



ROBERT THORNTON AND HIS BOOKS

Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts

Edited by SUSANNA FEIN
and MICHAEL JOHNSTON

Robert Thornton and his Books

YORK MEDIEVAL PRESS

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Essays on the Lincoln and London
Thornton Manuscripts

Edited by

Susanna Fein

Michael Johnston



THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

YORK MEDIEVAL PRESS

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Contributors

Julie Nelson Couch	Texas Tech University
Susanna Fein	Kent State University
Rosalind Field	Royal Holloway, University of London
Joel Fredell	Southeastern Louisiana University
Ralph Hanna	University of Oxford
Michael Johnston	Purdue University
George R. Keiser	Independent scholar, formerly Kansas State University
Julie Orlemanski	University of Chicago
Mary Michele Poellinger	University of Leeds
Dav Smith	University of York
Thorlac Turville-Petre	University of Nottingham

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Abbreviations

ANTS	Anglo-Norman Text Society
<i>Archiv</i>	<i>Archiv für das Studien der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>
BL	British Library
Briquet	C.-M. Briquet, <i>Les filigranes</i> , 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1923)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DIMEV	L. R. Mooney, D. W. Mosser, E. Solopova and D. H. Radcliffe, <i>The Digital Index of Middle English Verse</i> , www.dimev.net
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
EETS ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS SS	Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series
IPMEP	R. E. Lewis, N. F. Blake and A. S. G. Edwards, <i>Index of Printed Middle English Prose</i> (New York, 1985)
LALME	A. McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Benskin, with M. Laing and K. Williamson, <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> , 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986)
<i>Manual</i>	J. B. Severs, A. E. Hartung and P. G. Beidler, eds., <i>A Manual of Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500</i> , 11 vols. (New Haven, 1967–2005)
<i>Manual</i> 1, I	M. J. Donovan, C. W. Dunn, L. H. Hornstein, R. M. Luminansky, H. Newstead and H. M. Smyser, 'I. Romances', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. J. B. Severs, vol. 1 (New Haven, 1967)
<i>Manual</i> 2, V	C. D'Evelyn and F. A. Foster, 'V. Saints' Legends', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. J. B. Severs, vol. 2 (New Haven, 1970)
<i>Manual</i> 3, VII	F. L. Utley, 'VII. Dialogues, Debates, and Catechisms', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 3 (New Haven, 1972)
<i>Manual</i> 5, XIII	R. H. Robbins, 'XIII. Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 5 (New Haven, 1975)
<i>Manual</i> 6, XIV	R. L. Greene, 'XIV. Carols', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 6 (New Haven, 1980)
<i>Manual</i> 6, XVI	A. Renoir and C. D. Benson, 'XVI. John Lydgate', in <i>Manual</i> , ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 6 (New Haven, 1980)

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- Manual* 7, XX R. R. Raymo, 'XX. Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction', in *Manual*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 7 (New Haven, 1986)
- Manual* 9, XXII C. Louis, 'XXII. Proverbs, Precepts, and Monitory Pieces', in *Manual*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 9 (New Haven, 1993)
- Manual* 9, XXIII V. M. Lagorio and M. G. Sargent, with R. Bradley, 'XXIII. English Mystical Writings', in *Manual*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 9 (New Haven, 1993)
- Manual* 9, XXIV T. D. Cook, with P. Whiteford and N. M. Kennedy, 'XXIV. Tales', in *Manual*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 9 (New Haven, 1993)
- Manual* 10, XXV G. R. Keiser, 'XXV. Works of Science and Information', in *Manual*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 10 (New Haven, 1998)
- MED H. Jurath, S. H. Kuhn *et al.*, *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor MI, 1954–2001), <http://www.quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med>
- NIMEV J. Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse* (London, 2005)
- NLS National Library of Scotland
- NLW National Library of Wales
- PMLA *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
- STC A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, 2nd rev. edn, ed. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London, 1976–91)
- STS Scottish Text Society
- TCD Trinity College Dublin
- Thompson, J. J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton London Manuscript: British Library MS Additional 31042, Manuscript Thornton MS Studies* 2 (Cambridge, 1987)
- The Thornton MS*, intro. D. S. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen (London, 1975)
- Brewer and Owen

Note on the Presentation of Thornton Texts

When items from the Thornton manuscripts are accompanied by article numbers, the numbering conforms to the List of Contents provided in Chapter One of the present volume (Susanna Fein, 'The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manu-

Abbreviations

scripts'). Titles also agree with the List of Contents. In quoting specific Thornton texts, the authors usually rely on critical editions, as cited. When quotations are drawn directly from the manuscripts, folio numbers are provided, and the manner of transcription accords with that detailed in Fein's chapter, p. 21.

Introduction

The Cheese and the Worms and Robert Thornton

Michael Johnston

Why an entire essay collection on one manuscript compiler, who has left us but two manuscripts? Or so might the sceptical reader justifiably ask. And yet the value in sustained, focused and collective analysis of Robert Thornton and his manuscripts lies in the amazing wealth of detail we can find – details about the compilation and scribal practices of an identifiable historical figure; about the diversity and contours of vernacular and Latin literary culture in a provincial fifteenth-century English locale; about one specific instantiation of lay piety; about one individual's understanding of literary genres and verse forms; about medieval medicinal beliefs and practices; about conceptions of illumination and decoration in the non-commercial book; about the book production industry in regions beyond London; and about the literary activities of the late medieval gentry. Of course, I could go on, but these occur to me as the primary ways in which Robert Thornton and his books matter, and these are the primary topics taken up in the essays to follow.

I want briefly to propose here that micro-history provides us with a model through which we might better understand Thornton and his two manuscripts – and why they matter. As Giovanni Levi states,

The unifying principle of all microhistorical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved ... Phenomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation. It is then possible to use these results to draw far wider generalizations although the initial observations were made within relatively narrow dimensions and as experiments rather than examples.¹

* I wish to thank my colleague from Purdue's Department of History, William Gray, for a series of stimulating discussions about micro-history and current trends in historiography.

¹ G. Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. P. Burke, 2nd edn (University Park PA, 2001), pp. 93–119 (pp. 101–2). For further reflection on the practice of microhistory, see E. Muir, 'Introduction: Observing Trifles', in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples*

Or, as Carlo Ginzburg more gnominically puts it, 'A close-up look permits us to grasp what eludes a comprehensive viewing, and vice versa.'² Micro-historians exploit understudied archives that reveal information about the marginalized, those whose voices tend to be ignored or, more often, studiously written out of most surviving records. Most often these are freak survivals that happened to record the testimony of peasants or other non-dominant voices. Attending to such archives, these historians demonstrate, gives us access to the *mentalités* and ideologies of both the dominant and the marginalized – and of the tensions therein – and thus yields a richer picture than when we rely on documents constructed by the dominant powers in society, like chronicles, statutes, courtly literature or epistolary correspondence. Micro-history offers a leftist counter-narrative to the leftist, *longue durée* view of the Annales School, known to medievalists primarily through the work of Marc Bloch, Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff, who attempt to think in large-scale terms about the structures governing social life across broad geopolitical and temporal swathes.

In the essays to follow, by putting Thornton and his two codices under the microscope, so to speak, the contributors take up Levi's and Ginzburg's challenges. Of course, Thornton was not a marginalized figure in his society – far from it. The fact that he had the power of the pen/quill, was an active landowner, had the place of honour in his parish church and served on county commissions all suggest that we should not include him within the normal purview of micro-history. Yet when we turn our attention to late medieval book production as a whole, Thornton does come into focus as a marginalized figure, of sorts. That is, he does not fit any of the larger patterns in which most historians of English book production have been interested of late. Thornton is, in the vein of micro-historiography, the marginalized exception that can help us understand better the rules governing book production and circulation in fifteenth-century England.

For example, scholars have recently delved into the role of Middle English authors in the production and dissemination of their own texts or their role in manuscript production, particularly works by Hoccleve, Bokenham and Capgrave.³ We have also paid particular attention to the growth of the London

of Europe, ed. E. Muir and G. Ruggiero, trans. E. Branch (Baltimore, 1991), pp. vii–xxviii; and C. Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', trans. J. Tedeschi and A. C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993), 10–35.

² Ginzburg, 'Microhistory', p. 26.

³ On Hoccleve, see J. J. Thompson, 'Thomas Hoccleve and Manuscript Culture', in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. H. Cooney (Dublin, 2001), pp. 81–94; D. Watt, '“I this book shal make”: Thomas Hoccleve's Self-Publication and Book Production', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 34 (2003), 133–60; and L. R. Mooney, 'A Holograph Copy of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 33 (2011), 263–96; on Bokenham, see S. Horobin, 'A Manuscript Found in Abbotsford House and the

book production industry, as it slowly emerged in the late fourteenth century from being just one city amongst many in England, to its position as the dominant production centre for the entire nation. We have recovered much about high-end, commercially produced copies of the works of Gower, Chaucer and Langland from this period.⁴ In these years, the commercial industry fitfully centralized its processes: at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the process was largely decentralized. Take, for example, the well-known case of the Trinity Gower manuscript, where five different scribes were at work separately on individual quires. At the same time, Adam Pinkhurst was cobbling together the Hengwrt manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* from loose quires.⁵ By the mid to late fifteenth century, commercially organized copyists were producing multiple copies of the prose *Brut* and *Nova statuta*, almost certainly on a speculative basis, alongside the more decentralized method that continued to operate.⁶

Legendary of Osbern Bokenham', in *Regional Manuscripts 1200–1700*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards, English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700, vol. 14 (London, 2008), pp. 132–64; and on Capgrave, see P. J. Lucas, *From Author to Audience: John Capgrave and Medieval Publication* (Dublin, 1997).

⁴ On the production of Chaucer manuscripts, see, for example, L. R. Mooney, 'Chaucer's Scribe', *Speculum* 81 (2006), 97–138; and S. Horobin, 'Adam Pinkhurst, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the Hengwrt Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*', *Chaucer Review* 44 (2010), 351–67; on Gower, see K. Harris, 'Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1993); and D. Pearsall, 'The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. S. Echard (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 73–97; on Langland, see A. I. Doyle, 'Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. G. Kratzmann and J. Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 35–48; L. R. Mooney and S. Horobin, 'A *Piers Plowman* Manuscript by the Hengwrt/Ellesmere Scribe and Its Implications for London Standard English', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 26 (2004), 65–112; and S. Horobin, 'Adam Pinkhurst and the Copying of British Library, MS Additional 35287 of the B Version of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 23 (2009), 61–83.

⁵ Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R. 3. 2, and Aberystwyth, NLW, MS Peniarth 392D (Hengwrt). See A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210; and Horobin, 'Adam Pinkhurst'.

⁶ On the generally decentralized methods of commercial book production in late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century London, see Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production'; C. P. Christianson, *Memorials of the Book Trade in Medieval London: The Archives of Old London Bridge* (Cambridge, 1987); C. P. Christianson, 'The Rise of London's Book Trade', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume 3, 1400–1557*, ed. L. Hellenga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 128–47; and L. R. Mooney, 'Locating Scribal Activity in Late Medieval London', in *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. M. Connolly and L. R. Mooney (York, 2008), pp. 183–204. On the development of centralized commercial scriptoria producing books on a speculative basis, see K. L. Scott, 'A Late Fifteenth-Century Group of *Nova Statuta* Manuscripts', in *Manuscripts at Oxford: An Exhibition in Memory of Richard William Hunt (1908–1979)*, *Keeper of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library Oxford, 1945–1975, on Themes*

Thus the industry was slowly evolving into the more properly centralized operations of Caxton's press at Westminster.⁷ Finally, we have been interested in and learned a great deal about book production and circulation within specific communities with specific textual needs, most notably the Lollards, various noble households, religious institutions and London merchants and clerics who shared 'common-profit' books and libraries.⁸

Thornton, however, fits none of these patterns; his methods are better thought of as both ad hoc and atomized – ad hoc in his compiling and scribal methods, atomized in his individuality and divergence from any of the major trends I have just outlined from this period. R. J. Lyall suggests three basic models for how books were made in late medieval England: they could be made on commission, they could be produced within a religious house for use in that religious house, and they could be made by an individual for his or his family's domestic use.⁹ It is this last category that eludes scholarly systemization, largely because it is not, by its very nature, systemizable. Those producing books for their own use were not compelled to follow the best practices of commercial

Selected and Described by Some of His Friends, ed. A. C. de la Mare and B. C. Barker-Benfield (Oxford, 1980), pp. 102–5; and L. R. Mooney and L. M. Matheson, 'The Beryn Scribe and His Texts: Evidence for Multiple-Copy Production of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England', *The Library* 7th ser. 4 (2003), 347–70.

⁷ N. F. Blake, *Caxton and His World* (London, 1969); and L. Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London, 2010).

⁸ On Lollard book production and circulation see, for example, M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984); A. Hudson, 'Lollard Book Production', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall, Cambridge Studies in Publishing and Printing History (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 125–42; M. Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007); and R. Copeland, 'Lollard Writings', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100–1500*, ed. L. Scanlon (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 111–23. On noble houses and book production see, for example, R. Hanna, 'Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage', *Speculum* 64 (1989), 878–916; and R. Hanna and A. S. G. Edwards, 'Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58 (1996), 11–35. On religious houses and the production of vernacular literature see, for example, M. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 225–40; A. I. Doyle, 'Publication by Members of the Religious Orders', in *Book Production*, ed. Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 109–23; and V. Gillespie, 'Dial M for Mystic: Mystical Texts in the Library of Syon Abbey and the Spirituality of the Syon Brethren', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Ireland and Wales*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 241–68. On 'common-profit' books and libraries see, for example, J. A. H. Moran, 'A "Common Profit" Library in Fifteenth-Century England and Other Books for Chaplains', *Manuscripta* 28 (1984), 17–25; and W. Scase, 'Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter and John Colop's "Common-Profit" Books: Aspects of Book Ownership and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century London', *Medium Ævum* 61 (1992), 261–74.

⁹ R. J. Lyall, 'Materials: The Paper Revolution', in *Book Production*, ed. Griffiths and Pearsall, pp. 11–29.

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scribal culture, for they had no patron or commissioner to please. They were, then, not creating a commodity so much as an idiosyncratic artefact. Many such 'own-use' Middle English books survive; however, what makes Thornton so valuable is both that he has left us two large artefacts of this nature and that we know a reasonable amount about his life and social world, which we can read in the context of his compilation, shedding light on both the man and his books. Thus, with Thornton, we can fill out much of the personality subtending his idiosyncratic codices.

These idiosyncrasies are precisely what make Thornton so valuable to literary historians and book historians alike. As micro-historians rightly insist, the idiosyncratic matters because it disrupts grand narratives about cultural, social, economic and political history. For example, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's study of the village of Montaillou (about 100 km south of Toulouse) in the early fourteenth century reveals how variant its culture was from the model which medieval historians have offered for the Comté de Foix and for France *in toto*.¹⁰ Ladurie reveals how Catharism survived long after the Albigensian Crusade in this locale, largely on a domus-by-domus basis, where individual homes formed the primary social unit of the society, and where such homes comprised isolated Cathar communities, linked to one another by informal neighbourly relations. There was also, Ladurie reveals, remarkably little feudal class conflict in Montaillou, for there were no resident noblemen; however, what the residents lacked in acrimony towards aristocratic landlords they made up in acrimony towards the Church, which vigorously defended its tithe-collecting prerogatives. From this historical study we also learn much about peasant *mentalités*, in particular their attitudes towards aesthetics, gender relations, marital fidelity, animals and dogma, among many others, none of which can be encompassed by larger-scale histories. Although the most ardent Cathars in the village scorned Mass and the sacrament of the Eucharist, everyone participated in All Saints' Day masses, which were tied to the beginning of the winter sheep pasturing. Moreover, the entire village seems to have believed passionately in the dogma of Original Sin (and hence baptism) and confession, in spite of the widespread anticlerical attitudes and even the Catharism of their lone parish priest. Ultimately, then, Ladurie's analysis shows a village of such complexity as to elude larger grand narratives about medieval French peasant society and about medieval popular religion.

Likewise, Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* provides insight into the epistemology of sixteenth-century peasants in Artigat (coincidentally, located in the same county as Montaillou).¹¹ Davis tells the story of Martin Guerre, who fled his home when he was accused of stealing from his

¹⁰ E. L. R. Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. B. Bray (New York, 1978).

¹¹ N. Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge MA, 1983).

father, a major transgression in French peasant society. Later, Arnaud du Tilh, a down-on-his-luck soldier, was mistaken for Martin Guerre and, realizing that he must look like this stranger and that this stranger must be absent from his native society, pulled a brilliant confidence trick by going to Guerre's village and passing himself off as the prodigal son returned home. Arnaud even took up with Martin's wife and had children by her. Eventually his ruse was uncovered, and this is where Davis's historical work is most penetrating. She shows how multivalent and complex were the peasants' understandings of juridical truth. At the various trials of Arnaud, witnesses displayed a startling variety of epistemological approaches to truth, some pertinaciously insisting that Arnaud was in fact Guerre, others insisting he was an impostor.

But perhaps the most memorable and well-known example of micro-history is Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*, which analyses the strange and brilliant theories of a sixteenth-century Italian miller, Menocchio, who was tried and convicted of heresy by the Inquisition and was executed, at the pope's command, in 1601. Menocchio's trial records reveal a man who espoused a materialist, pantheistic, sceptical and pluralistic theology. His ecclesiology even replicated cutting-edge radical Protestant thought of the most erudite type, yet as Ginzburg shows, Menocchio arrived at his own ideas independently, primarily through a heady mix of oral tradition, selective reading of numerous books (from Jacobus de Voragine to Mandeville to possibly even the Koran) and an active imagination. His cosmogony is the most memorable thing to survive from his trial, whence the title of Ginzburg's book:

'I have said that, in my opinion, all was chaos ... and out of that bulk a mass formed – just as cheese is made out of milk – and worms appeared in it, and these were the angels. The most holy majesty decreed that these should be God and the angels, and among that number of angels, there was also God, *he too having been created out of that mass at the same time.*'¹²

As Ginzburg demonstrates, 'An almost exclusively oral culture such as that of the subordinate classes of preindustrial Europe tends not to leave traces, or, at least, the traces left are distorted.'¹³ By reconstructing Menocchio's *mentalité*, as well as those of the villagers of Montaillou or Artigat, we are left with a richer, and more accurate, picture of cultural attitudes.

In some ways, then, Thornton can be thought of as a fifteenth-century English Menocchio – minus the idiosyncratic metaphysics and heterodox theology. That is, he was an eager textual collector whose own personal tastes and predilections are borne out by the volume(s) he has left us, and whose

¹² C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. J. Tedeschi and A. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1980), p. 53; italics in original.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

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tastes were sufficiently catholic to leave us traces of a wide range of cultural practices, all of which stands outside the *longue durée* narrative of book production in this period. So although Thornton is not at all counter-cultural, he is like Menocchio in that snippets of both of their personalities come through in the artefacts they have left us. This glimpse is all the more valuable in Thornton's case, since most surviving Middle English books are silent about both their production and their early provenance – and with Thornton, he himself is the key to *both* production and provenance.

What we know about Thornton and his books

Before launching into these essays that reveal new information about Thornton, it is worth pausing to take stock of the picture scholarship has hitherto painted of Thornton. Here, I will briefly suggest that we have approached Thornton from five main angles, each of which provides valuable insight into his working methods and cultural world, and each of which the essays to follow profitably expand upon. The diversity of these approaches also testifies to the cultural diversity contained within the medieval book, and to the complexity of the codex. The first such category involves codicological and palaeographical analyses, which have shed much light on Thornton's working methods.¹⁴ From such

¹⁴ On Thornton's compiling methods see, for example, A. McIntosh, 'The Textual Transmission of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', in *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. N. Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London, 1962), pp. 231–40; G. R. Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe', *Studies in Bibliography* 32 (1979), 158–79; J. J. Thompson, 'The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton and the "Thornton Romances" in Lincoln Cathedral MS 91', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study: Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 113–24; Thompson, *London Thornton Manuscript*; R. Hanna, 'The Growth of Robert Thornton's Books', *Studies in Bibliography* 40 (1987), 51–61; R. Kennedy, 'The Evangelist in Robert Thornton's Devotional Book: Organizing Principles at the Level of the Quire', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 8 (2005), 71–95; and J.-P. Pouzet, "'Space this werke to wirke': Quelques figures de la complémentarité dans les manuscrits de Robert Thornton', in *La Complémentarité: Mélanges offerts à Josseline Bidard et Arlette Sancery à l'occasion de leur départ en retraite*, ed. M.-F. Alamichel (Paris, 2005), pp. 27–42. On Thornton's scribal habits see, for example, P. R. Robinson, 'A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Mediaeval Manuscripts' (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1972), pp. 66–70; D. Lawton, 'Gaytryge's Sermon, "Dictamen", and Middle English Alliterative Verse', *Modern Philology* 76 (1979), 329–43; M. Hamel, 'Scribal Self-Corrections in the Thornton *Morte Arthure*', *Studies in Bibliography* 36 (1983), 119–37; H. N. Duggan, 'Alliterative Patterning as a Basis for Emendation in Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 8 (1986), 73–105; J. A. Jefferson and A. Putter, 'Alliterative Patterning in the *Morte Arthure*', *Studies in Philology* 102 (2005), 415–33; and J. I. Carlson, 'Scribal Intentions in Medieval

analyses, a general picture of Thornton as scribe and compiler has emerged: we now know of Thornton as someone who worked at his compilations over a long period of time and who sought to compile texts into booklets marked by a rough generic homogeneity. Thanks to codicological analyses of both manuscripts together, we have recovered Thornton as someone who struggled to maintain this rough homogeneity by simultaneously juggling numerous booklets that were constantly evolving, and as someone who frequently 'circled back' to expand quires as he came across new texts. Thus, he often added to quires after he had begun copying by nesting smaller quires inside already-folded ones. We also know that Thornton was a scribe who, in the words of the most recent analyst, 'engaged in predictable [scribal] interventions motivated by a desire to present these tales orally for the moral education of his family'.¹⁵

Second, we now know of Thornton as someone who had a rough sense of the need for thematic coherence to his codices and who sought to elicit certain responses from readers based on the pairing or series of texts he compiled.¹⁶ For example, he copied out the alliterative *Morte Arthure* very early in his compilation process, following it with several other texts, primarily romances, that do not seem thematically related (viz., *Northern Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Earl of Toulouse*, *Life of Saint Christopher*, *Sir Degrevant* and *Sir Eglamour of Artois*). Later in the process of compiling the Lincoln manuscript, however, he came across a prose *Life of Alexander*, which he added to the front of the alliterative *Morte*. As a result, based on their codicological proximity, the prose *Life*

Romance: A Case Study of Robert Thornton', *Studies in Bibliography* 58 (2007–8), 49–71. Yet more light on Thornton and his texts may soon emerge, as Fred Porcheddu and Patrick J. Murphy are currently studying Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 11. 45, containing a letter which they argue originates with Thornton and refers to his alliterative *Morte Arthure*. I thank Fred for sharing these details with me in private correspondence.

¹⁵ Carlson, 'Scribal Intentions', p. 53.

¹⁶ See, for example, O. J. Daly, 'This World and the Next: Social and Religious Ideologies in the Romances of the Thornton Manuscript' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1977); S. Fein, 'Quatrefoil and Quatrefolia: The Devotional Layout of an Alliterative Poem', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 2 (1999), 26–45; P. Hardman, 'The Siege of Melayne: A Fifteenth-Century Reading', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. R. Field (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 71–86; P. Hardman, 'Compiling the Nation: Fifteenth-Century Miscellany Manuscripts', in *Nation, Court and Culture*, ed. Cooney, 50–69; J. Finlayson, 'Reading Romances in Their Manuscript: Lincoln Cathedral Manuscript 91 ("Thornton")', *Anglia* 123 (2005), 632–66; E. Leverett, 'Holy Bloodshed: Violence and Christian Piety in the Romances of the London Thornton Manuscript' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2006); M. Johnston, 'Robert Thornton and *The Siege of Jerusalem*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 23 (2009), 125–62; J. Finlayson, 'The Context of the Crusading Romances in the London Thornton Manuscript', *Anglia* 130 (2012), 240–63; and D. Gorny, 'Reading Robert Thornton's Library: Romance and Nationalism in Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 91 and London, British Library MS Additional 31042' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2013).

of *Alexander* and the alliterative *Morte* speak to one another hauntingly, both reflecting on the pitfalls of imperial ambition and both offering a vision of the body politic ineluctably waxing and waning in tandem with the physical body of the king. Thornton, moreover, added a decorative scheme to both of these romances, something he did not do elsewhere in the Lincoln manuscript, further underscoring both their material and literary interpenetration.

Third, scholars have uncovered Thornton as someone who saw the decoration of his books as fundamental to the meanings of the texts they contained.¹⁷ Beyond the decorative scheme for the prose *Alexander* and the alliterative *Morte*, he also, in the London manuscript, left space for a large illustration at the beginning of the *Northern Passion*, which was likely intended to contain a depiction of the crucified Christ, the central image of this text. Since the *Northern Passion* was originally the opening text for this manuscript, it seems that Thornton wanted a devotional image to head the devotional series of texts with which this manuscript was to open.

Fourth, scholars have attended to Thornton's identity as a gentry landowner and his socio-economic place within late medieval England.¹⁸ Analysis of Thornton's local networks of cultural exchange has revealed him sharing literature with local clerics and local landowners. He may have been involved with the Percy family, one of the scions of North Riding politics, perhaps even taking part in the Percy-Neville violence in the summer of 1453. And, moreover, recent investigation has focused more broadly on the gentry socio-economics of his romances and how such issues relate to and mediate the social anxieties of one in Thornton's position within aristocratic, landowning society.

Finally, we know a good deal about Thornton and the sorts of piety he practised.¹⁹ His catholic, and always orthodox, devotional impulses attest to the

¹⁷ See, for example, J. Fredell, 'Decorated Initials in the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript', *Studies in Bibliography* 47 (1994), 78–88; P. Hardman, 'Reading the Spaces: Pictorial Intentions in the Thornton MSS, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, and BL MS Add. 31042', *Medium Ævum* 63 (1994), 250–74; and T. H. Crofts, 'The Occasion of the *Morte Arthure*: Textual History and Marginal Decoration in the Thornton MS', *Arthuriana* 20 (2010), 5–27.

¹⁸ See, for example, Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91'; G. R. Keiser, 'More Light on the Life and Milieu of Robert Thornton', *Studies in Bibliography* 36 (1983), 111–19; D. Youngs, 'Cultural Networks', in *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England*, ed. R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005), pp. 119–33; M. Johnston, 'A New Document Relating to the Life of Robert Thornton', *The Library* 7th ser. 8 (2007), 304–13; and M. Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (forthcoming, Oxford, 2014), ch. 5.

¹⁹ See, for example, G. R. Keiser, 'De Holy Boke Gratia Dei', *Viator* 12 (1981), 289–317; G. R. Keiser, "'To Knawe God Almyghtyn": Robert Thornton's Devotional Book', in *Spätmittelalterliche geistliche Literatur in der Nationalsprache*, vol. 2, *Analecta Cartusiana*, ed. J. Hogg (Salzburg, 1984), pp. 103–29; S. G. Fein, "'Have Mercy of Me" (Psalm 51), An Unedited Alliterative Poem from the London Thornton Manuscript', *Modern Philology* 86 (1989), 223–41; J. J. Thompson, 'Another Look at the Religious Texts in Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91', in *Late-Medieval Religious*

catholicity of devotional practices available to the late medieval literate laity. He compiled texts of various devotional strands: *inter alia*, affective piety, catechetical instruction, reflections on the so-called 'mixed life', hagiography, religious lyrics, Marian devotion, penitential reflections, mystical visions and biblical translations. He also copied out numerous romances that have a pious or devotional strain to them, and even a series of romances at the beginning of the London manuscript which seem intended as part of a Christian historical schema, with the Jews being vanquished in the *Siege of Jerusalem* followed by the Muslims in the *Sege of Melayne* and *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain*. And though the majority of Thornton's texts were in Middle English, he does preserve a healthy smattering of Latin religious literature. This diversity, then, attests to the complexity and diversity available to an overridingly orthodox compiler.

Our volume commences with Susanna Fein's comprehensive listing of all the texts in both of Thornton's manuscripts, updating older lists by accounting for scholarship and critical editions of Thornton's texts that have appeared in the intervening years. Fein also attends more carefully to the various scribal colophons and signatures that Thornton composed than do any previous lists. For the first time, Fein's list allows readers to compare the contents of both of Thornton's volumes and to consider which works Thornton brought together within any given booklet. This list thus forms the bedrock and reference point for the essays to follow.

These essays expand upon the five main critical approaches to Thornton, as outlined above. George R. Keiser begins with 'Robert Thornton: Gentleman, Reader and Scribe', which contributes new information on Thornton, including new insight into his family life and cultural milieu. Most importantly, Keiser reveals a wealth of new insights into Thornton's script, with a particular focus on his formation of several graphemes. By such a detailed analysis, Keiser fruitfully complicates existing theories about the order in which Thornton compiled his texts. But Keiser also extends his analyses beyond the palaeographical, showing how his proposed chronology of Thornton's copying can bear on our understanding of how Thornton understood the relationships among his texts. In short, Keiser's essay shows how manuscript details and literary analysis can be mutually informing. Joel Fredell then similarly asks how knowledge of the makeup of Thornton's manuscripts might allow us to reconstruct the processes Thornton went through to achieve each manuscript's present form. Whereas previous analyses have focused on watermarks, dialect and quiring, Fredell takes

Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 169–87; and E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, 1992), 272–5.

up decoration to show how we might understand the various steps Thornton went through in compiling his codices. By dividing the manuscript up into its component parts based on the role of various decorators, Fredell – like Keiser – complicates previous attempts at understanding Thornton's working methods.

The next two essays take up the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, certainly the most famous of Thornton's texts. Ralph Hanna and Thorlac Turville-Petre argue that, in light of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* and recent work on the metre of alliterative verse, we need a new edition of the *Morte*. In particular, they identify the grounds on which one might emend lines in Thornton's text – the only surviving copy of this canonically central poem – that alliterate irregularly, while also giving greater credence to the evidence about the *Morte* poet's alliterative practice surviving from Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* than has any editor to date. Following from this, Mary Michele Poellinger examines the intersections between the language of violence, so central to the *Morte*, and the language of affective piety animating so many of Thornton's texts across both manuscripts. As she concludes, 'In the identification of a shared language of violence between genres, exemplified by the *Morte*, we can begin to understand the sympathies and judgements passed upon the knights who are encountering the affective language.'

In my own contribution to the present volume, I analyse what the linguistic and codicological evidence can tell us about how much of the final shape of the London manuscript reveals Thornton's intentions versus how much was simply transmitted from his exemplars. By examining the dialect strata underlying the opening texts in the London manuscript, I show that Thornton was selecting texts from multiple exemplars, and thus the salvational scheme one meets in that codex, discussed by numerous scholars, was by and large his own invention. Continuing with an interest in the London manuscript's religious literature, Julie Nelson Couch examines the figure of the Christ child in Thornton. By examining the tradition of narratives about Christ's childhood, and by placing Thornton's 'Romance of the childhode of Ihesu Criste þat clerkes callys Ipokrephum' in relation to other texts in the London manuscript, she demonstrates that 'This referential narrative enacts the dialectic at play within and among the manuscript's texts between affective devotion to and righteous indignation for Christ's sacrifice.'

Julie Orlemanski next draws our attention to what are the least literary texts in Thornton's compilations: the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis* and the fragmentary herbal that mark the end of the Lincoln manuscript. By considering how Thornton places his medical texts alongside other literary genres, Orlemanski shows how he is unique in bringing together romance and medical texts; at the same time, Orlemanski suggests that Thornton is very much of his cultural moment: as a collector of vernacular medical lore, Thornton was part of a widespread and rapidly emerging trend among the fifteenth-century English laity.

Finally, Rosalind Field and Dav Smith argue for a re-assessment of Thornton's socio-cultural milieu, demonstrating that the North Riding was quite vibrant – culturally, religiously and politically. The volume concludes with their exciting new discoveries about the fate of Robert Thornton's tomb within his parish church, Holy Trinity, Stonegrave.

This collection takes its cue from four previous edited collections that have similarly focused on a single, late medieval English manuscript, putting it under the microscope of a team of scholars working from different scholarly perspectives.²⁰ We also envision this as a call for further such endeavours, for numerous manuscripts from late medieval England were similarly produced by ad hoc methods that elude systemization and thus demand their own sustained analyses. In this regard, one thinks of Cambridge, CUL, MS Ff. 1. 6 (the Findern Anthology) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Misc. c. 66 (the commonplace book of Humphrey Newton), both of which arose from the efforts of individuals about whom we know a good deal.²¹ If, in addition to revealing new information about Thornton and inspiring further work on his manuscripts, this collection can also testify to the need for more such work on other codices, then this enterprise will have been well worth the effort.

²⁰ D. Pearsall, ed., *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1990); M. Stevens and D. H. Woodward, eds., *The Ellesmere Chaucer: Essays in Interpretation* (San Marino CA, 1995); S. Fein, ed., *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253* (Kalamazoo MI, 2000); and K. K. Bell and J. N. Couch, eds., *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: The Shaping of English Vernacular Narrative, Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 6* (Leiden, 2011). See also S. Fein, ed., *My Wyl and My Wrytyng: Essays on John the Blind Audelay* (Kalamazoo MI, 2009) (on Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 302); and W. Scase, ed., *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript: The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. a. 1, Texts and Transitions 6* (Turnhout, 2013).

²¹ On the Findern manuscript, see R. H. Robbins, 'The Findern Anthology', *PMLA* 69 (1954), 610–42; K. Harris, 'The Origins and Make-up of Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 8 (1983), 299–333; R. Hanna, 'The Production of Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.1.6', *Studies in Bibliography* 40 (1987), 62–70; J. J. Thompson, 'Collecting Middle English Romances and Some Related Book-Production Activities in the Later Middle Ages', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. M. Mills, J. Fellows and C. Meale (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 17–38 (pp. 30–8); S. C. Marshall, 'Manuscript Agency and the Findern Manuscript', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 108 (2007), 339–49; and L. Olson, 'Courting Romance in the Provinces: The Findern Manuscript', in K. Kerby-Fulton, M. Hilmo and L. Olson, *Opening up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (Ithaca NY, 2012), pp. 139–51. On Humphrey Newton and his manuscripts, see R. Hanna, 'Humphrey Newton and Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Misc. C.66', *Medium Ævum* 69 (2000), 279–91; D. Marsh, "'I see by sizt of evidence': Information Gathering in Late Medieval Cheshire", in *Courts, Counties and the Capital in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. D. E. S. Dunn (New York, 1996), pp. 71–92; and D. Youngs, *Humphrey Newton (1466–1536): An Early Tudor Gentleman* (Woodbridge, 2008).

The Contents of Robert Thornton's Manuscripts

Susanna Fein

In keeping with the purpose of this volume, I offer here an overview of Robert Thornton of Yorkshire's surviving corpus and an updated list of contents. The Thornton manuscripts – hereafter called 'Lincoln' and 'London' – have been frequently described in terms of content and makeup. The treatments still considered the definitive starting-points for any new work are by Derek Brewer and A. E. B. Owen, in a 1975 facsimile of Lincoln, and by John J. Thompson, in a 1987 book that examines London.¹ Supplementing these authorities is a plethora of descriptions over the years, dating at least from 1844 (James Orchard Halliwell's edition of what he termed the *Thornton Romances*) to 2012 (Linda Olson's chapter in *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts*).² In between, many have contributed steady, gradual refinements to the growing portrait of Thornton's substantial achievement as a self-fashioned scribe tending prayerfully and paternally to the mental nourishment and spiritual well-being of a familial household, providing them with romances and edifying entertainments, religious meditations and *exempla*, liturgical services, and an encyclopedia of medical remedies.

As scholarship on Thornton has advanced, much of it has centred on codicological details, with investigators using booklet and quire makeups, watermarks, palaeography, dialect of scribe versus exemplar, detectable scribal error, and styles of ornament to produce divergent answers to a host of questions: In what order did Thornton receive and copy texts? What were his methods of book construction? How fully did he follow (as he most apparently did) generic criteria for selections and arrangements? What other hands are present in the manuscript? Did the manuscripts ever leave the Thornton household during

¹ *The Thornton MS*, intro. Brewer and Owen; and Thompson, *London Thornton MS*.

² *The Thornton Romances*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camden Society 30 (London, 1844), pp. xxv–xxxvi (treating Lincoln only); and L. Olson, 'Romancing the Book: Manuscripts for "Euerich Ingliche"', in K. Kerby-Fulton, M. Hilmo and L. Olson, *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (Ithaca NY, 2012), pp. 95–151 (pp. 116–39), who treats both manuscripts.

the period of their making? And what cultural assumptions, social allegiances, and literary tastes do the chosen texts reveal?

Taken collectively, the wide array of studies of Thornton's books has sketched an ever-deepening portrait of the scribe. With few exceptions, though, individual scholars and editors are wont to examine Thornton through a specific lens of interest, examining, for example, a featured text or, alternatively, one of the dominant strands in his books: romance, religion, medicine. Consequently, individual attention is apt to fall on one manuscript or the other, not both, and frequently on just an isolated portion of that book. My purpose here is to umpire for a moment this ongoing scholarship by compiling an updated descriptive list of the contents of *both* manuscripts, and, insofar as may be possible, to collate our many advances in defining and assessing individual items.³

This List of Contents serves as the touchstone for titles and article numbers that appear in the essays of this volume. It presents the incipits, first and final phrases, and explicits for each item according to my own transcription, taken from the facsimile of Lincoln and a British Library microfilm of London. By means of these framing words, one may use this descriptive list to readily survey Thornton's entire codicological labour and acquire a sense of his literate

³ The main descriptions consulted here include (listed chronologically): (1) *Lincoln manuscript: Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers*, ed. C. Horstmann, 2 vols. (London 1895–6; repr. Cambridge, 1999), I, 184–5; *The Life of Richard Rolle Together with an Edition of His English Lyrics*, ed. F. M. M. Comper (London, 1928), pp. 207–9; *The 'Liber de Diversis Medicinis' in the Thornton Manuscript (MS. Lincoln Cathedral A.5.2)*, ed. M. S. Ogden, EETS OS 207 (London, 1938), pp. x–xvii; *The Thornton MS*, intro. Brewer and Owen, pp. vii–xxii; G. Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich, 1976), pp. 135–42; J. J. Thompson, 'The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton and the "Thornton Romances" in Lincoln Cathedral MS 91', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study. Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 113–24 (p. 115); G. R. Keiser, "'To Knawe God Almyghtyn": Robert Thornton's Devotional Book', in *Spätmittelalterliche geistliche Literature in der Nationalsprache*, vol. 2, *Analecta Cartusiana*, ed. J. Hogg (Salzburg, 1984), pp. 103–29 (pp. 125–9); R. Hanna III, 'The Growth of Robert Thornton's Books', *Studies in Bibliography* 40 (1987), 51–61; R. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 65–9; and *Richard Rolle: Uncollected Prose and Verse*, ed. R. Hanna, EETS OS 329 (Oxford, 2007), pp. xxxvi–xxxix. (2) *London manuscript: Hs. Brit. Mus. Additional 31042*, ed. K. Brunner, *Archiv* 132 (1914), 316–37 (pp. 316–27); *The Northern Passion*, ed. F. A. Foster, 2 vols., EETS OS 145, 147 (London, 1913–16), II, 12–13; K. Stern, 'The London "Thornton" Miscellany: A New Description of British Museum Additional Manuscript 31042', and 'The London "Thornton" Miscellany (II): A New Description of British Museum Additional Manuscript 31042', *Scriptorium* 30 (1976), 26–40, 201–18; Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue*, pp. 159–63; Thompson, *London Thornton MS*; Hanna, 'The Growth', pp. 51–61; *Wynmere and Wastoure*, ed. S. Trigg, EETS OS 297 (Oxford, 1990), pp. xiv–xv; and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. R. Hanna and D. Lawton, EETS OS 320 (Oxford, 2003), pp. xv–xvi.

presence – as scribe and rubricator, as devout Christian and *paterfamilias*, as engaged reader and collector of texts – as he expresses it by distinctive markers.

The inscribing that flowed from Thornton's hand is voluminous. Nearly five hundred folios survive more or less intact. Numerous others are just fragments, and many of these are meagre scraps salvaged from pages once affixed to the end of Lincoln. Both manuscripts begin and end imperfectly, and both have suffered internal losses. Measurable gaps within the books as we have them come to more than thirty folios.⁴ Nonetheless, a majority of items survive fully intact as Thornton copied them.⁵ In these many leaves we witness a fifteenth-century English gentleman's long-term, worshipful endeavour to compile a sizeable library for his own personal use and the edification of his family. How Christian faith drove Thornton's inner life is evident by the presence of many meditations and prayers, as well as by the scribe's instinctive insertions of invocations and blessings. Thornton's manorial home supported a private chapel,⁶ which helps to explain the inclusion of texts for liturgical or meditative practice. There are, moreover, numerous romances collected by Thornton with deliberation and discernment, which would have held particular appeal for a gentry family.⁷ And comprising a discrete booklet in Lincoln are medical texts and a herbal (now fragmentary), which gave the Thorntons a storehouse of information on the properties of natural substances, scientific lore and practical remedies. While one cannot determine how many or what texts are now lost from the Thornton oeuvre, the extensive corpus that survives tells us that Thornton's self-made library was ambitious in scope and substantial in its actual execution.⁸

⁴ According to the accepted collations. See D. Brewer and A. E. B. Owen, 'Collation of the Manuscript', in *The Thornton MS*, intro. Brewer and Owen, p. xii; and Thompson, *London Thornton MS*, p. 19. These collations have been subsequently refined by examination of watermarks, quires, and stubs. See, in particular, Stern, 'The London "Thornton" Miscellany' and 'The London "Thornton" Miscellany (II)'; S. M. Horrall, 'The London Thornton Manuscript: A New Collation', *Manuscripta* 23 (1979), 99–103; S. M. Horrall, 'The Watermarks of the Thornton Manuscripts', *Notes and Queries* n.s. 27 (1980), 385–6; R. Hanna III, 'The London Thornton Manuscript: A Corrected Collation', *Studies in Bibliography* 37 (1984), 122–30; Hanna, 'The Growth'; and the chapters by Fredell and Keiser in the present volume.

⁵ Some articles suffering severe damage, for example, include a miracle of the Virgin, Thornton's herbal, and the romances the *Sege of Melayne* and *Richard Coer de Lyon* (Lincoln arts. 17, 100; London arts. 8, 32).

⁶ Keiser, "'To Knawe God Almyghtyn'", pp. 121–2; see also Keiser's chapter in the present volume.

⁷ M. Johnston, 'A New Document Relating to the Life of Robert Thornton', *The Library* 7th ser. 8 (2007), 304–13.

⁸ Keiser suggests large losses from the front of London in his chapter in the present volume. In addition, he provides an astute assessment of the herbal lost at the end of Lincoln (see Lincoln art. 100).

The primary language of Lincoln and London is English. Yet Thornton shows himself ready, as both scribe and reader, to pivot casually to Latin, which he often does, mainly in religious contexts and incipits. In carrying out his vast scrivenal undertaking, though, Thornton chooses English most of the time, and in this language he copies more verse than prose, the ratio being roughly two to one when measured by number of folios filled. Aside from the abridged, yet long, *Psalter of Saint Jerome* (Lincoln art. 84), which occupies about twenty-five pages, the presence of Latin seems incidental to Thornton's main compiling purpose. Outside the *Psalter*, Latin totals only about a dozen pages, appearing mainly as prayers, charms, proverbs and pious tags.⁹ Despite its secondary status, Latin contributes to Thornton's books a cultivated manner of dignity and reverence. Thornton regularly interchanges Latin with English in his own incipits and explicits, and he often turns to Latin to inscribe brief prayers.

In the following paragraphs, I summarize the nature and contents of each book and some ways in which Thornton signified his presence as their maker.

The Lincoln manuscript

As it stands today, Lincoln holds 312 folios before ending with a set of severely damaged fragments that represent all that remains of Thornton's lost herbal. Lincoln's basic structure of four booklets is evident on empirical grounds and provokes no dispute.¹⁰ **Booklet 1** (fols. 3–52; arts. 1–6) holds the prose *Life of Alexander*, which was added to preface booklet 2 after the latter was completed, Thornton deciding to set the life of an ancient Worthy before that of a medieval one: King Arthur of Britain in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. In Arthur's second dream in the alliterative poem, he has a spectacular vision of Fortune's

⁹ Thornton ascribes a Latin prayer and two meditations to Richard Rolle (Lincoln arts. 49, 55, 56), nestling these items among much by Rolle in English prose or verse (Lincoln arts. 46, 47, 51–4, 57–60). Clusters of very short Latin texts fill space near the opening or close of booklets (London arts. 17–19; Lincoln arts. 88–96), or mix with similar texts in English (Lincoln arts. 26–36). Two articles of English devotional prose frequently include Latin (Lincoln arts. 61, 62).

¹⁰ For some significant broad efforts to define discrete codicological units (commonly called 'booklets') within manuscripts, see P. R. Robinson, 'The "Booklet": A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica* 3 (1980), 46–69, and 'Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations', *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986), 100–11; R. Hanna III, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Stanford CA, 1996), pp. 21–34; J. Boffey and J. J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 279–315; J. Fredell, "'Go Litel Quayer": Lydgate's Pamphlet Poetry', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 9 (2006), 51–74; and E. Kwakkel, 'Late Medieval Text Collections: A Codicological Typology Based on Single-Author Manuscripts', in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authority in Theory and Practice*, ed. S. Partridge and E. Kwakkel (Toronto, 2012), pp. 56–79.

Wheel, sees eight riders being tossed off in succession and then becomes the ninth, signifying how he is the last of the great imperial leaders of history. The first of the Worthies is Alexander, who declares in Arthur's dream that 'I was lorde ... of londes inewe, / And all ledis me lowttede that lenegede in erthe' (lines 3285–86).¹¹ Thornton has framed his manuscript as a World History, secular in its thrust for these first booklets. Blank space at the end of booklet 1 holds family records, signatures and scribbles by Thornton's descendants, a prognostication on thunder according the days of the week and chivalric drawings. There is also the lyric *Sinner's Lament* that ruminates on the fates of men, situated strategically between the falls of Alexander and Arthur.¹² The blank space thus formed a spot for filler material, some related to the core romances on either side, some demonstrating the book's intergenerational status as a Thornton household treasure.

As a full unit in its own right, **booklet 2** (fols. 53–178; arts. 7–36) stands as one of the premier medieval collections of Middle English verse romance. When one joins to it *Alexander* and the four crusades-oriented romances of the London manuscript, we find in Thornton's body of work a set of romances that rivals the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, NLS, MS Advocates' 19. 2. 1) in quantity and significance. The booklet leads off with the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and then serves up *Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, the *Earl of Toulouse*, *Sir Degrevant*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Sir Perceval of Gales*. Tucked into this sequence are other kinds of narrative that the scribe may have regarded as romance-like: the *Life of Saint Christopher*, a miracle of the Virgin called *The Wicked Knight and the Friar*, *Liarde* (a comic satire on friars and husbands)¹³ and *Thomas of Erceldoune's Prophecy*. A good number of these items are preserved solely in Lincoln, adding to its value as a witness to romances circulating in Thornton's region.

The next section of Lincoln, **booklet 3** (fols. 179–279; arts. 37–98), holds Thornton's collection of religious devotions and treatises, often in prose (mainly English), with a hefty number of attributions to specific authors: Richard Rolle, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, William of Nassington and Edmund Rich of Abingdon. Three treatises by Walter Hilton (one an extract from the *Scale of Perfection*) appear without any attribution. Alliterative English prose or verse makes an appearance in Gaytryge's *Sermon*, the alliterative *John Evangelist Hymn*

¹¹ Fol. 88r. See *Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition*, ed. M. Hamel, Garland Medieval Texts 9 (New York, 1984), p. 221.

¹² On the regular use of this song to comment on great men who have fallen low, see *The Sinner's Lament*, in *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. S. G. Fein (Kalamazoo MI, 1998), pp. 361–94 (pp. 367–9).

¹³ *Liarde*, the most secular and comic work in Thornton's oeuvre (Lincoln art. 18). It seems to draw on monastic goliardic traditions.

and a treatise *On Prayer*. Other anonymous religious items include the *Privy of the Passion*, the *Holy Boke Gratia Dei*, an extract from the *Prick of Conscience* and several lyrics, prayers and hymns. The English lyrics include versions of *When Adam Delved* and *Earth upon Earth*. The unique *Revelation Shown to a Holy Woman* offers a glimpse of the pains of purgatory; Thornton annotates this text and copies after it the psalm and hymn most useful to escape that fate. Lincoln's final section, **booklet 4** (fols. 280–321; arts. 99–100), preserves the medical collection *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, which survives on thirty-five leaves, and the herbal now mostly lost.

The London manuscript

The smaller London (179 folios) is more homogeneous and less obviously segmented than Lincoln. Its collation and watermarks nonetheless suggest that it too was constructed progressively in parts. Begun as an account of Sacred History, it initially opened with the *Northern Passion*. But again, as with Lincoln, Thornton's plans evolved as time passed, and he eventually augmented London's opening with a new beginning – a long extract and a short allegorical dialogue taken from the *Cursor Mundi* – thereby setting up an expansive preface to the *Northern Passion*. This new opening forms **booklet 1** (fols. 3–32; arts. 1–3).¹⁴ The succeeding **booklet 2** (fols. 33–97; arts. 4–20) has the *Northern Passion* joined to three romances that continue a narrative of Christian history, from the *Siege of Jerusalem* (situated AD 70) to the crusading Middle Ages: the *Sege of Melayne* and *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain*. Interspersed here are lyrics by John Lydgate. Thornton's corpus of Lydgatiana is comprised of the *Complaint That Christ Makes of His Passion*, *Verses on the Kings of England*, the *Dietary*, a refrain poem *O Florum Flos*, and (in the next booklet) *Virtues of the Mass*, which has a scribal ascription to Lydgate (fol. 103r). Aside from Lydgate's *Virtues*, **booklet 3** (fols. 98–124; arts. 21–31) features a selection of anonymous religious verse: the alliterative *Four Leaves of the Truelove* in thirteen-line stanzas; *Have Mercy of Me* (an alliterating paraphrase of Vulgate Psalm 50); a filler poem hailing one's guardian spirit; more English lyrics on mercy, mutability and wisdom; the *Rose of Ryse* (a carol with allusions to Henry V); and the narrative *Three Kings of Cologne* in rhyme royal stanzas. *Three Kings* is the last lengthy item in booklet 3, and its dignified rhyme royal seems matched to Lydgate's rhyme royal *Verses on the Kings of England* at the end of booklet 2. These are the only items in this metre in Thornton's entire corpus.

When Thornton added **booklet 4** (fols. 125–168; arts. 32–3), he was able

¹⁴ According to the analysis of Hanna, 'The London Thornton Manuscript', and Hanna, 'The Growth'.

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to introduce another romance of sacred history – *Richard Coer de Lyon* – furthering his accumulated themes of royalty, crusade and national mission. And finally, after *Richard*, he rounds London's interests back to the scriptural *Cursor Mundi* and *Northern Passion* material of his two beginnings: Thornton now includes the apocryphal *Childhood of Christ*, which he names a 'romance' in the incipit. One final section remains: **booklet 5** (fols. 169–181; arts. 34–5) supplies a moralizing commemoration of the Nine Worthies and an allegory of the world in decline: the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *Wynnere and Wastoure*. Both drawn apparently from one of Thornton's favourite exemplars,¹⁵ this pair of alliterative debate poems gives London a provocative if incomplete ending.

Thornton's signatures

As Robert Thornton acquired a personal household library by selecting and copying the texts he wished to own, it is clear that in scrivening he was ever-cognizant that his deeds were under God's watchful eye. His own embellishments reveal how profoundly he considered scribal work to be pious work. Thornton's personal voice emerges in the consistently prayerful idiom employed to frame texts according to a fairly methodical system of incipits and explicits.¹⁶ His name appears eleven times in Lincoln, twice in London. Four times it surfaces as 'R Thornton', four times 'Thornton', once 'Robert Thornton', once (on an illustrator's scroll) 'Robart Thornton', once (in a Latin context) 'Robertus Thornton', once (oddly) 'Robert of Thornton',¹⁷ and once (in a Latin prayer) 'Robertum'. In addition, in the prose *Life of Alexander* there appears a rebus drawing that puns on the Thornton name (Lincoln, fol. 23v).

But it is not merely in the signatures that Thornton's devout presence may be heard and felt in his books. He habitually embellishes the endings of texts with multiple strung-out 'Amens', often with 'per charite' added for good measure. This final benediction is so common that when one finds it as the last line of a romance – that is, set *inside* the last stanza, not outside it – one may suspect that Thornton has doctored the ending to conform to his own religio-aesthetic sensibilities. This event happens twice: in the romances *Octavian* ('Amen Amen per charyte') and *Sir Perceval of Gales* ('Amen for charyte') (Lincoln arts. 10, 21). Appended to some texts there are also couplets (or near-couplets) that bear

¹⁵ On the basis of dialect, their shared exemplar is also thought to have contained the *Sege of Melayne* (London art. 8) and *Octavian*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Earl of Toulouse*, *Sir Perceval of Gales*, and the *Abbey of the Holy Ghost* (Lincoln arts. 10, 11, 13, 21, 85).

¹⁶ And in the occasional annotation: see Lincoln arts. 81 and 84, and also London art. 24 (an ascription to Lydgate).

¹⁷ This one is not in Thornton's hand. It and the ascription on a scroll accompany the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (Lincoln art. 8).

a distinct Thorntonian air because they tend to recur as devout ways to sign off the copying task. The most familiar is the Latin rhyme wherein Thornton names himself ('R Thornton dictus qui scripsit sit benedictus amen'), which appears twice in Lincoln (arts. 9, 68), once in London (art. 7), and twice in abbreviated form *sans* signature ('Qui scripsit [carmen] sit benedictus Amen'; Lincoln arts. 50, 60). This ending implores a blessing for the scribe after his pious labour. At one point Thornton embeds his name deep inside a prayer (Lincoln art. 28), showing how personalized the copying has become. He also names himself in a plea to God for mercy ('Thornton misereatur mei dei'; Lincoln art. 93), invoking Vulgate Psalm 50, which he elsewhere records in Lincoln in Latin (art. 82) and in London in an English verse paraphrase (art. 23). At other points, he inserts an English couplet as a colophon-prayer, and one of these is certainly his own invention: 'Amen Amen per charite / And louynge to god þerfore gyfe we / R Thornton' (London art. 5).¹⁸ Twice in Lincoln, Thornton's enthusiasm for naming Christ and Mary erupts as a rhyming Latin prayer that must reflect a personal pious reflex: 'Ihesus Marie filius sit michi clemens & propecius' (Lincoln arts. 59, 95). Thornton's most intrusive moment comes when he describes his compilatory reordering of texts as scribal fantasy, 'fantasiam scriptoris' (London art. 3; fol. 32vb). There are other instances where Thornton mixes piety with deep family pride, as in the birth record of his grandson (Lincoln art. 2) and the apparent family motto inscribed at the base of the opening folio of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (Lincoln art. 7): 'Espoyez / Thornton / ygl En esperance may ...' (Lincoln art. 7).¹⁹

List of Contents

The List of Contents given below itemizes individual articles found in Robert Thornton's Lincoln and London manuscripts. Each article's opening and closing phrases are given. Boldface indicates Thornton's own verbal insertions, that is, those words he adds as incipits, explicits, signatures, prayers, pious invocations or final 'amens'. When these insertions show Thornton to be using verse (usually a single couplet in Latin or English), the item is listed separately.

The article numbering represents a new count of the contents of Lincoln and London. The count is different because of a finer discrimination within and between separate articles (in accord with recent scholarship) as well as because Thornton's signatures, insertions and meaningful blank sections are enumer-

¹⁸ This couplet is not recorded in the *NIMEV*. For a second example, see Lincoln art 48: 'Ihesu þe sone of þe gloriouse virgyne / Now lorde haue mercy one all thyne / Amen Amen pur charite Amen' (*NIMEV* 1779.3).

¹⁹ See details in the List of Contents, Lincoln arts. 2, 7.