The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi, Vol. V

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est and most secure northern monasteries, probably Durham, or possibly somewhere in York, places which were a great deal less vulnerable to the general chaos.

OWNERSHIP AND HISTORY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

Some manuscripts bear no indication of their medieval ownership, but others give substantial clues at least to the profession or social status of those who possessed them.

MS L is the only manuscript which was in religious rather than secular hands in the Middle Ages. The name and date of its scribe are recorded: “scriptus Rhodo per Johannem Newton die 25 Octobris 1459” (fol. 226v). The same hand also wrote MS Jesus College Oxford 39, a copy of Disce mori. On the back pastedown of L appears the inscription “Syster Anne Colvylle” and, visible under ultra-violet light, “of youre charyte prey for sustyr clement thasebirght.” Anne Colvylle was a nun of Syon in 1518 as was the owner of the Jesus College Manuscript of Disce mori, Dorothy Slyghe. However, the manuscript need not have been commissioned by a religious. Another of Sister Anne Colvylle’s books survives as MS BL Harley 993, but with a colophon indicating that it was a common profit manuscript, commissioned by a layman and given to a religious in return for prayers for the soul of the donor:

This book was maad of þe goodis of roberth holond for a comyn profite þat þat persoone þat þap þis book committid to him of þe persoone þat þap þap power to committie it hauþ þe vss þerof þe terme of his lijf þreiynge for the soule of þe same Robert and þat þe þap þap þe forseid vss of comissionoun whanne he occupieþ it not leene he it for a tyme to sum oþer persoone also þat persoone to whom it was committid for þe teerme of lyþ þe þe þap þerþe committid from persoone to persoone man or womman as longe as þe book endurþ. (fols. 38r-v)
All other manuscripts of *CM* would seem to have been exclusively in lay hands.

Something can be deduced about early owners of the other copies of the southern version of the poem. MSS H and T survive in what was presumably the original format of this edition, copied on parchment with wide margins. MS T has some handsome penwork initials and MS H handsomely painted ones. The manuscripts were thus probably fairly expensive, but the names which appear in their margins give little clue to the status of the owners. At the end of the text in MS T is the name John Digbye (fol. 142v) in a late-fifteenth-century hand, and on the following folio, 143v, are the names Francis Stacye, Thomas Stacye, John Digbye, and Jeames Stacy. Although the dialect indicates that the manuscript was copied in Staffordshire, Digby is a name frequently found in Warwickshire records and the Stacys were a Bedfordshire family. This indicates that the manuscript may have moved by the late fifteenth century. It was given to Trinity College by George Wilner.

MS H contains only a few faint pencil annotations in a hand of the sixteenth century: Christus anno dominj 1546 (fol. 152v); William Udyll (fol. 155v); and “by me Wylliam” (fol. 154v). Although it is kept with the manuscripts donated to the College of Arms by the Duke of Norfolk, it was not part of his donation, and there is no record of how it reached the College.

MS B was produced in Bedfordshire and probably remained in that county since medieval times, as it was owned by the Bedfordshire General Library until it was acquired by the British Library in Sotheby’s sale of June 18, 1904. All that remains to indicate medieval ownership are some barely legible accounts on fol. 1r relating to sheep. These are enough, however, to suggest that this manuscript belonged to a member of the merchant class.

Some of the northern copies have little evidence of early ownership. All that is known of MS E from the time it was copied in the West Riding of Yorkshire until the eighteenth century is that it was bequeathed to the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh by Dr. John Drummond in 1741. He had been President of the College from 1722 to 1727.

One of the northern manuscripts seems also to have belonged to merchants. Several names occur in MS C in hands of the fifteenth cen-
tury. The most extensive note of ownership is on fol. 56r: "Wylliam cosyn wylliam cosyn owneb his boke who so euer fynd." Hupe speculated at some length on the identity of this man, finding the name in records from Lincolnshire, where he thought CM was composed, and in London. As MS C more probably belongs in the West Riding of Yorkshire, however, there seems little reason to suppose that the family or families he documented are connected with it. Other names are also to be found in the manuscript: Jamys Hyrst (fols. 30r, 90r), John Robynsun (fol. 60r), Wylliam (fols. 82r, 88v), John (fols. 82r, 157v), Rychyr d (fol. 163r), and on fol. 163v Richard Brus, John Kearnforth, John Cosyn, and other names less readily legible. In view of the manuscript's connection with Yorkshire, and the appearance of the name Brus on fol. 163v, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the Cosyn family who owned the manuscript was the one which appears in records over several centuries in Linthorpe, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, a part of the county in the Brus fee.

More significant for determining the social class of the owners of MS C are the beginnings of two indentures on fols. 163r and 163v: "Thys indentur e made th e iiiiiij dai o f merche" (fol. 163r) and "Th e indentur made pe iii dai of may betwy x richard brus" (fol. 163v). These indicate that at least one of its fifteenth-century owners was of the merchant class.

In the sixteenth century, the manuscript was in the collection of Henry Savile of Bank in Yorkshire, from whom Robert Cotton obtained many of his manuscripts. MS C was in Cotton's collection by 1621. It used to be thought that Savile got most of his collection from "northern monasteries" but this assumption has been questioned for all the manuscripts and it is probably not true that MS C came to him from such a source.

Two manuscripts were owned by members of the landed gentry. MS BL Add 31042 was copied and owned by Robert Thornton, the landed gentleman of the West Riding of Yorkshire whose career and milieu have been well documented.

MS F is in the dialect of Lancashire and its colophon also records its place of origin: "Stokynbrig scripsit istum librum willelmo keruour de lancaster." Other names appear in hands of the sixteenth century: on
the verso of an unnumbered flyleaf at the beginning are the names Tomas, Tomas of canterbere, Thomas Belyngham, Robartus Belyingham, and Robertus Crank; fol. 1r Wilelmus Belyngham, fol. 1v Nycho-
las Batson ... of York. Fol. 3v contains notes on burgages of Lancaster. The Middle English Dialect Atlas also reads “Iste liber restat domino Iohanni de croft,” in other words Sir John Croft of Dalton in Kendal, Lancs. The Crofts were indeed a prominent family in Lancashire, and various members of the Bellingham family are recorded there too, including a Thomas Bellingham who had the advowson of the Church of St. Chad, under the patronage of Nicholas Croft, from June 10, 1437 until October 1445, and a Robert Bellingham who died in 1540.

The most intriguing question of ownership is posed by MS G. It was copied in the second half of the fourteenth century in Yorkshire, but from an exemplar which was partly in a dialect of south Lincolnshire. Its decoration, which seems to have been done in York, and the illegible coat of arms on its first folio indicate that it was commissioned by an armigerous patron. Furthermore, it contains a request for prayers for the person who commissioned the manuscript, whose name is given:

And speciali for me 3e pray
Pat his bock gart dight
John of lindbergh, i 3u sai
Pat es mi name ful right. (ll. 17099–102)

At this time, the name de Lindbergh (of Lindbergh) could have been used either as a family name or a place name. As a family name, it appears in records from Dorset and Yorkshire, in the latter case probably deriving from the tiny village of Limber Magna, near Whitby. The name is most often recorded in Lincolnshire, however, where, for instance, two members of the family, both named Adam, gained national prominence. Although the surname turns up fairly often in Lincolnshire records, no suitable John de Lindbergh has been found.

If Lindbergh is considered as a place name, however, some suggestions are possible. The commissioner of the manuscript was armigerous, as is witnessed by the coat of arms on fol. 1r, and fairly wealthy, as is witnessed by the quality of the manuscript he commissioned. No suitable candidate is recorded from Lindbergh Magna in
Yorkshire, nor from Lindbergh Parva in Lincolnshire. Attention must centre on Lindbergh (now Limber) Magna in southern Lincolnshire, a site close to the source of the dialect layer underlying the first 11,000 lines of MS G.

Hupe considered that John of Lindbergh was the author of CM. He identified Limber Magna, but stated that it was the site of a monastery, implying that this explained the commissioning and copying of the manuscript.

This is not possible, however. In the mid-twelfth century, the manor and church of Limber Magna were given to the Cistercian abbey of Aunay-sur-Odon in Normandy by Richard de Hument, constable of Normandy, and his wife Agnes. The Cistercians operated it as a grange, with perhaps one monk in charge of the property, but it is doubtful that there was ever a larger establishment, such as a priory, there. The church continued in this fashion until 1393, when at the suppression of alien priories, the manor and church were sold to the Carthusian priory of St. Anne in Coventry.

The only other religious presence in the village in the fourteenth century seems to have been the Knights Hospitallers, who had a manor or camera there, associated with Willoughton, but again this was a small establishment, consisting of a secular chaplain, a bailiff, and a few others.

Fairly recently, Charles C.V. Ross has suggested that the wording of the curse on anyone stealing the manuscript (ll. 17103–10) implied that its owner was a priest. He discovered two priests named John (John Tumby and John Whittyl) who held the benefice of Limber Magna in the 1370's. However, there is nothing in the routine wording of the curse which would specifically suggest it was composed by a priest, and such a supposition ignores the rubbed coat of arms on fol. 1.

It seems very likely that the manuscript was commissioned by the family who held the manor in Lymbergh Magna. In the early part of the reign of Edward III, the holder was Henry Beumys (also spelled Bealm-eyes, Beaumys), who held a court which his tenants, including one Hugh de Keleby, attended. Henry's son was named John, and it is he who is the probable commissioner of the manuscript. He seems to have been dead by about 1351, for Hugh de Keleby's son, who died in that year, is
said to have held his lands in Lymbergh from "Tecia, late the wife of John de Baumys." Tecia, John's wife, lived on until 1381, when she died on the feast of St. Lawrence. John's and Tecia's lands then passed to their son Thomas, aged 30, who had been born after his grandfather Henry's death.

However, an older son, Henry, aged 46, turned up to claim the manor. Thomas was summoned "to be before the king in the Chancery," but failed to appear, and so the manor was given to his older brother. If Thomas was 30 years old in 1381, his father, John, must have been alive in 1351, and if Henry was 46 in 1381, John must have been of marriageable age in 1335.

The hand and decoration of the manuscript have been variously dated in the second half of the fourteenth century, with art historians leaning towards a date around 1375 for the decoration. The history of the production of the manuscript is not straightforward, however, for it was clearly produced in at least two stages, using at least two exemplars, one from south Lincolnshire and one from Yorkshire. A shift in the underlying dialect was noticed at the beginning of this century by Curt Barth. The first 11,000 lines of the poem, corresponding roughly to the first 74 folios, were taken from an exemplar in a dialect of south Lincolnshire, while the rest of the poem was copied from an exemplar in a more northern dialect, probably of Yorkshire. There is also physical evidence of the division of folios. That of fols. 1–74 is different from that of fols. 75–169. Furthermore fols. 73–74 are a separate bifolium, interrupting the regular 12-leaf quire structure. Each of the columns on this bifolium holds 46–47 lines of the poem, as compared with 36–38 on the leaves of regular quires. There is a jotted note on fol. 75r which reads "This haf was in hys ... bock." Having copied the first part of CM, crowding the last bit onto a separate bifolium, the scribe of G presumably had to pause to find an exemplar for the second part, as is indicated by the change of dialect, the change of ink, the addition of a bifolium to carry the last of the text of the first part, and the note on fol. 75. The difficulties did not end with the copying of the manuscript. It may be that the heirs of John Beawmys were executing a commission which had been put in hand by their father, and interrupted by his death, or it may be copied from an earlier exemplar into the later copy.