

## London, British Library, Harley 2253

London, British Library, Harley 2253, contains over one hundred religious and secular texts written in French, English and Latin. The manuscript itself can be dated to c.1340,<sup>1</sup> though many of the texts will have originated earlier. It was compiled by a scribe in the Marches region, probably someone working in the town of Ludlow in Shropshire, who may have had native connections with Leominster.<sup>2</sup> This same scribe was also responsible for another collection of texts in London, British Library, Royal 12 C. xii, and appears to have had access to a large number of exemplars in Latin, French and English.<sup>3</sup> He drew on a number of these exemplars for the compilation of Harley 2253, which appears to have been compiled for edification and for entertainment, probably as a lay-person's volume. Among the non-English contents in Harley 2253 are fabliaux, hagiographies, prayers, directions for religious observances, biblical stories, historical texts, and descriptions of the Holy Land. The fifty-one English texts, which include *King Horn*, are all verse with the exception of some prose recipes. This makes the collection in Harley 2253 one of the most important medieval manuscripts for the study

of lyrical poems. It is a vital witness to secular poetic texts composed in English in particular, for as Derek Pearsall states: 'It contains unique copies of poems and groups of poems whose loss would wipe out our knowledge of whole areas of English poetry, some of it the very best of its kind, in a critical time of change . . . there is no other manuscript of any of the secular love-poems or political poems.'<sup>4</sup>

There appears to be little thematic structuring of the material in Harley 2253; rather, the English lyrics are interspersed with French and Latin texts, and are not organized into any discernible groupings.

The lyrics edited here are *Earth upon Earth*, *Alysoun*, *Spring*, *Advice to Women*, *An Old Man's Prayer*, *Blow*, *Northerne Wynd*, *The Death of King Edward I*, *I Syke when Y Singe* and *An Autumn Song*. The lyrics from *Spring* to *Edward I* occur in sequence from folio 71 verso to folio 73 recto, demonstrating the apparent lack of thematic organization in this manuscript's items. The titles of the lyrical texts given here are those supplied by Brook and by Ker in his facsimile.<sup>5</sup> Following these lyrics is *King Horn*, a lengthy verse Romance.

### Earth upon Earth

*Earth upon Earth*, found at folio 59 verso, is a well-known penitential quatrain that depends on its condensed form and punning for its effective *contemptus mundi* (contempt of the world)

theme. According to Duncan, this 'riddle-like poem is a punning elaboration of the Biblical text, *Memento homo quod cinis in cinerem reverteris*, "Remember man that you are dust and

### Notes

LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, HARLEY 2253

<sup>1</sup> N. R. Ker, intro., *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, BETS o.s. 255 (London, 1965), p. xxi. Ker's *Facsimile* includes folios 49–140, all of the work of the main scribe.

<sup>2</sup> M. Samuels, 'The Dialect of the Scribe of the Harley Lyrics', in *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some*

*Principles and Problems*, eds A. McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Laing (Aberdeen, 1989), pp. 256–63.

<sup>3</sup> See Ker, *Facsimile*, pp. xx–xxi.

<sup>4</sup> D. Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, Routledge History of English Poetry I (London, 1977), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> G. L. Brook, ed., *The Harley Lyrics* (Manchester, 1940); Ker, *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*.

to dust you shall return", used in the Ash Wednesday liturgy'.<sup>1</sup> This version is the original text that may date from the thirteenth

century; the many later versions often expand these four lines.

#### Earth upon Earth

Erþe toc of erþe erþe wyþ woh,	
Erþe oþer erþe to þe erþe droh;	added
Erþe leyde erþe in erþene þroh.	grave
Ðo hevede erþe of erþe erþe ynoh.	had

#### Alysoun

This secular love lyric, contained at folio 63 verso, opens with the *reverdîe*, the traditional description of spring, that here leads into a revelation that the poet is suffering for love. The burden, or refrain, with its double alliteration, is a joyful song that through its careless abandon serves to emphasize the contrasting love-sickness of the speaker in the stanzas.

Alysoun herself is described in terms of courtly love, which run through the second and third stanzas interspersed with the poet's melancholic musings. Alysoun is the superlative example of womankind as one might expect, but there is individualization here with the giving of her name at least.

#### Alysoun

Bytuene Mersh ant Averil,	
When spray biginneþ to sprynge,	shoots
Ðe lutel foul hap hire wyl	desire
On hyre lud to syngre.	song
5 Ich libbe in love-longinge	live
For semlokest of alle þynge:	most seemly
He may me blisse bringe;	She
Icham in hire baoundun.	power
10 An hendy hap Ichabbe yhent,	fair fortune; received
Ichot from hevene it is me sent;	I know
From alle wymmen mi love is lent,	gone
Ant lyht on Alysoun.	alighted
15 On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,	hue; hair
Hire browe broune, hire eze blake;	eyebrows
Wiþ lossun chere he on me loh,	lovely; countenance; she; laughed
Wiþ middel smal ant wel ymake.	
Bote he me wolle to hire take	she

#### Notes

##### EARTH UPON EARTH

<sup>1</sup> T. G. Duncan, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics, 1200-1400* (London, 1995), p. 208.

20	Forte buen hire owen make, Longe to lyven Ichulle forsake Ant, feye, fallen adoun. An hendy hap etc.	be; mate fated to die
25	Nihtes when Y wende ant wake, Forþi myn wonges waxeþ won, Levedi, al for þine sake, Longinge is ylent me on. In world nis non so wyter mon Ðat al hire bounte telle con: Hire swyre is whittore þen þe swon, Ant feyrest may in toune. 30 An hendi hap etc.	turn; lie awake cheeks; grow arrived wise goodness neck; swan maid
35	Icham for wowyng al forwake, Wery so water in wore, Lest eny reve me my make Ychabbe zyrynne 3ore. Betere is þolien whyre sore Ðen mournen evermore. Geynest under gore, Herkne to my roun. An hendi hap etc.	wooing; weary with waking weir rob yearned; for a long time to suffer; sorely loveliest; clothing (i.e. in body) Listen; song

#### Spring

This secular love lyric, at folio 71 verso of Harley 2253, like the previous and following ones, begins with the *reverdîe*. Here, though, it opens into an extended and amusing discussion of the joys of the world of animals, who woo and make love, while the poet must contend with his equally amorous desires and desperation to find a lover.

#### Spring

5	Lenten ys come wiþ love to toune, Wiþ blosmen ant wiþ briddes rounne, Ðat al þis blisse bryngreþ. Dayesezes in þis dales, Notes suete of nyhtegales, Uch foul song singreþ. Ðe prestelcoc him þreteþ oo; Away is huere winter wo When woderove springreþ. 10 Þis foules singreþ ferly fele, Ant wlyteþ on huere wynne wele Ðat al þe wode ryngreþ.	Spring song Daisies thrush; brawls continuously their woodruff in wonderful profusion warble; abundant joy puts on; redness
	Ðe rose rayleþ hire rode, Ðe leves on þe lyhte wode	

15	Waxen al wiþ wille. De mone mandeþ hire bleo; De lilie is lossom to seo, De fenyl ant þe fille. Wowes þis wilde drakes,	willingness sends forth; beams lovely chervil Woo
20	Miles murgeþ huere makes Ase strem þat strikeþ stille. Mody meneþ, so doþ mo; Ichot Ycham on of þo For love þat likes ille.	Animals; delight; mates flows; softly Passionate men; complain; more those badly
25	De mone mandeþ hire lyht, So doþ þe semly sonne bryht When briddes singeþ breme. Deawes donkeþ þe dounes, Deores wiþ huere derne rounes	brightly Dews; soak Animals; secret Wishes; declare
30	Domes forte deme. Wormes woweþ under cloude, Wymmen waxeþ wounder proude So wel hit wol hem seme. 3ef me shal wonte wille of on,	clod wonderfully suit/befit not have my desire from one of them
35	Þis wunne weole Y wole forgon, Ant wyht in wode be fleme.	wealth of joy; forego as a creature; banished

### Advice to Women

As in the previous two examples, this lyric, found at folio 71 verso, begins with a reminder that spring is the time of renewed interest in love. Although there are numerous formulaic phrases here (*Ase ladies þat beþ bryht in bour* etc.) there is more to this work than mere convention. The return of spring prompts the speaker to engage in advising women to beware of the treachery of men who

will want them only for their money and their virginity. The second stanza seems deliberately to employ the plural pronoun with its inherent ambiguity (men or women?) to cast aspersions on not only men's traitorous habits, but women's falseness too. In the light of the last three lines of the poem, this makes for an intriguing explanation of the poet's seeming philanthropy.

### Advice to Women

5	In May hit murgeþ when hit dawes In dounes wiþ þis dueres plawes, Ant lef is lyht on lynde; Blosmes bredeþ on þe bowes, Al þis wyld wyhtes wowes, So wel Ych under-fynde. Y not non so freoli flour Ase ladies þat beþ bryht in bour, Wiþ love who mihte hem bynde.	makes us merry; dawns animals; play linden tree spring forth creatures; woo perceive do not know; noble
10	So worly wymmen are by west;	worthy

15	One of hem Ich herie best From Irlond in to Ynde.	praise India
15	Wymmen were þe beste þing, Ðat shup oure heze hevène Kyng -- 3ef feole false nere; Heo beoþ to rad upon huere red To love þer me hem lastes bed, When heo shule fenge fere. Lut in londe are to leve,	formed; high many; were not They; too hasty; counsel one; vices; offers take; a companion Few; be believed
20	Ðah me hem trewe trouþe zeve, For tricherie to zere. When trichour haþ is trouþe yplyht, Byswyken he haþ þat suete wyht, Ðah he hire oþes swere.	Though one might give them a true pledge For treachery (men are) too ready traitor; his Deceived; sweet; creature oaths
25	Wymmon, war þe wiþ þe swyke Ðat feir ant freoly ys to fyke: Ys fare is o to founde. So wyde in world ys huere won, In uch a toune untrewre is on From Leycestre to Lounde.	guard; treacherous one freely; flatter practice; ever; found wanting dwelling one London
30	Of treuþe nis þe trichour noht, Bote he habbe is wille ywroht At stevenyng umbe stounde. Ah, feyre levedis, be onwar! To late comeþ þe 3eyn-char, When love ou haþ ybounde.	nothing at all Unless; performed an assignation; for a short time repentance you
35	Wymmen bueþ so feyr on hewe, Ne trow Y none þat nere trewe 3ef trichour hem ne tahte. Ah, feyre þinges, freoly bore, When me ou woweþ, beþ war bifore Whuch is worldes ahte. Al to late is send a3eyn When þe ledy liht byleyn Ant lyveþ by þat he lahte; Ah, wolde lylie-leor in lyn Yhere levely lores myn, Wiþ selþe we weren sahte.	hue believe taught creatures; nobly men; aware About; possessions return lies; deflowered which she; received lily-face; linen willingly; advice happiness; reconciled

### An Old Man's Prayer

At folio 72 recto is a penitential lyric which is a poignant reflection on a sinful life by a speaker who believes he is nearing death. The desire to atone for sins committed, and the realization that it is only by repentance that salvation might be gained, is evident in many other

lyrics. In this poem, however, the detail of the suffering of the subject and the personal nature of his revelations (the names he is called, for example, in lines 16-17) makes this a powerful and moving expression of regret, tempered throughout by a longing for days gone by.

Heze Loverd, þou here my bone,  
 Þat madest middelert ant mone  
 Ant mon of murþes munne.  
 Trusti kyng ant trewe in trone,  
 5 Þat þou be wiþ me sahte sone,  
 Asoyle me of sunne.  
 Fol Ich wes in folies fayn,  
 In luthere lastes Y am layn,  
 Þat makeþ myn pryftes þunne,  
 10 Þat semly sawes wes woned to seyn,  
 Nou is marred al my meyn,  
 Away is al my wunne.

High; prayer  
 earth  
 joys; to think  
 throne  
 reconciled  
 Absolve; sin  
 eager  
 wicked; vices  
 gains; meagre  
 speeches; accustomed  
 virtue  
 joy

Unwunne haveþ myn wonges wet,  
 Þat makeþ me rouþes rede;  
 15 Ne semy nout þer Y am set,  
 Þer me calleþ me 'fullefter',  
 Ant 'waynoun wayteglede'.

Sadness; cheeks  
 lamentations; utter  
 suits me; sat  
 'floor-filler'  
 'good-for-nothing; fire-gazer'

Whil Ich wes in wille wolde,  
 In uch a bour among þe bolde  
 20 Yholde wiþ þe heste;  
 Nou Y may no fynger folde,  
 Lutel loved ant lasse ytolde,  
 Yleved wiþ þe leste.

pleasure's; power  
 every; noble  
 In keeping; highest  
 bend  
 less; esteemed  
 Believed to be; among  
 gout; grieved

A goute me haþ ygreyþed so,  
 25 Ant oþer eveles monye mo,  
 Y not whet bote is beste.

remedy  
 before; wild; roe  
 desist  
 pursues

Þat er wes wilde ase þe ro,  
 Nou Y swyke, Y mei nout so,  
 Hit siweþ me so faste.

30 Faste Y wes on horse heh,  
 Ant werede worly wede;  
 Nou is faren al my feh,  
 Wiþ serewe þat Ich hit ever seh;  
 A staf ys nou my stede.

expensive; clothes  
 gone; property  
 sorrow; saw  
 steed

35 When Y se steden styþe in stalle,  
 Ant Y go haltinde in þe halle,  
 Myn huerte gynneþ to helde.  
 Þat er wes wildest inwiþ walle,  
 Nou is under fote yfalle

strong  
 halting  
 sink  
 within

40 Ant mey no fynger felde.  
 Per Ich wes luef Icham ful loht,  
 Ant alle myn godes me atgoht,  
 Myn gomenes waxeþ gelde;  
 Þat feyre founden me mete ant cloht,  
 45 Hue wriþ away as hue were wroht;  
 Such is evel ant elde.

loved; loathed  
 disappeared  
 pleasures; barren  
 Those who kindly; food  
 turn; angry  
 evil; old age

Evel ant elde ant oþer wo  
 Foleweþ me so faste,  
 50 Me þunkeþ myn herte brekeþ a-tuo,  
 Sute God, whi shal hit swo?  
 Hou mai hit lengore laste?

so

Whil mi lif wes luper ant lees  
 Glotonie mi glemon wes,  
 55 Wiþ me he wonede a while;  
 Prude wes my plowe-ferre,  
 Lecherie my lavendere,  
 Wiþ hem is gabbe ant gyle.  
 Coveytise myn keyes bere,  
 60 Niþe ant onde were mi fere,  
 Pat bueþ folkes fyle;  
 Lyare wes mi latymer,  
 Sleuthe ant slep mi bedyver,  
 Þat weneþ me unbewhile.

wicked; false  
 minstrel  
 lived  
 play-fellow  
 laundress (i.e. mistress)  
 mockery; guile  
 Covetousness; carried off  
 Anger; envy; companions  
 vile  
 translator  
 Sloth; sleep; bed-fellows  
 entertained; from time to time

65 Umbewhile Y am to whene,  
 When Y shal murþes meten;  
 Monne mest Y am to mene.  
 Lord, þat hast me lyf to lene,  
 Such lotes lef me leten.

cheered up  
 merriment; meet  
 Of men; most; to be pitied  
 grant  
 behaviour; abandon

70 Such lyf Ich have lad fol 3ore  
 Merci, Loverd, Y nul namore,  
 Bowen Ichulle to bete.  
 Syker hit siweþ me ful sore –  
 Gabbes, les, ant luper lore:  
 75 Sunnes bueþ unsete.  
 Godes heste ne huld Y noht,  
 Bote ever azeyn is wille Y wroht  
 Mon lereþ me to lette.  
 Such serewe haþ myn sides þurhsoht  
 80 Pat al Y weolewe away to noht  
 When Y shal murþes mete.

led; for a long time  
 amendment  
 Truly; pursues  
 lies; wicked; teaching  
 Sins; unprofitable  
 commands; held  
 did (what)  
 I am taught to leave off  
 pierced  
 waste away

85 To mete murþes Ich wes wel fous  
 Ant comely mon ta calle;  
 Y sugge by oþer ase bi ous,  
 Also ys hirmon halt in hous,  
 Ase heved-hount in halle.

eager  
 And a fine man to be called  
 I speak about others just as of us  
 As a; servant; of high rank  
 head-hound

90 Dredful deþ, why wolt þou dare  
 Bryng þis body þat is so bare  
 Ant yn bale ybounde?  
 Careful mon ycast in care,  
 Y falewe as flour ylet forþfare,  
 Ychabbe myn deþes wounde:  
 Murþes helpeþ me no more.

misery  
 Anxious  
 fade; to die

London, British Library, Harley 2253

95 Help me, lord, er þen Ich hore,  
 Ant stunt my lyf a stounde;  
 Pat 3okkyn haþ y3yrned 3ore,  
 Nou hit sereweþ him ful sore  
 Ant bringeþ him to grounde.

To grounde hit haveþ him ybroht;  
 Whet ys þe beste bote?  
 100 Bote heryen him þat haht us boht,  
 Ure Lord þat al þis world haþ wroht,  
 Ant fallen him to fote.

Nou Icham to deþe ydyht  
 Ydon is al my dede,  
 105 God us lene of ys lyht,  
 Þat we of sontes habben syht  
 Ant hevene to mede. Amen.

*grow grey  
 stop; soon  
 Who with lustful desire has yearned long since*

*remedy  
 But; praise*

*to his feet*

*prepared*

*grant  
 saints; sight  
 reward*

Blow, Northerne Wynd

This secular love song, contained at folio 72 verso, is a good example of the later thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century poet's ability to combine the conventions of courtly love poetry with a lyrical refrain that may have been extracted from a popular song. The simplicity of the burden is in sharp contrast to the elaborate rhetoric of the verses.

Among the devices and motifs is formulaic description (*A burde of blod ant bon*), the courtly personification of emotions, the love-sickness of the suitor, and the non-individualized, and occasionally highly artificial, references to the woman. This poetic display suggests *Blow, Northerne Wynd* is designed as a general or public lyric.

Blow, Northerne Wynd

Blow, northerne wynd,  
 Send þou me my suetyng!  
 Blow, norþerne wynd,  
 Blou, blou, blou!

5 Ichot a burde in boure bryht  
 Pat fully semly is on syht,  
 Menskful maiden of myht,  
 Feir ant fre to fonde;  
 In al þis wurhliche won

10 A burde of blod ant of bon  
 Never 3ete Y nuste non  
 Lussomere in londe.  
 Blow, etc.

15 Wiþ lokkes lefliche ant longe,  
 Wiþ front ant face feir to fonde,  
 Wiþ murþes monie mote heo monge,  
 Þat brid so breme in boure.

*I know; lady*

*Graceful  
 charming; to find  
 noble; dwelling  
 lady  
 knew  
 More lovely*

*lovely  
 forehead  
 joys; many (people); cheer  
 maiden; bright*

20 Wiþ lossom eye grete ant gode,  
 Wiþ browen blysfol under hode,  
 He þat reste him on þe rode  
 Þat leflich lyf honoure!  
 Blou, etc.

25 Hire lure lumes liht  
 Ase a launterne a nyht,  
 Hire bleo blykyeþ so bryht;  
 So feyr heo is ant fyn.  
 A suetly suyre heo haþ to holde,  
 Wiþ armes, shuldre ase mon wolde,  
 30 Ant fyngres feyre forte folde;  
 God wolde hue were myn!

35 Middel heo haþ menskful smal,  
 Hire loveliche chere as cristal,  
 Þezes, legges, fet ant al  
 Ywraht wes of þe beste.  
 A lussum ledy lasteles  
 Þat sweting is, ant ever wes;  
 A betere burde never nes,  
 Yheryed wiþ þe heste.

40 Heo is dereworþe in day,  
 Graciouse, stout, ant gay,  
 Gentil, jolyf so þe jay,  
 Worhliche when heo wakeþ.  
 Maiden murgest of mouþ;  
 45 Bi est, bi west, by norþ ant souþ,  
 Þer nis fiele ne crouþ  
 Þat such murþes makeþ.

50 Heo is coral of godnesse,  
 Heo is rubie of ryhtfulnesse,  
 Heo is cristal of clannesse,  
 Ant baner of bealte;  
 Heo is lilie of largesse,  
 Heo is parvenke of prouesse,  
 Heo is solsecle of suetnesse,  
 Ant ledy of lealte.

55 To Love, þat loflich is in londe,  
 Y tolde him, as Ych understonde,  
 Hou þis hende haþ hent in honde  
 On huerte þat myn wes:  
 Ant hire knyhtes me han so soht,  
 60 Sykyng, Sorewyng ant Þoht,  
 Þo þre me han in bale broht  
 Azeyn þe poer of Pees.

To Love Y putte pleyntes mo,  
 Hou Sykyng me haþ siwed so;

*hood  
 Christ*

*face; shines*

*hue; shines*

*neck*

*clasp  
 she*

*Waist; gracefully  
 countenance  
 Thighs  
 Made  
 faultless*

*To be praised; highest*

*precious  
 stoutly  
 lively; as  
 Noble  
 merriest*

*fiddle; viol*

*righteousness  
 purity  
 beauty  
 generosity  
 periwinkle; excellence  
 marigold  
 loyalty*

*courteous one; seized*

*sought  
 Sighing  
 misery  
 authority*

*complaints  
 pursued*

65 Ant eke þoht me þrat to slo  
 Wiþ maistry zef he myhte.  
 Ant Serewe sore in balful bende  
 Þat he wolde, for þis hende,  
 Me lede to my lyves ende  
 Unlahfulliche, in lyhte.

70 Hire Love me lustnede uch word  
 Ant beh him to me over bord,  
 Ant bed me hente þat hord  
 Of myne huerte hele:  
 'Ant bisecheþ þat swete ant swote,  
 Er þen þou falle ase fen of fote,  
 Þat heo wiþ þe wolde of bote  
 Dereworþliche dele.'

80 For hire love Y carke ant care,  
 For hire love Y droupne ant dare,  
 For hire love my blisse is bare,  
 Ant al Ich waxe won.  
 For hire love in slep Y slake,  
 For hire love al nyht Ich wake,  
 85 For hire love mourning Y make,  
 More þen eny mon.

*threatens; kill  
 force  
 grievous; captivity*

*Unlawfully, plainly*

*listened  
 leaned; table  
 instructed; to take; treasure  
 cure  
 sweet and gentle one  
 mud  
 as a remedy  
 Affectionately behave*

*fret  
 droop; falter  
 poor  
 grow  
 grow weak*

### The Death of King Edward I

At folio 73 recto is this lament on Edward I's death in 1307. It is one of a number of unique political poems surviving from Harley 2253.<sup>1</sup> It is a loose translation of a French text, mourning the king's passing, and selectively emphasizing Edward as a crusading king, fighting (and, incidentally, losing) his holy wars. Its religious emphasis suggests that its original author may have been a cleric, but this

national event is given international significance by drawing into the text the king of France (an enemy of Edward), cardinals, knights, and the pope (an ally of Edward). A sermon recently discovered in a Vatican manuscript was delivered as a eulogy on Edward to Pope Clement V in 1307.<sup>2</sup> The existence of this text lends historical substance to the poem included in Harley 2253.

#### The Death of King Edward I

Alle þat beoþ of huerte trewe  
 A stounde herkneþ to my song;  
 Of duel þat deþ haþ diht us newe,  
 Þat makeþ me syke ant sorewe among;

*while  
 sorrow; prepared  
 sigh; at times*

### Notes

#### THE DEATH OF KING EDWARD I

<sup>1</sup> For this and others, see P. Coss, intro., *Thomas Wright's Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1998), p. 210, n. 15, and p. 211.

5 Of a knyht þat wes so strong,  
 Of wham God haþ don ys wille.  
 Me þuncheþ þat deþ haþ don us wrong  
 Þat he so sone shal ligge stille.

10 All Englund ahte forte knowe  
 Of wham þat song is þat Y syng:  
 Of Edward, kyng þat liþ so lowe,  
 3ent all þis world is nome con sprynge;  
 Trewest mon of alle þinge,  
 Ant in werre war ant wys.  
 15 For him we ahte oure honden wrynge –  
 Of Christendome he ber þe pris.

Byfore þat oure kyng wes ded  
 He spek ase mon þat wes in care:  
 'Clerkes, knyhtes, barouns', he sayde,  
 20 'Y charge ou by oure sware  
 Þat ze to Englonde be trewe.  
 Y deze, Y ne may lyven na more:  
 Helpeþ mi sone ant crouneþ him newe,  
 For he is nest to buen ycore.

25 Ich biqueþe myn herte aryht,  
 Þat hit be write at mi devys,  
 Over þe see þat hue be diht,  
 Wiþ fourscore knyhtes al of pris  
 30 In werre þat buen war ant wys,  
 A3ein þe heþene forte fyhte  
 To wynne þe crois þa lowe lys;  
 Myself Ycholde zef þat Y myhte.'  
 King of Fraunce, þou hevedest sunne,  
 35 Þat þou þe counsail woldest fonde  
 To latte þe wille of Kyng Edward  
 To wende to þe Holy Londe:  
 Þat oure kyng hede take on honde  
 Al Englund to zeme ant wysse  
 40 To wenden into þe Holy Londe  
 To wynnen us heveriche blisse.

Þe messenger to þe Pope com,  
 Ant seyde þat oure King wes ded.  
 Ys oune bond þe lettre he nom –  
 Ywis, is herte wes ful gret.  
 45 Þe Pope himself þe lettre redde,  
 Ant spec a word of gret honour:  
 'Alas!' he seide, 'Is Edward ded?  
 Of Christendome he ber þe flour.'

Þe Pope to is chaumbre wende,  
 50 For del ne mihte he speke namore;

*It seems to me  
 lie*

*ought*

*lies  
 Through; name began to spring  
 in  
 prudent*

*prize*

*anxious*

*you; oath*

*next; chosen*

*bequeath; properly  
 plan  
 it; sent  
 esteem  
 In war*

*low; lies  
 I would  
 had sin  
 try  
 prevent  
 go  
 had; taken  
 rule; guide*

*heavenly*

*to his; own; took  
 very*

*sorrow*

55	Ant after cardinals he sende, Dat muche coupen of Christes lore Boþe þe lasse ant eke þe more, Bed hem boþe rede ant synge. Gret deol me myhte se þore, Mony mon is honde wrynge.	<i>knew; teaching</i> <i>Asked; to; conduct services</i> <i>sorrow; men; there</i>
60	Þe Pope of Peyters stod at is masse, Wiþ ful gret solempnete, Per me con þe soule blesse – 'King Edward, honoured þou be. God lene þy sone, come after þe, Brynge to ende þat þou hast bygonne: Þe holy crois, ymad of tre, So fain þou woldest hit han ywonne.	<i>Poitiers</i> <i>began</i> <i>grant; son</i> <i>wood</i> <i>much</i>
65	Jerusalem, þou hast ilore Þe flour of al chivalerie Nou King Edward liveþ na more. Alas! Ðat he zet schulde deye, He wolde ha rered up ful heyze Oure baners þat bueþ broht to grounde. Wel longe we mowe clepe ant crye Er we a such king han yfounde.'	<i>lost</i> <i>raised</i> <i>have been</i> <i>might; call out</i>
75	Nou is Edward of Carnarvan King of Engeland al aplyht. God lete him ner be worse man Þen is fader, ne lasse of myht: To holden is pore men to ryht, Ant understonde good consail, Al Engeland forte wisse ant diht; Of gode knyhtes darh him nout fail. Þah mi tonge were mad of stel, Ant min herte yzote of bras, Þe godnesse myht Y never telle Þat wiþ King Edward was.	<i>in truth</i> <i>strength</i> <i>justice</i>
80	King, as þou art cleped conquerour, In uch bataille þou hadest pris, God brynge þi soule to þe honour Þat ever wes ant ever ys, Þat lesteþ ay wiþouten ende. Bidde we God ant oure Ledy, To þilke blisse Jesus us sende. Amen.	<i>guide; instruct</i> <i>lack</i> <i>made</i> <i>called</i> <i>each</i> <i>lasts; always</i> <i>that same</i>

## I Syke when Y Singe

This devotional lyric, found at folio 80 recto, column a, is extraordinarily moving. It creates a vivid visual picture of the crucifixion as

viewed through the mind of the narrator singing about Christ. The personal relationship between lyricist, Christ and Mary is emphasized

by the movement of the poet, who merely observes in the first two stanzas but then addresses Christ directly in the third stanza, and by the immediacy of the present tense. The use of terms such as *Jhesu, þe suete, Jhesu, mi lemmon, Marie, reweþ þe*, adapted from the

courtly love tradition to this religious setting, enhances the theme of love, and makes the love-sickness of the poet the more poignant. The reverie of this love is sharply contrasted with the derisive tone reserved for sinners in the final stanza.

## I Syke when Y Singe

5	I syke when Y singe For sorewe þat Y se, When I wiþ wpyng Biholde upon þe tre, Ant se Jhesu, þe suete, Is herte blod forlete For þe love of me. Ys woundes waxen were Þei wepen stille ant mete – Marie, reweþ þe.	<i>sigh</i> <i>weeping</i> <i>sweet</i> <i>shed</i> <i>grow wet</i> <i>pity</i>
10	Heze upon a doune Per al folk hit se may A mile from uch toun Aboute þe midday Þe rode is up arered His frendes aren afered And clyngeþ so þe clay; Þe rode stond in stone. Marie stont hire one And seiþ 'Weylaway!'	<i>hill</i> <i>raised</i> <i>afraid</i> <i>shrunk; as</i> <i>cross</i> <i>stands; alone</i>
15	When Y þe biholde Wiþ eyzen bryhte bo, Ant þi bodi colde, Þi ble waxeþ blo, Þou hengest al of blode So heze upon þe rode, Bituene þeves tuo – Who may syke more? Marie wepeþ sore Ant siht al þis wo.	<i>both</i> <i>face; leaden</i> <i>bloody</i> <i>sees</i>
20	Þe naylles beþ to stronge, Þe smyþes are to sleye, Þou bledest al to longe, Þe tre is al to heyze, Þe stones beoþ al wete: Alas! Jhesu, þe suete. For nou frend hast þou non But Seint Johan mournynde,	<i>skilful</i>
25		
30		
35		

40	Ant Marie wepynde, For pyne þat þe ys on.	torment; upon
	Ofte when Y sike And makie my mon, Wel ille þah me like, Wonder is hit non.	lamentation not at all; though
45	When Y se hongre heze And bittre pyne dreze, Jhesu, mi lemmon, His wondes sore smerte, þe spere al to is herte	torments; suffering sweetheart hurting
50	Ant þourh is sydes gon.	through; his
	Ofte when Y syke Wiþ care Y am þourhsoht; When Y wake Y wyke, Of serewe is al mi þoht.	pierced through grow weak
55	Alas, men beþ wode þat suereþ by þe rode, Ant selleþ him for noht þat bohte us out of synne; He bryng us to wynnne	mad swear  joy
60	þat haþ us duere boht.	dearly

### An Autumn Song

At folio 80 recto, column b, is this penitential lyric addressed to the Virgin Mary. It incorporates conventions of the secular love lyric in the seasonal reference of the opening. The second stanza begins like a *pastourelle* (in which the lover rides out into the countryside in pursuit of pleasure). This is not spring, though, but autumn, when thoughts turn to the inevitable mortality of living things, prompting the poet's penitence. This is a lyric that demonstrates a stylistic self-

consciousness, coupled with conventional language and imagery adapted from secular lyrics (of the object of devotion as healer or physician, for example). Its personal theme of repentance is extended in the final stanza into a more general reminder to women that their beauty (unlike the Virgin's) is a passing thing; and that concentrating on eternal life rather than earthly looks would serve a better purpose.

### An Autumn Song

5	Now skrinkeþ rose ant lylie-flour þat whilen ber þat suete savour In somer, þat suete tyde. Ne is no quene so stark ne stour, Ne no levedy so bryht in bour, þat ded ne shal byglyde. Whose wol fleysh lust forgon Ant Hevene blis abyde,	withers scent time mighty; strong  creep up on of fleshly await
---	--	--

10	On Jhesu be is þoht anon þat þerled was ys side.	his; constantly pierced
	From Petresbourh in o morewenyng, As Y me wende o my pleyzyng, On mi folie Y þohte. Menen Y gon my mournyng To hire þat ber þe hevene Kyng, Of merci hire bysohte: 'Ledy, preye þi sone for ous, þat us duere bohte, Ant shild us from þe loþe hous þat to þe fend is wrohte.'	Peterborough pleasure folly (or adultery) Express; began her mercy sought  dearly hateful for; made
15		deeds; afraid
	Mine herte of dedes wes fordred, Of synne þat Y have my fleish fed Ant folewed al my tyme: þat Y not whider I shal be led, When Y lygge on deþes bed, In joie ore into pyne. On o Ledy mine hope is, Moder ant virgyne: We shulen into hevene blis þurh hire medicine.	lie or; torment
20		deeds; afraid
	Betere is hire medycyn þen eny mede or eny wyn, Hire erbes smulleþ suete. From Catenas into Dyvelyn Nis þer no leche so fyn Oure serewes to bete. Mon þat feleþ eni sor, Ant his folie wol lete, Wiþoute gold oþer eny tresor He mai be sound ant sete.	smell Caithness; Dublin physician cure grief abandon at ease
25		plaster
	Of penaunce is his plastre al, Ant ever serven hire Y shal, Now ant al my lyve. Now is fre þat er wes þral, Al þourh þat levedy, gent ant smal, Heried be hyr joies fyve. <sup>1</sup> Wherso eny sek is þider hye blyve; þurh hire beoþ ybroht to blis Bo mayden ant wyve.	slave noble; slender Praised sick person to her; hasten
30		plaster
		slave noble; slender Praised sick person to her; hasten
35		plaster
		slave noble; slender Praised sick person to her; hasten
40		plaster
		slave noble; slender Praised sick person to her; hasten
45		plaster
		slave noble; slender Praised sick person to her; hasten
50		plaster

### Notes

#### AN AUTUMN SONG

<sup>1</sup> The five joys of Mary: the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption of Mary.

For he þat dude is body on tre  
 Of oure sunnes have piete,  
 Þat weldes heovene boures.  
 Wymmon, wiþ þy jolyfte,  
 Þou þench on Godes shoures:  
 Þah þou be whyt ant bryth on ble  
 Falewen shule þy floures.  
 Jesu have merci of us,  
 Þat al þis world honoures. Amen.

*gave*  
*sins; pity*  
*rules*  
*Women; jollity*  
*pains*  
*bright; of face*  
*Wither*