (New York, 1969), 83-109.

⁸ The earliest known minstrel repertoire manuscript dates from 1556-8, and is now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 48. See Andrew Taylor, *The Songs and Travels of a Tudor Minstrel: Richard Sheale of Tamworth* (York, 2012).

⁹ *The Heege Manuscript: A Facsimile of National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.3.1*, ed. by Phillipa Hardman (Leeds, 2000); Phillipa Hardman, ‘A Medieval “Library in Parvo”’, *Medium Aevum*, 47 (1978), 262-73; Phillipa Hardman, ‘A Note on Some “Lost” Manuscripts’, *The Library*, 30 (1975), 245-7.

¹⁰ For instance, a stanza on the concept of deceit from the *Fall of Princes* is mashed up with other proverbial expressions to create, effectively, a different poem (item 13; fol. 61v), and one that makes our attribution of the fragment to Lydgate seem like a scholarly anachronism. From *Fall of Princes*, Book II. 4432-38. In H. Bergen (ed.), *Lydgate’s Fall of Princes*, EETS ES, 121-24, 4 vols. (1924-27), ii, 324.

¹¹ See Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2014), esp. 128-58; Thorlac Turville-Petre, ‘Some Medieval English Manuscripts in the North-East Midlands’, in Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study* (Cambridge, 1981, 1983), 125-41.

¹² For a codicological overview see Richard Beadle and A. E. B. Owen, ‘Introduction’, in Richard Beadle and A. E. B. Owen (ed.), *The Findern Manuscript: Cambridge University Library MS Ff.i.6* (London, 1978), i–xxxiii. On the book’s importance as a collection of Middle English secular lyrics, see Russell Hope Robins, ‘The Findern Anthology’, *PMLA*, 69 (1954), 610–42.

¹³ In addition to Hardman, *The Heege Manuscript*, and Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England*, see Raluca Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge, 2013), esp. 1-39; Myra Seaman, ‘Renovating the Household Through Affective Invention in Manuscripts Ashmole 61 and Advocates 19.3.1’, in Glenn D. Burger and Rory G. Critten (ed.), *Household Knowledges in Late-Medieval England and France* (Manchester, 2019), 74-99.

¹⁴ For an edition and discussion of this text see David Scott-Macnab, ‘The Hunttyng of the Hare in the Heege Manuscript’, *Anglia*, 128 (2010), 102-123. In quoting from this text I follow Scott-Macnab’s edition. The whole of the Heege Manuscript is available online in digitized form, from the National Library of Scotland’s website: < <https://digital.nls.uk/early-manuscripts/browse/archive/133680060#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-316%2C-201%2C3314%2C4015>>. Accessed 17 April 2023.

¹⁵ Walter Scott, ‘Essay on Romance’, in *The Mics. Prose Works of Walter Scott, Bart.*, vol. 6 (Edinburgh, 1834), 127-216 (143); see also, Walter Scott, ‘Evans’s Old Ballads’, in *The Mics. Prose Works of Walter Scott, Bart.*, vol. 17 (Edinburgh, 1835), 119-136 (132-33).

¹⁶ These survive in three manuscripts: London, British Library, MS Harley 5396; Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.5.48; Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Library, MS English 590F. See Erik Kooper (ed.), *Sentimental and Humorous Romances* (Kalamazoo, 2005).

¹⁷ Item 18 in the manuscript (fols. 63r-64v) is also concerned with hunting. It is a manual intended to educate in the proper terms of various hunting activities. Even this, though, strays into comedy, in the form of anti-clerical satire: ‘an abhominabul syght of munkus | a superfluyte of nones’ (fol. 64r).

¹⁸ For instance: ‘Thus sone won hit hym on the backe, / That euer aftur his arse seyde
‘Qwacke!’, / When he schulld ryse to walke. (ll. 214-216; fols. 5v-6r).

¹⁹ *MED* ‘hapli’ adv. The manuscript gives what appears to be ‘appyngly’ with the ‘ng’ rubbed out (fol. 1r).

²⁰ Kathleen M. Ashley and Gerard NeCastro (ed.), *Mankind* (Kalamazoo, 2010), ll. 274, 452, 505-515 < <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/ashley-and-necastro-mankind> > accessed 17 April 2023; see also Jessica Brantley and Thomas Fulton, ‘*Mankind* in a Year Without Kings’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 36 (2006), 321-54 (347, n. 20).

²¹ Discussion of Alice de Bryene from Shuffleton, ‘Is there a Minstrel in the House?’, 67; see V. Redstone, *The Household Book of Alice de Bryene* (Ipswich, 1932); Ffiona Swabey, *Medieval Gentlewoman: Life In A Gentry Household in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, 1999), esp. 42, 91-2; revised edition, Ffiona von Westhoven Perigrinor, *Life in a Medieval Gentry Household: Alice de Bryene of Acton Hall, Suffolk, c.1360-1435* (London, 2021).

²² On peasant names and naming see Emily Steiner, ‘Naming and Allegory in Late Medieval England’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106 (2007), 248-75.

²³ For an edition and discussion see Malcolm Jones, ‘The Parodic Sermon in Medieval and Early Modern England’, *Medium Aevum*, 66 (1997), 94-114.

²⁴ See Jones, ‘The Parodic Sermon’, 96.

²⁵ Jones, ‘The Parodic Sermon’, 95.

²⁶ In quoting from this text I follow Jones’s edition throughout.

²⁷ See Aisling Byrne, 'The Intruder at the Feast: Negotiating Boundaries in Medieval Insular Romance', *Arthurian Literature*, 27 (2010), 33-57.

²⁸ See Brantley and Fulton, 'Mankind in a Year Without Kings', 321-54; Anthony Gash, 'Carnival against Lent: The Ambivalence of Medieval Drama', in David Aers (ed.), *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History* (Brighton, 1986), 74-98.

²⁹ Jones, 'The Parodic Sermon', 95.

³⁰ In quoting this poem I follow Turville-Petre's edition: 'Some Medieval English Manuscripts in the North-East Midlands', 137-38

³¹ *MED* 'Malkin' n.

³² See Turville-Petre, 'Some Medieval English Manuscripts in the North-East Midlands', 138; Johnson, *Romance and the Gentry*, 144-49.

³³ See Taylor, *The Songs and Travels of a Tudor Minstrel*, 18, 24-7.

³⁴ *MED* 'forslokened' ppl.

³⁵ See Ad Putter and Myra Stokes (ed.), *The Works of the Gawain Poet: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Patience, Cleanness* (London, 2014), 274.

³⁶ See Putter and Stokes (ed.), *The Works of the Gawain Poet*, 618.

³⁷ *MED* 'muche-what' pron.

³⁸ See Taylor, 'The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript', 73.

³⁹ See Malcolm B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991), 19-33; Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London, 2004), esp. 46-47.

⁴⁰ See John Burrow, 'Poems Without Contexts: The Rawlinson Lyrics', *Essays in Criticism*, 29 (1979), 6-32.

⁴¹ Quoted from Orietta da Rold, *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions* (Cambridge, 2020), 143.

⁴² From J. Alan B. Somerset (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire* (Toronto, 1994), 74.

⁴³ See Daniel Huws, 'Porkington 10 and Its Scribes', in Jennifer Fellows, Rosalind Field, Gillian Rogers, Judith Weiss (ed.), *Romance Reading on the Book. Essays on Medieval Narrative presented to Maldwyn Mills* (Cardiff, 1996), 188-207; the satirical letter with nonsense passages has been edited by Nancy P. Pope, 'A Middle English Satirical Letter in Brogyntyn MS II.1', *ANQ*, 18 (2005), 35-9.

⁴⁴ The texts from both manuscripts are printed in *Reliquiae antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts, Illustrating Chiefly Early English Literature*, ed. by Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell, 2 Vols. (London, 1845), i. 81-82, 85-86. My quotations follow this edition, with original manuscript spellings retained. Brogyntyn MS II.1 is available online in digitized form, from the National Library of Wales's website:

<<https://www.library.wales/discover-learn/digital-exhibitions/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/a-middle-english-miscellany>>. Accessed 17 April 2023.

⁴⁵ On records of minstrels performing at provincial houses see Shuffleton, 'Is there a Minstrel in the House?', 67.

⁴⁶ On the extensive '*prima facie*' evidence for minstrels performing romances, see Putter, 'Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition', esp. 340; also, see Zaerr's list of references to minstrel performance in romances, *Performance and the Middle English Romance*, 181-233.