

Some sermon verse and its transmission in manuscript and print: a case-study of the verse in Longleat MS 4, *Dives and Pauper* and Wimbledon's sermon

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Explorations of the portions of verse that survive in the context of Middle English prose sermons have suggested for these a number of different functions. In some cases the verse passages probably served as mnemonics for both the preacher delivering a sermon and an audience hearing it, encapsulating in a pithy way a larger argument of some kind. They could offer handy summaries of sources under discussion, whether from the scriptures or elsewhere; and might sometimes have served as reminders of popular songs and snippets (occasionally proverbial) concerning behaviour to be shunned or especially cultivated.¹ In certain other contexts they seem to have had a function as structural markers to round off or to introduce sections of a sermon as it unfolded. Susan Powell's study of Mirk's *Festial* has identified in that work some rhyming tags of a kind found in a number of sermons; and she has also investigated the significance of the two longer lyrics interpolated in

¹ Verse in Middle English sermons is now helpfully indexed in Veronica O'Mara and Suzanne Paul, *A Repertorium of Middle English Prose Sermons*, 4 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), IV, 2894-95. For discussion, see Alan J. Fletcher, 'The Lyric in the Sermon', in *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric*, ed. by Thomas G. Duncan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 189-209, and *Late Medieval Popular Preaching in Britain and Ireland: Texts, Studies, and Interpretations* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 273-305; Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: 'Fasciculus Morum' and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1978), and *'Fasciculus Morum': A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989); and *Preachers, Poets and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

the *Festial's* sermons for the feast of the Assumption.² As Powell points out, the transmission of these two Marian lyrics was almost entirely confined to *Festial* manuscripts and was subject to little textual variation.³ In sermons other than those of the *Festial*, though, preachers sometimes incorporated verse from other contexts for their own purposes, and employed lyrics that circulated more widely and hence in a greater variety of forms. To illustrate something of the range of textual affiliations characteristic of sermon verse, this essay offers a small case-study of the items of verse which made their way into, first, the sermons of Warminster, Longleat House MS 4; second, the sermon-related prose dialogue *Dives and Pauper*, and finally, Wimbledon's sermon *Reddite rationem villicacionis tue* (works selected for comparison on the grounds of certain affiliations which will become apparent as discussion proceeds).⁴ Its exploration of the verse in these different works also takes the opportunity to investigate what happened to it when *Dives and Pauper* and Wimbledon's sermon went into print.

Considering the verse in the Longleat 4 sermons alongside that of *Dives and Pauper* offers an unusual opportunity to review the practice of one

² Susan Powell, "For ho is queen of cortaysye": the assumption of the Virgin in *Pearl* and the *Festial*, in *In strange countries: Middle English Literature and its Afterlife. Essays in Memory of J. J. Anderson*, ed. by David Matthews (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 76-95; ed., *John Mirk's Festial*, 2 vols, EETS, os 334-5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 2011), II, 206-12 (pp. 210-11).

³ As Powell notes, one of the items does appear in a non-*Festial* context in London, British Library MS Harley 210, but with indications that it was 'presumably copied [. . .] from the *Festial*'; see Powell, 'The Assumption of the Virgin', p. 94.

⁴ The sermons of MS Longleat 4 are only partially edited: see Adrian Willmott, 'An Edition of Selected Sermons from MS Longleat 4', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1995; I have relied on information in O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, IV, 2484-2606, and on notes taken during preparatory work for *NIMEV*. For the remaining works see Lone Kemp Knight, ed., *Wimbledon's Sermon* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1967), and Priscilla Heath Barnum, ed., *Dives and Pauper*, EETS, os 275, 280, 323 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, 1980, 2004).

author in the context of two separate undertakings. In the collaborative article which first drew the Longleat 4 sermons to scholarly notice, Anne Hudson and Helen Spencer pointed out in the cycle six allusions to *Dives and Pauper* which seem incontrovertible evidence for common authorship. They also supported arguments put forward in earlier studies of *Dives and Pauper* alone that the author of this work — and hence also of the Longleat cycle — was probably a Franciscan friar. Priscilla Heath Barnum's work on *Dives and Pauper* persuaded her that this author was not only a Franciscan but also very likely 'employed as a member of the household staff of an English magnate'.⁵ Scholarly consensus seems to be that the anonymous author was probably working on *Dives and Pauper* from 1402 until sometime after 1405, possibly as late as 1410; and that the sermon cycle, which came next, must postdate 1410 and Arundel's Constitutions.⁶ The sermon cycle survives only in MS Longleat 4, a carefully produced parchment volume in which it precedes copies of *Pore Caitif* and the *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, and whose contents and general appearance suggest production for purposes of private study rather than public preaching.⁷ *Dives and Pauper*, a dialogue again conceived for private reading, but with a preacherly flavour deriving from the monitory role which Pauper often plays, had in contrast a much wider transmission; this work survives in eight virtually complete

⁵ Anne Hudson and Helen Leith Spencer, 'Old Author, New Work: the Sermons of MS Longleat 4', *Medium Aevum*, 53 (1984), 220-38; Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, xxv. John Bale's attribution of *Dives and Pauper* to the Carmelite friar Henry Parker was convincingly refuted by H. G. Richardson, '*Dives et pauper*', *Notes and Queries*, 11th series, 4 (1911), 321-23, and *The Library*, 4th series, 15 (1934-5), 31-7.

⁶ Hudson and Spencer, 'Old Author, New Work', p. 222; Barnum, III, xviii-xx.

⁷ Hudson and Spencer, 'Old Author, New Work', p. 226.

manuscripts, a further six fragments, and three early printings made between 1493 and 1536.⁸

In keeping with the different nature of the works, the verse in each has its own characteristic flavour. Five of the eight verse items identified in the Longleat sermons are Latin (*Esca cubile piger crux*, sermon 1; *Anna solet dici tres peperisse Marias*, in sermon 9; *Confiteor tundo*, in sermon 42; and *Cur homo torquetur* and *Iob probat*, both in sermon 50).⁹ Three of these (*Esca cubile piger crux*, *Confiteor tundo*, and *Iob probat*) consist of small strings of short lines, and they function effectively to emphasise, and probably also to make easily memorable, the sense of the Middle English that immediately precedes or follows them (*Confiteor tundo*, for example, seems intended to underline and authorize an Augustinian precept about forgiveness for venial sins). *Cur homo torquetur*, even though rather longer, has the same function of emphasis: its eleven lines are monorhymed, for extra effect; and *Anna solet dici tres peperisse Marias*, a summary of the genealogy of Christ which extends to six long lines, encapsulates and once again makes more easily memorable the sense of the surrounding Middle English. All of these short Latin pieces except *Esca cubile piger crux* apparently survive in other contexts, and it seems reasonable to assume that they were relatively widely known.¹⁰ In no instance in Longleat 4 do they particularly advance or develop the meaning of the surrounding Middle English prose into which they are

⁸ For a complete list, see Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, liv-lxxvi. The prints, by Pynson, de Worde and Berthelet respectively, are STC numbers 19212-14 (see further below).

⁹ For transcriptions and an indication of context, see O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, IV, 2484-2606.

¹⁰ O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, cite Hans Walther, *Initia carminum ac versum medii aevi posterioris latinorum: Alphabetisches Verzeichnis der Versanfänge mittellateinischer Dictungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959) [hereafter Walther, *Initia*], numbers 1060, 3148, 3927, 9864.

inserted, and they are present presumably to confer authority and summarize significant information or points of doctrine at key moments.

Of the three English verse items, one does something of the same work in recapitulating the message of the surrounding prose, which warns that a sinful person, once shamed, will seek God in order to be healed like the leper healed by Christ in Matthew 8: 1-13: 'Fyl here faces wip opyn shame / and p anne schul p ey sekin p in holy name'.¹¹ Another has an obviously structural function in that it concludes the first sermon in the cycle. Beginning with four long lines all starting with the imprecation 'Blissid be he', it then rounds the sermon off with a two-line prayer. The remaining item of Middle English verse, more substantial than these snippets, is, as Adrian Willmott noted, a ten-line translation of lines from Job 14: 1-2, beginning 'Man that is of woman born'.¹² It is the only one of the three items of Middle English verse in the cycle to have correspondences outside MS Longleat 4, namely with translations of the same passage from the Book of Job which appear in the *Fasciculus Morum* and in the Latin sermons of Oxford, Bodleian MS Barlow 24.¹³ That the only traceable connections of the Middle English verse in the Longleat sermons should be with Latin sermons and with a preacher's collection seems entirely appropriate. Like the preponderance of Latin among the verse items, it bespeaks the generally learned tenor of the cycle as a

¹¹ From sermon 10: see O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, IV, 2503-4

¹² NIMEV 2076.55; see Adrian Willmott, 'Another Middle English Verse Rendering of Job 14: 1-2', *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1994), 148.

¹³ NIMEV 2058; see Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons*, p. 149, and *Fasciculus Morum*, p. 96; Alan J. Fletcher, "'I Sing of a Maiden": A Fifteenth-Century Sermon Reminiscence', *Notes and Queries*, 223 (1978), 107-8, and Susan Powell, 'Connections between the *Fasciculus Morum* and Bodleian MS Barlow 24', *Notes and Queries*, 227 (1982), 10-14.

whole, and perhaps also its nature as a text for reading, rather than for public declamation in a context where rhetorical strategies of other kinds might have been in order. The function of the verse here has little to do with what Alan Fletcher characterizes as the 'uphill task' and 'battle for attention' which sometimes faced the live preacher.¹⁴

It is hardly surprising to find that *Dives and Pauper*, a work much longer than the Longleat 4 sermon cycle, contains rather more in the way of verse: at least ten, perhaps as many as fifteen items, variously in Latin and English (sometimes in parallel versions in both languages). Isolating and describing these is complicated by the fact that they are all copied as prose in the manuscripts, and furthermore by the impossibility of making hard and fast distinctions between formal verse items and rhetorically heightened passages of rhythmic prose. The Latin and English verse items identified in Francis J. Sheeran's study of *Dives and Pauper* are approximately matched by the sections of text set out as verse in Barnum's edition, but there are some discrepancies, and Barnum's notes acknowledge the difficulties of separating out verse and prose with any precision.¹⁵ Of the Latin sections that Barnum sets out as verse, several probably derive from a bank of pieces which were part of any self-respecting preacher's stock-in-trade: one of these is a versified rendition of a Biblical proverb from Proverbs 19: 4 (*Tempore felici / Multi numerantur amici*);¹⁶ two more (*Diues diuicias non congregat absque*

¹⁴ Fletcher, 'The Lyric in the Sermon', p. 191.

¹⁵ Francis J. Sheeran, 'Ten Verse Fragments in *Dives and Pauper*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 76 (1975), 257-70; see also Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, I, 88-89 (with notes at III, 26-27) and III, xxxii.

¹⁶ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 283 (Commandment IX, chapter 12; Barnum's note gives details of further occurrences). Sheeran, 'Ten Verse Fragments', p. 258, suggests that the *Dives and Pauper* author may have used 'an unidentified collection of poems especially gathered for the use of clergymen'.

labor, Condicio, sexus, etas, discrecio, fama) are also found in the *Fasciculus Morum*.¹⁷ Like the Latin verses in the Longleat 4 sermons, all serve as mnemonics or *sententiae*.

The English verse items have slightly more varied affiliations. Although it can be argued that much of what Dives has to say is couched in preaching mode, *Dives and Pauper* as whole defines itself more broadly as a 'tretys', designed to offer comprehensive vernacular instruction on the relationship of the commandments to the virtuous earthly life, and its strategies and affiliations are thus perhaps slightly different from those informing the Longleat 4 sermons. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw some parallels. Just as the first sermon of the Longleat 4 cycle ends with verse, for example, so *Dives and Pauper* is brought to a close in some of the manuscripts with three rhyming lines ('To whiche blysse brynge vs he / p at for 3 ou & for me / Deyyd on tre'):¹⁸ a device common in Middle English prose texts such as Nicholas Love's translation of the Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*, and compared by Priscilla Barnum with *Jacob's Well* and the sermons in BL MS Royal 18 B XXIII.¹⁹

¹⁷ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 158 (Commandment VII, chapter ix), Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, p. 314, and Walther, *Initia*, 6059; Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 222 (Commandment VIII, chapter vi), Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, pp. 478, and Walther, *Initia*, 719. One further group of Latin lines, beginning *Si ducas viduam uel corruperit alter* and set out by Barnum as verse, are in *Dives and Pauper*, II, 113 (Commandment VI, chapter xix); no analogues are cited.

¹⁸ NIMEV 3783.22. Some of the manuscripts end imperfectly and so lack the conclusion (see the textual notes in Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 326 and the manuscript descriptions in III, liv-lxxv). Where they are present the lines are written as prose.

¹⁹ See Michael Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love. The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Full Critical Edition, based on Cambridge University Library (Additional MSS 6578 and 6686, with Introduction, Notes and Glossary* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), p. 239; Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, 324; and more generally, NIMEV, subject index, under 'colophons'.

A tissue of Latin sources and correspondences, similar to that which relates to the verse in MS Longleat 4, can be teased out of the verse in book xv of *Dives and Pauper*, Commandment VI: a section which deals with remedies for the temptation of lechery, the best of which is 'deuocion & mende of Cristis passion'.²⁰ The chapter begins with the widely-circulating tale of the bloody shirt, an allegory of Christ as knight, elaborated first with a couplet in both Latin and Middle English ('*Cerne cicatrices ueteris uestigia pugni* [. . .] / Beheld myn wondys & haue [p is] in p i p out'), and then with a Middle English quatrain (beginning 'Whyl Y haue his blood in mende').²¹ The Latin of the first couplet, identified as originally from Ovid's *Amores*, appears once again in the *Fasciculus Morum*, possibly a work well known to the *Dives and Pauper* author.²² Middle English variants of both the couplet and the quatrain appear in the Latin *Gesta Romanorum* in the context of the same tale of the bloody shirt, and the *Dives and Pauper* author hints that this may have been his source when he points out that his version of the tale is adduced from 'gestis'.²³ As he proceeds to expound the allegorical significance of the tale, he moves onto the third and final verse item in this section: three six-line stanzas (beginning 'Whan I thinke of Cristes blod') translated from Latin lines also provided here (beginning '*Reminiscens sacrați sanguinis*'), and attributed to 'an holy man'.²⁴ Barnum notes the appearance of the Latin in BL MS Arundel 507 and elsewhere, and also similarities to a Middle English 'ABC

²⁰ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 99.

²¹ NIMEV 497.55, 4074.22.

²² Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons*, pp. 160-62, and *Fasciculus Morum*, p. 204.

²³ NIMEV 498, 3568.5/4074.5; S. J. H. Herrtage, ed., *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS es 33 (London: Oxford University Press, 1879, repr. 1962) pp. 23-6.

²⁴ NIMEV 3967.55; Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 102.

Poem on the Passion of Christ'.²⁵ The verse in Commandment VI, book xv thus seem to have had some currency in Latin and Middle English outside *Dives and Pauper*, circulating in longer works like the *Gesta Romanorum* or the *Fasciculus Morum*, and also probably in anthologies of various kinds. Such contexts also probably furnished the four short lines of verse (beginning 'With þ is betyl ben þ ey betyn') in Commandment IV, chapter iv, here providing the punch lines to a story about unfilial children who get their comeuppance by being disinherited; another version of it appears in the sermons of BL MS Royal 18 B XXIII.²⁶

Chapter xiv of the section dealing with the sin of lechery in Commandment VI includes verse with a different range of associations. One remedy against lechery, the author points out, is to think about death and the last things. An example to bolster the soundness of this advice is drawn from the story of Rosamund Clifford, Henry II's 'Fair Rosamund', who died while the king was away from her company, and was buried at Godstow. When her tomb was later opened at the grieving king's request, the assembled company was repelled by the sight of her ravaged corpse, with 'an horrible tode vpon hir breste bytwene hir teetys: and a foule adder', and the king accordingly ordered an inscription for the tomb: '*Hic iacet in tumba rosa mundi non rosa munda. / Non redolet sed olet quod redolere solet.* That is thus to sey in englissh Here lyethe in graue rose of the worlde but not clene rose She smelleth not swete but stynketh ful foule that sumtyme smelled ful swete'.²⁷

The story as a whole was perhaps best known from the *Polychronicon*, in

²⁵ NIMEV 1523; Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, 213.

²⁶ See the note in Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, 142.

²⁷ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 97.

which context it circulated widely, and it is worth noting that the *Dives and Pauper* author follows Higden's verse version of the Latin epitaph with a Middle English prose translation very close to that supplied in John Trevisa's translation of Higden's Latin. Although Barnum sets out both the Latin and English in verse lines, the *Dives and Pauper* author is properly discriminating in referring only to the Latin as 'þese two vers' ('vers' presumably meaning couplets).²⁸

The remaining verse item in *Dives and Pauper*, rather like these lines on Fair Rosamund, had a circulation whose breadth was in large part to do with its incorporation in another widely transmitted analogue. Chapter xv of Commandment VIII, on bearing false witness, introduces a discussion about God's judgement and the endless sorrow of the damned: 'Than they þat schul ben dampnyd schul mon seyn a sawe of sorwe þat neuere schal han ende: *defecit gaudium cordis nostri* [...]

þe ioy of our herte is don and pasyd away [...]
 To sorwe and care is turnyd our play,
 þe gerlong of our hefd is fallyn to grounde;
 þat euere dede we synne, welaway þe stounde.²⁹

Both Latin and English stanzas are versions of Lamentations 5: 15-16 (a source cited in *Dives and Pauper* at the end of the verse stanza), and the Middle English lines survive in variant forms, both with and without the Latin,

²⁸ Walther, *Initia*, 7973. See *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis, together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by the Rev. Joseph Rawson Lumby, 9 vols, Rolls Series, 41 (London: Longman and Co., 1876), VIII, 54. Sheeran, 'Ten Verse Fragments', p. 263, quotes a further occurrence of the anecdote from Robert Holcot's commentary on *Wisdom*.

²⁹ NIMEV 3397.55. Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 245.

in an assortment of preacher's manuscripts: John of Grimestone's preaching notebook (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 18. 7. 21); the Latin sermon collection which is now Worcester Cathedral MS F 126; BL Royal 7 C I (from Ramsey Abbey; including much preaching material); and BL MS Harley 7322 (two versions).³⁰ In a slightly different form they also appear in Oxford, Merton College MS 120, added in a later hand to a thirteenth-century copy of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*.³¹ The context in which they are most frequently recorded, however, is in the conclusion of Thomas Wimbleton's sermon *Reddite rationem villicacionis tue*, an exposition of the parable of the vineyard from Luke 16: 2, first delivered at Paul's Cross in London in one of the years between 1387-89:

Whan þese dampned men bep in þis woo þey schulleþ
 synge þis rewful song þat is written in þe Book of Mornynge:
 þe ioye of oure herte is ago;
 Oure wele is turned into woo;
 þe coroune of oure heued is falle vs fro;
 Alas for synne þat we haue doo.³²

Surviving in both Latin and Middle English versions, Wimbleton's sermon is extant in over twenty manuscripts, a small number of which are partial or in

³⁰ NIMEV 221 (the reference under this number to CUL MS li. 3. 8, fol. 43v, duplicates the entry under 3397 and should be deleted). On these manuscripts, see respectively Edward Wilson, *A Descriptive Index of the English Lyrics in John of Grimestone's Preaching Book*, Medium Aevum Monographs, NS 2 (Oxford: Blackwell for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1973), items 39 and 92; Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, pp. 146-58 and *Verses in Sermons*, pp. 82-86; The British Library Online Manuscripts Catalogue: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/>. The Harley 7322 versions are conveniently reprinted in Knight, *Wimbleton's Sermon*, p. 135.

³¹ NIMEV 3398; see Rodney Thompson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in Merton College, Oxford* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 99-100.

³² Knight, *Wimbleton's Sermon*, p. 127; Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections*, pp. 171-74. On the date of the sermon's delivery, see Fletcher, *Preaching and Politics*, p. 208, note 35.

some way reworked: its wide transmission was probably related to what it has to say about the responsibilities of priests and lords, and its not always implicit critique of exploitation and extortion.³³ All of these manuscripts are anthologies or composites of some kind in which Wimbleton's sermon features as one of a number of contents. In some cases the other contents are predominantly sermons or preaching-related, but in others Wimbleton's sermon rubs shoulders with an array of texts which includes *The Three Kings of Cologne*, extracts from the *South English Legendary*, the writings of Richard Rolle, and *The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*.

It is unlikely that the author of *Dives and Pauper* simply lifted the verse from a copy of Wimbleton's sermon: his version differs in several minor particulars from that transmitted in copies of Wimbleton, and in fact resembles more closely the first of the two variant forms in BL MS Harley 7322, that on fol. 153v. Given that the author was at work on *Dives and Pauper* some time after 1402, however, in what must have been the early period of the copying and circulation of Wimbleton's sermon, it seems quite likely that he might at least have seen Wimbleton's version of this eminently useful versified Latin biblical paraphrase. That its sentiments had potential in a variety of contexts is further indicated by its incorporation in *The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, in a sequence of references to Lamentations that lead to a discussion of 'Hou god ordered a waye to sauen man':

³³ NIMEV 3397. The most up-to-date list of manuscripts is that in O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, I, 55-61. The edition by Knight, *Wimbleton's Sermon*, is based on the text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 357; that of K. F. Sunden, ed., *A Famous Middle English Sermon [...] Preached at St. Paul's Cross, London, on Quinquagesima Sunday, 1388* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri, 1925), on the text in Bodl. MS Hatton 57.

A, þou sely couent, who shal ben þi helpe? *Cecidit corona capitis
nostri, ue nobis quia peccauimus*, I ne can nouȝt ellis seyn, he seip,
but, þe fairest flour of al oure garlond is fallen away; alas, alas &
weloway, þat euere we dede synne.³⁴

The scribe of BL MS Harley 1704 may have used a garbled memory of this quotation, improbably mixed up with a line from Chaucer's Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale,³⁵ as some kind of shorthand reference to the amalgamated version of the *Charter* and *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*. About to start his copy on fol. 31r of the manuscript, he inserted the heading 'Alas that euer loue was synne'; but then crossed it out in order to insert some shorter verse texts before beginning the *Charter* and *Abbey* conflation on fol. 32v.³⁶

Discussion thus far has outlined some of the slipperiness characteristic of short Middle English verse texts incorporated in longer prose contexts, and has gestured towards the complex networks of sources and correspondences which play around them. Verse in sermons is an especially thorny problem when, as is so often the case, it translates part of the scriptures or of some other authority, or simply well-known Latin mnemonics or *sententiae*. The

³⁴ C. Horstman, ed., *Yorkshire Writers. Richard Rolle of Hampole an English Father of the Church and his Followers*, 2 vols (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1895), I, 337-62 (p. 348). A list of manuscripts of the *Charter* is in J. Boffey, 'Conflations of *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* and *The Charter of The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* in Manuscript and Print', for *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. by Takami Matsuda, Richard Linenthal and John Scahill (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 245-54 (see p. 247, note 9).

³⁵ 'Allas, allas! That euer love was synne!', III, 614 in Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer* (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1987), p. 113.

³⁶ See John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 8 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), I, 240.

capacity of such verse to change shape in transmission (sometimes to the extent of being unrhymed and mismetred), and to pop up in and out of different contexts, poses a number of challenges. The versified conclusion to *Dives and Pauper*, for example, is not consistently versified in all the manuscripts; and in the copy of Wimbledon's sermon in Dublin, Trinity College MS 155, a second scribe has inserted an extra verse conclusion after the usual quatrain and signing off.³⁷ These are just two instances of the variation characteristic of verse in sermons. Editorially, and sometimes for readers as well, variation of this kind can be perplexing: a perceptive later reader spotted that portions of *Dives and Pauper* in Glasgow University Library MS Hunterian 270 were somewhat unusual, and wrote 'verse' in the margin next to 'Whyl y haue his blood in mende'.³⁸ In the case of both *Dives and Pauper* and Wimbledon's sermon it is however possible to compare the state of the verse in the manuscripts with its forms in successive early printed editions. To what extent was the verse in these works susceptible to the potential of print to fix and make stable?

Dives and Pauper went relatively early into print, in a 1493 edition by Pynson about whose production an unusual amount is known (STC 19212). The setting copy has survived, in the form of Bodleian MS Eng. th. d. 36, as also have documents relating to cases at law brought both by and against

³⁷ See Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, 324; O'Mara and Paul, *Repertorium*, I, 195: 'To the whiche ioye and blis God bring you and me §at boght vs with his precious passion opon the holy rode tre'.

³⁸ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 100, textual notes.

Pynson in relation to one John Russhe esquire, of London, who put up half the money for the printing and received half the print run of 600 copies.³⁹ Following the precedent of his setting copy, Pynson (or the editor and/or compositors working for him) made no attempt to distinguish the verse from its surrounding prose in terms of layout: in every case it simply runs on as prose from its introductory prose lines. Even the three-line rhymed conclusion which is found in some of the manuscript copies is in Pynson's version abbreviated and unrhymed: 'To whiche blisse he // bring vs // that for vs dyed on the //rode tree. Amen.' (sig. J7va). A reader of this edition could be forgiven for not noticing the existence of verse in *Dives and Pauper*.

The same is true of Worde's edition of 1496 (STC 19213), virtually a reprint of Pynson's text although enhanced with some woodcuts. But by the time of Berthelet's 1536 edition (STC 19314) someone had evidently decided on a raft of changes to the appearance of the text, and among these had done some tinkering with the verse sections (the text of the edition otherwise remains the same as Pynson/de Worde).⁴⁰ Berthelet's edition is for a start a smaller-format book, in octavo rather than the folio size of both the Pynson and de Worde editions. It has marginal apparatus, in the form of glosses indicating Biblical and other sources, and it employs a variety of typefaces to distinguish the main text from the glosses, and within the main text to separate Latin from English. Some portions of both the Latin and English

³⁹ Margery M. Morgan, 'Pynson's Manuscript of *Dives and Pauper*', *The Library*, 5th series, 8 (1953), 217-28; Henry R. Plomer, 'Two Lawsuits of Richard Pynson', *The Library*, NS 10 (1909), 114-33.

⁴⁰ Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, III, lxxvi, confirming that both de Worde and Berthelet's editions follow the text established by Pynson, notes of Berthelet's that that 'The basis of his text seemed (*sic*) to have been the Wynkyn de Worde printing, but Berthelet abbreviated the Table and freely modernized spellings and wordings'. Sheeran, 'Ten Verse Fragments', does not consider Berthelet's edition.

verse in the text are carefully set out in verse lines, sometimes with added paraps and indentation to clarify matters of rhyme and metre.⁴¹ This is so in relation to the verse in Commandment IV ('With this betyl'; Berthelet, fol. 137), and to the three devotional lyrics in chapter xv of Commandment VI ('Behold my wondys', fols 220v and 221; 'When I thinke on Cristes blode', fol. 221v), where in the last case the Latin source is printed as a marginal gloss, in roman type. The epitaph on Fair Rosamund in Commandment VI, chapter xiv, is also treated with discrimination: the Latin, which the text describes specifically as 'two verses' is printed in separate verse lines, in roman type, but the English prose translation is left as prose. Unaccountably, given this otherwise very careful layout, the verse in Commandment VIII, chapter xv ('p e ioy of our herte is don and pasyd away', fol. 297) is left in prose lines; perhaps this is to be explained by a change of compositor, or by a growing sense, as the setting of the type proceeded, that space was at a premium. The colophon (fol. 343) is also left unrhymed, although here set into a neatly shaped fishtail.

Berthelet's decision to print *Dives and Pauper* in 1536, forty years after de Worde's edition, may seem a curious one. That the printed *editio princeps* was the work of his predecessor as King's Printer, Richard Pynson, may be part of the explanation; and another factor may have been his concern not to handle apparently heretical books (he had appeared before the vicar-general in 1526 for printing works without first seeking license): a work first printed in the 1490s may have seemed a safe option.⁴² At the same time, though, its

⁴¹ The Latin lines beginning '*si ducas inductam*' (fol. 227v), are for example set out as verse.

⁴² C. Clair, 'Thomas Berthelet, royal printer', *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1966), 177–81.

promotion of the ideal of holy poverty, its intermittent criticism of the clergy, and its apparent support for the availability of 'Godis lawe [...] in her moder tunge'.⁴³ Whatever the reasons behind his printing it, Berthelet's edition rather interestingly preserved for the 1530s some snippets of Middle English verse in a form which made at least some of them more prominent as verse than they had been in previous printed editions and in the manuscript copies.

The case of the verse that *Dives and Pauper* shares with Wimbledon's Sermon, the translation of Lamentations 5: 15-16 ('þe ioy of our herte is don and pasyd away') offers a curious coda to this discussion. While Wimbledon's sermon clearly had a comparatively extended fifteenth-century manuscript circulation, it was not taken up by any of the first generation of English printers. As Helen Spencer has pointed out, the Middle English sermons most enthusiastically transferred into printed editions were those of *The Golden Legend* and the *Quattuor Sermones*, along with Mirk's *Festial*;⁴⁴ these were joined in the very late fifteenth and early sixteenth century by individual sermons from preachers such as Alcock and Fisher. But once Wimbledon's sermon made its very late appearance in print, in an edition of ?1540 attributed to Mayler (STC 25823.3), it seems to have had an unstoppable success, reprinted on its own and in other contexts (such as Foxe's *Book of*

⁴³ See Barnum, *Dives and Pauper*, II, 64, and III, xv-xxxi; and on the wider context, Anne Hudson, "No Newe Thing": The Printing of Medieval Texts in the Early Reformation Period', in *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis*, ed. by Douglas Gray and Eric Stanley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 153-74, reprinted in Anne Hudson, *Lollards and their Books* (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 227-48.

⁴⁴ See 'The Sermons' Later History' in Helen Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 321-34

Martyrs)⁴⁵ until at least 1738. The reasons for this have been productively explored by Alexandra Walsham, who signals the sermon's useful susceptibility to reinvention, its appeal to those concerned to 'recover and revive Wycliffite writings' who were to make it 'nothing less than a Tudor and Stuart bestseller'.⁴⁶ These enthusiasts were evidently unconcerned with the distinctive modulation from prose to verse which brought the sermon to an end in its earlier existence. In Mayler's and subsequent editions the quatrain was unravelled into prose, and in Kele's tiny sexodecimo edition of c. 1550, for example, it reads as follows: 'The ioy of our hertes is gone // Oure myrth is turnyd to woo / and sorrow. The crownes of oure / head is fall from vs. Alas for / the synne that we haue doone' (STC 25824).

The disappearance of the quatrain from sixteenth-century and later printed editions of Wimbledon's sermon no doubt serves as a reminder that Berthelet's careful signalling of the verse in his 1536 edition of *Dives and Pauper* was not in any way a standard response to the presence of verse in prose contexts of this kind. While the evidence reviewed in this discussion confirms that the prose of Middle English sermons readily accommodated passages of heightened formality, with metrical and rhyming patterns both deliberately constructed and imported from elsewhere, it also makes clear that such passages did not call for an special signalling from scribes, and that printers in turn were only intermittently interested in them. They seem to have remained malleable elements of the larger rhetorical constructs of which they

⁴⁵ Its appearance in successive editions can be consulted via *Foxe's Book of Martyrs Variorum Edition Online* at <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/edition.html>.

⁴⁶ Alexandra Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past: The Afterlife of a Medieval Sermon in Early Modern England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58 (2007), 628-55 (especially pp. 629-30).

were a part, embedded in tissues of quotation and allusion where features of rhyme and metre were occasional, emphatic flourishes.