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Chapter 1

Medieval Scribal Culture and the Enjoining Text

An Early Middle English *Life of St. Margaret* portrays the saint as defining authors, books, and readers in a way that reveals with startling clarity how differently preprint scribal culture envisaged the nature of texts than does print culture.

> I pray and beseech you . . . that whosoever writes the book of my life, or causes it to be written, or holds it and has it very often in hand, or whosoever reads it, or listens happily to its reader, Ruler of heaven, may all their sins be forgiven soon.
>
> [Ich bidde 7 biseche þe . . . þ[et] hwa-se-eauer boc writ of mi lif-lade, oðer bi-3et hit iwriten, oðer halt hit 7 haueð oftest on honde, oðer hwa-se hit eauer redeð, oðer þene redere bliðeliche lusteð, wealdent of heouene, wurðe ham alle sone hare sunnen for-3euene.][1]

Notice two things: first, how large the textual community pictured by the saint is—"authors," scribes, patrons, and various kinds of users, even users who cannot read the book but can only hold it, are included. Second, note that the people in this crowd are not just included, but are placed on the same level of importance as the person we think of as the "author." The same importance, the same reward is provided for the patron and the listener, even the holder of the volume, as for the author.

The *Life of St. Margaret* may be remarkable in its explicitness, but it is not unique. On the contrary, the surviving corpus of Early Middle English texts includes many passages, though none so full and comprehensive, that testify to how differently texts were perceived in scribal, collaborative cul-

ture compared to the perceptions print-culture scholars generally recognize. Indeed, many scholars of medieval Latin texts of comparable date have interpreted them as suggesting that sophisticated medieval writers gave the "author" the same ascendancy as that accorded by print culture. This book will examine this debate, will argue that scribal culture was collaborative in a way that has eluded the assumptions of print culture, and will explore methodologies used in the interpretation of medieval manuscripts that make these historical attitudes to text and textuality more apprehensible.

The small corpus of Early Middle English texts is a useful venue for study because it shows a striking interest in the very issues this *Life of St. Margaret* raises, and the consistency of witness among this small body of surviving texts written in vernacular English between 1100 and 1300 is significant. The first texts after the Norman Conquest to use the developing Middle English language, these texts are not numerous, and there is limited knowledge about their specific geographic and institutional origins. Most have explicit Christian contexts and agendas. They are not books of theory, but they do reveal their theoretical assumptions in self-referential passages in prologues, explicits, and text. Unlike the slightly later (and chronologically overlapping) Latin-oriented scholastic theorizing about the role of the author, studied by A. J. Minnis in *Medieval Theory of Authorship*,[2] the texts of Early Middle English emphasize the roles of various kinds of writers and readers in a process of textual creation that can only be called "collaborative." These Early Middle English texts create, and are created by, *communities* of readers. The difference in emphasis between single authorship and communal production has far-reaching implications for how these texts were, and might be, viewed.

In the speech quoted above, the saint heroine of the Katherine Group *Life of Saint Margaret* (c. 1225) gives a conventional prayer for forgiveness of sins and in the process enumerates the multiple relationships people might have with her book. Margaret's speech defines the function of this book as a continuous medium for spiritual benefit (very different from the idea of an artistic product or authorially limited object of interpretation), and the list of book-acts projects a community whose labors of perpetuating and consuming the book are all equal in the sight of God (very different from a hierarchizing of writers that places highest value on the "author").

The prologue to another Early Middle English text, Laȝamon's *Brut* (c. 1189–1236) adds to this the notion that the role of a named author is to *join in* with those voices of readers and writers that already make up the text

the author is "writing."[3] According to the prologue's concluding lines, the priest Laȝamon and the books he used as his models all "speak" at once in the present tense: "Now says with song of praise the one who was priest among the people / All that the books speak that he took as his model" [Nv seið mid loft-songe þe wes on leoden preost. / al swa þe boc speked: þe he to bisne inom] (Caligula version lines 36–37). Like the *Saint Margaret* speech, this passage conveys the idea of a continuous text whose existence includes, but reaches past, any individual human helping it along. In addition to fairly standard prologue material that names Laȝamon's sources and describes his act of compiling them, this prologue emphasizes that *reading* was part of his process of making this book and future *reading* by others will continue it (lines 5–6, 29–32). The prologue in the Cotton Caligula A.ix manuscript of Laȝamon's *Brut* bolsters the sense of the community in the text with a very tactile image of the writer's body fusing with the text, finger, feather, and skin: "He took feathers (quill pens) with his fingers and joined them to the book-skin" [Feþeren he nom mid fingren: 7 fiede on boc-felle]. All in all, two kinds of "joining" are described as the stuff of text making: the writer joining texts together (the act of compilation but with none of the defensiveness about avoiding blame that later scholastic *compilatio* shows)[4] and the text joining people, including the writer, together with each other in a Christian bond.

These ways of defining what a writer does and what a text is are culturally specific not only to this body of medieval vernacular texts (and almost certainly other localizable medieval textual groups), but more generally to texts produced by scribal technology before the invention in the West of print. In this chapter, I will first examine some of the expectations about books and writers that are specific to print culture and that often bias us to misunderstand textual issues of preprint scribal culture, and then I will proceed to examine more fully the historical context of the set of textual attitudes I have described as characteristic of Early Middle English textuality.

Print Culture versus Scribal Culture

Modern literary theories, especially poststructuralism, have had a lot to say about the importance and problematics of our cultural category of the "author" and its attendant assumptions about textual boundaries. These discussions have not usually factored in, at least in more than an oversimplified form, the influence of print technology and its systems in shaping

modern conceptions about texts, authors, and textual authority. It is my contention that preprint scribal technology and systems conditioned a different set of possible assumptions about texts. Positioned as late-twentieth-century members of print culture, we cannot automatically see these assumptions of scribal culture in their full systemization. To get a glimpse of them, it is necessary to first make visible some basic assumptions embedded in the system of textual production that conditions modern literary values in print culture.

Among current textual values conditioned by print technology and systems is the expectation of a "standard" text, whereas different conceptions of variant textual versions would have existed in the scribal culture of the medieval period. For several hundred years, until the revolution in electronic media and concomitant debates in editorial theory of the last decade, it has not been useful to acknowledge that multiple versions of a single text can coexist. Even though editorial and bibliographical theorists of print texts like D. F. McKenzie, Donald H. Reiman, George Bornstein, and Jerome McGann have in recent years recognized that even print texts are unstable, contingent, and versional in important ways, practical attitudes toward texts in the West, conditioned by centuries of mechanical print technologies, lag behind these theoretical debates.[5] The ways we conventionally think about literary texts systematically suppress the fact of multiple versions, with elaborate structures that render invisible all versions except the one that emerges in print as authoritative.

The technology of book production in a print culture has created expectations that a literary work is complete when it has been typeset. The printed page has provided a point of fixation. Until that point is reached, an author can be expected to write successive "drafts," a term that devalues the literary worth of these versions; after that point of fixation in print is passed, changes made by the author become "authorized" only when they are printed—whether by author or scholar—in successive editions.

This model of book production has accommodated the notion of variant textual versions by ordering the variants into a chronological *sequence*. The model depends upon the existence or at least idea of a *single author* (a function sometimes displaced onto an editor) who is responsible for and has authority over the generation of each draft and edition. And the model is made possible by the technical ability, available fully since the early nineteenth century, to *standardize* a text in mass production.[6]

In a way, the system of authorizing only one among several versions of a text by a given author is a protective measure. The machinery of printing

made it possible, technically, to reproduce every version—every draft and revision—written by every author, and it is indeed frightening to imagine a science fiction scenario in which mass publication of every text in several versions could create a chaos of authority.[7] The urge to choose one version as a convention, a mutual point of reference, is in some sense a cultural response to the threat of a technology-driven textual Babel. Print culture as we have known it in its preelectronic forms establishes its controls of textual authority in (1) selection of one from among all versions of a text and (2) author as supreme arbiter of change and selection among versions.[8]

Chronology, as the principle of classification of textual versions, functions for both these controls. By centralizing control of the text in one person, it becomes possible to separate partial and complete versions of that text, each made at a different time, and arrange them in a linear sequence (a feat that becomes impossible if one is dealing with a collaborative textual production, in which simultaneous work on one version by two or more people makes a linear representation inadequate). The very ability to sort these versions chronologically allows the use of chronology as a criterion for selecting one text. The devaluing of "drafts," mentioned earlier, is an example of "authoritativeness" being settled on the final version in a chronological sequence; the scholarly value placed on authorial autographs exemplifies a prioritizing of the first in a chronological sequence. Jerome McGann has identified these two points, author's original copy and author's final copy, as the contenders in a controversy among modern editors over the proper choice of a copy text for preparing editions of literary works.[9] That this editorial controversy, whose object is the selection of one authoritative text, centers on the assignment of textual versions to places in a chronological sequence confirms the importance of chronology in our textual system. Whether settling on the textual version that is chronologically first or last, the decision of which textual version to prioritize depends on classification by chronology—*for texts produced within that system.*

If we wish to understand attitudes about textual authority in a different system—like medieval scribal culture—we must acknowledge that a different system *may lack* the assumptions that textual authority resides in the single author and that only one version, the first or last one, could be authoritative. This is not to say that such a culture could not accommodate concerns with authors and sequential versions in particularly configured ways. Minnis's arguments for thirteenth- and fourteenth-century scholastic hierarchization of writers that gave increasing value to the *auctor* in a specific institutional context offer compelling historical evidence, for ex-

ample.[10] But it is important not to generalize to the whole of medieval scribal culture attitudes that are institutionally localized. The different technologies of medieval scribal text production made for a cultural situation in which the dominance of single authorship or of chronologically mandated standard versions *was not inevitable.*

Rejecting these principles opens up new ways to envision how medieval textual production systems conditioned attitudes about books. To begin with, scribal methods for duplicating books, in which exact repeatability among mass-produced copies of a text was impossible, would not have permitted the author to control changes to texts. The capacity of print for standardizing all versions of one text and the related ability to "freeze" or fix one version as *the* text are features of print technology heavily emphasized by historians of printing like Elizabeth Eisenstein. She speculates on what the absence of fixity and standardization in preprint culture would have meant.

> The wish to see one's own work in print (fixed forever with one's name in card files and anthologies) is different from the desire to pen lines that could never get fixed in a permanent form, might be lost forever, altered by copying, or—if truly memorable—be carried by oral transmission and assigned ultimately to "anon." Until it became possible to distinguish between composing a poem and reciting one, or writing a book and copying one; until books could be classified by something other than incipits, how could modern games of books and authors be played?[11]

The absence of standardization and fixedness in medieval scribal culture did mean that it was impossible to distinguish "writing" from "copying" a book, to the extent that "copying" did not necessarily aspire to our modern standards of exact repeatability. Scribal book production was achieved for the most part by one-to-one copying, a process that necessarily introduced unique scribal error to every book (a principle that modern editing methods recognize). At the very least then, inadvertent error created some degree of alteration in a given text each time the text was duplicated, so that no two "copies" were exactly the same text. The standard of exactness in duplication of copies that print introduced beginning with the fifteenth century was then simply unheard of, and variation among versions of the "same" text was the norm.

Given the absence of postprint standards of exactness, medieval scribal culture did aspire to a degree of standardization for certain texts and in

certain institutional settings. Standardization should be distinguished from mass reproduction, although in modern print culture the two seem inseparable. The history of printing bears witness to the possibility of having one without the other. Even a sacred text like the Bible was subject to printing practices whereby an error in the typesetting might be corrected after a number of copies of a page had already been pressed, and these sheets might be used anyway with no one keeping track of which copies were erroneous; when all the copies of all the pages were compiled into volumes, there was no way of knowing which volumes of the same edition had the corrected leaves for any given page. Thus there was no guarantee that any two copies of the same edition were in fact identical.[12] It is not mass reproduction per se, but the combination of mass reproduction with systems of quality control that yield the level of exact repeatability we have come to expect in copies of one edition of a text.

Neither foolproof technology nor such editorial processes geared to the new technology sprang into being with Gutenberg. They took four centuries of development. That is why Paul Saenger can make the observation that early books printed by William Caxton and Colard Mansion were less standardized than hand-copied books produced in contemporary fifteenth-century aristocratic scriptoria of the Burgundian court.[13] Elements of quality control were present in those scriptoria, in their insistence on one master exemplar for all copies (no chance for continuation of the scribal errors of a copy) and one master scribe to set the standard of script. These Burgundian aristocratic scriptoria probably achieved the pinnacle of textual standardization possible in scribal culture.[14] This achievement required an elite and moneyed class of reader and cannot be taken as typical of medieval scribal book production. The vast majority of extant manuscripts do not demonstrate such standardization—far from it.

There are attested cases of mass production of books before printing, but without accompanying evidence that exact repeatability was achieved in these cases. In the premedieval scribal culture of A.D. first-century Rome, an incidence is recorded by Pliny the Younger of the mass production of one thousand copies of a eulogy by Regulus, a Roman citizen, for his son:

> he . . . has had *countless* [*one thousand*] *copies made* to distribute throughout Italy and the provinces. He has written an open letter to the town councils asking them to choose one of their number with the best voice to give a public reading of the work; and this has been done.[15]

> [Eundem [librum] in *exemplaria mille transcriptum* per totam Italiam prouinciasque dimisit. Scripsit publice, ut a decurionibus eligeretur uocalissimus aliquis ex ipsis, qui legeret cum populo: factum est.][16]

Regulus's text itself is not extant. Pliny regards Regulus's measures as excessive, but his description nevertheless bears witness to the possibility of centralized reproduction by hand of copies of one text in the scribal culture of the Roman Empire. The question of how exactly the text was repeated in each of these one thousand transcripts must remain unanswered. Elsewhere in his letters, Pliny writes about his own speeches and poems and the lively exchange of writings, readings, and criticism among his friends (who included Tacitus); his treatments of these subjects suggest a continual expectation of his circle that compositions would probably be altered—often quite deliberately—with any transcription or delivery.[17]

Over one thousand years later, in post-Conquest England, the Magna Carta provides a case of textual mass production that left more evidence behind. The Magna Carta illustrates both the need of a royal bureaucracy to achieve mass production of identical copies of charters, and the less than perfect standardization achievable in such a scribal bureaucracy. According to J. C. Holt, King John agreed to the charter in 1215 and the document was reissued in 1216, 1217, and 1225, each time with variations.[18] Yet, Holt finds, "within two generations of Runnymede the chroniclers of St. Albans confused the texts of 1215 and 1225 in complete uncertainty as to what was valid and what was not."[19] The difference among the reissues was not sorted out until 1759,[20] well into the era of print technology.

More pertinent than the reissues for the level of textual standardization, however, is the degree of variation among copies of one issuing. Of the four "originals" now extant of the 1215 Magna Carta, copyists' variants exist in them all, and two have in common some amendments lacking in the other two.[21] Holt and others give equal priority to the four manuscripts, rejecting the "assumption that there was a single authoritative original which figured in the ceremonies at Runnymede and from which all other versions were copied."[22] No original was preserved in government records.[23] Holt presents the available evidence relating to the actual distribution of Magna Carta through towns and villages and finds that the delivery of copies was not simultaneous nor, perhaps, comprehensive. The records point to a routine royal system of production and distribution of writs that was both subject to political interruption and imperfectly standardized by comparison to print capabilities.[24]

A third example of scribal mass production, two hundred years later on the eve of print technology, is found in evidence from a 1413 ecclesiastical investigation into the "errors of orthodoxy" of Jean Petit's *Justification du duc de Bourgogne*, which has been studied by Charity Cannon Willard.[25] The testimony describes scribal processes that produced either six or twelve paper manuscripts simultaneously by dictation.[26] The court's interest was to verify the manuscripts available to them as representing the "original" text delivered orally on March 8, 1408, at Hotel Saint-Pol by Jean Petit, who was deceased by the time of the trial. Modern study of the manuscript tradition shows that four illuminated vellum manuscripts of the *Justification* were made for family members of the duke of Burgundy after the oration, and the paper manuscripts were prepared subsequent to those.[27]

According to Willard, the testimony of two witnesses was pertinent: Laurent Ouyn, a Master of Arts on the Arts Faculty at the University of Paris, described how Jean Petit had assembled twelve students and masters who each copied the text as it was read aloud by Master Johan Johannis. He further testified that Jean Petit gave some supervision, and that he believed that text to be the same as the original oration with "one minor difference." Master William Dare testified to the same details except he remembered only six copyists, and he identified a manuscript as the one he himself had copied.[28] Clearly the factor that the court considered significant for verifying the text as authoritative was the physical presence, albeit sporadic, of Jean Petit at the copying, rather than any attempted effort at collation of manuscripts. Most manuscripts of the *Justification* were burned after being pronounced heretical, a situation that prevents modern comparisons among the manuscripts, but Willard's study shows variants exist in the form of two continuations by Jean Petit.[29] Without the paper manuscripts to study, we cannot confirm what degree of standardization was achieved among these simultaneously produced copies, but considering the foibles of dictation, one would not expect exact repeatability to the standard of print technology even with the control of a centralized exemplar.

When writers of the scribal Middle Ages did show concern for standardization among texts, it was not necessarily related to simultaneous mass production. Instead, the greatest cultural mandate for standardization throughout the Christian Middle Ages unquestionably involved the diachronic reproduction of sacred letters, God's holy text. God's Word had to be maintained exactly as he had given it, with no variation. The struggles of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century scholastic theologians to define the exact roles played by the divine *auctor*, God, and the human *auctores* and

compilers in the transmission of sacred letters, documented by Minnis, speaks to the anxiety this mandate for standardization created in the late Middle Ages. In one form or another, though, exact reproduction of the Holy Scripture had been an issue beginning much earlier.

In the sixth century, Cassiodorus had shown explicit concern about this issue in his instructions to monks at Vivarium. In *Institutiones,* Cassiodorus set forth guidelines for the proper correcting of sacred texts (Holy Scripture, biblical commentaries, etc.) that would have had the effect of standardizing such elements as Latin orthography, treatment of Hebrew names, and Latin grammar and style among the manuscripts.[30] Chapter 15 entrusts the correction of sacred texts only to very learned monks "who have unusual knowledge of divine and secular letters and practical ability to discover what is inconsistent with ordinary usage."[31]

The whole point of correcting books, in Cassiodorus's *Institutiones,* is to ensure proper Christian education. This is the central institutional function with which the *Institutiones* is concerned. His guidelines applied to sacred texts only, which were preselected and institutionally sanctioned. The preface to *Institutiones* compares education in divine letters to a spiritual journey, which requires error-free texts.

> Therefore, if you please, we ought to preserve this kind of reading, that the novices of Christ, after they have learned the psalms, may in the beginning study the divine authority with perpetual practice in *faultless books,* until under the Lord's guidance it becomes very well known to them, *for fear lest the mistakes of scribes become fixed in unpolished minds;* since that which is manifestly implanted and rooted in the recesses of the memory cannot easily be torn out.[32]
>
> [quocirca, si placet, hunc debemus lectionis ordinem custodire, ut primum tyrones Christi, postquam psalmos didicerint, auctoritatem divinam in *codicibus emendatis* iugi exercitatione meditentur, donec illis fiat Domino praestante notissima, *ne vitia librariorum impolitis mentibus inolescant;* quia difficile potest erui, quod memoriae sinibus radicatum constat infigi.][33]

The emphasis was not all on the danger. The joy and enormous value of sacred books' spiritual function come through in Cassiodorus's description of what a scribe does when copying Scripture.

> Happy his design, praiseworthy his zeal, to preach to men with the hand alone, to unleash tongues with the fingers, to give salvation

> silently to mortals, and to fight against the illicit temptations of the devil with pen and ink. Every word of the Lord written by the scribe is a wound inflicted on Satan.[34]
>
> [felix intentio, laudanda sedulitas, manu hominibus praedicare, digitis linguas aperire, salutem mortalibus tacitum dare, et contra diaboli subreptiones illicitas calamo atramentoque pugnare. tot enim vulnera Satanas accipit, quot antiquarius Domini verba describit.][35]

For Cassiodorus, the importance of making books correct was that books make people correct.

Ultimately Cassiodorus's interest in the correctness of books was not equivalent to interest in standardization, or exact repeatability, among manuscripts of the same text. Cassiodorus's worry about correctness was an issue involving textual authority, more profound than the simple question of whether a manuscript matched its exemplar. The object of emending was not to render one book identical to another in the way that one printed copy is identical to another printed copy of the same edition of a text; rather, emending was a critical procedure tantamount to making a new edition in that it recognized both potential error and ultimate authority in preceding exemplars and their correctors, and in that it aspired to the creation of a perfect text. His central problem was how to ascertain and insure correctness, when any book on hand might have reproduced error from ancestral exemplars, and yet ancient books were the source of textual authority. Thus the instruction in correcting manifests an implicit tension between the authority of editorial principles and that of ancient codices. Neither is infallible. At the same time that he offers rules for correction—the authority for which comes from specific ancient writers, especially on orthography[36]—he also instructs scribes to preserve idioms of Holy Scripture that break such rules, directing them to seek precedents for the broken rules in "two or three ancient and emended codices"[37] [duorum vel trium priscorum emendatorumque codicum auctoritas].[38] Elsewhere he again recommends something like collation with older manuscripts when in doubt.[39]

Absent was the force of numbers of identical copies that today mechanically preserve the author's authoritative text. For Cassiodorus, there was no technical possibility for a fixed text but every mandate for fixed preservation of divinely inspired writings, a situation to which the only response was vigilance against error in all literary activities, writing or read-

ing or reading for correction. Cassiodorus's concern was with correct transmission of sacred texts from God their source to each human reader's soul, and the ever present danger to that transmission was error.

In a later example of medieval concern with standardization and sacred letters, this one from England at the turn of the eleventh century, the Anglo-Saxon grammarian Ælfric (made abbot of Eynsham in 1005) was still recognizing the danger posed by error. Ælfric, too, advocated vigilance in educating the young to Christian faith and in preserving correct texts for that education. In the preface to his translation of Donatus's grammar, Ælfric reminds the reader of the dangerous time when English priests could not read Latin and therefore could not teach the true faith, a situation that could recur. He ends the preface with a plea that this book be copied correctly, and the plea is more than just a convention. It caps the argument that error in book production will produce error in Christian living, and at the same time it acknowledges the lack of control an author (or translator) has over the reproduction of his or her own text.

> I pray now in God's name, if anyone wishes to copy this book, that he correct it well according to the exemplar; because I have no control over anyone who would bring it to error through untrue copyists, and it would then be his responsibility and harm, not mine. Great evil does the incorrect copyist, if he will not correct his errors.
>
> [Ic bidde nu on godes naman, gyf hwa ðas boc awritan wylle, þæt he hi gerihte wel be ðære bysne; forðan ðe ic nah geweald, þeah hi hwa to woge gebringe þurh lease writeras, and hit bið ðonne his pleoh, na min. micel yfel deð se unwritere, gyf he nele his woh gerihtan.][40]

Like Cassiodorus before him, Ælfric's desire for exact repeatability in the duplication of texts is specific to one kind of text, the kind that teaches Christian belief. Like the later thirteenth- and fourteenth-century scholastic writers, he is concerned with the heavy responsibility every writer of Christian sacred letters takes on.

A cultural anxiety behind Ælfric and Cassiodorus's aspiration to the scribal equivalent of standardization was the danger that even God, the original Author, might not be able to control changes to his text. This is probably not a formulation either Ælfric or Cassiodorus could have made, but it is nevertheless a legitimate way of naming the fear that drove scribes to copy sacred texts as exactly as possible. God's word and God's truth

comprised the first, best text, and this authoritative original text could not exist in more than one version; change was error was sin. Nevertheless, that medieval reliance on God the Author could not transcend the vagaries of scribal book production. It is clear from the examples of Cassiodorus and Ælfric that a whole medieval category of texts—divine letters—was selected to receive the greatest possible degree of exact repeatability from ancient codices to contemporary books copied from them. It is equally clear from the records of Cassiodorus's efforts and frustrations and from Ælfric's warnings against the "unwritere" that exact repetition, the medieval counterpart to standardization, was difficult if not impossible to achieve even for that privileged group of sacred and didactic Christian texts.

Secular letters, the other category of medieval texts, were not subject to the same aspiration to exactness of duplication. Cassiodorus himself advises the student of secular letters that "one would make a mistake with less danger [than in divine letters] if in making it he preserved his faith steadfast."[41] For books that were not conceived of as conduits of divinity, the authority of ancient codices was not as significant, and variation among manuscripts of the same text comprised some category other than error. The prevalence of variant versions among secular texts suggests that at least for some genres and circumstances, quite apart from the technological pitfalls, standardization of texts as we know it was not a significant goal or expectation.

The existence of manuscript variants that defy the category of "error" is a situation familiar to anyone who studies medieval literature, and certain texts like the fourteenth-century *Piers Plowman* are notorious for the challenges they pose the critic because of their multiple versions. The *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1146),[42] the Anglo-Latin history that forms part of the textual ancestry of Laȝamon's *Brut,* provides a cogent example. Of the two hundred-odd extant manuscripts of the *Historia Regum Britanniae,* several versions exist, which have been dubbed Vulgate and Variant versions by their modern editors.[43] The versions are distinguished largely by syntactical and stylistic variation, not by substantial detail. The following collation of several sentences from book 9, chapter 6 is typical:

Vulgate: /
Variant: / Peractis igitur pro voto omnibus, dux Cornubiae,
Vulgate: / Pace itaque firmata,/
Variant: post Arturum iter arripiens,/ /

Vulgate: / profectus est aldclud /
Variant: / venit Aldclud,/

Vulgate: /quam arturus iam a barbarica oppressione liberauerat./
Variant: /quam rex ab obsidione barbarica iam liberaverat, /

Vulgate: / /
Variant: / nepote suo Hoelo sano recepto./

Vulgate: / Deinde duxit exercitum suum mureis/
Variant: / Duxit inde exercitum Mireis, civitatem Albaniae,/

Vulgate: / ubi obsidebantur scoti & picti /
Variant: / ubi audierat hostes se recepisse./

Vulgate: / qui tercio contra regem nepotemque suum dimicantes,/
Variant: / /

Vulgate: / & ab eo superati usque ad eandem prouinciam
Variant: /

Vulgate: diffugerant./ /
Variant: / Quo cum perveniret, deserentes munitionem/

Vulgate: / / Ingressi autem stagnum lumonoi/
Variant: / Scotti et Picti/ ingressi sunt stagnum Lumonoi/

Vulgate: /occupauerunt insulas que infra erant.
Variant: /atque insulas quae infra erant, occupaverunt,

Vulgate: securum refugium querentes;/ Hoc autem stagnum /
Variant: refugium quaerentes. / Hoc stagnum /

Vulgate: /quadraginta insulas continens./ sexaginta flumina
Variant: /sexaginta continebat insulas, / sexaginta flumina

Vulgate: /recipit / nec ex
Variant: / a montibus Albaniae recipiens fluentia,/ nec ex

Vulgate: /eo nisi unum solum ad mare decurrit.[44]
Variant: /tot fluminibus de stagno labitur in mare praeter unum.[45]

The narrative elements in these passages from the two versions are the same: Arthur and Howel advance their armies to Aldclud and Mureis, and the Scots and Picts that had been attacking flee to refuge in the islands of Loch Lomond, which is described as receiving the waters of sixty rivers but having only one stream flow out of it. One difference of detail, the number

of islands reported variously as forty and sixty, is probably attributable to scribal error, since the Vulgate Version manuscripts vary among themselves between forty and sixty, and some use Roman numerals (.lx. in Griscom's Harlech MS 17)[46] that could easily have been transposed by a scribe to make forty out of sixty or sixty out of forty. The majority of the differences, however, are differences of recast and reordered sentences, a kind of rhetorical scrambling. Either version is adequate. Whatever circumstances produced the two versions—possibly a creative dictation-taker? or a student experimenting with Latin grammar? or a revision by the author? or a scribe just writing it a little differently from the exemplar?—the manuscript differences testify to a freedom to change the wording and style of a text in a way that postprint culture permits only if the original author makes the changes and even then only before the text is fixed in print. There is no evidence that the Variant Version and the Vulgate Versions of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* were by the same person; indeed, it is no longer certain which one was composed by Geoffrey of Monmouth.[47] In any case, these may be the concerns of print culture. Medieval scribal culture did not necessarily penalize this lack of standardization among manuscripts of the "same" secular text.

Modern print culture, at least prior to the Internet, has made us helpless in the face of variant versions largely through the pervasive influence of the metaphor of the "mechanical." The controlling metaphor of a mechanical print production system defines the act of composition or authorship as everything that happens between writer and text until the text goes to press, that is, until the "mechanical" takes over. No equivalently mechanical phase of book production ever existed in medieval scribal culture. Although there was extensive use of the "inkpen" image to convey human "instrumentality" in reproducing sacred texts, the "inkpen" technology did not construct an end point to the composition process the way postindustrial machines do.[48] The scribal Middle Ages had no technology-imposed, mechanical marker of author's text.

Medieval expectations for nonsacred texts, then, did not necessarily include expectations of a (mechanically) fixed text nor of a text that could be altered only by its single, original author. Study of the liberal arts was organized in some cases around particular authors' names, especially for a few highly codified commentary traditions for pagan authors like Virgil, but medieval scribal culture left openings for other ways of organizing what a text was. The technological systems allowed for looser relations between

writers and texts. The job of the critic of texts produced in this scribal system is to try to recognize and suspend print-culture criteria for establishing authoritative texts, and the evaluations embedded in those criteria.

The kinds of problems that can result from a lack of awareness of one's print-induced bias can be illustrated in two examples. One concerns the erroneous nineteenth-century translation of the Middle English word *least* as it appears in Oxford MS Bodley 34, the closing lines of the Katherine Group life of St. Juliana: "Ant. he þ[at] her least. on wrat swa as he cuðe. Amen" [and he that here last wrote, such as he could. Amen]. The end of a prayerful wish for the scribe, these lines were translated in the thirteenth-century manuscript by a sixteenth-century hand as "him that last wrote Amen,"[49] implying an understanding that this translation of *Juliana* had been copied a number of times by a number of scribes, and the prayer is partly for the writer of the manuscript written here most lately (or perhaps even for the annotator, a reader who is the latest one to write "Amen" *her* [here] on this page). Oswald Cockayne, however, who translated the whole work in 1872 for the Early English Text Society, mistranslated this line as "he also, *least in þis matter*, who penned it as well as he was able. Amen."[50] Cockayne's interpretation implies that the thirteenth-century scribe would have devalued his own activity of copying and would naturally have placed himself at the bottom of a hierarchy of author, translator, copier. This is a good example of print-culture expectations asserting themselves inappropriately. D'Ardenne, the most recent editor, overturns Cockayne's translation and defines this Early Middle English usage of *least* to mean "last," that is, "most recent,"[51] as does the *Middle English Dictionary* (hereafter *MED*).[52] The important thing for a modern reader to recognize is that this Early Middle English usage of *least* (last) conveys no special authority or lack of it to any of the writers.

The second example is another caveat against assuming that implicit evaluation was meant in medieval descriptions of writers, when the description might in fact be neutral. The Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure, whose mid-thirteenth-century writings contributed to the scholastic debates on authorship of Holy Scripture, was certainly one of the theorizers who explored human roles in channeling God's word under the assumption of a hierarchical relationship between the Divine *Auctor* and human *auctores*. Bonaventure's description of four kinds of writers, in the prologue to his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Libri sententiarum*, is cited by M. B. Parkes and by A. J. Minnis to exemplify the importance of the human "author," that is, a hierarchical relationship among writers that places *auc-*

tor at the top and devalues all others. Minnis's translation of Bonaventure's Latin assumes value judgment, in its application of the word *merely* to scribes:

> The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be *merely* the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. Someone else writes both the materials of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author.[53]
>
> [quadruplex est modus faciendi librum. Aliquis enim scribit aliena, nihil addendo vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur scriptor. Aliquis scribit aliena addendo, sed non de suo; et iste compilator dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena et sua, sed aliena tamquam principalia, et sua tamquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur commentator non auctor. Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tamquam principalia, aliena tamquam annexa ad confirmationem et debet dici auctor.][54]

But if one looks at Bonaventure's Latin, with suspicion of one's own print bias that expects hierarchy, one realizes that Bonaventure's description does not devalue the scribe. The Latin word *mere* (adverb form of *merus*) does not mean "merely"; it means "purely, unmixedly." This is the scribe and nothing but the scribe; this is wholly the scribe.

The distinctions among *scriptor, compilator, commentator,* and *auctor* are distinctions of relative *proportion* of the material written—what proportion comes from other writers, what proportion from this writer?—and even authors are not said to be entirely original. Authors are writers with the lowest proportion of material by others. What the quotation reveals is the great variety of configurations of writing responsibilities in a scribal system. In this passage, Bonaventure's Latin does not praise any one act of writing more than any other. It would, in fact, be an interesting exercise to reexamine the scholastic writings on authorship for the presence or absence of evaluative cues. Meanwhile, it behooves the modern reader to keep in

mind that in medieval scribal culture, copying books could be and often was a literary activity.

Texts produced in medieval scribal culture should be approached *not* with the assumption that author and scribe are automatically fixed in a hierarchical relationship (even though that is sometimes true in medieval scribal culture). These texts *should* be approached with a questioning attitude: in the localized context of the text under consideration, what *were* the relations among kinds of writers and between writers and text? This brings us to a look at some specific historical contexts that include or have bearing on Early Middle English texts.

Historical Contexts of Early Middle English Scribal Culture

Questions about what relations exist between author and scribe, or what authors, scribes, or other writers do, have been applied to the whole of Latin Christendom from Roman times through the twelfth century, and the vocabulary used by medieval texts to refer to acts of writing has been one major source of evidence. Jean Leclercq and Paul Saenger, most notably, have argued that Latin "vocabulary of composition" developed a strict opposition of meaning between the terms *scribere* and *dictare* by the tenth century, the distinction being that between "copying" and "composing."[55] Their claim centers on the idea that the term *ars dictaminis*, the art of *composing* documents and letters, reflected the specialization of meaning ("composing," "authoring") attendant to forms of *dictare*.

In *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Jean Leclercq relies on this theory of semantic distinction of *dictare* and *scribere* in his discussion of the sermons by Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153).[56] In addressing the "problems" of multiple versions of some of Bernard's sermons, Leclercq's agenda is a characteristic product of print culture: to sort out what was original with Bernard. He thus categorizes manuscript variations as "intervention by notaries."[57] Leclercq's discussion is sometimes fueled by a print-culture expectation of a series of author-controlled drafts and a final author-approved fixed text, and the credibility of his descriptions may be compromised by his inability to see his own (our own) cultural bias substituting for evidence. For example,

> To "dictate" could thus refer to the successive stages of composition. First came the impressing on wax tablets of the first draft of a work;

> this was reread, corrected, and only then was the definitive version "noted" either by the author himself or, more frequently, by a professional "notary" who copied it over or took it down from dictation.[58]

Some extant sermon texts from the scribal period may be the result of such a sequence and division of labor and such a stopping point, but not all, as Leclercq himself reveals elsewhere in examples of texts copied from other sermon texts and texts written down variously by congregation members as they were being preached.[59] Nevertheless, it does not occur to Leclercq to modify his model to accommodate this variety of sermon types and their processes of becoming textualized.

Paul Saenger has traced the philology of the Latin terms *scribere* and *dictare* in the context of his study about developments in silent and oral reading.[60] Relying partly on Leclercq's discussion, Saenger summarizes his view of the semantic changes that occurred with *scribere* and *dictare: dictare* meant "to dictate" in republican Rome; in imperial Rome, *dictare* occasionally referred to "the act of authorship"; by the tenth century *dictare* primarily referred to "the act of composition," in the context of the *ars dictaminis*, which Saenger envisions as orally composed and performed; in the thirteenth century the act of composing signified by *dictare* could be a silent, internalized process, "composing by listening to an inner voice."[61] The term *scribere*, according to Saenger, followed the reverse path: "In republican Rome . . . *scribere* connoted both the mechanical art of writing and the act of composition"; in imperial Rome *scribere* still was "the more usual term" for "the act of authorship"; by the tenth century, *scribere* "came to refer almost exclusively to the physical act of writing."[62]

This analysis parallels Minnis's study of twelfth- through fourteenth-century developments in theory of authorship of sacred texts, in the sense that the argument is organized around making distinctions among writerly acts and assuming an attendant hierarchy among those acts. But Saenger's claims are too general. At least two localized bodies of literature show medieval usage of *scribere* to refer to writing processes that cover the whole range from copying to authoring.

Twelfth-century Anglo-Latin histories provide the first counter-example. Vocabulary evidence from these twelfth-century texts challenges the centrality of a conceptual distinction between *composing* and *copying* in medieval Latin letters. Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*,[63] which was written in various continuations between 1129 and Henry's death in 1154,[64] refers to Henry both as author and writer. In the epilogue

to the *Historia Anglorum* (which in continuations after 1135 is incorporated as the prologue to book 8, *De Summitatibus*), Henry addresses himself as *auctor historiae:*

> Dic, Henrice, dic, hujus *auctor* historiae, qui fuerint illius temporis archidiaconi.[65]
>
> [Tell me, Henry, *author* of this history, tell me—who were the archdeacons of former times?][66]

The same epilogue refers to the *scriptor historiae:*

> Hic est igitur annus ille a quo *scriptor* historiae suam voluit aetatem a sequentibus computari.[67]
>
> [This is the year, therefore, from which the *writer* of history has wanted his age to be measured, by those who follow.]

and in book 7, Henry refers to himself as the *scriptor* in a passage that identifies him personally.

> Eodem anno Nicholaus, pater *illius qui hanc scripsit historiam,* mortis legibus concessit, et sepultus est apud Lincoliam. De quo dictum est:
>
> "Stella cadit cleri, splendor marcet Nicholai;
> Stella cadens cleri, splendeat arce Dei."
>
> Hoc ideo *scriptor* suo inseruit operi, ut apud omnes legentes mutuum laboris obtineat, quatenus pietatis affectu dicere dignentur, "Anima ejus in pace requiescat. Amen."[68]
>
> [In the same year Nicholas, father of *the man who wrote this history,* yielded to the rule of death, and was buried at Lincoln. Of him it has been said:
>
> "The star of clerks has fallen,
> Nicholas's light fades out;
> But the star of clerks having fallen,
> the citadel of God shines forth."
>
> The *author* has placed this in his work, that he might obtain a reciprocal labor from all his readers, since piety makes it fitting to say, "May his soul rest in peace. Amen."][69]

Henry does not use the word *dictare* to refer to his act of authoring his chronicle; he uses *scribere*. His use of both *auctor* and *scriptor* to refer to himself suggests the interchangeability of those terms to refer to the creator/writer of this chronicle.

In book 5 of *Historia Anglorum* Henry refers to the stylistically minded writers of Anglo-Saxon chronicles as *scriptores*, in reference to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 937 on the battle of Brunanburg, which he translates to Latin.

> De cujus proelii magnitudine *Anglici scriptores* quasi carminis modo proloquentes, et extraneis tam verbis quam figuris usi, translatione fida donandi sunt, ut pene de verbo in verbum eorum interpretantes eloquium, ex gravitate verborum gravitatem actuum et animorum gentis illius condiscamus.[70]
>
> [Of the magnitude of this battle, *English writers* tell in poetic form, and have employed foreign language as well as foreign figures of speech; they should be given a faithful translation, so that, rendering their eloquence almost word for word, we may thoroughly learn through the dignity of the language the dignity of the deeds and minds of those people.][71]

Elsewhere Henry again refers to writers/creators of histories or chronicles as *scriptores*, but it is the personal references to himself and the reference to the Brunanburg chroniclers that serve as conclusive examples that *scriptor* and *scribere* could and did denote the act of composition or authorship in addition to the physical act of writing, at least in the context of this Anglo-Latin history.

Another Anglo-Latin historian who used *scribere* to mean "compose" was William of Newburgh. The preface to William of Newburgh's *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* contains his famous rejection of Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of history, and claims his own work follows more legitimate historical traditions established by Bede.[72] In the extended contrast between the "historian" Bede and the "fabler" Geoffrey of Monmouth, William's preface discusses the making of a history entirely without reference to any form of *dictare*. Various forms of *scribere* do, however, express a range of writing tasks from copying to composing. Like Henry of Huntingdon, William of Newburgh uses a form of *scribere* to refer to the recording of history by ancient historians.

> Quomodo enim *historiographi veteres,* quibus ingenti curae fuit nihil memorabile *scribendo* omittere, qui etiam mediocria memoriae mandasse noscuntur, virum incomparabilem, ejusque acta supra modum insignia, silentio praeterire potuerunt?[73]
>
> [For how would the *elder historians,* who were ever anxious [when *writing*] to omit nothing remarkable, and even recorded trivial circumstances, pass by unnoticed so incomparable a man, and such surpassing deeds?][74]

Scribendo refers here to "compiling" and "recording," not just transcribing. William applies derivations of *scribere* to Geoffrey of Monmouth as well as to the ancient historians, although he represents Geoffrey's writing as the fabrication of lies rather than the recording of true history.

(1) At contra quidam nostris temporibus, pro expiandis his Britonum maculis, *scriptor* emersit, ridicula de eisdem *figmenta contexens,* eosque longe supra virtutem Macedonum et Romanorum impudenti vanitate attollens.[75]

> [For the purpose of washing out those stains from the character of the Britons, a *writer* in our times has started up and *invented* the most ridiculous *fictions* concerning them, and with unblushing effrontery, extols them far above the Macedonians and Romans.][76]

(2) nec veretur, ut verum non taceat, Brito de Britonibus *scribere,* quod nec in bello fortes fuerint, nec in pace fideles.[77]

> [(T)here can be no suspicion that the truth is disguised, when a Briton, *speaking* of Britons, declares, that they were neither courageous in war, nor faithful in peace.][78]

(3) quae homo ille de Arturo et ejus vel successoribus vel, post Vortigirnum, praedecessoribus *scribere* curavit . . .[79]

> [that whatever Geoffrey has *written,* subsequent to Vortigern, either of Arthur, or his successors, or predecessors . . .][80]

For William of Newburgh, the significant difference between Geoffrey and ancient historians is the "truth" or lack thereof of the histories they wrote,

but in either case forms of *scribere* denote an act of compilation or composition. At one point in the preface, Geoffrey of Monmouth's choices about what he included in his history become a foil to William of Newburgh's own decisions about what he will include in *his* history, and again William's diction, in opposing *omitto* to *scripserit* (as well as to *confinxerit*), invokes a process of compositional decision-making:

> *Omitto* quanta de gestis Britonum ante Julii Caesaris imperium homo ille confinxerit, vel ab aliis conficta tanquam authentica *scripserit*.[81]
>
> [*I omit* this man's inventions concerning the exploits of the Britons previous to the government of Julius Caesar, as well as the fictions of others which he has *recorded*, as if they were authentic.][82]

In one other place, the prefatory epistle to the abbot of Rievaulx, William of Newburgh refers to himself and his own process of writing this history, and he expresses his task through the term *conscribere*.

> Literas sanctitatis vestrae suscepi, quibus mihi studium et operam rerum memorabilium, quae nostris temporibus copiosius provenerunt, ad notitiam cautelamque posterorum *conscribendarum* dignatur ingerere.[83]
>
> [I have received the letters of your holiness, wherein you deign to assign to me the care and labour of *writing* (for the knowledge and instruction of posterity) a history of the memorable events which have so abundantly occurred in our own times.][84]

This variant on *scribere* refers to an act of gathering and recording information that is not necessarily contained in written exemplars, and that by implication must be formulated into a written text by William. William applies the same verb, *conscribere*, to Bede, his model of a responsible historian.

> Historiam gentis nostrae, id est, Anglorum, venerabilis presbyter et monachus Beda *conscripsit*.[85]
>
> [The history of our English nation *has been written* by the venerable Beda, a priest and monk.][86]

Conscribere thus functions for William as a verb that means more than mechanical copying. The diction of these texts severely qualifies the received conclusion that *scribere* and *dictare* formed a binary opposition of meaning. In the Anglo-Latin histories of Henry of Huntingdon and William of Newburgh, *scribere* covers a range of meanings that include all the compository and imaginative acts of writing by historians in addition to "merely" copying. Further, *scribere* seems to be the preferred term for describing what a historian does.

There was another Latin word used in twelfth-century Anglo-Latin histories that *did* apparently have the specialized meaning of "to copy": *transcribere*. William of Newburgh uses this word in the limited sense of "to reproduce a book" in a reference to the work of Gildas:

> paucis eum vel *transcribere* vel habere curantibus, raro invenitur.[87]
>
> [few persons care either to *transcribe* or possess it.][88]

It is significant that this term is a (prefixed) form of *scribere*, just demonstrated to have a widely inclusive semantic range in Anglo-Latin histories. What *transcribere* adds to *scribere* is the idea of transference, from one written text to another manuscript. *Trans-* does not necessarily add any idea of mechanical exactness of duplication any more than *scribere* usually conveys that concept. *Transcribere* and *scribere* are not binary opposites. *Scribere* is a more general term that can include the meaning of *transcribere;* it is not a term that opposes *transcribere* with the idea of originality. This is another important corrective to Saenger's study, which unself-consciously opposes "the act of composition" to "the *mechanical* art of writing."[89] Saenger falls into the trap of assuming that "to copy" is equivalent to "to copy exactly," like a machine.

The twelfth-century Anglo-Latin histories are not anomolous in their generalized use of *scribere* to refer to a range of writing acts from authoring to copying. In A. J. Minnis's discussion of fourteenth-century English writers Gower and Chaucer and their writerly roles in the context of scholastic theories of authorship, Minnis cites a quotation from Gower's *Vox clamantis* that uses *scribere* in this generalized way and thus provides a second counterexample to Saenger's conclusions.

> Hos ego compegi versus, quos fuderat in me
> Spiritus in sompnis: nox erat illa grauis.

> Hec set vt auctor ego non *scripsi* metta libello,
> Que tamen audiui trado legenda tibi:
> Non tumor ex capite proprio me *scribere* fecit
> Ista, set vt voces plebis in aure dabant.[90]
>
> [I have brought together these verses, which a spirit uttered in me while I was asleep: that night was burdensome. But I have not *written* as an authority these verses in a book; rather, I am passing on what I heard for you to read. A swelling of my own head did not cause me to *write* these things, but the voice of the people put them in my ear.][91]

As Minnis points out, Gower is denying that he bears primary responsibility for the matter of this book, that is, denying he is *auctor*. But his use of *scripsi* in line 1445 implies that the verb could be understood to be the act of an *auctor* and must have qualification *(vt auctor)*. His further use of the verb *scribere* in line 1447 is directly in the service of describing authorship: "A swelling of my own head did not cause *(fecit)* me to write *(scribere)* these things." This entire quotation from Gower displays an interesting struggle with what it might mean to distinguish levels of responsibility in different writing acts. Gower's final description of a community in the text—"the voice[s] of the people put them in my ear" [*vt voces plebis in aure dabant*]—is highly reminiscent of the Early Middle English formulations of a century before, but unlike the Early Middle English notion that the author joins that community, this scholastic-influenced idea is that this writer must separate himself from and defer to that community.[92]

Early Middle English Vocabulary of Writing

How does Early Middle English vocabulary of composition compare, in its articulation of relations between scribes and authors? I have surveyed the self-reflexive passages in a number of works in Early Middle English existing in manuscripts dated by paleographical means to have been copied between 1100 and 1300.[93] A consistent pattern emerges: the exact role of a writer (e.g., whether copyist or author) is often ambiguous; what is never ambiguous is the spiritual significance of the labor of writing, whatever form the labor takes.

Oxford, Jesus College MS 29 is one of the principal manuscripts containing Early Middle English (EME) texts; it was copied, according to Ker, between 1250 and 1300,[94] and it includes "The Owl and the Nightingale"

plus twenty-seven other EME texts. Three of the poems unique to Oxford, Jesus College MS 29 (hereafter Jesus 29) make mention of their writers, and as a group the poems exemplify an ambiguity about the precise writerly acts being carried out. The work listed in Morris's edition as "A Moral Ode: Tractatus quidam in anglico"[95] has an addendum after the "Amen" that exhorts the audience, who could either be reading or hearing, to pray for a writer who could be either copier or composer:

> þat we mote to him cume . hwenne we heonne wendeþ.
> Amen. Bidde we nu leoue freond . yonge and ek olde.
> þat *he þat þis wryt wrot* . his saule beo þer [heaven]
> atholde. Amen.[96]
>
> [that we might come to him, when we go from here.
> Amen. Let us pray now, dear friends, young as well as old,
> that *he who wrote this writing,* may his soul be kept there [in
> heaven]. Amen.]

The postscript placement of these lines might suggest that it is a copyist who asks to be prayed for, but similar vocabulary is used to refer to the writer of "A Luue Ron,"[97] who may well be the author of that poem as named in its incipit.

> Incipit quidam cantus quem *composuit* frater *Thomas de hales.*[98]
>
> [Here begins a certain song which Brother *Thomas of Hales composed.*]

The ending of "A Luue Ron" includes the following:

> þis rym mayde ich þe sende.
> open and wiþ-vte sel
> . . . . . .
> And yeue him god endynge.
> *þat haueþ iwryten þis ilke wryt.* Amen.[99]
>
> [This rhyme, maid, I send to you,
> open and without seal.
> . . . . . .
> And may God give him a good ending,
> *who has written this same writing.* Amen.]

The incipit, text, and epilogue of "A Luue Ron" tell a frame-story about a friar writing this song at the request of a young Christian woman, urging her to learn it "bute bok" (without the book, i.e., by heart) and teach it to her friends, and to take out the "wryt" (writing) and sing it to distract herself from "longynge" (desire).[100] The text represents itself as having been composed and copied by the same person and addressed to a specific reader. The third poem, "The Passion of our Lord,"[101] uses the same verb *iwryten* but constructs a context that mixes oral performance with written text and presents the writer/teller as not inventing but transmitting the text. The prologue assembles these elements in the first two lines:

> *Iherep* nv one lutele tale. þat ich eu wille *telle.*
> As we *vyndep hit iwrite. in þe godspelle.*[102]

> [Now *listen* to a little tale, that I will *tell* to you,
> As we *find it written,* in the Gospel.]

This frame-story postulates a teller reporting a tale he found written in the Bible, but the ending lines of the poem acknowledge that the text is a *writing* of his *telling;* the writer and the "teller" may or may not be the same.

> And *he þat hauep þis rym iwryten.* beo hwat he beo.
> God in þisse lyue. hyne lete wel iþeo.
> And alle his iveren. boþe yonge and olde.
> God heom lete heore ordre. trewliche her holde.[103]

> [And *he who has written this rhyme,* whatever he may be,
> May God cause him to prosper in this life.
> And [for] all his companions, both young and old,
> May God cause them to keep their vows faithfully here.]

Of the circumstances surrounding the making of these three works, we know only what the "frame-stories" tell us. To some extent they may be literary conventions. Nevertheless, they present three different scenarios for the relationship between composing and copying: (1) copier of another's composition; (2) composer/copyist (one person), writing to a specific person; (3) adapter of Holy Writ, either dictating or writing a text for oral

performance. Whether inventing or transmitting a text, all return to the same vocabulary for referring to themselves: He that has this writ or rhyme *iwryten*. Even more so than the Latin of twelfth-century English historians, Early Middle English vocabulary does not seem to discriminate between copying and composing.

The precise role of "the one who wrote" the poem variously called "The XI Pains of Hell" and "St. Paul's Vision,"[104] another work in Jesus 29, is complicated to reconstruct because the work exists in many versions (in Greek, Latin, and medieval vernaculars). The Jesus 29 text names a writer and calls attention to the writer in both English and French:

Ki ces .xi. peynes escryu(er)a.
Bon Auent(ur)e. ly auendra.
Hwo so wrot þes pyne(n) elleuene.
His soule mote cu(m)me te heuene.
(And) pleye þ(er) myd engles bryhte.
. . . . . .
For .Hug'. is his rihte nome
(And) he is curteys and hendy.
þi. god him lete wel endy. Am(en)—eN.[105]

[*Whoever wrote these "Eleven Pains"*
May good fortune come to him.
Whosoever wrote these "Pains Eleven"
May his soul go to heaven,
And play there amid the bright angels.
. . . . . .
For Hugh is his proper name
And he is courteous and gracious,
May God let him end well. Amen.]

Is Hug' the copyist, or is he versifier and/or translator? *The Manual of Writings in Middle English* classifies this text as version *a*, the earliest of six Middle English versions of the "Vision of St. Paul," and lists one other manuscript, Oxford, Bodley MS 1687 (Digby 86), containing this version with some variations.[106] The Digby 86 text[107] lacks all reference to Hug' or even to a generic "Hwo so wrot þes" [Whosoever wrote these] and instead extends the apostrophe and prayer to "Sweete Jhesu" with no

reference to any writer. In place of the Jesus 29 version's final five couplets, the Digby 86 version has a sixteen-line conclusion in which the verse form alters from couplets to rhyming quatrains that interlock with couplets in a more sophisticated rhyme scheme than that of the Jesus 29 text (*aa bb aaaa cccc bbbb*).[108] Thus both manuscript texts appear to have a somewhat detachable set of concluding verses, one set that suddenly departs from the rhyme scheme of the foregoing 291 lines, and one set that preserves the couplet rhyme scheme to the end and within that consistent verse form names its writer. The manuscripts are reported as roughly contemporary with each other,[109] so paleographical evidence cannot establish the chronological sequence of the two texts. Hug' may be the translator; Hug' may be the copyist; Hug' may be both. Whatever the case, the prayer for spiritual reward applies.

The Early Middle English *Juliana*[110] is another text that exists in two manuscripts, Oxford, Bodley MS 34 (S.C. 1883) and London, British Library MS Royal 17A.xxvii, both copied in the early thirteenth century,[111] and one of them, the Bodley 34 text (hereafter *Juliana*-Bodley 34), may discriminate between translator and scribe in its closing lines.

> Hwen drihtin o domes dei windweð his hweate. 7 [weopð] þ(æt)
> dusti chef to hellene heate. *He* mote beon a corn i godes
> guldene edene. *þe turnde þis of latin to engliSche ledene. Ant*
> *he þ(æt) her least. on wrat swa as he cuðe.* AMeN.[112]

> [When the lord winnows his wheat on the day of judgment and
> flings the
> dusty chaff to hell's heat, may *he* be a kernel in God's
> gilded Eden *who turned this from Latin to English song,*
> *as well as the last one who wrote here such as he knew how.* Amen.]

The other manuscript of *Juliana,* MS Royal 17A.xxvii (hereafter *Juliana*-Royal), does not contain the epilogue nor the specific reference to translator nor scribe. That these lines in Bodley 34 refer to two separate people, one who translated a Latin life of Juliana into English and another who wrote this particular manuscript, is probable; this was the interpretation of the sixteenth-century reader who wrote an updated version of these lines in the bottom margin of folio 52r of the manuscript, and of both nineteenth- and twentieth-century editors (although Cockayne, as mentioned earlier, fell into the trap of assuming EME *least* meant "least in importance" rather

than "last"). There is no sense that the scribe deserves any less reward than the translator, since the import of the whole epilogue is to grant the same wished-for reward—to be a "corn" in God's Eden—to both translator and writer equally.

Concluding lines in one of the manuscripts of the EME *Ancrene Riwle* also suggest a division of labor in the production of the text but again show no favoritism in requests for the readers' prayers. London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.xiv (hereafter *Ancrene*-Nero)[113] structures its penultimate sentence like the closing sentence of *Juliana*-Bodley 34,[114] but instead of copyist and translator *Ancrene*-Nero seems to distinguish copyist and composer/compiler:

> amen. asc ofte as 3e readeð out o þisse boc: greteð þe leafdi mid one aue marie *uor him ðet makede þeos riwle. and for him þet hire wrot and swonc her abuten.* Inouh meðful ich am: þet bidde so lutel.[115]
>
> [amen. As often as you read out of this book, praise the Lady with one Ave Maria *for him who made this rule, and for him who wrote it and labored here about.* I am very undemanding who asks so little.]

The syntax is more responsible than the vocabulary for suggesting that prayers for two people are called for. The *MED* defines *maken* as "to write or compose" and shows a range of meaning that extends from the physical act of writing ("to write (a letter of the alphabet)") to the administrative act of having a document drawn up ("to draw up and/or write a (legal or commercial document); also, have (such a document) made.") to the compositional act of authoring.[116] The phrase "him ðet makede þeos riwle" [him who made this rule] could theoretically refer to the copyist, except that in this case other words—"him þet hire wrot and swonc her abuten" [him who wrote it and labored here about]—seem to apply there. Even if we assume that the one who "makede" *Ancrene*-Nero is the one who originally drew the rule up, that person still gets no more and no less reward than the scribe: "one aue marie" from the reader.

This case is particularly interesting because two other manuscripts of the *Ancrene Riwle*, London, British Library MS Cotton Titus D.xviii (hereafter *Ancrene*-Titus)[117] and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 402 (hereafter *Ancrene*–Corpus Christi),[118] contain variations on the same appeal to the reader, but neither makes a clear distinction between roles of composer and copyist.

(1) Amen. Ase ofte as ȝe hauen red oht o þis boc? Gretes ure lauedi wið an. Aue. *for him þ(æt) swanc her abuten.*[119]

[Amen. As often as you have read out of this book, praise Our Lady with an Ave *for him who labored here about.*]

(2) AMeN. ASe ofte as ȝe habbeð ired eawiht her on? greteð þe leafdi wið an aue? *for him þ(æt) swonc her abuten.* Inoh meaðful ich am þe bidde se lutel. Explicit. Iþench o *þi writere* i þine beoden sumchearre? ne beo hit ne se lutel. hit turneð þe to gode. þ(æt) tu bidest for oþre.[120]

[AMeN. As often as you have read a whit herein, praise the Lady with an Ave *for him who labored here about.* I am very undemanding who asks so little. The End. Remember *your writer* in your prayers, be it ever so little. It turns you to good, that you pray for another.]

The simple appeal of *Ancrene*-Titus is the common denominator for all three texts, an invitation to pray for the one who *swanc,* who labored in an unspecific way—translating, compiling, or copying—to make this book. If we assume that the one who "swanc" is the copyist, as the reference seems to be in *Ancrene*-Nero, then what do we make of the second plea to pray for "þi writere" [your writer] in *Ancrene*–Corpus Christi? *Ancrene*–Corpus Christi is ambiguous about whether one or two persons is to be prayed for. The one who "swonc" (labored) may be the scribe and the "writere" the original author; the one who "swonc" may be the original author and the "writere" the present scribe; the one who "swonc" may be a former scribe and the "writere" the current scribe; the "writere" may indeed be intended to be the same as "him þ(æt) swonc," a variation in a second plea post-scripted for emphasis. EME *writere* can have the meaning of original author (e.g., in the London, British Library, MS Royal 17A.xxvii text of the life of St. Katherine);[121] it can also refer to a copyist, as in Ælfric's use of the term *unwritere.*[122] It has already been demonstrated that *writen* as a verb includes the whole range from "copy" to "compose" and does not necessarily distinguish those activities.[123] The positioning of the *Ancrene*–Corpus Christi plea *after* the explicit suggests it was an afterthought by the copyist to drum up support for himself or herself. What remains the case for all these appeals is that, whatever the ambiguity about who does what, none of

the various kinds of writers nor their activities are devalued below any others.

Far from indicating any sense of priority for composing over copying, then, self-referential passages in EME texts either obscure distinctions between copyists and composers or mete out the same reward to both. The speech by St. Margaret quoted at the beginning of this chapter fits this EME context as it multiplies the number of people with relations to this book and to God.

> Ich bidde 7 biseche þe . . . þ[et] hwa-se-eauer *boc writ of mi lif-lade,* oðer bi-ȝet hit iwriten, oðer halt hit 7 haueð oftest on honde, oðer hwa-se hit eauer *redeð,* oðer þene *redere* bliðeliche *lusteð*, wealdent of heouene, wurðe ham alle sone hare sunnen for-ȝeuene.[124]
>
> [I pray and beseech you . . . that whosoever *writes the book of my life,* or causes it to be written, or holds it and has it very often in hand, or whosoever *reads* it, or *listens* happily to its *reader,* Ruler of heaven, may all their sins be forgiven soon.]

Like this catalog of things to do with books, the emphasis of the EME attributions surveyed here is on the need for the spiritual benefits this labor of text making might have for the soul. There is no consistent attention to questions of original authorship in these exhortations, and indeed if there were, the concept of originality would have to be modified to take into account the fact that at least five of the seven texts cited here are translations from Latin or French (all except "A Luue Ron" and possibly *Ancrene Riwle*). Unlike the modern privileging of author over technician, these manuscripts do not favor one kind of writing over another; they do reveal a consistent privileging of spiritual reward over earthly reward. As earthly labors that might aid the soul's quest for God, translating, creating, adapting, copying were all equal.

These EME attitudes do not exist in a historical vacuum. Similar categories and values were present in Old English vernacular literature that preceded Early Middle English, but literary discussion of authors and scribes in Old English literature has been subject to the same print biases that may have distorted description of Latin vocabulary. Discussions of the status of the writer Cynewulf are a prime example. Since the runic "signatures" of Cynewulf were noticed in 1832, Cynewulf has been presumed the unquestioned author of the Old English poems *Elene, Juliana, Christ II,*

and *Fates of the Apostles,*[125] which are distributed among two manuscripts, the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book. Scholarly distinction of "author" from "scribe" or "adapter" has been enforced with such strength that evidence to the contrary has been simply ignored, for example by George Philip Krapp in 1932.

> By virtue of the runic symbols on fol. 133a, in the passage following the end of the narrative of *Elene,* this is one of the few Anglo-Saxon poems *the authorship of which is unquestioned,* for all agree that the poem was written by Cynewulf. This runic passage, it should be noted, is an appendage or epilogue to *Elene.* . . . Nothing in the content of this runic passage connects it inescapably with *Elene,* and *indeed it is so different in general style that it would seem to have been composed as an entirely independent effort.* The connection of the runic passage with the rest of the poem is therefore not structural but casual, *though this fact scarcely justifies any doubts of it as a genuine addition to Elene.*[126]

By "a genuine addition," Krapp meant an addition by the original author. That he felt impelled to reassure the reader of the "genuine" nature of the runic passage reveals the privileged position of original authorship in his (and, still, our modern) critical system: structural integrity can be sacrificed, but not single authorship.

The runic signatures of Cynewulf in the four Anglo-Saxon poems actually have much in common with the EME scribes' self-referential comments just surveyed. Two of the Cynewulfian poems, *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles,* ask the reader directly to pray for "me," presumably the Cynewulf whose name is embedded in the texts in runes:

> *Bidde ic* monna gehwone
> gumena cynnes, þe þis gied wræce,
> þæt he *mec* neodful *bi noman minum*
> *gemyne* modig, *ond meotud bidde*
> þæt *me* heofona helm helpe gefremme[127]

> [*I pray* to anyone
> among humankind who has moved through this poem
> that he *mention me by name,*
> earnest and full-spirited, *and that he pray to the creator*
> that the protector of heaven should afford *me* aid]

Nu *ic þonne bidde* beorn se ðe lufige
þysses giddes begang þæt he geomrum *me*
þone halgan heap *helpe bidde,*
friðes ond fultomes.
. . . . . .
Sie þæs gemyndig, mann se ðe lufige
þisses galdres begang, þæt he geoce *me*
ond frofre fricle.[128]

[Now, *therefore, I pray* to the man who appreciates
the course of this poem that *he pray*
to the holy apostles *for aid* of peace and protection
for mournful *me.*
. . . . . .
Let the man who appreciates the course of this song
be mindful of this, that he seek help
and comfort for *me.*]

These appeals use some of the same phrasing seen in the later EME scribal appeals, especially the initial word "bidde" (cf. "A Moral Ode": "Bidde we nu leoue freond . . ."). [129] Their purpose is the same in the EME and Old English texts: the reminder, after the text has been read or heard, that its existence depends on a person whose soul, like all souls, needs spiritual help in the form of prayer. As in many of the EME appeals, the precise writerly role of the person is not specified as author or scribe.

The Cynewulfian and the EME requests for readers' prayers both position themselves at or near the end of their texts, with the qualification that the Old English appeals are rather longer than the EME ones. The Old English attribution and appeal passages comprise 37 lines in *Juliana*, a text of 731 total extant lines; 35 lines in *Fates of the Apostles*, a text of 122 lines; 86 lines in *Elene*, a text of 1,321 lines, and 88 lines in *Christ II*, from a total of 427.

Only one of the four Cynewulfian endings, that in *Elene*, is markedly "detachable" like some of the EME ones. According to Krapp, the single manuscript of *Elene* is divided into numbered sections, and the narrative concludes at the end of section 14 with the marker "Finit." An additional section numbered 15 follows the "Finit" in the manuscript, and this "appendage or epilogue" contains the signature.[130] A stylistic marker also separates this final section from the preceding 1,235 poetic lines: con-

centrated end rhyme in lines 1236–50, including pairs "fus"-"hus," "þreodude"-"reodode," "nearwe"-"gearwe," "riht"-"miht," "asæled"-"gewæled," "onleac"-"breac," plus several off-rhymes. Such a prosodic shift recalls the similar case of the EME "XI Pains of Hell," which had two different "detachable" endings in Jesus 29 and Digby 86, one of which (Digby 86) altered the rhyme scheme of the final sixteen lines.

In two of the other Cynewulfian poems, the beginnings of the runic passages are signaled by a shift where the narrative voice suddenly steps into first person with a self-referential "ic" or "me" (*Christ II*, line 789; *Juliana*, line 695; *Fates* uses "ic" throughout), although this transition to a focus on the (or a) writer does not yield quite the sense of detachability that the closing of *Elene* signals. In *Juliana*, for example, the ending request for prayers (lines 695–731) completes a structure in which Juliana's past trials are set in parallel opposition to the speaker's present trials, a parallel supported by diction echoes between the runic passage and the earlier narrative (e.g., lines 699–700, cf. 669–70). The attribution passage is thus constructed to fit in with a larger rhetorical pattern. Whether completely "detachable" or not, however, the runic signatures of Cynewulf and the EME scribal claimers show overall at least as much similarity as difference of form and function.

My purpose here is not to prove that Cynewulf was a scribe rather than an author, but to focus on the lack of importance that distinction may have held in Anglo-Saxon and EME scribal culture. Even when a text includes a writer's name, the reason for that name's presence is not necessarily authorial attribution as a twentieth-century secular reader understands it. The ambiguous reference in Jesus 29 to Hug', quite possibly a copyist of "The XI Pains of Hell," bears witness to the inclusion of names other than original authors. The Old English *Juliana* clearly specifies that the name of Cynewulf is present *in order that* the reader can pray for him by name, "bi noman minum."[131] Both manuscripts of the EME Laȝamon's *Brut* invoke the same purpose, including the name not only of one text-maker but also of his father; both versions invite prayer for the parent as well as the writer.

> AN preost wes on leoden! *Laȝamon wes ihoten.*
> he wes *Leouenaðes sone!* liðe him beo Drihten.
> . . . . . .
> Nu bidde[ð] Laȝamon alene æðele mon!
> for þene almiten Godd.
> þet þeos boc rede! 7 leornia þeos runan.

þat he þeos soðfeste word! segge to-sumne.
for his fader saule! þa hine for[ð] brouhte.
7 for his moder saule! þa hine to monne iber.
7 for his awene saule! þat hire þe selre beo. Amen[132]

[A priest was among the people; *he was called Laȝamon.*
He was *Leovenath's son*—may God be kind to him.
. . . . . .
Now Laȝamon asks every noble person—
for the sake of almighty God—
who reads this book and takes in its knowledge
that he say the true words all properly together
for his father's soul, who brought him forth,
and for his mother's soul, who bore him,
and for his own soul, that it prosper. Amen.]

A prest was in londe. *Laweman. was hote.*
he was *Leucais sone.* lef him beo Driste.
. . . . . .
Nu biddeþ Laweman. echne godne mon.
for þe mistie Godes loue. þat þes boc redeþ.
þat he þis soþfast word segge togadere.
and bidde for *þe saule. þat hine to manne strende.*
and for his owene soule. þat hire þe bet bifalle. Amen.[133]

[A priest was in the land; *he was called Lawman.*
He was *Leuca's son.* May God bless him.
. . . . . .
Now Lawman asks each good person—
for the love of almighty God—who reads this book
that he say the true words all properly together
and pray for *the soul that begat him as a man*
and for his own soul, so that better things befall it. Amen.]

What emerges as much more important than the issue of author versus copyist for these scribal texts is the concept of texts as continuous linking bonds among various participants in a Christian reading community—those who have had some hand in producing the texts and those who read and pass them on.

The most distinctive writing dynamic expressed by EME texts concerns the relationships between writing and various acts of "joining," from the compiling writer who joins other texts together, to the fusion of the writers with other voices that constitute the text. Of course, compilation *(compilatio)* was not unique to Early Middle English texts. It had been and continued to be widely discussed in various periods of the middle ages. Contemporary with EME texts, Hugutio of Pisa (c. 1200), according to Minnis, wrote that *autor* (without a *c*) could mean *ligator*, "someone who ties together," and an etymological link was seen between the term *auctor* and the verb *auieo* for the kind of writing done by pagan poets who "'tied' together their verses with feet and metres."[134]

In the earlier context of sixth century monasticism, among the metaphors Cassiodorus had used to describe his writing was the image of text as a garment pieced together by the scribe/compiler. Cassiodorus emphasizes the assembly required to make such a "garment" in reference to his attempts to compile biblical commentary on the Book of Kings:

> In secundo vero Regum codice, quoniam continui textus expositionem reperire non potui, quaedam frustra disertissimorum vivorum velut in uno quodam vestimento contexui, ut membratim possit adunata collectione cognosci, quod sub uno corpore nequaquam potuit inveniri.[135]
>
> [In the second codex, that of Kings, since I have been unable to find an exposition of the complete text, I have clothed certain bits of the work of most skillful men in a single garment, as it were, that from the collection so assembled there may become known, limb by limb, what could in no way be found in a single body.][136]

The concept of "joining texts together" is also central to the particular textual tradition of which the EME Laȝamon's *Brut* forms a part, the historical text, specifically the history-of-Britain texts. The *Historia Brittonum*[137] attributed to Nennius, one of the early histories of Britain (seventh to mid–ninth centuries; preceded only by Gildas's *De excidio* and sections of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*), is by its own acknowledgment a collection, or "pile," of other texts and oral traditions:

> cum rudis eram ingenio et idiota sermone, haec pro modulo meo, non propriae nitens scientiae, quae vel nulla vel admodum rara et exilis est,

> Latinorum auribus idiomatizando tradere praesumpsi, sed partim maiorum traditionibus, partim scriptis, partim etiam monimentis veterum Britanniae incolarum, partim et de annalibus Romanorum, insuper et de cronicis sanctorum patrum, Isydori scilicet, Ieronymi, Prosperi, Eusebii nec non et de historiis Scottorum Saxonumque licet inimicorum non ut volui, sed ut potui, meorum obtemperans iussionibus seniorum, unam hanc historiunculam undecumque collectam balbutiendo *coacervavi*.[138]
>
> [being dull in intellect and rude of speech, I have presumed to deliver these things in the Latin tongue, not trusting to my own learning, which is little or none at all, but partly from traditions of our ancestors, partly from writings and monuments of the ancient inhabitants of Britain, partly from the annals of the Romans, and the chronicles of the sacred fathers, Isidore, Hieronymus, Prosper, Eusebius, and from the histories of the Scots and Saxons, although our enemies, not following my own inclinations, but, to the best of my ability, obeying the commands of my seniors; I have lispingly *put together (heaped up)* this history from various sources.][139]

The actual form of the *Historia Brittonum* texts is, as Robert W. Hanning puts it, "not a continuous narrative by one author, but a compilation of texts whose dates and places of origin are various and often obscure."[140] The list of chapters and their contents reflects all the variety of genre and nationality in the sources announced by "Nennius": genealogies or origin stories of the Saxons and Scots coexist with two different origin stories of the Britons; these are intermingled with lives of St. Patrick as well as King Arthur, two chapters of date computations, lists of marvels, a description of the island of Britain, and more.[141]

The textual tradition of the *Historia Brittonum* is complicated, and variant manuscript versions are the rule. Many of the manuscripts nevertheless preserve the verb *coacervavi* (to accumulate, heap up, make a pile) to describe their processes of formation, though not always in the passage as it is presented in the quotation above; it occurs in a closing apology in some manuscript versions. Naming sources is of course not unique to histories of Britain, but the way the *Historia Brittonum* calls attention to what it does with the disparate sources is extreme, and the descriptions in the prologues of La3amon's *Brut* several centuries later, of La3amon traveling to gather sources and almost literally piling his three books together (line 19, Calig-

ula, "Boc he nom þe þridde? leide þer anüdden"), partake of a process of compilation similar to that invoked in the earlier, Latin, history of Britain.

The model of texts as things compiled or joined together also was present in Old English vernacular literature in a range of genres and was often expressed with some form of the Old English word *fegan,* "to join," in contexts specific to language, rhetoric, and writing.[142] Old English textbooks made heavy use of forms of *fegan* to refer to grammatical and rhetorical "joinings" (like compound words and conjunctions),[143] and Ælfric's grammar used the word to mean "compose" (he translated Latin *compono* as Old English *ic gefege,* "I compose"), although the meaning of compose may have been more general than written composition.[144]

Two clear Old English uses of *fegan* to mean an act of writing occur in *Fates of the Apostles* and in the Old English *Meters of Boethius.*[145] *Fates of the Apostles,* one of those provocative texts with the runic "signature" of Cynewulf, catalogs in verse the twelve Christian saint-heroes. *Fegde* occurs in the runic section and describes the activity—of copying, composing, and/or compiling—of the person about to be named by the runes.

> Her mæg findan foreþances gleaw,
> se ðe hine lysteð leoðgiddunga,
> hwa þas fitte *fegde.*[146]
>
> [In this place can anyone who desires it,
> keen of deliberation, find who *joined together*
> this fit, this poem.]

In the text's own terms, Cynewulf's role in the making of the work is that of a "joiner," like Laȝamon.

The Old English *Meters of Boethius* uses the word *gefegean* to express Boethius's making of songs, or "ged":

> Me þios siccetung haſaþ
> agæled, ðes geocsa, þæt ic þa ged ne mæg
> *gefegean* swa fægre, þeah ic fela gio þa
> sette soðcwida, þonne ic on sælum wæs.[147]
>
> [This sighing, this sobbing,
> have held me back, so that I cannot
> *join together* the songs as fairly as when I was

in happiness and prosperity, though in former times
I set many into true speech.]

A partial translation of book 1, proem 1 of the Latin *Philosophiae Consolatio*,[148] the Old English Meter 2 has altered one aspect of the Latin text: in the Latin, Boethius though sorely tried is *not* deserted by poetry and the muses; in the Old English, the speaker bemoans in a conventional elegiac mode that his skill in making verses *has* diminished. By modern standards, this is adaptation, not strict translation. The speakers of the Old English *Meters of Boethius* and *Fates of the Apostles* use the term *fegan* to represent themselves as putting a song or poem together, not preserving a text unchanged.

To conclude this survey of attitudes about writers and writing that had bearing on EME scribal texts, let us return to the second EME text quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Laȝamon's *Brut*, for a fuller look. The prologues in both manuscripts of Laȝamon's *Brut* (hereafter La3*Brut*-Otho and La3*Brut*-Caligula)[149] accord with the textual model of compilation and add to that the idea of collaboration. They portray a text-maker as one who joins texts with texts and texts with people.

Laȝamon gon liðen: wide ȝond þas leode.
7 bi-won þa æðela boc: þa he to bisne nom.
He nom þa Englisca boc: þa makede Seint Beda.
An oþer he nom on Latin: þe makede Seinte Albin.
7 þe feire Austin: þe fulluht broute hider in.
Boc he nom þe þridde: leide þer amidden.
þa makede a Frenchis clerc:
Wace wes ihoten: þe wel couþe writen.
7 he hoe ȝef þare æðelen: Ælienor
þe wes Henries quene: þes heȝes kinges.
Laȝamon leide þeos boc: 7 þa leaf wende.
he heom leofliche bi-heold. liþe him beo Drihten.
Feþeren he nom mid fingren: 7 fiede on boc-felle.
7 þa soþere word: sette to-gadere.
7 þa þre boc: þrumde to are.[150]

[Laȝamon went traveling, widely ranging around the land's people,
and he obtained the noble books that he took for exemplars.
He took the English book that Saint Bede made;

Another he took in Latin, that was made by Saint Albin
and the fair Augustine, who brought baptism here;
he took the third book—laid it there in the middle—
that a French clerk made,
Wace he was called, who knew how to write well,
and who gave it to the noble Eleanor
who was the queen of Henry, the high king.
Lazamon laid these books down and turned the leaves.
He beheld them lovingly—may God be kind to him.
He took feathers (quill pens) with his fingers and fused them to the bookskin,
and the truer words he set together,
and the three books fused to one.]

Loweman gan wende? so wide so was þat londe.
and nom þe Englisse boc. þat makede Seint Bede.
Anoþer he nom of Latin. þat makede Seint Albin.
Boc he nom þan þridde. an leide þar amidde.
þat makede Austin. þat follo[s]t bro[s]te hider in.
Laweman þes bokes biеolde. an þe leues tornde.
he ham loueliche bi-helde. fulste God þe miþtie.
Feþere he nom mid fingres. and wrot mid his honde.
and þe soþe word sette togedere.
and þane hilke boc tock us to bisne.[151]

[Lawman went traveling as wide as was the land,
and took the English book that Saint Bede made;
another he took of Latin, that Saint Albin made;
a third book he took and laid it there in the middle,
that Augustine, who brought baptism here, made.
Lawman beheld the books and turned the leaves—
he beheld them lovingly—may God the mighty aid him.
He took feather (quill pen) with his fingers and wrote with his hand
and set the true words together,
and that same book gave us as a model.]

The prologues elicit the idea of a text as something that partakes of a number of previous texts, their writers, and readers. They emphasize the model of the writer gathering and joining materials and words, in their

narrative of Laȝamon's travels to find exemplars, in their list of three sources, and especially in their diction. Laȝamon "sette to-gadere" [set together] the words (line 27). Laȝamon "þrumde" the three books "to are" (combined or perhaps even "threed"[152] the three books to one) in Laȝ*Brut*-Caligula line 28. In Laȝ*Brut*-Caligula he "fiede" (joined) pen and fingers to vellum to write the history (line 26).

That image of joining the fingers and feather and bookskin takes Laȝamon's act beyond compilation into collaboration. This word "fiede" is an EME form of the verb Old English *fegan*. According to the *MED*, the use of *feien* ("to join") in the context of writing is rare in Middle English, in fact unique to this passage in Laȝ*Brut*-Caligula.[153] Its use here clearly draws on the history of Old English usage of *fegan* in contexts specific to language, rhetoric, and writing, but unlike those Old English uses it adds the idea of the writer himself joining the text. That idea is reinforced by the prologues' descriptions of how reading functions in this system of composition.

Concluding each Laȝamon's *Brut* prologue is the invocation of reading and praying that links the activity of readers of this text to that of the writer Laȝamon at the beginning.

> on-fest Radestone. þer *he bock radde.*
> Hit com him on mode: . . .
> . . . . . .
> Nu bidde[ð] Laȝamon alene æðele mon:
> for þene almiten Godd.
> *þet þeos boc rede:* 7 leornia þeos runan.
> þat he þeos soðfeste word: segge to-sumne.[154]
>
> [next to Redstone where *he read books* (or *the book*).
> It came into his mind . . .
> . . . . . .
> Now Laȝamon asks every noble person—
> for the sake of almighty God—
> *who reads this book* and takes in its knowledge
> that he say the true words all properly together.]
>
> faste bi Radistone þer *heo bokes radde.*
> Hit com him on mode. . . .
> Nu biddeþ Laweman. echne godne mon.

for þe mistie Godes loue. *þat þes boc redeþ.*
þat he þis soþfast word segge togadere.[155]

[hard by Redstone where *he read books.*
It came into his mind . . .
Now Lawman asks each good person—
for the love of almighty God—*who reads this book*
that he say the true words all properly together.]

The voice of the prologue thus articulates not just a theory of writing but a theory of reading. The two activities are cyclically joined: reading led to thought led to touching books led to writing led to someone else reading. That "someone else" (the reader) is invited to take in the secrets and say together a prayer for Laȝamon and his father (and his mother, in La3*Brut*-Caligula only). Before the narrative opens in line 38, the prologue makes a final statement that he who *was* priest *now* says with song of praise all that the *books speak* that he took as a model (paraphrase of lines 36–37). *He* and *the book* both speak, and fuse as one. By this prologue's own statement, the book of Laȝamon that we read is not totally separate from the books that Laȝamon read and "threed to one" (La3*Brut*-Caligula). Rather, all are versions of a continuing text.

The prologues to Laȝamon's *Brut* invoke assumptions about texts from several overlapping medieval scribal traditions: the idea of divine letters that a text is a conduit of sacred truth; the demonstrable freedom with respect to secular letters for writers other than original authors to make radical changes in the reproduction of a text; the attitude expressed in EME (and other) manuscripts that no labor of writing—or even reading—is devalued in the sight of God; the model from Anglo-Saxon poetry and from the Latin subgenre of British history that writers of all kinds were compilers and "joiners," and that texts were things assembled and joined together as well as media that continue to bond Christian writers and readers. This set of attitudes did not, as in later scholastic theorizing or in modern print culture, center textual authority in human authors in the sense of devaluing the "transmitters," those who collaborated in the series of textual reproductions. Rather than prioritizing any one manuscript version of a text on the basis of its place in a chronological sequence, this set of assumptions prioritized the continuance itself of a text. The emphasis of this particularly configured medieval scribal textual community is not only on the object of the text but on the process between text and reader, a

process of collaboration among first authors, scribes, illuminators, correctors, annotators, and other readers. The continuance of such a scribal text did not mean exactly repeated "mechanical" reproduction, but instead a renegotiation among meaning and words of preceding models and current writers and readers every time a single codex was reproduced.