

Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature

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The role of miscellanies in the making of Middle English literature deserves some attention, for it is no coincidence that they preserve the bulk of Early Middle English verse, thus serving to increase dramatically the presence of English in the manuscript record between the middle of the thirteenth century and the middle of the fourteenth. Indeed, miscellanies containing English were trilingual until the end of this period, when the appearance of the nearly monolingual Auchinleck manuscript (Nat. Lib. Scot. MS Adv. 19.2.1) marks the appearance of a public whose literacy is essentially confined to English. It is the developments of the century or so preceding the Auchinleck MS, from the first appearance of miscellanies containing English, that I am concerned with here.¹ A ‘miscellany’, as the term is used here, is more than simply a repository for a variety of items, even if they are, for example, in a single hand. A miscellany has cohesion of some kind, which may either be external — directed towards some function — or internal, in which the relationship of texts with each other and the shaping of the whole are factors.²

Even in trilingual miscellanies that can be explained functionally, structural patterns appear that arise precisely from the combination of languages; and in those that are less obviously functional, language can be a factor not only in the choice of texts, but also in their organization, producing

¹ Where nothing is stated to the contrary, the manuscripts discussed here can be dated from a little after the middle of the thirteenth century to early in the fourteenth. The scholarship cited in connection with each manuscript includes discussion of the generally unsettled question of dating; to this may be added two articles by Neil Cartlidge: ‘The Date of *The Owl and the Nightingale*’, *Medium Ævum*, 65 (1996), 230–47, and ‘The Composition and Social Context of Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29(11) and London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.1X’, *Medium Ævum*, 66 (1997), 250–69.

² My use of the term ‘miscellany’ is similar to that of Marilyn Corrie, in ‘Harley 2253, Digby 86, and the Circulation of Literature in Pre-Chaucerian England’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of BL MS Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 427–43 (pp. 427–28, n. 2), rather than that of Theo Stemmler in the same volume (‘Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts: MS Harley 2253, for Example’, pp. 111–21). Stemmler (p. 113) uses ‘miscellany’ to mean a ‘somewhat arbitrary, casual collection of texts’, in contrast both to ‘a well-wrought book carefully made up of mutually corresponding parts’, and to an ‘anthology’, which for him is an intermediate possibility between these two extremes: ‘a careful collection selected as representative specimens of various genres’. Corrie, on the other hand, allows principles of arrangement in a ‘miscellany’. This seems closer to normal usage, and conveniently provides terms for compilations that exhibit such principles of arrangement as well as those that exhibit restrictive principles of selection (for which Corrie reserves ‘anthology’), provided — something perhaps implicit in Corrie’s discussion — a ‘miscellany’ is assumed to have a degree of cohesion, unlike, for example, a commonplace-book.

contrasts, connections, and groupings. The salience of language is connected to the exceptionality of written English at the time: if an English text enters a manuscript at all, it is likely to contain texts in the more commonly written languages. Scholarship has tended to account for the generic mix of the English-bearing miscellanies by attributing them to mixed and marginal milieux, such as those of friars, canons, and household chaplains; whether or not such attributions are correct, much about them can be explained by the position of written English, finding a place in a polyglot context. This requires a degree of confidence and experience in handling it at the centres concerned; and evolution out of subordination to French and Latin, to something quite other than simple interchangeability.

One kind of stimulus that the trilingual environment could give to the formation and arrangement of a miscellany is best illustrated by Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.39 (hereafter T). This is a collection of 140 items, produced, on the evidence of paleography, codicology, and dialect, by a dozen scribes working to some extent independently.³ Yet its contents are more clearly unified than most of the Early Middle English miscellanies, for the majority of the texts are clearly religious, the remainder being gnomic items susceptible of homiletic use. John Frankis has challenged Reichl's categorization of it as a preaching book,⁴ and it is more convincing to see it as combining items to be used by clerics in teaching the laity with items to be read by the clerics themselves.

T is multilingual in two ways: it contains seventy-seven items in Latin (many of them brief *sententiae*), ten in French, and twenty-six in English; but it also contains a further twenty-seven that mix languages, the great majority of these being pairs of texts that are equivalent in meaning but differ in language. This relationship is in every case signalled by juxtaposition. The mixed-language items consisting of translation-pairs are as follows:

Latin followed by English 2, 3, 13, 36, 37, 42, 43, 46, 48, 64, 77, 78, 88, 90,
91, 125, 127, 128
French followed by English 7
Latin followed by French 85, 99

The natural assumption is that one of each pair is, at least in part, a translation of the other.⁵ The completely consistent order of the languages implies a hierarchy — Latin, French, English — and a significant distinction between the two vernaculars. The disproportion between the number of Latin texts with French versions attached (two) and the number with English

³ A partial edition and detailed description and analysis are given in Karl Reichl, *Religiöse Dichtung im englischen Hochmittelalter* (München: Fink, 1973). All texts in T are referred to by Reichl's numbers.

⁴ 'The Social Context of Vernacular Writing in Thirteenth Century England: The Evidence of the Manuscripts', in *Thirteenth Century England I*, ed. by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), pp. 175–84 (p. 182).

⁵ The list includes cases where the English gives an equivalent for the Latin, but with considerable expansion or augmentation.

versions attached (eighteen) is marked. Yet T as a whole contains a good deal of French. It seems that whatever function the appended vernacular translations had was better performed by English than French. The two cases where a French translation is given clarify the point. In item 85 the French is cited as the *ipsissima verba* of St Edmund (Rich), though it is interesting that even in this case where the vernacular might appear to be the original and authoritative version, the hierarchy of languages prevails, and the Latin is given first. There is no such obvious explanation for other cases, the Sequence for Pentecost, ‘Veni Sancte Spiritus’ (99), but it is the manuscript’s only translation in that highly marked linguistic register, the liturgical, which often prefers something other than everyday vernacular language. Where there are no such special conditions, the manuscript’s translations are in English. This suggests that the segment of T’s public unfamiliar with Latin was at ease in English rather than French.

The primacy of Latin in the hierarchy of languages, in addition to its quantitative predominance in the collection, suggests that in this milieu it was the preferred language for writing. English, I would argue, is present because it is the preferred language for oral delivery. One kind of evidence for this is the nature of T’s English, for there are signs that the scribes (from four to six of them) that copied its English texts were unused to writing the language. At the foot of the first page of its *Proverbs of Alfred* the following list of characters occurs:

īye	w	ant	iyorn
ȝ.	ƿ.	ȝ.	þ.

This is an aid to dealing with the exotic written English of the exemplar or the present text. Further, Reichl (pp. 16–36) finds notable oddities in the orthography, for which he blames ‘Anglo-Norman scribes’, a line of explanation firmly dismissed by Cecily Clark;⁶ rather, the point is that the scribes, regardless of their — presumably English — ethnicity, when writing English are driven to use an orthography with shallow and partly non-English roots.

Significant here is the genre of the items that do have English versions attached. The majority (13, 36, 37, 42, 43, 64, 77, 78, 88, 90 and 91) are *sententiae*, which seem to call for a homiletic frame. There are two *exempla* (2 and 3). Item 48 is a version of the Ten Commandments. Items 7 (from French) and 46 are verse prayers, while item 125 is the verse translation of a meditation. Item 128 lists eight of the Patriarchs, making each the representative of a virtue. It seems most likely that the purpose of providing the English translations was the instruction of the laity or less educated religious. (Similarly, *The Three Kings*, the one text in this manuscript that was

⁶ ‘The Myth of “the Anglo-Norman Scribe”’, in *History of Englishes: New Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Matti Rissanen, Ossi Ihalainen, Terttu Nevalainen and Irma Taavitsainen, Topics in English Linguistics, 10 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 117–29.

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certainly composed ad hoc, as a partial draft is found in the margins, adopts the manner of a popular homily: ‘Wolle ye iheren of twelte day, wou þe present was ibroust’.)

Since most of the bilingual texts are homiletic, it appears that preachers most accustomed to reading and writing in Latin were encountering congregations little able to understand it, and more conversant with English than French, though the authority of an authentic text must have played a part in the citation in Latin as well as the vernacular of the Ten Commandments, the ‘Veni Sancte Spiritus’, and two pieces attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, items 91 and 125. Though the matter has been much debated, there are good reasons for believing that sermons noted in Latin might be delivered in a vernacular language.⁷ Why, then, were written vernacular versions added in T? The vernacular member of all but one of the translation-pairs (43, 64, 77, 78, 91, 125, 128) is in verse. The use made of the vernacular versions would seem to have called for the mnemonic and oral qualities of verse, which could hardly be produced impromptu.⁸ The written vernacular has lost a status it retained at least until the copying of the Wintene manuscript of the Benedictine Rule (BL MS Cotton Claudius D.iii) at the beginning of the thirteenth century;⁹ that manuscript gives an authoritative Latin text, and adds the English as an aid to understanding. But in T, the language of the original is also more familiar, in its written form at least; the exotic thing is the written vernacular, a middle term between the (Latin) written word and the spoken vernacular. The presentation of Latin-based piety and doctrine in orally-delivered verse should accordingly be seen as playing an important part in the re-development of written English in a milieu like that of T.¹⁰ Essentially the same relationship between vernacular and Latin is indicated by the presentation of the ‘Bele Alis’ sermon (68): this secular lyric is given in full at the start, while in the sermon that follows, the relevant phrase is quoted in French before its allegorization in Latin. These quotations are highlighted by colour and

⁷ D. L. d’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 90–95, gives a recent survey of the topic, pointing out that written records of friar sermons with an apparently popular destination are overwhelmingly in Latin, not the vernacular.

⁸ This is corroborated by the form in which T reproduces Robert of Gretham’s *Miroir*, also known as *Les Evangiles des Données* (item 101). The *Miroir* consists of translations and expositions of the Sunday Gospel readings in French verse, including a number of *exempla*. T gives only the *exempla*. Linda Marshall and W. Rothwell argue that the resultant should not be seen as a small non-homiletic *exemplum*-collection, for the order of the *exempla* is liturgical, and each is preceded by the opening words of the corresponding sermon in Latin (‘The *Miroir* of Robert of Gretham’, *Medium Ævum*, 39 (1970), 313–21). Thus Robert’s verse framework has been discarded in T or an ancestral manuscript; the user of T is expected to be able to supply the framework (in prose, no doubt), but the versified vernacular *exempla* are provided. See further Reichl, pp. 454–56.

⁹ See Frankis, p. 178, and Mechthild Gretsch, ‘Die Wintene-Version der *Regula Sancti Benedicti*: Eine frühmittelenglische Bearbeitung der altenglischen Prosaübersetzung der Benediktinerregel’, *Anglia*, 96 (1978), 310–48.

¹⁰ Siegfried Wenzel discusses English verses within Latin sermons in *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); see especially p. 86.

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underlining, rather like the *lemmata* in a commentary. It is the vernacular that is ‘marked’, in both the visual and the linguistic senses.

Such juxtapositions of languages were not necessarily driven by a need to furnish a translation. Item 126 appears to juxtapose a Latin text and English verses in exactly the same way as item 125. But although the two are similar in subject, Reichl has observed (p. 90) that the English translates, not this Latin text, but another one that was circulating in the same period. This suggests that in some cases at least the primary aim was not the provision of an actual translation but the validating of a vernacular text with a Latin one. There are other juxtapositions of languages that seem to have such a function. In items 17, 79, and 101, a Latin quotation precedes each section of homiletic material in English or French, and in item 16, an English poem incorporates Latin quotations. (Nevertheless, there are macaronic texts, 8, 9, and 114, which produce a single artistic whole from two languages, assuming a public that knows both.)¹¹

T seems, then, to have been produced, as it were, at the interface between languages. In such a milieu it is possible that translations were actually being produced ad hoc, rather than collected as their originals were. Reichl (p. 98) thinks that item 46 may have been, noting that in two places the English follows closely the preceding Latin text, even though this Latin has errors that give bad syntax in one place and inferior sense in another; he adds that the scribe concerned seems to have composed other texts in the manuscript. *The Three Kings* certainly was produced ad hoc, as observed above. Moreover, there are signs that the milieu of T was one in which vernacular texts were being reworked to meet new needs. *Doomsday* and *The Last Day* have been combined ‘rather ingeniously’, as Carleton Brown observes, into a single poem, which Homer G. Pfander observes is more like a complete sermon than the two poems separate, the shorter *Doomsday* making a Prothema and *The Last Day* the body of the sermon.¹² Interestingly, similar substantial reworking in order to produce homiletic material can be traced in four of T’s five substantial French texts.¹³

The elements of adaptation, translation, and new composition indicate that its makers faced a need for preaching material that the available sources could not fully satisfy, stimulated in part by the Fourth Lateran Council. If T

¹¹ Item 135, ‘Zus [*sic*] nothus, est eurus, zephirus veet [*sic*], flat boreas nort.’, seems to be lexicographical in purpose.

¹² Carleton Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 187; Homer G. Pfander, ‘The Mediaeval Friars and Some Alphabetical Reference-books for Sermons’, *Medium Aevum*, 3 (1934), 19–29 (p. 29).

¹³ Thus, the original of *Ezechiel* (item 100) is a set of prognostications, but in T all but the edifying prologue has been omitted (Reichl, p. 453). Homileticization seems to be the effect of the long prologue T adds to *Seignurs plaist vus escuter* (105). But most remarkable is what happens to *Ragemon le bon*: as found in Bodleian MS Digby 86 and elsewhere, this is a kind of fortune-telling game, which T has managed, rather strenuously, to convert into two verse sermons (102 and 122). Robert of Gretham’s *Miroir*, as shown in note 8 above, has been converted from one kind of homiletic resource into another. In this context it is not surprising to find the *Bele Alis* sermon, another drastic reworking of material to produce a homily.

belongs to the second half of the thirteenth century, there might seem to be a time gap; but it is interesting that Leonard E. Boyle finds that the second wave of penitential pastoralia, flowing from the Fourth Lateran Council and more directly concerned with the penitent and his education than with the confessor, ‘in its vernacular aspect [. . .] does not appear to have had much momentum before about 1260’.¹⁴ In T, language is a problem. English occurs at all only in a narrowly definable range of texts, and even there is frequently attached in some way to Latin. The need for a particular language (English) outruns the competence and resources of the compilers; hence the creation of texts, and the juxtaposition (and perhaps creation) of translations.

With more than three-quarters of T’s English texts found nowhere else and at least one of them home-made, the written sources it drew upon are obscure. There are two links to the only antecedent lineage of compilations in English, late Anglo-Saxon homiletic collections such as London, Lambeth Palace MS 487, which like T contains *The Proverbs of Alfred*, and Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.52, which contains *Poema morale*. These early-thirteenth-century collections invite comparison with T by the inclusion of a few items of religious verse in English, but they belong to another, dying cultural world, for in them English still has sufficient status to be the primary language of a manuscript, with some Latin and no French; and the prose homilies soon cease to be copied.

By the second half of the thirteenth century, such English compilations are no longer being made, and most of the surviving collections in which it has an important role are in the nature of sermon notebooks, too loosely compiled to exhibit the significant interaction between languages found in T. For example, Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.1.45 contains sermons in French, English, and Latin, as well as some verses in English, and the well-known *Atte wrastlinge* sermon usefully shows how such verses might be used homiletically.¹⁵ Maidstone, Town Museum MS A.13, a ‘closely written mass of sermons and pieces useful to a preacher’,¹⁶ most of it in Latin, includes also about a dozen pieces of vernacular verse — notably, a quotation from *Poema morale* and a copy of *The Proverbs of Alfred* with a list of Saxon letters like that found in T, suggesting a similar unfamiliarity with the writing of English. Also essentially a sermon notebook is BL MS Additional 46919, unlike the previous two in the predominance of French, most of the Latin consisting of the sermons by William Herebert, who assembled the

¹⁴ ‘The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology’, in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature, 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 30–43 (p. 35). One might also note that according to d’Avray (pp. 67–68) the earliest surviving ‘purpose-built’ *exemplum* collection may have been made as late as 1261.

¹⁵ E. J. Dobson, in *The English Text of the Ancrone Rivole Edited from B. M. Cotton MS. Cleopatra C. vi*, EETS OS 267 (1972), cxliii–cxlvii, examines the work of this scribe, who also corrected the Cleopatra manuscript of *Ancrone Wisse*.

¹⁶ N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries III: Lampeter-Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 317.

manuscript from various sources.¹⁷ Most of the English, too, is Herebert's own composition, in the poems that are largely translated from Latin sources. (Two, however, are made from French originals, which are found in the manuscript, though not adjacent to the translations.)

On the other side, there are compilations dominated by a single language. Two collections for devout women, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McLean 123 and BL MS Egerton 613, have French as their preferred language, with a handful of English poems in no obviously significant arrangement. In Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 2, even French is peripheral, for this is essentially a scholarly Latin compilation with a few religious poems in French and English. Other genuine trilingual miscellanies are found, but they are even more remarkable collections than T, for they lack its evident external purpose, and in some cases show signs of an internal rationale in which contrasts of language play a part.

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86 (hereafter D) is best known for its array of English texts, particularly the secular ones, though it is a more complicated case, structurally as well as linguistically. As Latin and French items usually have headings in their own language, while English items regularly have titles in French, effectively French is the matrix language, Latin having a superordinate but figurehead status. One notes the appearance in D's Latin of forms that suggest French habits of pronunciation or spelling, such as *sauntam*, *fuerount*, and *omnioun* (for *omnium*).

D on inspection appears to fall into five sections: the first (items 1–26) consists of religious and practical pieces mostly in French, with some in Latin; the second (27–39) is of poems in French, mostly secular, all narratives or labelled as such by the compiler; the third (40–52) is of poems in English, narrative, didactic, and religious; the fourth (53–74) has the same generic range as the preceding, but contains poems in French, English and Latin; the last (75–81) contains prayers, practical information, and didactic texts, in Latin.¹⁸ The outer sections, the first and the last, are similar in content, and so are the inner sections, the third and fourth sections respectively constituting English and multilingual counterparts of the second.

The codicological and paleographic evidence as analysed by Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes (pp. xli–xlvii) fills out the picture, for they find that the present order of the gatherings represents the compiler's final intention, though not the order in which he wrote the sections. They argue that he starts with two discrete but complementary collections. The first was

¹⁷ See Stephen R. Reimer, *The Works of William Herebert, OFM*, Studies and Texts, 81 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1987), 8–20.

¹⁸ The item numbers are those of Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes, *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, EETS SS 16 (1996). A somewhat similar analysis is proposed by C. N. Meier-Ewert, 'A Study and a Partial Edition of the Bodleian Manuscript Digby 86' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1971), p. 7, though it includes items that Parkes and Tschann have identified as additions by the first scribe. Reichl (pp. 74–78) offers a simpler segmentation in which the primary break lies after item 39, the principal difference between the sections being the predominance of French in the first and the importance of English in the second.

the sequence of 'prose texts with practical application' that now opens the collection, which subsequent additions extended to the first part of item 20. The second original section ran from item 35 to 81. Within this section, item 59, *Dame Sirih*, appears on an anomalous four-leaf quire with parchment of a different size, on which *The Names of a Hare* (60) was subsequently appended. The rest of the section (items 61–81) was envisaged as an 'annexe', ruled in long lines for verse texts in appropriate measures, and subsequently for prose texts. Afterwards, the central section, from the latter part of item 20 to the end of item 34, was added as a bridge between the two original collections. Finally the original compiler inserted quire signatures that confirm the present order of gatherings (as well as adding various items in blank spaces and on two singleton leaves at the end).

The present arrangement of D, then, is original. But it is a product of the processes of book-making as much as of generic organization. The separation of religious and practical prose from narrative and lyric verse is, in Tschann and Parkes's view, authentic; and within the long-line annexe the practical and didactic texts have been separated out. The French second section was formed in two stages, as an original cluster was prefaced by further such texts. Their analysis also explains the English texts that are not in the third section: *Dame Sirih* most likely came from a separate source; whereas the three poems of item 68 were placed in the long-line annexe because of their fourteeners. This suggests that several sources have been drawn upon for the English texts at least, and that the arrangement of the extant manuscript is primarily one that the compiler chose, rather than reproduced.

Tschann and Parkes argue persuasively that this compiler 'was also the earliest owner of the book' (p. lvii). However, their further conclusion, that he made the book for his own use, can be refined upon. The original division into generically and linguistically different sections and the concentration of Latin prose in the outer sections suggest a range of functions, the compiler working partly with his own interests in view, and partly those of an establishment to which he was attached. Within such a milieu, the compiler combined wide interests and a sense of codicological propriety to produce a collection that manages to be both orderly and 'extravagantly heterogeneous',¹⁹ contrasting text-types within the same language and placing in parallel similar text-types in different languages. For example, the multilingual fourth section opens, as Tschann and Parkes observe (p. xlv), with a pair of texts comparable in content but contrasting in language, the *Proverbs of Hendyng* (52) and *Les proverbes del vilain* (53); and it continues with another such coupling: an English poem headed 'Chancun del secle' (57) and a Latin one headed 'Hic demonstrat veritatem seculi isti' (58). The sequence that ends this section reinforces the impression of sensitivity to language. The last English text, beginning 'Loue is sofft loue is swet loue is goed sware' (69), is

¹⁹ Frankis, p. 183.

followed by a French poem beginning ‘Couuard est ki amer ne ose vilein ki ne veut amer’(70), another pairing of thematically related texts in different languages. Next comes a French prayer and Latin verses on the four humours. These are followed by the heading ‘Welcome ki ke bringe ki ne bringe farewel’, preceding these lines:²⁰

Intus quis tu quis ego sum quid queris vt intrem
Fers aliquid non esto foras fero quid satis intra.

This piece of trilingual macaronic linguistic play ends the multilingual section, and the rest of the original collection is in Latin. It may be that the operation of bringing together sources in different languages suggested to the compiler the potentiality of such juxtapositions, which are one manifestation of the generally interventionist approach of the D compiler: Marilyn Corrie highlights the extent of his rearrangement and reworkings, arguing that Tschann and Parkes have overemphasized the influence of source and subject-matter on the shape of the compilation, at the expense of considerations of form, and raises ‘the possibility that the compiler [. . .] was sensitive to the languages in which his texts were written, and ordered many of them accordingly’.²¹

Remarkable though it may be for both individual texts and its overall makeup, D is not completely isolated, for it has repeatedly been linked with BL MS Harley 2253 (hereafter H), on the grounds of the number of texts they share; further, it has been called the ‘prototype of the Harley compilation’,²² implying that it exerted its influence less as an exemplar than as a compilatory model, and this is more likely, for in none of the eight cases where they have what is in some sense the same text are D and H textually close.²³ To speak of ‘prototype’ implies resemblances in organization, and in organization H is remarkable. In Revard’s view, ‘Harley 2253 is selectively and dialectically compiled as an anthology, with not only a deliberately wide variety of forms, genres, viewpoints, and themes, but also with a deliberate placement of its pieces in mutually illuminating relationships. In effect [. . .] it is thus like the *Canterbury Tales* or the *Disciplina Clericalis*’.²⁴ In comparing

²⁰ I am indebted to Juris Lidaka (personal communication) for the observation that ‘Welcome ki . . .’ is a heading. (Parkes and Tschann list it as a separate item.) The observation is also implicit in the table of contents appended to the discussion of D in his article ‘Sacred and Secular Eloquence and the Middle English Poetical Works in Bodleian MS Digby 86’, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 105 (1991), 330–59. I thank Dr Lidaka for sending me a copy of this article as well as an unpublished conference paper on D; these two discussions anticipate some of the observations in Tschann and Parkes.

²¹ ‘The Compilation of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86’, *Medium Ævum*, 66 (1997), 236–49 (p. 239).

²² E. J. Hathaway, P. T. Ricketts, C. A. Robson, and A. D. Wilshere, *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ANTS 26–28 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), p. xliii. The accumulated evidence, as marshalled by Carter Revard, indicates that H was made in the 1330s and (earlier?) 1340s. See ‘Scribe and Provenance’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, pp. 21–109 (pp. 23, 57, 73).

²³ An early proponent of this view was Brown (pp. xxxvii–xxxviii). Corrie, ‘Harley 2253’, pp. 439–41, and Scahill, ‘The Friars’ Miscellanies’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 1990), pp. 175–77, find that the two manuscripts are textually somewhat remote in all their shared items.

²⁴ ‘*Gilote et Johane*: An Interlude in B.L. MS. Harley 2253’, *Studies in Philology*, 79 (1982), 122–46 (p. 138).

the whole manuscript to such works, Revard indicates that the inclusion of a given item may be explained not by any external function, but by its relationship to other items, something that exists on two levels: local, in the juxtaposition of texts that have some relationship of similarity and difference (metrically similar poems of profane and sacred love, for example); and global, in the *miroir*-like completeness of the whole. For example, he argues for a connection in H between *Gilote et Johane* (which he sees as an interlude) and *The Harrowing of Hell*, which is actually marked for recitation with marginal initials and names, viewing them as a contrasting pair of dramatic pieces, one sacred, one profane.

On the global level, the structure of H is in some measure a product of its formation, for it started with existing quires of religious narratives (fols 1–48), all in French.²⁵ After two brief items of Latin religious prose in the main hand, there follow seventy-three folios containing the French and English verse for which the book is best known, including some noteworthy clusterings: lyrics in folios 61–67 and 71–81, and fabliau-like narratives in folios 107–24, and it concludes with some dozen folios of French and Latin, nearly all prose, including a second block of religious narratives at the end (fols 131–40).²⁶ Some sense of linguistic decorum is at work, but it suggests no secondary status for English; indeed, the compiler mixes French and English verse without apparent distinction of language. Revard makes a suggestive comparison of H with MS Harley 978: ‘The mixture in this manuscript is very like that in Harley 2253, as though different compilers had worked on the same selective principles: some romances, some hymns, secular lyrics, satires, political poetry, didactic verse, and popular songs, with evidence that the compilers saw secular lyrics and sacred poetry as related rather than merely thrown together.’²⁷ The crucial difference is that MS Harley 978 is almost all in Latin, while some seventy years later English can be given an equal place in such a collection, at least by an exceptional anthologist.

The interrelationship of the languages can be seen to change in tandem with growing compilatory flair during the career of the Harley anthologist. The first collection he is known to have been involved in, BL MS Harley 273, is a devotional and ascetic collection for lay, perhaps female, use.²⁸ It is

²⁵ Although this opening section is in another hand, there are two reasons for including it when examining the shape of the collection as a whole: in R the incorporated booklets are central to such organization as there is, and the main scribe of H seems to have added titles to the articles in this existing opening section (*Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, ed. by N. R. Ker, EETS OS 255 (1965), p. xviii).

²⁶ Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 198–99, gives a similar analysis, focusing on the interweaving of the vernaculars. Stemmler, pp. 113–20, stresses the element of merely associative groupings and local haphazardness in the arrangement of H, but nevertheless sees the compilation as an ‘anthology’ (see n. 2 above). As Revard’s claim appears to be that relationships between texts determine some, not all, of the inclusions and placements, the difference between their views is not as great as may first appear.

²⁷ Revard, ‘*Gilote et Johane*’, p. 128, n. 11.

²⁸ Most recently described by Revard, ‘Scribe and Provenance’, pp. 67–69.

predominantly in French, with some Latin and no English. He played a greater part in the formation of BL MS Royal 12 C.xii, which ‘is full of serious, semi-scientific interests, schoolroom history, and devotion to the Church’.²⁹ (Ker judges from the script that his work on MS Royal 12 C.xii was generally earlier than his work on H.) To existing booklets in French and Latin he added a variety of pieces, a minority of them in English, but there is no sense in which the Royal collection is organized as a whole. Its apparent development by accretion accounts satisfactorily for its present state; the only pattern seems to be that each of the (highly heterogeneous) existing booklets incorporated by the compiler was prefaced with generically similar material.³⁰

Whether D in fact influenced H is uncertain; the similar milieu of compilers who worked in nearby locations and seem both to have been clerics in partly secular environments may be sufficient to explain the similarities of their collections. Both are trilingual and strikingly wide-ranging in genre and interests. Both combine the secular and the religious, the serious and the entertaining, and are notable for the inclusion of the large numbers of lyrics and secular narratives. The evident differences are that in H, Latin is a little more narrowly restricted to didactic prose, and that the subordination of English to French found in D is no longer obvious; indeed, its ‘Thomas of Erceldoune’ is the only substantial work in English prose (of a stylized kind, and following an introduction in French) in a trilingual miscellany. Beyond this, the greater cohesiveness of the Harley anthology should be linked to the higher frequency of pointed juxtapositions and contrasts of texts, which in D might merely be accidental side-effects of the process of compilation. No merely functional explanation will account for D, but the more coherent internal rationale of H, and not simply the inclusion of individual non-functional items, takes us more clearly into the realm of what J. A. Burrow terms the ‘non-pragmatic’.³¹

These three collections, T, D, and H, have in fact been linked in the scholarship as ‘friars’ miscellanies’. This label is unjustified, and the foregoing discussion has highlighted the differences in genre and handling of language between T and the other two.³² The affinities in use of languages of two further miscellanies frequently linked with these deserve investigation.

BL MS Cotton Caligula A.ix (hereafter C) and Oxford, Jesus College MS 29 (hereafter J) both contain *The Owl and the Nightingale*, three French poems attributed to a Chardri — *La vie de Set Dormanz*, *La vie de Seint Iosaphaz*, and *Le*

²⁹ Hathaway, Ricketts, and others, p. xlv. On this manuscript, see further Ker, *Harley 2253*, pp. xx–xxi.

³⁰ In their discussion of its development, Hathaway and others (pp. xxxvii–lii) make this observation about the booklets containing the *Miroir de sainte église* and *Liber experimentarius*; and a parallel relationship can be seen between *Ami et Amile* and the two histories placed before it, *Fouke le fitz Waryn* and the *Short English Metrical Chronicle*.

³¹ *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature and its Background 1100–1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 13.

³² The difficulties (above all, a serious shortage of evidence) are outlined by Frankis, and by Scahill, pp. 12–33.

petit plet — and some short religious poems in English. C adds Lazamon's *Brut* and a short French prose chronicle, *Li rei de Engleterre*. J's additions are further English religious poems, the *Proverbs of Alfred* and *The Shires and Hundreds of England*, which is followed by its one Latin work, the *Assisa panis Anglie*, followed in turn by a French version of the story of Tobias, *Les vnze peynes de enfern* in French and English, and *Le doctrial Sauvage* (a French poem about manners and conduct); and the collection ends with the three Chardri poems.

The presence of some unequivocally secular works aligns these two miscellanies with D rather than T. In their handling of language they differ on some points from both. Negatively, there are no translation-pairs, and little to suggest a subordinate status for any of the three languages, beyond a tendency to give French or Latin headings to English works, and some Latin marginal notes in Lazamon's *Brut*. In proportions, French predominates in J, constituting some fifty-five per cent of the whole, though in C the weighting is reversed by the inclusion of Lazamon's massive *Brut*. It is of interest that the common ancestor of C and J, reconstructable not just because of the shared items, but also because of their textual closeness in those items,³³ seems to have been about seventy-five per cent in French, due to the presence of Chardri's three substantial poems.

Looking at organization, one notices J's sense of compilatory decorum in separating its English, Latin, and French texts into three neat blocks, with the one, brief Latin item, *Assisa panis Anglie* in the middle, and putting the macaronic *Les vnze peynes de enfern* among the French: as if the higher-status language determines the placing. C opens with the *Brut*, followed by two of the Chardri poems, its other French text, *Li rei de Engleterre*, then the remaining English texts, and finally the third Chardri poem. This is less neat than J, but also shows a pattern of arrangement by language, particularly if it is borne in mind that the *Brut* is somewhat separate, paleographically and codicologically.³⁴ The non-original status of J's order may be suggested by the very tidiness with which it has put all its French items together at the end. On the other hand, the relative order of the Chardri poems in the only other recorded witness to two of them, the lost Titchfield MS Q.III, is the same as in J.³⁵

In C and J, then, the three languages co-exist, though with relegation of Latin to a figurehead status — paramount but little used, except in one, authoritative, legal text. As compilations, they show some tendency towards

³³ Scahill reconstructs some aspects of the common ancestor in detail (pp. 34–81).

³⁴ There is no sign that C has been rearranged (though Sir Robert Cotton often rebound and reassembled his manuscripts), and in *The Owl and the Nightingale: Facsimile of the Jesus and Cotton Manuscripts*, EETS OS 251 (1963), p. xx, N. R. Ker points out that 'the rust mark made by the nail to which the strap of the medieval binding was attached [...] shows that [*Le petit plet*] has been the last item in the manuscript for a long time'.

³⁵ On the Titchfield MS, see David N. Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratensians*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 3 (London: British Library, 1992), 248–49.

a simple separation of texts by language. Linguistic contrasts of the kind found in D and H are not in evidence, though it is notable that two wide-ranging debate poems, *Le petit plet* and *The Owl and the Nightingale*, have met in a milieu with two written vernaculars, and that C's additions, the *Brut* and *Li rei de Engleterre*, are both histories of England, though very different in length and treatment. Such pairings may have suggested possibilities to subsequent compilers, but here are likely to be fortuitous. That the vernaculars were not perfectly equivalent is indicated by the discrepancy between J's English and French additions: on the one side principally religious lyrics, on the other *Le doctrinal Sauvage*, and the narrative *Toby*, whose closest affinities are with Chardri's *Seint Iosaphaz* and *Set Dormanz*.

That the use of languages in C and J, though less heavily patterned than in D and less pressured than in T, arises from specific historical developments is suggested by a comparison with the one slightly earlier trilingual collection. The East Anglian BL MS Arundel 292 is dated to the middle of the thirteenth century. In its original form, it seems to have consisted of a quire of English prayers and the *Bestiary* for which the manuscript is best known, followed by three quires consisting of Latin animal fables, French verse-sermons, and the *Bele Alis* sermon found also in T (in Latin, with quotations from the French poem), and then ten quires predominantly in Latin and consisting of *Apollonius of Tyre*, *Prophecies of Merlin*, *De purgatorio sancti Patricii*, *De compositione chilindri*, *De compositione quadrantis*, *Tractatus brevis de sortibus*, as well as Everard's *Cato* in French.³⁶ The consistency of script and layout suggests that the sections belonged together from the start. This compilation is as diverse in contents and as orderly in organization as C and J, and like them deserves the description miscellany rather than commonplace book. (Indeed, its plain, smallish textura is reminiscent of the scripts of C.) This miscellany is also trilingual, not exclusively religious, and shows some sense of linguistic decorum in its organization, which produces the interesting juxtaposition of the English *Bestiary* and Odo's animal fables. However, its primary language is Latin.³⁷ Corresponding to this is a more scholarly *ordinatio*: some texts, notably the English *Bestiary*, *De quatre sorurs*, and *De purgatorio sancti Patricii*, are supplied with internal rubrics or marginal signs indicating important points and divisions. In the Arundel manuscript the vernaculars are less important than in C, J, or T, agreeing with the signs of a more educational, less pastoral

³⁶ There is no detailed account of the manuscript in print, and this account is based on personal inspection, supplemented by the British Museum printed catalogue of 1834 and Reichl, pp. 79–81. An early table of contents indicates that there was once a *De rege & ioculatore* in the second block of three quires. This was presumably a version — in French — of a widely-circulating tale, also found in H as *Le roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ély*. Although it has been called a fabliau, Mary Dove, in 'A Study of Some of the Lesser-Known Poems of British Museum Manuscript Harley 2253' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1969) regards it as having affinities with *fatrasie* and books of courtesy (p. 109).

³⁷ J. P. Gumbert and P. M. Vermeer, in 'An Unusual *yogh* in the *Bestiary* Manuscript — A Paleographical Note', *Medium Ævum*, 40 (1971), 56–57, argue that some unusual features in the script of this manuscript are the result of an attempt 'to lessen the graphemic distance between vernacular and Latin script', thus assimilating written English to the dominant Latin model.

milieu, though its earlier date and origins away from the South-West Midlands may also have limited the availability of English texts.

There is only one other trilingual compilation from our period, BL MS Harley 913, set apart from the others by its Irish origins. For the Anglo-Irish, in Thorlac Turville-Petre's view, Latin 'was an escape-route over the wall that enclosed their constricted and exiled community', while 'English and French [were] united as vernacular languages in the common exclusion of Irish' (p. 163).³⁸ Be that as it may, it contains only two French texts, in contrast to eighteen in English. There is more Latin than English, though not overwhelmingly so, and there is a Latin translation of the English lyric 'Lollai, lollai lilil child' (Turville-Petre, p. 173), but the two would seem never to have been adjacent or even in the same booklet. As Angela M. Lucas and Peter J. Lucas have reconstructed the original shape of this since dismembered and rearranged collection, the more substantial of the French works, *The Entrenchment of New Ross*, originally occupied a booklet of its own, but they argue that the structure is the product of its growth by accretion, despite being largely in a single hand, with separate booklets connected with Kildare, New Ross, and Waterford.³⁹ The compiler has been content to leave his materials in the shape that a series of external events placed them in. Generically, then, its diversity is comparable to that of C, J, and even D, but the differences highlight necessary conditions for the formation of such miscellanies: despite being the work of a single scribe, it lacks unity, even codicologically,⁴⁰ and one language, French, is of too little importance to provide much compilatory stimulus.

There has been much discussion of the environments that produced the miscellanies, some aspects of which are clearly established, some conjectured, some entirely mysterious. No doubt external events have done much to form them, not least a locally higher status for written English, for the origin of most of them in the South-West Midlands can hardly be an accident. Indeed, a major precondition must have been the confident handling of written English in the region, to which the endeavours of makers of collections such as T contributed. But it has seemed worthwhile here to focus on internal aspects, for the importance in literary history of manuscripts that are both trilingual and miscellanies is striking. Even in T, the number of paired items differing in language is a significant structural element in the compilation, and in the organization of other miscellanies the language of both blocks of texts and individual texts is relevant. The potential for texts to acquire new significance through their relationship to other texts and to a

³⁸ The manuscript, as he observes (p. 159) can be dated to shortly after 1329.

³⁹ 'Reconstructing a Disarranged Manuscript: The Case of MS Harley 913, a Medieval Hiberno-English Miscellany', *Scriptorium*, 44 (1990), 286–99.

⁴⁰ Michael Benskin, 'The Hands of the Kildare Poems Manuscript', *Irish University Review*, 20 (1990), 163–93, finds that the manuscript was 'written piecemeal, perhaps over many years' (p. 172). The entire article argues that in spite of great variability, the bulk of the manuscript is in a single hand.

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miscellany as a whole was fully realized only in H, but an internal, non-pragmatic tendency is more widely evident, which can usefully be called 'literary'. The term is usually applied to individual texts, but seems equally appropriate to the relationship a miscellany can give one text to another, or to a whole ensemble.