The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi, Vol. II

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SOURCES

In composing this section of his poem, the poet ranged quite widely in manner and matter. As he saw fit, he rearranged, translated, paraphrased, summarized, expanded, conflated, and drew selectively from portions of at least a half-dozen works in Latin and Old French. His eclectic method precludes positive identification of all his sources but the following can confidently be cited as his major ones:

**Le Château d’amour**

*Le Château d’amour*\(^2\) by Robert Grosseteste (called “scynt Robardes boke” by the poet at l. 9516) supplies the material for about one-fifth of the section edited here. The debt is in the form of careful and extensive translation.\(^3\)

**Herman’s Bible**

The *Bible* of Herman de Valenciennes,\(^4\) another important source, is handled more freely. The poet deletes, expands, rearranges, paraphrases, and only occasionally translates phrases or entire lines.

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2. See J. Murray, ed., *Le Château d’amour de Robert Grosseteste* (Paris, 1918). In addition to the Anglo-Norman versions, Middle English versions were available from the second half of the thirteenth century. See K. Sajavaara, ed., *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste’s Château d’amour,* Mémoires de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki, 32 (Helsinki, 1967). The debt to Grosseteste was first noted by Dr. Haenisch in *CM,* pp. 23*-31*.

3. Kari Sajavaara, “The Use of Robert Grosseteste’s *Château d’amour* as a Source of the *Cursor Mundi: Additional Evidence,*” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* LXVIII (1967), 186, says “the translation is close and usually matches couplet for couplet.” In his longer study (see note 2 above) Sajavaara remarks that the *CM* “reproduces the message of the *Château d’amour* more faithfully than the [four] other [Middle English] versions.”

**L’Établissement de la fête de la conception Notre Dame dite la fête aux normands**

Wace’s *L’Établissement de la fête de la conception Notre Dame dite la fête aux normands*\(^5\) is the source for the extensive treatment of the family background and early life of the Virgin. The CM poet is generally content to translate and paraphrase this source, rarely altering it in other than minor ways.

**Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium**

*Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*,\(^6\) although similarly interested in the pre-biblical Marian history, is chiefly important as an uncanonical gospel containing the wondrous exploits of Christ’s childhood that the CM poet used extensively in places, selectively in others. Less probable as direct sources but worth mentioning nonetheless as part of the apocryphal tradition are *The Protevangelium of James*, *The Infancy Story of Thomas*, and *De Nativitate Mariae*.\(^7\)

**Historia Scholastica**

Petrus Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica*\(^8\) was a well-known work in the period and one that the CM poet used, as Dr. Haenisch observed.\(^9\)

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5. Ed. G. Mancel and G. S. Trebutien (Caen, 1842). See E. Petavel, *La Bible en France* (1864); J. Bonnard, *Les Traductions de la Bible en vers français au moyen âge* (Paris, 1884). Haenisch, *CM*, pp. 13*-*20*, first noted this source. G. L. Hamilton, in his “Review of Gordon Hall Gerould, *Saints’ Legends,*” *Modern Language Notes*, XXXVI (1921), p. 238, has suggested that the CM poet found much of his apocryphal material in an interpolated copy of Wace, such as that found in BL Add 15606. Comparison with CM shows that Add 15606 was not its source, and no more suitably interpolated manuscript of Wace has yet come to light.


8. *PL* CXCVIII.

In ll. 9229–12712, the poet appears to have drawn only selectively from it. Such debts are difficult to prove, however, since much of the matter is common to several sources.

**Legenda Aurea**

Jacobus a Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* was also identified as a source by Haenisch.10 Once again, however, the indebtedness is difficult to establish for the section edited here. Many of the details common to the *Legenda* and the CM appear in *De Nativitate Mariae* and Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, from both of which the *Legenda* took much of its information, thus complicating the question of immediate debt. Whatever its exact relationship to ll. 9229–12712 of the CM, the widely known *Legenda* helped establish the apocryphal traditions within which the CM poet worked and is therefore an important guide to our general understanding of the poem and its background.

**Elucidarium**

Honorius Augustodunensis' *Elucidarium*,11 not included in Haenisch’s list of sources, plays a definite but minor role in this section of the poem. The poet principally drew on it for his theological discussion of the redemption (ll. 9732–94).

**The Vulgate Bible**

The Vulgate,12 not surprisingly, furnished scant material for a narrative section dealing with the Virgin's life prior to the Annunciation and stopping on the eve of Christ's public ministry. Thus, although the poet uses the New Testament whenever he can, the opportunity does not often arise, and the Bible ends up, ironically, supplementing apocryphal writings.

12. Unless stated otherwise, biblical quotations in Latin are based on the *Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatem Clementinam* (Rome, 1956).