

Some London Women Readers and a Text of *The Three Kings of Cologne*

JULIA BOFFEY

As recent studies have begun to make clear, research into the literacy and reading of medieval women needs to take into account many kinds of evidence.¹ Recovery of the varied contexts in which women may have had access to books – in religious communities, families or households, and other networks – and the uses which books served in these contexts, are as crucial to our understanding as is the written evidence in a will or a manuscript inscription which might link a particular name to a particular work. Amongst evidence which is often unnoticed or overlooked are features of certain copies of individual texts which indicate adaptation for women readers.

Features of just this kind are to be found in one of the manuscripts of *The Three Kings of Cologne*, a Middle English prose text which enjoyed a relatively wide fifteenth-century circulation. They link it interestingly with the circle of John Shirley, a significant figure in metropolitan book production, whose network of male patrons and acquaintances has been extensively investigated.² The chain of connection begins with Shirley's sister-in-law Beatrice, and her association with the London abbey of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Francis, without Aldgate, better known as the Minories. Beatrice's parents were William Lynne, a woolman and grocer, and Alice, who on her husband's death in 1421 became a vowess.³ Beatrice's second husband was Avery Cornburgh, yeoman of the king's chamber, under-treasurer of England, and eventually keeper of the great wardrobe,⁴ whose connections with Shirley are documented in San Marino, Huntington Library MS EL 26. A. 13, a copy of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* and some of the poems of Lydgate.⁵ She lived until 1502, and at her death was buried at St Dunstan's, Stepney, with her parents.

Beatrice's piety is in part recorded in the establishment by Avery Cornburgh, before his death in 1487, of a chantry chapel in Romford parish church. Here was to be constructed a tomb bearing a lengthy poem giving details of the foundation, and instructions for the reading of the bederoll which was to include her name with that of her husband.⁶ As recorded by Weever, the poem was an expansion of a well-known epitaph, 'Farewel my frendys, the tyde abydeyth no man'.⁷ A clearer manifestation of Beatrice's personal piety is her concern for the community of religious, the Minoresses of Aldgate, to whom she donated an illuminated psalter which is now in the library of the Bible Society of New Zealand, in Wellington.⁸ In it is the inscription

Memorandum that this Sawter was gevyn by Beterice Carneburgh' unto Dame Grace Centurio to have it to her for terme of her lyfe and aftir hir discesse to remayne unto what syster of the meneres that it shall plesse the seme grace to gyf it, never to be gevyn away solde nor lent but onely to the meneres, they to pray perpetually for the sawles named in this present Sawter.

This single record of Beatrice's ownership of a book is left in a devotional manuscript which was to be passed by another woman to a community of female religious; no books are mentioned in her will.⁹ Unless one actually stumbles on the record itself, or a transcription of it in a manuscript catalogue, there is no direct way of recovering this facet of her life.

The community of the Minoresses at Aldgate, Franciscan nuns of the order of St Clare, to whom Beatrice left her service-book, lay at the centre of several networks of women readers, both religious and lay.¹⁰ Founded in 1293/4 by Edmund Earl of Lancaster, brother of Edward I, and his wife Blanche, it remained in existence until 1539 despite vicissitudes such as fires and serious epidemics: a long-lived house, in the context of this small order. Many of its nuns and lay sisters came from aristocratic or gentry families, or were members of the London mercantile élite, and the community was further enlarged by the households who inhabited two mansions which were constructed within the precinct.¹¹ A recent study notes that 'The evidence of bequests ... gifts, and other records makes it clear that throughout its history the house maintained a distinctly aristocratic character, attracting a succession of royal and noble benefactors, visitors, residents, abbesses, and nuns. Around them gathered a similar group of patrons and recruits drawn from gentry and mercantile families'.¹²

A rule for the sisters, originally written for the house at Longchamp founded by the sister of King Louis IX of France, was approved for use in the London house in 1295, and survives in a fifteenth-century English translation as the 'rewle of the sustris menouresses enclosid'.¹³ While this version makes no specific recommendations about reading, it is clear that literacy was a skill assumed of at

least some of the nuns: 'the sustres wheche canne rede & singe schal do the office reuerentli & mesurabli after the custome & the ordre of freris menoures, & the other schal sey xx *pater noster* for matyns ...';¹⁴ readers at mealtimes are also mentioned. The surviving manuscripts which can be associated with the community include service books and books of other kinds. Listed in Neil Ker's *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*¹⁵ are a Book of Hours, Reigate Church MS 2322, given to 'Dame An Frenell' (or possibly Freuell) by another 'Dame Annes porter';¹⁶ a copy of *Pore Caitiff*, given by Dame Margaret Hasley to Sister Anne Bassyngburne;¹⁷ and, in Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 14. 15, a fifteenth-century translation of a thirteenth-century Latin treatise for nuns, ascribed variously to Gerard of Liège or to Hugh of St-Cher, *De Doctrina Cordis*, bequeathed communally to her sisters by Dame Christine Saint Nicolas, an abbess of the house, at her death in 1455/6.¹⁸ Also in communal ownership was a copy of some of the works of Walter Hilton, now London, British Library MS Harley 2397, given by Abbess Elizabeth Horwood

to remayne to the vse off the systeres of the sayde / place to pray fore the
yeuere & ffore the sowles off hyre ffader/& here modere Thomas
horwode & beatrixe, & the sowle / off mayster Robert Alderton (fol.
94").¹⁹

One of the texts in this collection is on the *Vita mixta*, the mixed life, of which the larger community associated with the house is in some ways representative. Many of the lay people associated with it, like Beatrice Cornburgh, shared its taste for pious reading, and have left occasional testamentary evidence about the books they owned. The wills of Eleanor de Bohun, and Anne Neville, wife of Humphrey Stafford, first Duke of Buckingham, who were respectively in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries lay residents in the houses within the precinct, include devotional books, for the most part interestingly passed very specifically to their daughters or other female relatives. Anne Neville-Stafford's will, for example, proved in 1480, as well as making provision 'that the hous of the mynorsse without Algate of londoun haue [£20] to kepe yearly in perpetuite a masse and dirige by note to pray for the soule of my most dere and best beloued husbound humfrey late Duke of Bukkyngham my soule and alle oure childrenes soules' directs that

my daughter Richmond [i.e. her daughter-in-law, Margaret Beaufort]
haue a boke of English of legenda sanctorum a boke of ffrensh called
lukan an other boke of frensh of the pistelles and gospelles and a
prymmer with claspes of siluer and gilt couered with purpull velvett.²⁰

Books survive too from the other English houses of Franciscan nuns, insignificant though the order may have been: only five out of eight projected houses were ever established, and two of these flourished for only a few decades.

Ker lists a psalter and a copy of the printed *Book named the Royal* from Bruisyard; *Northern Homilies* and an English version of William of Nassington's *Speculum Vitae* from Denny, even a bible from the shortest-lived of the houses, Northampton, closed in 1272.²¹ While the focus on devotional and religious works, particularly in Middle English, replicates the interests of the London minoresses and the women associated with them, the inclusion of *The Book named the Royal* – first printed by Caxton as a treatise on vices and virtues for secular readers – is a reminder of the breadth of these women's interests, and a warning against too rigid categorization of 'secular' and 'religious' tastes.

Some sense of the transmission of texts between lay and religious circles, and of the manner in which certain works were adaptable to the specific interests of different kinds of readers – men, women, religious or laypeople – can be gained from the different forms of circulation enjoyed by *The Three Kings of Cologne*. Originally written in Latin by John of Hildesheim, a Carmelite friar who died in 1375, this was an account of the visit made by the three kings at the Nativity, covering among other things the significance of their gifts, their outwitting of Herod, and the posthumous fate of their bodies, which were transported from Milan to Cologne in 1164.²² At this point three fingers of the relics were given to the cathedral at Hildesheim, so stimulating the local cult which nurtured John of Hildeheim's interest. Stories of the three kings exerted a powerful attraction in many different contexts: in England they figured, for example, in liturgical plays and civic play cycles,²³ were invoked in the morning prayers included in most books of hours,²⁴ and small snippets from their histories are sometimes found in commonplace books such as that compiled by Robert Reynes of Acle in Norfolk in the fifteenth century.²⁵ John of Hildesheim's account was a work of apparently considerable appeal: it combines expansions of Biblical detail with random and exotic stories about the kings' remains, and spices the mixture with details about the geography and customs of the mysterious east. The work was read in England in both Latin and various vernacular versions:²⁶ twenty-one manuscript copies of the most widely circulated English prose translation, made c. 1400, have survived; this text was printed at least four times by Wynkyn de Worde in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (STC 5572 etc.); and a verse redaction (IMEV 854.3) was included by the Yorkshireman Robert Thornton in London, British Library MS Additional 31042.

The text's appeal, to judge from its incorporation in manuscript anthologies where it accompanies texts as diverse as *The Canterbury Tales*, the *Brut* chronicle, and *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*,²⁷ encompassed both John Shirley's readers and, it would appear, women who were associated or became associated with the London minoresses; to think of these as somehow distinct from Shirley's readers is anyway no doubt misguided. Shirley himself copied the English prose translation,

probably at least twice. One copy survives in Oxford, Bodleian MS Ashmole 59 and another is listed as 'a feyre Chronicle of thre kynges of Colen' in a table of contents, appended to the same collection, which seems to belong to what is probably a lost Shirley manuscript.²⁸ A further copy appears in Harvard University MS Eng. 530, a collection closely related in some way to Shirley's manuscripts, although not – as was long thought – in his hand.²⁹ The text in MS Ashmole 59 preserves the curious feature of an alphabetical acrostic³⁰ which runs across the opening letters of chapters 10 to 33 – a form of flourish which Shirley for some reason seems to have favoured, since it also occurs in the text of the *Decretum Aristotelis* (a version of the *Secreta Secretorum*) which he copied into the same manuscript.³¹ His taste for this kind of artful textual decoration may have been caught from, or in its turn have inspired, an acrostic of a different kind which appears in a small number of copies of the 'standard' text of *The Three Kings of Cologne*: initial letters to all the chapters, which, read in sequence, produce the names of 'Margareta Moningtoun' and 'Maud Stranslea'.

The inclusion of this device in London, British Library MS Royal 18 A x was known to Horstmann, who commented on it, and printed the text in his edition of 1886, in parallel with the unadapted version in Cambridge University Library MS Ee. iv.32. He also located the same acrostic in British Library MS Cotton Vespasian E xvi. Horstmann could not identify either of the women named, however, and the origins and transmission of this personalized version of the text have not been much pursued.³² Details of the fifteenth-century abbesses at Aldgate which were hidden in the summarized records of the early published histories of the house, however, suggest one possible identification. An abbess named simply 'Margaret' is recorded in 1441 in Bourdillon's *Order of Minoresses* and the *Victoria County History*, with reference in both cases to an entry in Sharpe's *Calendar of Wills proved in the Court of Husting, London*, where the translated Latin mentions 'Dame Margaret, Abbess of the House of the Sisters Minoresses of the Order of S. Clare without Aldgate', in connection with the bequest to the sisters of the remainder of a brewery called 'le Bole super le Hoop' near Towerhill.³³ Martha Carlin's more recent study of the house also cites this will, but adds a further reference to an indenture of 1433, made between the nuns and John Broddesworth and Richard Coppyng, *cives et hatters*, concerning shops and cellars in Hosier Lane, in which the abbess's name is given as Margaret Monyngtoun.³⁴ It seems possible, therefore, that one of the women made prominent in the *Three Kings*' acrostic was at some stage (not necessarily contemporary with her association with the text) abbess at Aldgate.³⁵

The nature and contents of British Library MS Royal 18 A x certainly lend weight to the association of its text of *The Three Kings of Cologne* with well-connected female religious. It is a carefully produced parchment manuscript, with

initials worked in red, blue and silver, and with some ornamentation and rubrication – a book for someone of reasonable standing. Essentially it is an anthology catering for the spiritual concerns of women readers – probably still more specifically of women religious – containing a number of texts and extracts in English or simple Latin.³⁶ Some, such as ‘a good remedie ayens spiritual temptation’ addressed to a ‘dere sister’, are directly addressed to women; others are so addressed at one remove, as for example ‘A pistell of seynt Jerome ysende to a mayden’; some are specially adapted, such as a form of confession for a woman.³⁷ Its ‘personalized’ text of *The Three Kings* may of course have been copied from an exemplar, but the clarity and consistency with which the acrostic is signalled, together with the remaining contents of the manuscript, seem strong testimony to the possibility that the personalizing was carried out just for this copy. The dating of the manuscript to the first half of the fifteenth century allows for its association with a woman who by the 1430s and 1440s had become head of an important religious house, and indeed corresponds interestingly to the period of Shirley’s interest in *The Three Kings* and acrostics: Ashmole 59 was probably copied between 1447 and 1456.³⁸

The personalized translation does however seem to have reached other readers beyond what we might assume to be the primary audience – commissioners, readers, or just possibly compilers of MS Royal 18 A x – and in its transmission to have been caught up with texts of broader secular concern. In British Library MS Cotton Vespasian E xvi, where only vestiges of the acrostic survive, as if its existence was not recognized, or not felt to be significant, it accompanies the romance *Titus and Vespasian* (now fragmentary), and scientific treatises in Latin prose.³⁹ And in British Library MS Stowe 951, although amalgamated with William of Nassington’s *Speculum Vitae* (as read in the Franciscan house at Denny) it is also accompanied by the unique surviving copy of Quixley’s translation of Gower’s *Traittie pour essampler les amantz mariets* (‘Instructional treatise for married lovers’) a text which quite clearly addresses the needs of lay readers.⁴⁰ Rigid distinctions between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ books, appropriate for specific groups of readers, are largely out of place in the overlapping metropolitan networks in which the minoresses were caught up. Manuscripts of all sorts, and by the late fifteenth century printed books as well, seem to have been readily available. The striking bookishness of the community is nicely and perhaps poignantly suggested in a seal used by one of the last abbesses, Dorothy Cumberford, in which a female saint is represented with in one hand a pair of pincers and in the other a book.⁴¹

Associations and connections of the kinds I have traced here can no doubt be uncovered in relation to many different female communities, as indeed in relation to individual women: recent specific studies, such as those of the books at Syon, or

of Margaret Beaufort's reading, have a lot to tell us.⁴² What remains striking is the hiddenness of much of the evidence, even in connection with powerful women whose active lives of business and financial negotiation can sometimes be glimpsed in surviving records. I have tried in this discussion to indicate some of the kinds of evidence we might look to for information about women's reading: testamentary bequests, inscriptions in surviving manuscripts and printed books, connections of different sorts with documented book-owners; and to signal the existence of certain unusual interventions in the texts themselves, such as the acrostic in *The Three Kings of Cologne*. The interpretation of much of this evidence is complicated by problems common to all research into readership and reception, many of which are not in any sense gender-specific: did people read the books they owned, or which were the property of their family, household, or community? how complete a record of someone's reading are we likely to find in a will? how do different standards of literacy, or distinctions between literacy in Latin and in the vernacular, complicate the issues? – these are all matters which need to be taken into account in any discussion of medieval books in use. In researching the field of women's reading, though, the discrepancy between what was traditionally prescribed (and therefore most likely to be marked with signs of ownership), and what was actually available, through the multiple networks to which different women had access, constitutes a special complication.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

The following abbreviations are used:

IMEV: Carleton Brown and Russell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse*, New York 1943, and Russell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*, Lexington, Ky, 1965.

STC: *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland ... 1475-1640*, first compiled by A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, 2nd edn begun by W.A. Jackson and F.S. Ferguson, and completed by Katherine F. Pantzer, 3 vols, London 1976-91.

1. See, most recently, Carol M. Meale, *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, Cambridge 1993; Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor, *Women, the Book and the Godly*, Cambridge 1995; Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature*, Ithaca and London 1995. The current study has grown from work undertaken with Carol M. Meale for a chapter on 'The reading of gentlewomen' to be included in *A History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 3, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, Cambridge, forthcoming.
2. See A.I. Doyle, 'More Light on John Shirley', *Medium Aevum*, vol. 30 (1961), pp. 93-101; Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and miscellanies: production and choice of texts', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, Cambridge 1989, pp. 279-315; Jeremy Griffiths, 'A Newly Identified Manuscript Inscribed by John Shirley', *The Library*, 6th series, vol. 14 (1992), pp. 83-93.
3. Alice Lynne's history has been recovered by Mary Erler, 'Three Fifteenth-Century Vowesses', *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Anne F. Sutton, London 1994, pp. 165-83. I am indebted to Mary Erler and to Anne Sutton for information and suggestions about the biography of Beatrice Lynne.

4. On Cornburgh, see the not always reliable account in Josiah C. Wedgwood, *The History of Parliament: Biographies of Members of the Commons House, 1439-1509*, London 1936, pp. 223-24.
5. A.I. Doyle, 'English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII', in *English Court Culture in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne, London 1983, pp. 162-81 (at pp. 176-77). The manuscript is described in C. Dutschke et al., *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, 2 vols, San Marino 1989, vol. 1, pp. 35-39.
6. M.K. McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500*, Cambridge 1986, pp. 223-27; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 - c. 1580* New Haven and London 1992, p. 336. Cornburgh's will is edited in H.W. King, 'Ancient Wills (No. 5)', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, vol. 4 (1869), pp. 1-24.
7. IMEV 765; Douglas Gray, 'A Middle English Epitaph', *Notes and Queries*, no. 206 (1961), pp. 132-35.
8. MS 135, currently on deposit in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; see Margaret M. Manion, Vera F. Vines, and Christopher de Hamel, *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in New Zealand Collections*, London 1989, pp. 118-19.
9. London, Public Record Office, PROB 11/15, fol. 56r-v; see Erler, 'Vowesses', p. 170, n. 19.
10. Studies of the house and its order are David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales*, 2nd edn, London 1971; A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoreesses in England*, Manchester 1926; Edward Murray Tomlinson, *A History of the Minorities*, London, London 1907; *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: London*, vol. 1, ed. William Page, London 1909, pp. 516-19; W.E. Hampton, 'The Ladies of the Minorities', *The Ricardian*, vol. 4, no. 62, September, 1978, pp. 14-22; Martha Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire: St Botolph Aldgate*, Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 1987, typescript.
11. See Jennifer C. Ward, 'Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare (d. 1360)', and Helen Bradley, 'Lucia Visconti, Countess of Kent (d. 1424)', in Barron and Sutton, ed., *London Widows*, pp. 29-45, 77-84.
12. Carlin, *St Botolph Aldgate*, p. 68; the nature of the community is also investigated by Catherine Paxton, 'The Nunneries of London and its Environs in the Later Middle Ages', unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1992. I am grateful to Dr Caroline Barron for telling me of this thesis, and for much helpful information about London women religious and their books.
13. Bodleian Library MS Bodley 585; see *A Fifteenth-Century Courtesy Book and Two Franciscan Rules*, ed. Walter W. Seton, EETS os 148, London 1914.
14. Seton, ed., *Two Franciscan Rules*, p. 85.
15. N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd edn, London 1964, pp. 123, 278-79.
16. Described in N.R. Ker and A.J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4, Oxford 1992, pp. 201-3.
17. The *Pore Caitiff* MS has been untraced since the Meade Faulkner sale at Sotheby's, 12 December 1932, lot 387. The obits of Margaret Haseley and Katherine Bassyngburne are added to the calendar of the 'Cornwallis Hours', formerly Bristol, Baptist College MS Z. d. 38, and sold at Sotheby's on 17 December 1991, lot 66; see N.R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 2, London 1977, pp. 191-93. A psalter sold at Sotheby's on 18 June 1991, lot 77, and now in the Schyen collection, may also have associations with Aldgate.
18. See Montague Rhodes James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, 4 vols, Cambridge 1900-1904, vol. 1, pp. 415-16. Extracts from the text are in *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, ed. Barry Windeatt, Cambridge 1994, pp. 253-58.
19. The will of Elizabeth Wellys, proved in 1520 (Guildhall Library, Probate Register of the Commissary Court, MS 9171/9, fols 175-76), specifies that a book called a herbal be left to the common use of the sisters; see Paxton, 'The Nunneries of London', p. 106.

20. For Eleanor Bohun's will, which also includes books on secular subjects, see John Nichols, ed., *A Collection of All the Wills Now Known to be Extant of the Kings and Queens of England*, London 1780, pp. 177-86; Anne Neville-Stafford's will, summarized by Sir N.H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, London 1826, p. 357, is here quoted from PRO Prob 11/7, fols 14v-15v. For her wider literary interests, see A.I. Doyle, 'A Note on St John's College, Cambridge, MS. H. 5', in *Stephen Scrope: The Epistle of Othea*, ed. Curt F. Bühler, EETS, os 264, London 1970, pp. 125-27.
21. Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, pp. 14, 57, 135, and *Supplement to the Second Edition*, ed. Andrew G. Watson, London 1987, p. 15.
22. Hans Hoffmann, *Die Heiligen Drei Könige zur Heiligenverehrung im kirchischen, gesellschaftlichen und politischen Leben des Mittelalters*, Bonn 1975, and C. Horstmann, ed., *The Three Kings of Cologne. An Early English Translation of the 'Historia Trium Regum' by John of Hildesheim*, EETS, os 85, London 1886.
23. See T. Wright, ed., *The Chester Plays: A Collection of Mysteries Founded upon Scriptural Subjects*, Shakespeare Society, vols 17, 35, London, 1843, 1847, vol. 1, pp. 255, 266-304.
24. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 216.
25. Cameron Louis, ed., *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynys of Acle*, New York 1980, pp. 288 and 478.
26. For information on the Latin and English manuscripts I am indebted to Dr Frank Schaer, Dr Oliver Pickering, and Professor A.S.G. Edwards. The list of manuscripts of the 'standard' edition in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, vol. 2, ed. J.B. Severs, Hamden, Connecticut, 1970, p. 631 [277b], is significantly incomplete and inaccurate, but largely corrected by the details in *The Index of Printed Middle English Prose*, ed. R.E. Lewis, N.F. Blake and A.S.G. Edwards, New York 1985, pp. 100-101. San Marino, Huntington Library MS 114 should be deleted from the latter list, since the fragment in this manuscript is related to the 'non-standard' text in MS Lambeth 491, of which Dr Schaer is preparing an edition. The 'Whalley MS' of the list is a ghost; Whalley, in Lancashire, is the location of Stonyhurst College MS B. xxiii.
27. It appears with various of *The Canterbury Tales* in Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2006, and Stonyhurst College MS B. xxiii; with *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* in the Stonyhurst MS, and British Library MSS Harley 1704 and Addit. 36983; and with the *Brut* in Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 5. 43 and Cambridge, University Library MS Ee. iv. 32.
28. Eleanor Prescott Hammond, 'Ashmole 59 and Other Shirley Manuscripts', *Anglia*, vol. 30 (1907), pp. 320-48.
29. See F.N. Robinson, 'On Two Manuscripts of Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, vol. 5 (1896), pp. 177-220, and the description in L.E. Voigts, 'A Handlist of Middle English in Harvard Manuscripts', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. 33 (1985), pp. 17-22.
30. Chapters begin consecutively ABCD ... etc., concluding with some contraction signs, often used in acrostics to extend the alphabetical sequence.
31. M.A. Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, EETS, os 276, London 1977, pp. xxxiii-xxxvi.
32. Horstmann commented 'I cannot be brought to believe those 2 female names ... to be those of the first authors, as their names are obviously forced upon an earlier text; they must be either the compilers of this single version, or the dedicatees ... The text of MS. Royal has many additions ... For these reasons I cannot believe MS. Royal to contain the primitive text; it is rather to be regarded as a separate version, made after a first text' (p. vi). The only attempts known to me to identify the women are those of Dr A.I. Doyle, reported in Manzalaoui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum*, p. xxxv: 'Both names [are] associable with the S. Wales Border (Herefordshire etc.) at the beginning of the fifteenth century ... Shirley seems to have had connexions (and origins?) in the same region, but there is nothing to relate Roy. 18. A. x and its contents to him'.

33. Bourdillon, *Order of Minors*, p. 87, VCH, p. 519; R.R. Sharpe, *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting*, London, 1258-1688, 2 vols, London 1889-90, vol. 2, p. 495. The document in question, Corporation of London Record Office, Husting Roll 170 (49) is the 1441 testament of William Colston, *civis et plomer* (dealer in lead); for Colston see Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Ann Arbor, 1962) p. 380.
34. London, Public Record Office, LR 14/904.
35. Dr Doyle tells me circumspectly in correspondence that 'the location is very nice', provided that the dates fit. Further details of Margaret's history are hard to locate. Thomas Monington (1425-81), of Toddington, Glos., and Ledbury, lawyer and M.P. for Herefordshire, may have been some relation; see Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, pp. 600-601, and Dr Doyle's association of Margaret with this area, cited above in n. 32. I have had little success in identifying Maud Stranslea, beyond discovering that the birth of one 'Matilde Stranle' is noted in an addition to the calendar of the fourteenth-century 'Hours of Alice de Reydon', associated with the Suffolk Reymes family, and now Cambridge, University Library MS Dd. 4. 17; see P.R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts, c. 737-1600, in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols, Cambridge 1988, vol. 1, p. 23. Lucy Freeman Sandler notes a 'mendicant flavour' in the inclusion of Francis, Anthony, Dominic, Clare and Elizabeth in the litany of saints in this manuscript: see *Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, vol. 5: *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*, 2 vols, London 1986, vol. 1, pp. 75-76; vol. 2, illustrations 168-69, 171-72.
36. For a description, see Sir George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and Kings' Collections, in the British Museum*, 4 vols, London 1921, vol. 2, pp. 265-67.
37. Many of the contents are indexed in P.G. Jolliffe, *A Check-list of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance*, Toronto 1974.
38. Hammond, 'Ashmole 59'.
39. H.L.D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols, London 1883-1910, vol. 1, pp. 185-86.
40. Henry Noble MacCracken, 'Quixley's Ballades Royal (?1402)', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 20 (1908), 35-50. It is possible that this manuscript may be related to the volume listed in the will of Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstall, high sheriff of Buckinghamshire, who died in 1487, which is described as 'vnum librum de Gower cum tractatu trium Regum de Coleyn coopertum cum coreo albo'; it was left to his wife. For the will, see *The Boarstall Cartulary*, ed. H.E. Salter, Oxford Historical Society, vol. 88 (1930), pp. 286-95.
41. See VCH, p. 519; pincers were an attribute of Saints Agatha, Appollonia, and Charitina.
42. See John Martin Robinson, *Syon Abbey, with an essay by Christopher de Hamel on the Medieval Manuscripts of Syon Abbey and their dispersal*; preface by the Marquis of Salisbury, Roxburghe Club, London 1991; Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 171-201.