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Two annotated *Piers Plowman* manuscripts from London and the early reception of B and C

Abstract:

London, British Library, MS Additional 35287 of the B version and San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 143 of the C version are two of the most important manuscripts for the study of *Piers Plowman*'s early reception. Each witnesses to the development, among the London scribes involved in the transmission of Langland's and Chaucer's works, of some of the earliest commentary on the two long versions of Langland's poem. Each manuscript, however, adopts a different attitude towards the authority of the apparatus it inherited from earlier exemplars in the London booktrade. Viewed alongside the marginal glosses to *The Canterbury Tales* produced by the same network of scribes, the annotations in metropolitan copies of both B and C can reveal much about early readers' perceptions of the issues of authorship, authority, and audience raised by the work of the two London poets.

Keywords:

Piers Plowman, *The Canterbury Tales*, marginalia, manuscripts, reception

London, British Library, MS Additional 35287 (sigil M of the B version) and San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 143 (X of C) have been recognized for some time now as two of the most important witnesses to the history of *Piers Plowman*'s reception and manuscript production. Scholars have traced the connections of each manuscript to the London booktrade and revealed both the corrector-annotator of X (called Hand 2) and the later annotator of M (Hand 3) to be highly engaged readers, interested respectively in *Piers Plowman*'s treatment of the clergy and its status as a work offering practical wisdom about doing well in the world.¹ Our understanding of how the poem was read in this metropolitan context can be further deepened by studying here how each manuscript witnesses to the development, among the London scribes involved in the transmission

of Langland's and Chaucer's works, of some of the earliest commentary on the two long versions of *Piers Plowman*.

Each of the two manuscripts has been considered previously as an independent response to *Piers Plowman*.² In contrast to *The Canterbury Tales*, where a stable set of marginal source glosses was transmitted consistently among early copies, scholars of *Piers Plowman* have noted the absence of any single program of annotation, identifying only two textual groups sharing marginalia.³ In part, the present study seeks to describe two further affiliations among the marginal annotations in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts. In each of the two present instances, the manuscript transmits an earlier program of annotation, in the case of M one that must have developed very early indeed in the transmission of the B version. Each manuscript, however, adopts a different attitude towards the authority of the apparatus it inherited from earlier exemplars in the London booktrade. Examining the two copies together brings into focus, as well, the divergent marginal responses of early readers of the B and C versions and permits some inferences about the responses of some of Langland's earliest readers to his revisions. Viewed alongside the marginal glosses to *The Canterbury Tales* produced by the same network of scribes, the annotations in metropolitan copies of both B and C can reveal much about early readers' perceptions of the issues of authorship, authority, and audience raised by the work of the two London poets. While the marginalia in the Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales* appear designed to confer authoritative status on its text, those of HM 143 reflect the work of a scribe acting on his own authority and adopting the "authorial" voice of the poem as his own. For the scribe of M, on the other hand, the marginalia he inherited from his exemplar apparently had their own form of authority. The care with which he reproduced even brief glosses from his exemplar offers a warning against assuming that manuscript marginalia necessarily reflect the personal reading of the immediate scribe.

The copying of Piers Plowman in London and Hand 1's glosses in British Library Additional 35287

X and M both originate in London, respectively at the end of the fourteenth and in the early fifteenth centuries, and both share features of handwriting and presentation with other metropolitan copies. Hand 1 of X, responsible for the original copying of the text, has been described as closely resembling the Ellesmere scribe.⁴ Simon Horobin has further discussed the similarities in handwriting and layout between X and four other members of the *i*-group of C-text manuscripts to which it belongs.⁵ Such shared characteristics of layout and handwriting resemble, Horobin points out, the similarities between B-text manuscripts also believed to have been produced in London, including M. This copy shares with four others of London manufacture blank lines marking breaks between verse paragraphs.⁶ Horobin has identified the hand of the corrector in M, Hand 2, as the Ellesmere (E1) scribe Adam Pinkhurst, whom he and Linne Mooney have argued to be also the copyist of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17 (W of the B version).⁷ These links draw X and M yet closer together as London productions: John Bowers has compared the opening page decoration of HM 143 with that in W,⁸ and Horobin proposes that Hand 1 of M was also responsible for copying a fragment of *Troilus* now bound into HM 143.⁹

The connections between the various copies of *Piers Plowman* produced by London scribes are further reinforced by examining the marginalia in X and M. X's marginal notes appear to derive from earlier exemplars of C circulating in the capital, while M shares with the London copies W and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 581 (L) not only features of presentation found in other metropolitan manuscripts of the B version, but also a set of marginal annotations and interlinear glosses that must derive ultimately from the shared archetype of beta, the second of the two B-manuscript families. Although the more extensive marginalia added to M in the mid to late fifteenth century by the scribe identified as Hand 3 have received the most previous critical attention, the notes of the original copyist Hand 1 are of greater interest here as transmitting the earliest surviving program of marginal commentary on *Piers Plowman* B.¹⁰

Studies of *Piers* marginalia have tended to imply that the notes represent the personal, even "idiosyncratic" response of an individual scribe. But it is clear that the annotators of both

manuscripts under consideration here copied or (in the case of X) adapted the annotations they found in an exemplar or exemplars. The annotators evidently did not compose their marginalia spontaneously because both manuscripts contain evidence of correction, pointing to the marginal notes having been copied from elsewhere, whether from a separate prepared list or directly from another manuscript. In their forthcoming edition of X for the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive, Patricia Bart, Michael Calabrese, and Gail Duggan point to the apparent correction of the note on fol. 58v next to RK 13.100, “//whereof seruen titles þat prestes han.”¹¹ According to Bart et al, the note originally read “tithes,” but was subsequently corrected to “titles,” the topic of the corresponding passage in the poem. The correction suggests to the manuscript’s editors the possibility that the marginalia were copied from (and then checked against) another manuscript, although self-correction without reference to an exemplar remains a possibility. Further evidence that the notes were copied from a pre-prepared list or another manuscript, however, appears in the note “sapience” on fol. 50v next to RK 11.119. Since “sapience” is referred to in the poem in line 115 on the previous page, the scribe apparently misplaced this note while copying from a list or another manuscript, rather than writing his notes in direct response to his reading of the copy of the text in front of him.¹² Similarly, at M 13.405 (KD 13.415), Hand 3 of M wrote the note “# quod loquitur contra sage Folis” but subsequently erased and re-wrote it as “contra Sage Folis” in the more appropriate location a few lines below, next to M 13.411 (KD 13.421).¹³ The initial misplacement and subsequent correction of this note implies that at least some of the notes of this fifteenth-century annotator were copied either from a list prepared in advance or from a manuscript, rather than reflecting immediate personal responses to the text.

None of Hand 1’s seven interlinear glosses and eleven marginal glosses and notes in M evidences any similar correction. Nevertheless, the content of the glosses and annotations in this hand, when compared with other B-text manuscripts, indicates that these notes, too, were copied from an earlier exemplar. Indeed, they derive ultimately from a very early stage of the poem’s transmission and reception. In his study of the marginalia of the B-text manuscripts, David Benson

observed a “general similarity” between the original annotations of M and W, noting that both included the names of the deadly sins and a note “quid est caritas” in passus 15.¹⁴ Benson, however, categorized only a small number of the annotations in M as the work of the original scribe. The reassessments of the hands responsible for the various notes in M carried out subsequently by the editors of the manuscript for the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive reveal both the extent of Hand 1’s contribution to the marginalia, and the extent of the relationship between the annotations in this manuscript and not only W but also two further copies, L and Huntington Library, MS HM 128 (Hm).¹⁵ The resemblance becomes clear when the annotations by Hand 1 (both marginal comments and interlinear glosses, the latter marked with an asterisk) are set out in tabular form alongside the annotations by the original scribes of W, Hm, and L:

TABLE 1 Annotations by Hand 1 of M compared with W, Hm, and L

<Table 1>

Leaving aside the names of the seven deadly sins, which appear frequently enough in *Piers* manuscripts that their presence in all the copies compared here may well be coincidental, the significance of the remaining shared notes (highlighted above in bold) becomes apparent in the light of the textual relationship between the four manuscripts. The B version manuscripts divide into two large families: alpha, represented by the two copies R and Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (F), and beta, represented by the remainder. Most of the beta copies derive from the hyparchetype beta1 and form groups as follows: [BmBoCot][GY(OC²)C][((CrS)(WHm)]. L is independent of beta1, as is M until passus 17, where there was a change of exemplar to a member of the WHmCrS group. M was also subsequently corrected by Hand 2 from an exemplar related to WHmCrS.¹⁶

The annotations by Hand 1 of M shared with W and Hm might in theory, then, derive from the exemplar used to copy the text from passus 17 onwards, although these agreements in the marginalia occur from passus 6 to the end of the poem (or from passus 5, if the names of the sins are included). The presence of the same annotations in L, however, points to a different source. Since L is textually independent, the notes shared between L, M, W and Hm most likely derive from the only source those manuscripts have in common, the archetype of the beta branch itself, one

generation removed from Bx, the shared source of all the surviving B manuscripts. The small collection of brief notes and glosses by Hand 1 of M thus reflects an effort at annotating the text that originated very early in the transmission of the B version.

As the earliest recorded marginal response to *Piers Plowman* B the notes appear at first a little underwhelming. They show some interest in the poem's antifraternial discussions, with a "nota" marking the appearance of Friar Flatterer in passus 20 and a "nota de fratribus" highlighting Anima's tirade directed at "ye grete clerkes" (KD 15.82) who accept the ill-gotten gains of the rich. They also indicate attention to the development of the theme of charity in the later parts of the poem, noting Will's question, "what is charite?" and later the identity of the Samaritan as a figuration of Christ. Such concerns are somewhat predictable given the emphases of the poem itself.

While the notes seem unrevealing in terms of offering any particular "reading" of *Piers Plowman*, they are nevertheless significant for what they indicate about the nature of annotation. In some ways their very brevity makes their transmission all the more remarkable. It is striking, too, that the position of the various glosses, whether interlinear or marginal, remains consistent across the manuscripts that contain them. That L and M share identical original notes in passus 20 shows that at least in some instances even the briefest, most apparently ephemeral kind of annotation, a simple "nota" next to KD 20.315, could be copied from one manuscript to another as scribes sought to provide the most authoritative and comprehensive presentation of the text available to them. For Hand 1 of M, it appears, the glosses and annotations had a kind of authority of their own that the scribe preserved even down to reproducing their position on the manuscript page.

These glosses by Hand 1 of M originating very early in the transmission of B are also significant in offering a kind of response to the text of *Piers Plowman* not widely dispersed in the manuscripts of this poem, but familiar from the glosses in the early copies of *The Canterbury Tales*, including the Ellesmere manuscript, which we should recall was copied by the scribe who also apparently acted as the supervisor and corrector of Hand 1's work. Most discussions of the marginalia of *Piers Plowman* have emphasized their differences from those of Chaucer

manuscripts, perpetuating the critical construction of Langland as Chaucer's Other.¹⁷ The marginalia in E1 most frequently take the form of source glosses, quotations from or identifications of sources. *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, for example, one of the most heavily glossed parts of the text, is supplied with Latin glosses from Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* and from the bible as quoted by Jerome. These include the Wife's "gentil text," "Crescite et multiplicamini," which appears on fol. 63r next to III 28, and "Melius est nubere quam vri" on fol. 63v (supplying the source-text from "th'apostle" referred to in III 51-52).¹⁸ By contrast, as Kathryn Kerby-Fulton recently points out, manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* tend not to be provided with such "interpretative" glosses but rather with simple annotations identifying speakers and topics and providing plot summaries.¹⁹

Nevertheless, this earliest surviving program of annotation to *Piers Plowman* B is dominated by lexical glosses clarifying the meaning of more obscure Middle English vocabulary in the more familiar Latin: "sepius" glossing "lomer" in KD 20.238, for example. Such lexical glossing resembles that in Ellesmere, for example "id est dremed" glossing "mette" in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* VII 3002 on fol. 180v.²⁰ The Ellesmere gloss was copied by the same scribe, according to Horobin, who also painstakingly corrected Hand 1's language in M. The presence of both linguistic glosses and linguistic corrections in this manuscript of *Piers Plowman* suggests not only the extraordinary care taken over its text, but also that the scribes responsible for these early copies of Chaucer and Langland approached them with the same interpretative tools, even if their readings of the two authors ultimately diverged.²¹

Authority and audience in the margins of Huntington Library, MS HM 143

The two hundred or so marginal notes in HM 143, like those supplied by Hand 1 of M, were apparently added to the book at the time of its original production, although not by the scribe who carried out the copying of the text but by a second individual who also made many textual "corrections." The marginalia added by Hand 2 of X are both more extensive and more loquacious

than those supplied in M by Hand 1, and they do not include the kind of lexical glosses found in that manuscript and the other early, textually important copies of B. Hand 2's annotations in HM 143 point to a tradition of annotation that differs from that of the B version, as well as from early copies of *The Canterbury Tales*. Like the marginalia of Hand 1 of M, the notes appear to have originated not with the immediate scribe, but in earlier exemplars circulating in London. However, Hand 2 of X differs from Hand 1 of M in his willingness to adapt the marginalia he inherited in his presumptive source. Indeed, not only is he willing to supply additional and adapted marginal notes on his own authority, but he goes beyond the effort of the original scribe of M at glossing the original author's language. Instead, he adopts the "authorial" voice of the text as his own.

Comparison of Hand 2's marginalia with those of another London manuscript, British Library, MS Additional 10574 (sigil Bm of B and L of C, a conjoint ABC text) implies that Hand 2's notes originated in exemplars in the London booktrade.²² Bowers remarks briefly on the marginalia of Bm/L in his discussion of X, noting that they "did not extend much beyond the Lady Meed material."²³ What Bowers does not point out, however, is that the marginal notes in Bm/L peter out—or rather switch from quite full narrative summaries to a minimal system of mostly pointing hands—at precisely the point that the text changes from its C to B exemplar.²⁴ The likeliest explanation is therefore that the notes in Additional 10574 in that portion where it is sigil L of C derived from the scribe's C-text exemplar.²⁵ It follows that the similarity between the marginalia in L and X is explained by common derivation from another metropolitan C-text source. The similarities of the two programs of annotation may be observed by presenting them in tabular form:²⁶

TABLE 2 Comparison of annotations in HM 143 and C-text portion of Additional 10574

<Table 2>

On an initial reading one might suppose that the similarities between the two sets of annotations are simply the result of their response to the same text, whose action and vocabulary they both follow

closely. But the two notes highlighted here in bold suggest that both programs of annotation have their origins, at however many removes, in a shared ultimate source. X's note at RK 2.181, "**//Red hyer a blissed companye per contrarium**" derives not, it would seem, directly from the text, but from a note that somewhat resembled L's marginal comment at RK 2.56, "**Biddyng to þe bridale of mede a fair cumpany.**" Both notes refer to Meed and her entourage, L at their first assembling for the wedding, X at the point they gather for the journey to Westminster. But while L's note derives from the wording of the poem itself, with "Biddyng to the bridale" echoing the a-verse of RK 2.58, "Were beden to þe Bridale" ("Weren beden to þat bridale" in the spelling of L), X's note, placed in a later position, echoes nothing in the corresponding text but appears to offer an elaboration of a note resembling L's: "a fair cumpany" becomes "a blissed companye per contrarium," clarifying the irony of any positive adjective applied to Meed's company of scoundrels. Since in its C-text portion Additional belongs to the same *x*-family as HM 143,²⁷ the resemblance of their marginal notes suggests that each represents a different development of a scheme of marginal annotation that originated in C-text exemplars in London. The relationship between the notes in X and L at RK 2.56 and RK 2.181 implies that X represents a form of the program of annotation more distantly removed than L from the original source.

The relationship between the two sets of annotations in L and X suggests that while Hand 1 of M saw the annotations he inherited from his exemplar as to some degree authoritative, reproducing them even down to their position on the page, Hand 2 of X was willing to assert his own authority by adapting and extending what he found in his C-text exemplar. Of course, it remains possible that an unknowable number of intervening scribes was responsible for the differences that can be observed between the notes in L and X. However, to suppose that Hand 2 himself made many of the changes to the marginalia he found in his source would be consistent with his behavior in relation to the text as copied by Hand 1.

Michael Calabrese's study of Hand 2's "corrections" to Hand 1's text emphasizes the scribe's willingness to insert himself into the text on his own authority, without apparent reference

to any exemplar. Hand 2 shows no qualms about substituting his own unique readings for archetypal readings copied by Hand 1: “Intervention in the text without poetic or metrical understanding occurs frequently,” Calabrese notes.²⁸ At the same time, Hand 2 sometimes intrudes into the text in a way that demonstrates both an active interest in particular themes, especially the clergy, and a sensitivity to Langland’s characteristic vocabulary. For example, Calabrese discusses Hand 2’s addition at RK 11.301, where Hand 1 had omitted the verb “kepe” in “As clerkes of holy kirke þat [kepe] sholde and saue.” Hand 2 here supplied the deficiency by inserting the verb “socoure.” Calabrese suggests that Hand 2 might have recalled the original reading from his memory of the poem in another source, since the verb he chose, “socoure,” encompasses one of the meanings of Langland’s original “kepe.” He comments that Hand 2’s repair here is “as Langlandian as the poet’s presumed own verse.”²⁹ Langland indeed himself employs the word ‘socour’ in RK 22.170, where it refers to Life seeking refuge in (phony and easy) medicinal remedies instead of the kind of spiritual ‘socoure’ that might properly be offered by “clerkes of holychirche.”

The unique readings in Hand 2’s marginalia as compared with those of L evince a similar attention to Langland’s language, and again might imply that Hand 2 had previously copied *Piers Plowman* in another version. X’s note at RK Prol.81, “//hyer parsones & parische prestes playned to þe bischop” indicates how closely the annotator followed the language of the poem itself, for while both X and L read “pleyned” (or “pleyneden”) in the corresponding line of the text, only X replicates the verb of the text in the marginal note, with L’s note reading, “here preieden persons & parische preestis of leue to dwelle at london &c.” Conversely, L’s note on Kind Wit devising the plough at RK Prol. 145 (“kynde wyt & þe comune maden a plough & cetera”) is closer to the language of the original poem than that of the corresponding note on the previous line in X (“þe comune & kynde wit ordayned a plow”), since Langland employed the verb “make” not “ordain.” But X’s note closely resembles the language of the corresponding lines in B, “The commune contreued of kynde wit craftes, / And for profit of al þe peple Plowmen ordeyned” (KD Prol.119-20), suggesting that either Hand 2 himself or an earlier scribe here recalled the previous version of

the poem. The likelihood that Hand 2 was responsible for the reading of this marginal note seems increased by comparison with the textual corrections. These demonstrate the same “feel” for Langland’s vocabulary combined with the same willingness on the part of the scribe to intervene on his own authority—and perhaps also on his recollection of a form of the text he had copied previously.

Hand 2’s readiness to insert himself into the text extended also to his habit of adopting the text’s address to an imagined audience as his own. For example, at RK 1.175, Hand 2’s note reads, “//notate 3e ryche” (fol. 6v). Here Hand 2 imitates the similar direct address to the rich within the corresponding text: “Forthy y rede 3ow riche.”³⁰ Similarly at RK 16.274 the note “//beth war of þis lered & lewed” (fol. 72v) echoes the direct address to “lewed men” in Langland’s own line. Elsewhere, for example at RK 3.27, the annotator’s note adds a direct exhortation to an imagined addressee where none appears at the corresponding point in the original poem: “//notate 3e lewed auanced” (fol. 11r). In some cases it is unclear whether the annotator addresses the reader of the manuscript or takes up the authorial pose of rebuke and admonition towards figures within the poem that form the object of the satirist’s critique, for example at RK 5.146 “//notate Religiosi” (fol. 22v).³¹ In others, the rebuke of figures depicted in the text is made explicit, for example at RK 13.124 “//beth war bischoppes” (fol. 58v).

In all these examples, the annotator’s imitation of the poet’s own use of the imperative plural blurs in interesting ways the boundaries between the authorial voice of the text and the voice of the annotator, as well as between the actual reader of the manuscript and the various fictionalized auditors addressed in the poem itself.³² Hand 2’s willingness to adopt the hortatory voice of *Piers Plowman* as his own simultaneously encourages the manuscript reader’s participation in the fiction, extending the poem’s fictionalized address to an audience into the margins of the book.

Although Hand 2 is not unique among *Piers* annotators in taking up different kinds of marginal address, “from commentator to character and from commentator to an outside reader or fellow audience member,”³³ his frequent use of Langland’s hortatory mode in his marginal notes

suggests again his independence from the presumptive source of his marginalia. Where at RK 1.175 Hand 2 writes in the margin, “//notate 3e ryche,” at the same point in the text MS Addit. 10574 supplies instead a simple topic note: “3it of loue & faip et cetera.” The distinctiveness of Hand 2’s note indicates that he was willing both to adopt the *Piers Plowman*’s hortatory voice as his own, and also to adapt the annotations he found in his source to his own ends.

Hand 2’s annotations addressing directly a range of imagined listeners or readers differ not only from those of his presumptive source in a metropolitan manuscript of the C version, but also from the annotations to *The Canterbury Tales* in the best-known Middle English literary manuscript produced by a London scribe, El. As Kerby-Fulton recently points out, drawing on the earlier study of the *Canterbury Tales* marginalia by Stephen Partridge, moments of apostrophe or exclamation in Chaucer’s work are frequently noted with “Auctor” in the margins of El. The note “Auctor” appears, for example, next to two apostrophes in *The Man of Law’s Tale*, II 358, “O sowdanesse roote of Iniquitee,” and II 421, “O sodeyn wo that euere art successour” (fols. 53r and 54r).³⁴ Nothing in such passages in the original text, Kerby-Fulton notes,

would suggest the voice of the *auctor* to us today. This in itself speaks volumes about medieval literary theory of narrative voicing, and asks us seriously to question whether the ideas on “persona” originating in New Criticism can be easily applied to medieval texts.³⁵

While Kerby-Fulton’s remarks here are provocative, they are perhaps over-generalized, since the ideas about narrative voicing, personae, and authorship in El’s copy of *The Canterbury Tales* differ in intriguing ways from those of Hand 2’s annotations on *Piers Plowman* in X. Possibly the “auctor” notes in El are designed to enhance the aura of authoritativeness that the careful planning and execution of the manuscript seems everywhere intended to project.³⁶ By contrast, despite its professional and polished appearance, HM 143 lacks an authorial presence or identification.³⁷ Whereas in its B-text portion MS Add. 10574 includes two notes referring to the “compiler” and the “author” of the work, X lacks any similar “auctor” notes.³⁸ The absence of the author is filled in this

manuscript by the annotator. At those declamatory moments whose parallels attract “auctor” notes in El, Hand 2 steps himself into the voice of the text.

At the same time as inserting his own voice into moments of direct address to the reader, Hand 2 preserves throughout his marginal notes a clear sense of the dreamer Will as a persona, even a fully realized dramatic character, distinct from the author of the poem.³⁹ This can be seen from the table above where X and Additional 10574 are parallel and where, unlike the notes in L, Hand 2 highlights Will’s questions to Holy Church: “//hyer askyd wille who was þat woman þat spak to hym” (fol. 5r, at RK 1.69); “//heyre prayde will he moste fals knawe” (fol. 7r, at RK 2.5). This emphasis on the figure of the dreamer as dramatic actor in the narrative persists throughout Hand 2’s annotations, which highlight, for example, his interrogation by Conscience and Reason (fol. 20v at RK 5.7/8: “//hyer concience & raysoun aratyde wille for his lollynge”); his sojourn in the “land of longing” (fol. 51r at RK 11.165: “//hyere fortune raueschid will & schewed hym a myroure þat hyzte myddylþerd”) and the significant moment at which Ymaginatif makes him blush with shame (fol. 61r at RK 13.212: “//hyer cawþte wille colour”); and finally his meeting with Need at the start of passus 22 (fol. 101v at RK 22.4: “//hyere he mette wyth nede”). Altogether the proper name of the dreamer Will appears eleven times in the sidenotes of X, compared with only five occurrences of the name in the entire C text of *Piers Plowman* (not all of these clearly referring to the poem’s narrator).

Again, X here presents a striking contrast not only with the B-text portion of Addit. 10574, which highlights instead of a *character* Will the “compiler” and “author” of the book “Longe Wille,” but also with the Ellesmere “auctor” notes. Modern critics are perhaps accustomed to thinking of Chaucer, the urbane London poet, as playing artfully with personae while Langland the fiery “oplonder” speaks with such earnest intensity as to seem often to break through the bounds of his own fiction, interposing his own voice directly. The Ellesmere scribe and Hand 2 of X seem to have read the two poems they copied and annotated rather differently. While the Ellesmere annotations are keen to identify an “authorial” presence at places where none appears evident to the

modern critic, Hand 2's marginal notes preserve a clear sense of a named "character," Will, even at points in the poem that slip into that authoritative/authorial voice that Derek Pearsall has described as the "overvoice."⁴⁰

The different character of El's and Hand 2's marginal notes perhaps reflects the two annotators' perception of a deeper difference between the relationship of author and audience in Chaucer's and Langland's work. In her study of the glosses on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, Susan Schibanoff highlights the way that Chaucer's earlier works foregrounded a narrator-poet who functions as a kind of glossator on the text, creating the illusion of the poem being communicated directly to "old readers" hearing the work read aloud. By contrast, in *The Canterbury Tales* the figure of the poet appears as merely one pilgrim among many, with no special intermediary interpretative function. The proliferation of idiosyncratic individual readings by "new readers" encountering the book unmediated, in private, becomes, Schibanoff suggests, the very subject of *The Canterbury Tales*, and is supported by the source glosses in the Ellesmere *Wife of Bath*. Rather than directing interpretation, Schibanoff argues, the source glosses support the Wife's idiosyncratic uses of textual "authorities."⁴¹

While *Piers Plowman* similarly foregrounds the proliferation of multiple conflicting interpretations, Langland never imagines his work, as Chaucer does, as a completed book in the hands of a private reader capable of turning the page to choose another tale. Rather, as Anne Middleton indicates, Langland foregrounds the text's status as public voice, preserving the illusion of a direct address to a listening audience.⁴² The annotations in HM 143 respond directly to this aspect of Langland's work. Hand 2 extends into the manuscript margins the fiction of a text speaking directly to its reader: "//lo how loot lay be his do3tres" (fol. 4v at RK 1.27); "//lo fendis fille for pride" (fol. 5v at RK 1.113)—though his notes indicate an awareness, too, that their own very existence speaks to an individual reader wishing to locate and relocate particular passages within the material artefact of Huntington Library, MS HM 143 itself: "//Red hyer a blissed

compane per contrarium” (fol. 9v at RK 2.181); “//behold þe houshold of mede” (fol. 7v at RK 2.57).

Hand 2’s notes may also be read, finally, as a response to features particular to the C version of *Piers Plowman*, and thus enable some insight into the reactions of early readers to Langland’s revisions. The marginalia of X foreground two aspects of the poem that Langland also enhanced in his final revisions: the figure of the dreamer Will, and moments of direct address to the reader. As Ralph Hanna has recently argued, the revisions to the early part of the C vision, particularly the pardon passus, develop a more prominent role for the dreamer earlier in the poem.⁴³ Langland replaces the tearing of the pardon with new materials in C passus 9 in which Will offers extended tirade against beggars, religious pretenders, and the bishops who allow their proliferation. In bringing the figure of the dreamer into prominence here and in the new “autobiographical” sequence at the beginning of C passus 5, Langland perhaps responds, Hanna suggests, to Chaucer’s dream vision poetry of the 1380s with its development of the narrator-poet figure. Not all the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* indicate readerly approval for this development: by the 1420s the redactor of the poem in the ABC splice San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 114 (Ht) appears to reject the increased prominence of the dreamer in C (perhaps even because Chaucer had diminished the status of this figure in his later work). He adopts the new material from C 9 into his hybrid text, but reassigns it to Piers by inserting it into the ploughing of the half-acre scene in B passus 6.⁴⁴ Hand 2 of X, however, annotating the text twenty or twenty-five years earlier, responds with apparent enthusiasm to the figure of the dreamer with his notes highlighting the new passages developing Will’s role. The new sequences in C 5 and C 9 attract a flurry of comments from Hand 2.⁴⁵ Nor was the annotator of X alone in this apparent enthusiasm for Langland’s new material: as Kerby-Fulton has pointed out, the new passages in C with which Langland replaced the tearing of the pardon attract more general attention in the margins of *Piers* manuscripts than the original scene.⁴⁶

Hand 2's many hortatory annotations suggest his appreciation, too, for a feature of the text that Langland also worked to enhance in C (although B-text manuscripts do also contain examples of marginalia addressing the reader or figures within the text). Calabrese has written recently of several passages in the C-text by means of which Langland "increases the intensity and the frequency of direct speech."⁴⁷ These passages include Conscience's accusation against the clergy in RK Prol.95-127 and Will's attack on false beggars and religious in the pardon passus already mentioned. These new sequences attract the notice of Hand 2 with a narrative summary note at RK Prol. 95 "//Concyence acusede prelates" (fol. 2r) and several notes on the pardon passus, including two extending the direct address of the text into the margins: "//notate 3e lewede ermytes" (fol. 42r at RK 9.204) and "/notate episcopi" (fol. 43r at RK 9.263), the latter translating into Latin Will's "How, herde!" Altogether Hand 2's notes suggest an alert London reader who responded not only to the poem's concerns with clergy and pastoral care, but also to the urgency with which these concerns were increasingly directed to the reader in the poem's final version.

Conclusion: Reading Piers Plowman marginalia

The marginal annotations of *Piers Plowman* manuscripts can enhance our understanding of the working methods and affiliations of the scribes responsible for the early transmission of the poem. While the brief annotations of M's Hand 1, for example, offer only rather indirect commentary on or response to Langland's work, they nevertheless reveal how meticulously marginal apparatus could be transmitted from one copy of *Piers Plowman* to another as apparently possessing a kind of authority of their own. The more comprehensive marginalia of other scribes like Hand 2 of X can provide more significant insight into the responses of medieval readers to Langland's text in its different versions. As Kerby-Fulton recently observes, these responses often challenge modern critical priorities and assumptions. As the different level of annotation in the C and B text portions of MS Addit. 10574 indicates, the C version often received the most extensive marginal commentaries in the medieval manuscripts, in contrast to the overwhelming preponderance of

modern critical commentary on B.⁴⁸ Further study of the manuscript marginalia thus promises to prompt reconsideration of modern readings of the poem as much as filling a gap in the history of Langland's reception.⁴⁹

Future investigation of the *Piers* marginalia stands to benefit, however, as I have indicated here, from a more rigorously comparative approach. One may observe a general tendency in recent criticism to romanticize the contribution of the immediate scribe whose work is visible in the manuscript.⁵⁰ This tendency has been exaggerated in the study of *Piers* marginalia by the often unstated assumption that the annotations of any individual copy are the product of the present scribe whose personal idiosyncrasies are thus directly reflected in his annotations. The more individual manuscripts are studied in isolation, the further the impression of each copy's uniqueness becomes reinforced. Kerby-Fulton's recent emphasis on how scribes copied from exemplars or lists offers a welcome corrective to her earlier sentimentalizing construction of the annotator of another C-text manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104 as the radical Irish counterpart to the cautious metropolitan annotator of HM 143.⁵¹ Bart's discussion of the different styles of annotation the Ht redactor derived from the multiple exemplars from which he must have worked to produce his conflated text also offers an example of a more skeptical empirical approach to the discussion of manuscript annotation. Although the transmission situation remains distinct, studies of Chaucer marginalia also offer an important corrective to a tendency of Langland scholars to treat manuscript marginalia as if the spontaneous effusions of individual scribes.⁵²

At the same time, there is one sense in which the impulse to read manuscript marginalia as the personal response of the scribe ought not to be resisted. For the form of *Piers Plowman* itself offered powerful inducements for a scribe or annotator to read the text "intimately," as Schott recently argues in relation to marginalia in B-text manuscripts that adopt various voices:

the very flexibility of speaker, the openness of the text to free interpretation, and even the personal adoption of the voice speak to a deeper invitation encoded in the poem for its readers to take its sentiment as their own.⁵³

While Hand 2's marginal "reading" of Langland's work was undoubtedly influenced by earlier metropolitan exemplars, his commentary simultaneously responded to several aspects of the text itself that invited the reader to take Langland's words "as their own." *Piers Plowman* framed itself as the biography of the dreamer Will, whose represented life Hand 2 traced carefully in his notes. It addressed contemporary social concerns with an immediacy that seems to have inspired in large part the annotator's many notes and textual interventions. And perhaps most importantly, it presented the fiction of speaking directly to the reader, a mode of address that was both traditional and perpetually contemporaneous, and one that Hand 2 extended into the margins and his relationship with the manuscript's reader. In his marginal annotations no less than in his interventions into the text, Hand 2 of HM 143 responded energetically to Langland's invitation to read *Piers Plowman* personally.

I am grateful to the Huntington Library for two fellowships in the summers of 2013 and 2014 that allowed me to study Huntington Library, MS HM 143. I offer thanks as well to the editors of the forthcoming edition of the manuscript for the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive (PPEA), Patricia Bart, Michael Calabrese, and Gail Duggan, for generously discussing with me their work in progress.

¹ Michael Calabrese and John Bowers have independently studied the many textual alterations and marginal annotations by Hand 2 of X, building on earlier work by Carl Grindley: see Michael Calabrese, "[*Piers*] the [*Plowman*]: The Corrections, Interventions, and Erasures in Huntington MS Hm 143 (X)," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 19 (2005): 169-99; John M. Bowers, "Langland's *Piers Plowman* in Hm 143: Copy, Commentary, Censorship," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 19: (2005), 137-68; Carl James Grindley, "From Creation to Desecration: The Marginal Annotations of *Piers Plowman* C Text HM 143" (unpublished MA thesis, University of Victoria, B.C., 1992) and "Reading *Piers Plowman* C-Text Annotations: Notes toward the Classification of Printed and Written Marginalia in Texts from the British Isles 1300-1641," in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo, eds., *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of*

Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower (Victoria, B. C., 2001), 73-141. See also G. H. Russell, "Some Early Responses to the C Version of *Piers Plowman*," *Viator* 15 (1984): 275-303.

The corrections to the text made by Hand 2 of M, identified as the work of the prolific Ellesmere scribe Adam Pinkhurst, have been discussed by Simon Horobin as evidence for collaboration among London scribes: see "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. Thorlac Turville-Petre has also discussed the corrections, which focus on spellings and use of final -e, as evidence for a "house style" among metropolitan scribes: "Putting It Right: The Corrections of Huntington Library MS. HM 128 and BL Additional MS. 35287," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 16 (2002): 41-65. David Benson identifies the many annotations by the later Hand 3 of M as "the most detailed record we possess of how *Piers Plowman* was read during the two centuries after it was written;" see "Introduction: The Annotations to the Manuscripts of the B-version of *Piers Plowman*," in C. David Benson and Lynne S. Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of Piers Plowman: The B Version* (Cambridge, U.K., 1997), 9-27, at 27. Christine Schott discusses the annotations in more detail in "The Intimate Reader at Work: Medieval Annotators of *Piers Plowman* B," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 26 (2012): 163-86.

² Grindley, who first studied HM 143's marginalia in detail, argued that they revealed Hand 2's "idiosyncrasies" ("From Creation," 77). Schott calls the annotator Hand 3 of M "an idiosyncratic reader" ("The Intimate Reader," 171).

³ See Stephen Partridge, "Glosses in the Manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: An Edition and Commentary" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1992) and "The *Canterbury Tales* Glosses and the Manuscript Groups," in *The Canterbury Tales Project Occasional Papers*, 1 (1993): 85-94. For the *Piers* marginalia shared by textually related copies, see Benson, "Introduction," 20. One set of shared marginalia is found in the pair Cambridge University Library, MS LL.iv.14 (C²) and Oxford, Oriel College MS 79 (O), which shared a common ancestor until passus 17 and whose marginalia continue to be related until passus 15. The other example of shared

marginalia in genetically related manuscripts noted by Benson is London, British Library, MS Additional 10574 (Bm) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 814 (Bo), where Bo contains one of the marginal notes also found in Bm.

⁴ Bowers, “Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in Hm 143,” 138.

⁵ Simon Horobin, “‘In London and Opelond’: The Dialect and Circulation of the C Version of *Piers Plowman*,” *Medium Ævum* 74 (2005): 248–69.

⁶ Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge, U.K., 2005), 244-47. The copies in question are Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17 (W), Cambridge, Newnham College, MS 4 (Y), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 581 (L) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 38 (R).

⁷ Simon Horobin and Linne R. Mooney, “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.

⁸ Bowers, “Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in Hm 143,” 144.

⁹ Horobin, “Adam Pinkhurst,” 63-65. Horobin points out that the manuscript has a Gloucestershire dialect but aspects of London *ordinatio*. But the identification of the main scribe of M as that of the fragment of *Troilus* now in HM 143 locates the original copying more firmly in London, the center for the original dissemination of Chaucer’s poem (62, 65, 79). Turville-Petre calls the original scribe of M a “Gloucestershire scribe with London training” (“Putting it Right,” 63).

¹⁰ For the date of Hand 3’s marginalia, see *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 5: London, British Library, MS Additional 35287 (M)*, ed. Eric Eliason, Hoyt N. Duggan, and Thorlac Turville-Petre, SEENET Series A.7, web edition (2014), <http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/main/B/M>, Introduction, I.9. Quotations from the marginalia of M throughout this essay are based upon this edition, silently expanding abbreviations. Line references to the manuscript are also to the line numbers there.

¹¹ Line references from *Piers Plowman* throughout this essay are unless otherwise stated from the Athlone editions, prefaced by the initials of the editors: *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London, 1975) (KD); *Piers Plowman: The C Version*, ed. George Russell and George Kane (London, 1997) (RK). Quotations from the marginalia of X are reproduced from the manuscript, silently expanding abbreviations and consulting the published transcription by Grindley (“Reading *Piers Plowman* C-text Annotations,” 127-35). That transcription is soon to be corrected by the forthcoming edition of the manuscript for the PPEA, and I am grateful to the editors for sharing and discussing some of these corrections with me. The manuscript is currently available in the print facsimile published by the Huntington Library: *Piers Plowman: The Huntington Manuscript (Hm 143) Reproduced in Photostat, with an Introduction by R. W. Chambers and Technical Examination by R. B. Haselden and H. C. Schulz* (San Marino, C.A., 1936).

¹² Grindley entertained the possibility that Hand 2 made notes before writing his annotations but did not find any firm evidence to support such a hypothesis (“From Creation,” 46-47).

¹³ The correction is also discussed by Schott, “The Intimate Reader,” 169.

¹⁴ Benson, “Introduction,” 20.

¹⁵ I have consulted Benson and Blanchfield’s transcriptions of the original marginalia of each manuscript, emended where necessary from the transcriptions, images, and designations of scribal hands presented in the PPEA editions: *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 2: Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17 (W)*, ed. Thorlac Turville-Petre and Hoyt N. Duggan, SEENET Series A.2, web edition (2014) <http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/main/B/W>; *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 6: San Marino, Huntington Library, MS Hm 128 (Hm and Hm2)*, ed. Michael Calabrese, Hoyt N. Duggan, and Thorlac Turville-Petre, SEENET Series A.9, web edition (2014), <http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/main/B/Hm>; and *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 4: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 581 (S. C. 987) (L)*, ed. Hoyt N. Duggan and Ralph Hanna, SEENET Series A. 6, web edition (2014)

<http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/main/B/L>. Scribal abbreviations have been silently expanded here and throughout this essay. I have not here reproduced the underlining that accompanies some of the notes.

¹⁶ See *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Vol. 9: The B-Version Archetype*, ed. John Burrow and Thorlac Turville-Petre, SEENET Series A.12, web edition (2014)

<http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/crit/main/B/Bx>, Introduction, II.1; *PPEA vol. 5*, ed. Eliason, Duggan, and Turville-Petre, Introduction, II.4. The relationships between WHmCrS differ at different points of the text: <Hm[W(CrS)]> in passus 10-15 and <[WHm][CrS]M> in passus 17-20 where they are joined by M. See Kane and Donaldson, *The B Version*, 43-44, 49-50, 62. They comment that “The specific relationship of these manuscripts before Passus X seems not recoverable” (*The B Version*, 50). Sion College MS Arc. L.40 2/E (sigil S) is not included in Turville-Petre and Burrow’s edition of the B text archetype, but it forms a genetic pair with Cr as discussed by Kane and Donaldson, *The B Version*, 32-35. San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 114 (Ht), a conflated ABC version is also excluded; it belongs to the GYOC²CBmBoCot group in its B portions. See Russell and Kane, *The C Version*, 193.

¹⁷ For this opposition, see Hanna, *London Literature*, 256.

¹⁸ See Partridge, “Glosses,” for transcription of the glosses together with notes on their sources. The Ellesmere manuscript can now be viewed online in a full digital facsimile in the Huntington Digital Library: <http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15150coll7/id/2838>. Line numbers and quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston, 1997).

¹⁹ See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work: Annotators, Editors and Correctors in Middle English Literary Texts,” in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Maidie Hilmo, and Linda Olson, *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2012), 207-44, at 223. Such notes, which Partridge calls “summary” glosses, do appear in manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* as well: Partridge gives the example of the note on fol. 65r of El, “Bihoold

how this goode wyf serued hir iij firste housbondes whiche were goode olde men” (Partridge, “Glosses,” ch. 1, 3). Kerby-Fulton provides a helpful brief introduction to the types of marginal annotation in manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* (“Professional Readers at Work,” 210-14).

²⁰ Discussed by Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 211. Partridge notes that interlinear glosses giving Latin equivalents of English words are confined largely to the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts and two other copies, Oxford, Christ Church MS 154 and Cambridge University Library, Dd.iv.24. As in the case of the glosses in the early copies of *Piers Plowman B*, the explanatory glosses in manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* entered the manuscript tradition early, ““above,”” Partridge says, “the surviving copies—that is, at least within a few years of Chaucer’s death” (“Glosses,” ch. 2, 10).

²¹ Assuming, of course, that the author himself was not responsible for some of these early glosses.

²² For the probable production of the manuscript in London, see A. I. Doyle, “Remarks on Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*,” in Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson, eds., *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell* (Cambridge, U.K., 1986), 35-48, at 41.

²³ Bowers, “Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in Hm 143,” 153.

²⁴ Bm, like Bo and Cot, is a conflated text containing C.Prol.1-2.131, A.2.90-212, and B.3.1-20.354. See Kane and Donaldson, *The B Version*, 1. Bo has the same marginal note on fol. 1r as found in Bm, “hic vidit fratres preche for copes,” apparently copied from that manuscript. See Bryan P. Davis, “The Rationale for a Copy of a Text: Constructing the Exemplar for British Library Additional MS. 10574,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 11 (1997): 141-56, at 144; Doyle, “Remarks,” 41; Kane and Donaldson, *The B Version*, 40-42. Besides the pointing hands that appear sporadically, petering out in the later part of the text, the only other certainly original notes in Bm are the names of the sins in passus 5, a note of Piers’s testament (fol. 25v next to KD 6.86), and a “nota contra fratres” on fol. 63v next to KD 15.226. Three notes are in a less formal and perhaps distinct hand: fol. 42r “hic libri non concordantur” (KD 11.35); fol. 60v “nota de condicionibus

compilatoris huius libri” (KD 15.5); fol. 62v “Nomen auctoris huius libri est longe wille” (KD 15.152). Two notae on fol. 11r are included by Benson among the original marginal notes but are perhaps in a hand different from the original scribe.

²⁵ Cf. Patricia Bart’s recent discussion of the different styles of marginal annotation in another conflated text, Huntington Library, MS HM 114 (Ht). These similarly suggest copying of marginalia from multiple exemplars with different patterns of annotation. See Patricia R. Bart, “Intellect, Influence, and Evidence: The Elusive Allure of the Ht Scribe,” in Michael Calabrese and Stephen H. A. Shepherd, eds., *Yee? Baw for Bokes: Essays on Medieval Manuscripts and Poetics in Honor of Hoyt N. Duggan* (Los Angeles, 2013), 219-43, at 234.

²⁶ I have excluded from the list here the notes on fol. 6r of X that do not comment on the content of the text but simply direct the reader to three lines accidentally omitted in the initial copying and supplied at the foot of the page. The marginalia of Additional 10574 are reproduced here from the manuscript and consultation of the transcription by Benson and Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts*, 167-68. To aid clarity of comparison I do not reproduce in this table the virgules and underlining that accompany X’s notes, though I have reproduced them elsewhere in this essay. I have not reproduced the boxing of the marginalia in the Additional manuscript.

²⁷ See the summary in Russell and Kane, *The C Version*, 58.

²⁸ Calabrese, “The Corrections,” 180.

²⁹ Calabrese, “The Corrections,” 190–91, at 191.

³⁰ Cf also fol. 68v at RK 16.9 “//notate 3e ryche men.”

³¹ For other examples, see: fol. 3r at RK Prol.166 “//notate men of lawe”; fol. 15r at RK 3.312 “//notate presbiteri”; fol. 27r at RK 6.254 “//notate diuites”; fol. 30r at RK 7.30 “//notate lewede prestes.” In his classification of the types of marginalia in the manuscript, Grindley calls the first two of these examples “Topic” notes, the third a “Polemical Response,” and the fourth “Exhortation,” suggesting the way that the notes evade rigid categorization.

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- ³² Kerby-Fulton takes the use of the plural as evidence “for the possibility either that HM 143 was produced in a commercial workshop for some kind of group readership (like Shirley’s) or that it was produced for a religious house and with such an audience in mind.” See “The Professional Reader as Annotator,” in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Denise L. Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce “Piers Plowman”* (Minneapolis, 1999), 68-91, at 74. This argument seems to overlook, however, the extent to which the note may, like the original poem, reflect a fictionalized rather than actual audience. For Hand 2’s imitation of Langland’s use of the second person plural, see also Grindley, “From Creation,” 60.
- ³³ Schott, “The Intimate Reader,” 178. Schott points out that “Examples abound,” in M and many other manuscripts, of such moments of address. Schott observes in M the same “slippage between addressees” that can also be seen in X.
- ³⁴ The same notes appear in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 141; see the edition of the glosses in Partridge, “Glosses.”
- ³⁵ Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 212. See also Partridge, “Glosses,” ch. 1, 4.
- ³⁶ Partridge notes that the Ellesmere glosses add to “the finished, authoritative quality of the manuscript” (“Glosses,” ch. 1, 27). Susan Schibanoff argues that the marginalia may be designed to lend authority to the manuscript since by this time “readers may have expected secular authors to annotate their own works.” See “The New Reader and Female Textuality in Two Early Commentaries on Chaucer,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 10 (1988): 71-108, at 92. As Schibanoff indicates, critics have disagreed on the question of whether Chaucer himself might be responsible for any of the marginalia in the early copies of the *Tales*; see chapter 1 of Partridge’s dissertation for a review of the various arguments.
- ³⁷ Bowers points out the absence of a title or authorial attribution in the manuscript (“Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in Hm 143,” 147-48).
- ³⁸ See fol. 60v at KD 15.5 “nota de condicionibus compilatoris huius libri”; fol. 62v at KD 15.152 “Nomen auctoris huius libri est longe wille.” See Benson, “Introduction,” 22, and Kerby-Fulton,

“Professional Readers at Work,” 231-32, for further discussion of notes in the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* B attempting to identify the author or “compiler.”

³⁹ Kerby-Fulton points out that Hand 2 “identified (centuries ahead of modern scholars) Will as the fictional principle of unity in the poem ... and ... never draws attention to the *auctor*.” See “The Professional Reader as Annotator,” 80.

⁴⁰ See the note at RK 9.247, “hyere mette wille wyth lollares to þe meteward” (fol. 42v). Pearsall’s use of the term “overvoice” is reported by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Langland ‘in his Working Clothes’? Scribe D, Authorial Loose Revision Material, and the Nature of Scribal Intervention,” in A. J. Minnis, ed., *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions: Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall* (York, 2001), 139-67, at 142.

⁴¹ Schibanoff, 77-78, 84-87, 96-104. For example, the EI gloss on fol. 64v, “Item vir corporis sui non habet potestatem set vxor” seems to support the Wife’s partial quotation from 1 Cor. 7:4 in III 158-62. For discussion of this example, see also Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 218-20.

⁴² See Anne Middleton, “The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II,” *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114; repr. in Steven Justice, ed., *Chaucer, Langland, and Fourteenth-Century Literary History* (Farnham, U.K., 2013), 1-25.

⁴³ Ralph Hanna, “The ‘Absent’ Pardon-Tearing of *Piers Plowman* C,” *Review of English Studies* n.s. 66, no. 275 (2015): 449-64.

⁴⁴ See Sarah Wood, “Nonauthorial *Piers*: C-text Interpolations in the Second Vision of *Piers Plowman* in Huntington Library, MS HM 114,” *JEGP* 114 (2015): 482-503.

⁴⁵ See the notes on fol. 20v at RK 5.7/8 “//hyer concience & raysoun aratyð wille for his lollynge”; fol. 21r at RK 5.35 “//hyer wille answerid to rayson”; fol. 22r at RK 5.105 “//hyer wente wille to churche & ful aȝen asclepe”; fol. 40v at RK 9.92 “/coterelis feste”; fol. 40v at RK 9.106 “/lunatyk lollares”; fol. 41r at RK 9.140 “/propure lollares”; fol. 41v at RK 9.170 “//byhold hyer of lollaren

children”; fol. 42r at RK 9.204 “//notate 3e lewede ermytes”; fol. 42v at RK 9.247 “//hyere mette wille wyth lollares to þe meteward”; fol. 43r at RK 9.263 “/notate episcopi.”

⁴⁶ Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 227.

⁴⁷ Michael Calabrese, “Langland’s Last Words,” in Cristina Maria Cervone and D. Vance Smith, eds., *Readings in Medieval Textuality: Essays in Honour of A. C. Spearing* (Cambridge, U.K., 2016), 65-81, at 65.

⁴⁸ Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 232.

⁴⁹ As Schott indicates in her study of the marginalia by Hand 3 of M, rather more has been written to date about *Piers Plowman*’s early modern reception than about the medieval “readings” witnessed by the manuscripts, though see in particular Marie-Claire Uhart, “The Early Reception of *Piers Plowman*” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester, 1986).

⁵⁰ For the tendency to ascribe an “authorial charisma” to the group of scribes associated with the early copies of Chaucer and Langland in particular, see D. Vance Smith, “The Shadow of the Book: *Piers Plowman*, the Ilchester Prologue, and Inhumane Revision,” in Calabrese and Shepherd, eds., *Yee? Baw for Bokes*, 203-18, at 206. Bowers’s discussion of HM 143’s marginalia tends also to assume that more can be discerned about the annotator’s political views than the evidence would strictly seem to allow: a brief “nota bene” on fol. 71v next to RK 16.234, for example, is linked to Lollard disapproval of images and said to show that Hand 2 is “aware of topical issues but cautious about explicit acknowledgement of Wycliffite doctrines” (Bowers, “Langland’s *Piers Plowman* in HM 143,” 156). Yet the corresponding line in the poem concerns not images in particular, but the Ten Commandments in general as a synecdoche for proper pastoral instruction—a concern with pastoral care that emerges also in Hand 2’s textual interventions as discussed by Calabrese.

⁵¹ Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work,” 233. Her earlier discussion in “The Professional Reader as Annotator” contrived a contrast between the Douce annotator’s bold attention to topics like poverty and salvation that the “more conservative” annotator of X “tiptoed around” (“Professional Reader as Annotator,” 82). Hanna’s critical review of the book took particular issue

with the two authors' "chic interest in reading medieval figures as the precursors of modernity": see "Piers Plowman and the Radically Chic," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 13 (1999): 179-92, at 184.

⁵² Though of course the Chaucer marginalia are not immune from over-ingenious interpretations; Partridge, "Glosses," ch. 1, 18-22 critiques the earlier discussion by Graham Caie on these grounds. See Graham Caie, "The Significance of the Early Chaucer Manuscript Glosses (With Special Reference to 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue')," *Chaucer Review* 10 (1976): 350-60.

⁵³ Schott, "The Intimate Reader," 179.

TABLE 1 Annotations by Hand 1 of M compared with W, Hm, and L

<i>Line</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>Hm</i>	<i>L</i>
KD Prol 146				Nota
KD 3.327				[pointing hand]
KD 5.62	Superbia	superbia	Superbia	
KD 5.63				Superbia
KD 5.71	Luxuria	Luxuria	Luxuria	
KD 5.72				Luxuria
KD 5.75	Inuidia	Inuidia	Inuidia	Inuidia
KD 5.113		perdicere*		
KD 5.135	Ira	Ira	Ira	Ira
KD 5.139				nota
KD 5.187	Auaricia	Auaricia	Cupido	
KD 5.188				Auaricia
KD 5.295	Gula			
KD 5.296		Gula		Gula
KD 5.297			Gula	
KD 5.384	Accidia			
KD 5.385		Accidia	Accidia	Accidia
KD 5.468				id est debeo*

KD 5.561				nota
KD 6.239	besaunte*	id est A besaunt*		a besaunt*
KD 7.113				Indulgencia petri
KD 9.34	id est adam*			id est adam* ⁵³
KD 9.163	id est boni*			id est boni*
KD 9.163	bonas*			id est bonas*
KD 10.112	id est mentitur*			
KD 10.366	id est vestes*			id est panni*
KD 11.320				nota ⁵³
KD 13.154				solucio ⁵³
KD 13.270				nota
KD 14.243				id est vmbilicus ⁵³
KD 15.83	nota de fratribus			
KD 15.84				nota de fratribus
KD 15.148	quid est caritas			quid est caritas
KD 15.149 α		quid est caritas		
KD 15.552				id est resoun &c
KD 15.557				nota
KD 16.11				id est edulium
KD 17.55	id est Cristus		id est christus ⁵³	id est cristus
KD 20.238	id est sepius*		id est sepius*	id est sepius*
KD 20.315	nota			nota

TABLE 2 Comparison of annotations in HM 143 and C-text portion of Additional 10574

<i>Line</i>	<i>HM 143</i>	<i>Additional 10574</i>
RKPr.51	hermytis wente to walsyngham	
RKPr.56	hyer preched frerys	hic vidit fratres to preche for copis
RKPr.66		here prechid a pardoner wiþ a bulle &cetera

RKPr.81	hyer parsones & parische prestes playned to þe bischop	here preieden persons & parische preestis of leue to dwelle at londoun &cetera
RKPr.95	Concyence acusede prelates	here conscience accusede hem persone & preest &cetera
RKPr.128		bihold here of [?petirs] power (erased)
RKPr.144	þe comune & kynde wit ordayned a plow	
RKPr.145		kynde wyt & þe comune maden a plough &cetera
RKPr.166	notate men of lawe	
RKPr.168		Conseil of Ratones and of Mees &cetera
RKPr.172	Hyere made ratonys a parlement	
RKPr.199	hyere spekyþ a mous of renoun	
RK1.3		here tolde holichirche to wille mony wytty þyngis et cetera
RK1.27	lo how loot lay be his do3tres	
RK1.69	hyer askyd wille who was þat woman þat spak to hym	
RK1.90		kyngis & kny3tis shulden kepe holicherclre &cetera
RK1.103		nota of kyngis
RK1.113	lo fendis fille for pride	
RK1.126		of fendis fallyng &cetera
RK1.145	notate þat loue is plante of pes	
RK1.174 α		3it of loue & faiþ et cetera
RK1.175	notate 3e ryche	
RK1.187	notate hic vnkynde prestes	
RK2.5	heyre prayde will he moste fals knawe	
RK2.9	pointing hand and text: Mede	
RK2.30	Holicherche	
RK2.41 α		þe weddyng of mede &cetera
RK2.56		Biddyng to þe bridale of mede a fair cumpany
RK2.57	behold þe houshold of mede	
RK2.64		Bihold here nota

RK2.80 α		feffament of mede cetera
RK2.81	the feffement atuxe mede & falsnesse	
RK2.112	witnessis of þe feffement a fayre hep	
RK2.117		Explicit carta de mede
RK2.119	hyer teologi chidde ciuile & symonye	
RK2.181	Red hyer a blissed companye per contrarium	
RK2.223	For drede falsnesse fley3 to þe freris	
RK2.242	3it freris fette hom lyere wyth hem to dwelle	