# SIMPLE BOOKS FOR DEVOUT READERS: RECOVERING A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MIDDLE ENGLISH GENRE

BY

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# ABSTRACT

This project recovers an overlooked fifteenth-century genre using a methodology informed by Object-Oriented Ontology. I collected fourteen manuscripts based on shared core features—portable size, small text box, textualis-leaning script, simple layout, primarily black ink with sparse yet helpful rubrication, and few or no illustrations. I argue that these books constitute a Middle English devotional genre, which I call the Simple Book. All of these books not only share a format, they also share similar types of devotional texts, and ultimately the format and texts work in tandem to create a humble, devotional reading experience. The Simple Book offered a rich, meaningful, and complete devotional reading program to readers with limited means. It defines itself by its use, both in its physical presentation to readers and in its narrative structuring, which I describe as both "welcoming" and "friendly." By illustrating how a shift from named entities (title, author) to physical affordances makes anonymous texts and their readers legible, this materials-first approach to Middle English devotional manuscripts suggests alternate ways to address the problematically unwieldy genre of the "devotional miscellany."

*for my family*

*for Andy and Rainer*

*with much love*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

CHAPTER 1. THE SIMPLE BOOK AS A MATERIAL OBJECT ..... 22

CHAPTER 2. THE *PORE CAITIF*, AUTHORSHIP, AND THE PROBLEM OF NAMES ..... 68

CHAPTER 3. DEFINING GENRES, SEEING READERS: BOOKS OF HOURS, DEVOTIONAL MISCELLANIES, AND SIMPLE BOOKS ..... 110

CHAPTER 4. FINDING SIMPLE BOOKS ..... 137

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 150

APPENDIX A: SIMPLE BOOK PAGE SIZES (TO SCALE) ..... 162

APPENDIX B: PRE-1650 ILLINOIS MS 80 (ILLINOIS 80) ..... 164

# INTRODUCTION

[P]ermitting ourselves to be implicated in the flex-point of manuscript space-time has much to teach. And not least of the teaching is the importance of allowing ourselves to be wounded by the aspects of our primary materials that seem at first blush to be non-meaningful, non-intellectual, non-verifiable… You could call this approach to manuscripts 'empathic codicology'—a *feeling-into* the study of the codex. Feeling and thinking, after all, know each other well, so why not call it *manuscript thinking*, and then shuffle all the parts around in good medieval *divisio*: Here is a manuscript, and it is thinking. Here is how manuscripts think. Or make 'manuscript' a modifier, and you get thinking written by hand, writing thought by hand, thinking by written hand.

Catherine Brown, *Manuscript thinking: Stories by hand*, 351-2

This project began with a tiny manuscript whose provenance was difficult to trace, whose seemingly old-fashioned script led to a cataloging error placing it in the wrong century, and whose identification of (simple) audience and (unique) source material suggested more questions than it answered. During my first semester of graduate school, I searched the University of Illinois Rare Book & Manuscript Library's catalogue for the library's earliest Middle English manuscript. My objective was simply to find a manuscript, identify its hand, and see what paper topics might emerge for my paleography seminar. I settled on Pre-1650 Illinois MS 0080, as it is catalogued "[England, 13--?]" and described as appearing "to be in the tradition of the 14th-century Meditationes vitae Christi."[1] With my copy of Albert Derolez's *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books* in hand, I requested the manuscript and spent several hours diligently searching out letter forms that would aid my paleographical identification of the hand, which I eventually deemed to be *littera minuscula gothica textualis semiquadrata media*.[2] In coming to this conclusion, I was led deep into the gothic classification systems as established by Derolez,

[1] Persistent link to catalogue entry: https://i-share.carli.illinois.edu/uiu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&v1=1&BBRecID=5201828. Last accessed 21 May 2019.

[2] For a full manuscript description of Illinois 80, see Appendix B.

G. I. Lieftinck, Wolfgang Oeser, Bernhard Bischoff, and Jane Roberts. None of these systems, however, seemed to provide an accurate place for Illinois 80 to land.[3] The paper I wrote for that first graduate seminar explored these gaps in the gothic textualis classification system, using Illinois 80 as an example. A clue to its "misfit" status appeared in Sheila Conard's unpublished dissertation, where I learned that Illinois 80's script did not conform to strict textualis guidelines because it was, in fact, written in the fifteenth century.[4] As Chapter 1 discusses, Anglicana had replaced a true semiquadrata as the default book hand for vernacular manuscripts in the fifteenth century, so it is reasonable to conclude that Illinois 80's careful approximation of a gothic semiquadrata led to its misdating.

I might have ended my work with Illinois 80 at that point, but in the course of my paper research, frustrated by my difficulty identifying the script, I searched for comparanda and found an image of British Library Harley MS 993 in Roberts's book, a fifteenth-century manuscript briefly described as a "common profit book." Illinois 80's visual similarity to Harley 993 was so striking, I was sure a relationship between the two must exist. Both manuscripts are small—Illinois 80 measures 130mm by 90mm, and Harley 993 is 165mm by 115mm. Based on the single image of Harley 993's colophon page, I observed that both manuscripts prefer a very simple look, featuring a single column of text, all-black ink, and the same open-bottom box-a that didn't quite fit into Oeser's classification system. Wendy Scase's article on common profit books provided some useful historical context for Harley 993 and its fellow common profit manuscripts.[5] These books, as their colophons describe, were made from the estates of fifteenth-

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[3] Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*; Oeser, "Das 'a' Als Grundlage Für Schriftvarianten in Der Gotischen Buchschrift"; Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*; Roberts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writings up to 1500*.
[4] Conard, "Dame Eleanor Hull's 'Meditacyons Vpon the VII Days of the Woke': The First Edition of the Middle English Translation in Cambridge University Library MS.Kk.i.6," 197–98.
[5] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books.'"

century Londoners who wished to provide some small means of charitable giving. By having simple books of prayer made and instructing these books to be given to (presumably relatively book-less) readers, these prayers would be said for the spiritual well-being of reader and benefactor alike. A third manuscript, British Library Harley MS 2336, was a visual twin of Harley 993, and when I had the chance to see both at the British Library, I verified that, while the two Harley manuscripts differed by about 20mm in page height, their text boxes both measured 108mm by 68mm (see Figure 1.)

Looking at these three tiny books together, it seemed to me that their physical properties were intimately tied to their contents and to the spirit of the common profit scheme. That is, as small, easily portable and inexpensively produced objects, these books provided a physical mirror to the spiritually (and presumably also economically) "simple" people—the "symple lettered men and wommen" of Illinois 80 or the "simple reader" of the Pore Caitiff in Harley 2336—that were to make use of these books. Illinois 80 included reading instructions to "eueri cristin man & womman þat kunnen rede," advising that, if the books' owner

> kunnen not or mowen not [read] for lak of loue, or syknes, or for lak & defaute of vce of resoun, lete summe oþere good freend seie þese preiers for hem. And chaunge þese wordis: where he seiþ 'y' or 'me' to seie þus 'þi seruaunt' or 'my broþer' aftir his discrecioun seeþ best.[6]

Did the author of these instructions simply intend to show potential book owners how to make use of the book when reading aloud? Was it intended as a book to be loaned out, perhaps by a

[6] Illinois 80 fol. 1r, lines 9-16. If the books' owner "cannot, or knows not [how to read], either through lack of love, sickness, or for lack or default of [their] use of reason, let some other good friend say these prayers for him. And change these words: where he would say 'I' or 'me,' say instead 'thy servant' or 'my brother,' as his discretion dictates."

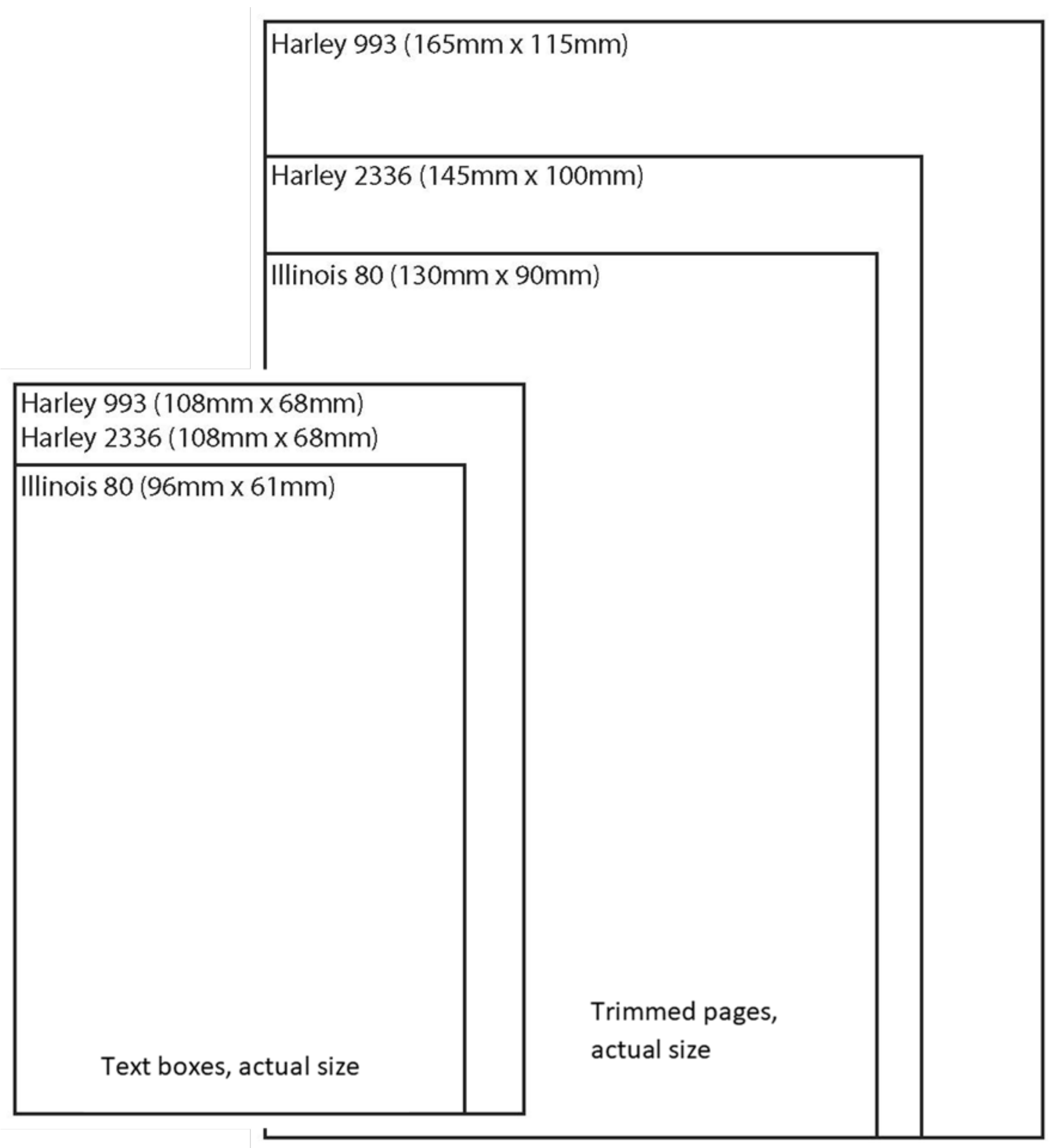


***Figure 1*** *Harley 993, Harley 2336, and Illinois 80 page and text box measurements compared. Viewed at 100%, images are to scale. Created by author.*

village pastor to his parishioners? Or was this opening address further evidence that the book was intended to be a part of the common profit scheme, in which case the book's potential ownership and readership would cast a wide net into a sea of unknown future readers? Such instructions for reading would be useful for readers who might not own many books, who relied

on the charity of common profit benefactors for their reading experiences. Or, perhaps these reading instructions offered devout readers a reassuring rubric for properly engaging with this book's devotional content. The readers of Illinois 80, Harley 993, and Harley 2336 were humble people whose pious humility is still echoed in the simplicity of the physical books themselves.

While my preliminary work seemed to suggest Illinois 80 belonged among the common profit books, that perhaps its colophon had been separated from the rest of its contents along the way, not all common profit books were physical matches to Illinois 80. Bodleian Douce MS 25, for example, contains a colophon in a similar script to Harley 993 and Harley 2336, but the rest of the manuscript is written in a secretary script. Lambeth Palace Library MS 472 has a similar visual aspect but is quite a bit larger (a duodecimo, with a text box measuring larger than the relatively small Illinois 80, Harley 993, and Harley 2336). While I continued my degree coursework, Illinois 80 and its two Harley companions lingered in the back of my mind. These three manuscripts shared meaningful physical formats, mirroring their desired or intended readers, yet they were not all common profit books, nor did all common profit books share this format.

Illinois 80 continued to raise more questions than it answered. When Daniel Wakelin kindly looked over the manuscript with me, he mentioned in passing that its visual affect was almost lollard, yet he agreed that the manuscript's contents were not.[7] What, if any, was this book's affiliation with the Wycliffite heresy? Was it purposely designed to *look* lollard while reinforcing orthodox views among readers who would normally be drawn to heterodox

[7] See, for instance, the cover of Fiona Somerset's *Feeling Like Saints*. A note on "Lollard" versus "lollard": I will be following Somerset's advice to use "lollard" adjectivally. "Some, and I am among them, have worried that the capital *L* in Lollard, like the capital *P* now no longer used in research on English puritanism, asserts what ought instead to be investigated by implying that "Lollards" are a distinctive, cohesive social group. Using "lollard" adjectivally instead allows for a more flexible investigation of widely prevalent tendencies and emphases." Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif*, 16.

expressions of faith? While the text does label its source material, it does so in a way that further obscures its origins, in one place citing the source incorrectly as “þe book clepid ars moriein” and in another place vaguely stating the material following is “in p*ar*ti taken of seint austin, a p*ar*ti of seint ancelm, *and* a p*ar*ti of seint bernard, *and* a p*ar*ti of oþ*er*e writingis” (f. 8, f. 12v). Moreover, the second half of the manuscript contains a copy of Dame Eleanor Hull’s translation of prayers and meditations, including the *Meditations on the Seven Days of the Week,* and here too they proceed without an attribution to their translator. Alexandra Barratt has written at length about Eleanor Hull’s work, including Cambridge University Library MS Kk.1.6—the only other manuscript witness to Hull’s translation. CUL Kk.1.6 contains a commentary on the penitential psalms followed by the prayers and meditations in Illinois 80, and “After the second text Richard Fox records that ‘Alyanore Hulle drowe out of Frenche all this before-wreten in this lytylle booke’, without further explanation.”[8] Again, this information led to no clearer answer to the visual oddity of Illinois 80 nor to its visual similarity to the two Harley manuscripts, as CUL Kk.1.6 is much larger (270mm x 190mm, or just about one inch narrower and shorter than this sheet of paper) and written in a flowing secretary hand. Whoever chose to copy this second portion of Eleanor Hull’s work into Illinois 80 translated her work into a humbler physical format, yet chose a more formal script.

Behind these questions lingered the hope that Harley 993 and Harley 2336 provided; hope that Illinois 80 was not, in fact, an anomalous manuscript. Armed with the hunch that other manuscripts must exist which looked and “felt” like these three, I began pulling manuscripts at the Bodleian and at the British Library. Finding such manuscripts proved difficult, as my criteria—page dimensions around 150mm x 100mm and a script variously catalogued as a

[8] Barratt, “Dame Eleanor Hull: The Translator at Work,” 278.

“bookhand,” as “a gothic Textura,” or as “bastard Anglicana” but with a textualis feel—were not always included in catalogues. Often the catalogue information would indicate a potential manuscript, describing the contents as “prayers and meditations in English,” yet it became immediately apparent when a large volume appeared that this manuscript would not work. Describing my difficulties to a research librarian at the British Library, my fears were confirmed—there was no better way to conduct this research.

To date, I have found fourteen manuscripts whose simplicity in structure and style, whose repeated positioning of their readers as devout and humble and simple, have suggested this genre’s name of “Simple Book.”[9] Finding these manuscripts has taken seven years, requiring several pleading emails to librarians for sample snapshots of manuscripts and rough page measurements, with repeated assurances that yes, if needed, I would indeed order the (increasingly costly) images properly. While the Simple Book continues to reveal insights about fifteenth-century bookmaking, narrative forms and their relationships to book formats, and communities of readers, it also illuminates the extent to which materiality is posed as problematic, or even inconsequential, in the study of medieval literature. How much does the manuscript matter? How closely do we pay attention to variants? In late medieval England, the “author” is a much broader concept than our own, as is the concept of textual cohesion. Where we are concerned with where precisely a text is borrowing from Richard Rolle, and where from *Ancrene Wisse*, the manuscript is more interested in how to explain the text’s use, how to demonstrate that it is trustworthy, how to determine whether or not its reader will require the study of other books in order to fully appreciate its contents, and so on. Where we seek to decide whether the *Pore Caitif* is fourteen or fifteen tracts long, or if a manuscript with just one of the

[9] A full, detailed list of the Simple Book’s physical criteria can be found in Chapter 1.

fourteen tracts can be said to contain the *Pore Caitif* and should be included in catalogues, the Simple Book presents itself as its own cohesive whole, and not a collection of fragments.

This divide between the text and the book-as-object is as problematic as the separation between medieval Europe and the rest of the world, or the periodizing gap between medieval and modern. We have tended to think almost exclusively in terms of texts and authors, despite evidence that fifteenth-century English peoples conceived of the "author" and of the "text" in much more broad, inclusive terms. The physical evidence we have—this collection of books, which so closely resemble one another—further suggests that physical format was just as meaningful a defining category, perhaps moreso than "author" or "text". What if the format were first, and the content second? A less anachronistic model is needed; one that allows us to approach manuscripts from a more authentically manuscript-minded perspective. My research accordingly begins with this question: What can we learn from the materials that house and transmit texts; what happens when we start with the objects first? In this introduction to my Simple Book research project, I therefore begin with a short exploration of the epistemological biases revealed by our discipline's research tools, analyzing how manuscript study's default mindset creates barriers to certain kinds of productive methodologies. From here, I introduce my Simple Book project as a case study for materials-first research, introducing each of this work's chapters in turn.

**Epistemological Biases in Manuscript Studies**

The convention of the manuscript catalogue has influenced the shape of manuscript studies, offering ways of contextualizing, categorizing, and evaluating manuscripts. Ralph Hanna's 2017 essay on "Manuscript Catalogues and Book History" offers a concise history of the manuscript

catalogue, starting with its first incarnations as inventory lists for institutional purposes and developing from there into the finding aid we know today. The catalogue's structure is informed by "[e]arly-modern antiquarianism, [which] was author- and text-centred."[10] Nineteenth-century cataloguers "remained wedded to this text-centered conception" so that catalogues from that era "facilitate, in the main, the activities of readers and editors, for whom, all too often, the book exists as a rather inert bearer of texts, not an object of examination in its own right." Hanna argues that even the mid- to late twentieth-century trend toward "increasing, and increasingly formalized, attention to production detail" and the desire to be "'objective' or 'authentic'/'truthful' by virtue of having had removed from it any marks of critical interpretation" create a catalogue which obscures. Modern catalogue entries present themselves as factual and complete, yet a formulaic model of "basic useful information" will not always accurately represent every manuscript. The modern catalogue flattens the dynamic manuscript, to the extent that Hanna calls for a "less constrained and universalized format so that they can return to the books the dynamism of their making and subsequent existence."[11] As catalogues come to be put to different uses over time, from providing inventories to finding all manuscripts containing specific texts, the information they present and the manner in which they do so must also change.

As libraries become increasingly digital, with digital catalogues opening opportunities for scholars to research from afar and manuscripts increasingly digitized and available for public viewing, the standards set by the nineteenth and early twentieth-century cataloguers remain. Bodleian Library's online catalogue links to *A summary catalogue of Western manuscripts*, published and maintained from 1908-1979. Cambridge University Library links to the 1856-57 *A*

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[10] Hanna, "Manuscript Catalogues and Book History," 46-47.
[11] Hanna, 57.

*catalogue of the manuscripts preserved in the library of the University of Cambridge*, and Trinity College Cambridge's online search function links to *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: a Descriptive Catalogue* (1900-1905). These catalogues offer decades of manuscript research, but the information provided is not always helpful, and at times obscures. Although a manuscript's size dictates, and precludes, many different uses, this information is often not provided in catalogues, or the information is not specific enough to prove useful. *A catalogue of the manuscripts preserved in the library of the university of Cambridge*, for instance, provides measurements using page folds. Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.34 is described as "a small quarto," meaning the piece of parchment was presumably folded four times and cut along the top fold. On the facing page, (non-Simple Book) Ff.6.35 is termed a "12mo," or "duodecimo." According to Michelle Brown's glossary of codicological terms, a "quarto" is " a medium-size volume, one quarter the area of a full sheet of writing material," and a "duodecimo" is not defined. No measurements are provided as guidelines, making the term a useful one for describing book construction but not for reporting dimensions of an actual manuscript.[12] The American Library Association (ALA)'s glossary addresses the issues with these terms, as "[t]here is much confusion about the definition of book sizes and little consistency in usage." According to the ALA's chart, a quarto, or four-fold, is roughly 15 inches (300mm) high, and a duodecimo is 7.25 inches (175mm) high. In his *Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology*, Peter Beal writes that, for the early modern period, a printed *quarto* is "approximately 7 1/2 - 9 1/2 inches (19 -24 cm) in length and 6-8 inches (15.5 - 20.5 cm) in width" (no measurements for manuscripts are provided).[13] These ranges differ greatly from those provided by the ALA, so there is no set standard to rely on.

[12] Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*.

[13] Beal, *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 1450-2000*, 327.

Neither Beal's nor the ALA glossary's measurements for quarto match CUL MS Ff.6.34, which measures 150mm high. In ALA terms, this is a *twentyfourmo*.[14] The suggested precision of the page-fold measurement system obscures more than it illuminates. There is scant information to suggest that parchment sheets were of a uniform dimension, much less any precision in declaring that, if a parchment sheet is folded into quarters or twelfths that it will measure within an inch of precision. While it does help the codicologist identify how many times the sheet of parchment was folded, it does nothing to help identify how large the page is; the pieces of parchment used to construct the Simple Book were undoubtedly smaller than average, speaking to their economy. As size is one of the most important qualifying aspects of the Simple Book genre (see Appendix A for a visual representation of all Simple Books' page sizes), some precision in measurement is required. CUL Ff.6.34 was initially ruled out as a potential Simple Book, as a *quarto* (300mm or 190mm-240mm) manuscript is too large to meet the requirements. In this case, providing no measurement would have proved more helpful.

Even when more precise information is offered, online catalogues often do not allow users to search by these criteria. The British Library catalogue offers precise measurements to the millimeter of both page size and the (more precise) text box size, providing a greater sense of the book's *potential* uses; a book with ample margins could imaginably be trimmed down to become a Simple Book, if all other criteria match. This is the primary reason why Harley 993 is included; while it is a bit larger than all other Simple Books, its text box is not the largest of the group, and its colophon and hand tie it to fellow Simple Book Harley 2336. However, the British Library catalogue does not offer a way to search for manuscripts by size (see Figure 2).

[14] Levine-Clark and Carter, *ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science*, 38.

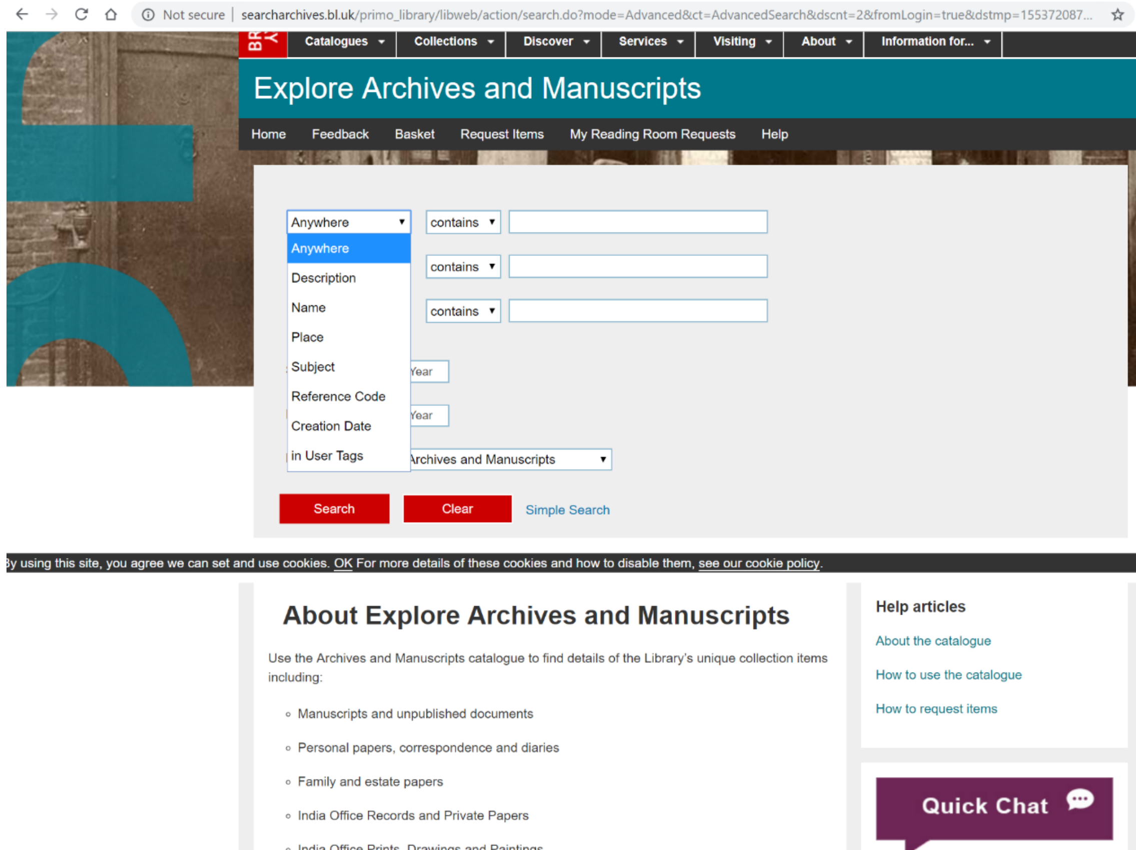


***Figure 2*** *Screenshot of British Library search function for Archives and Manuscripts. Taken by author on March 27, 2019.*

Adding the option to search by approximate page measurements would have greatly simplified this project's research process. Illuminated manuscripts are afforded a few additional options for searching (see Figure 3). While more options are presented here, some information is regarded as primary while other details are considered supportive; it is more important to be able to search for a manuscript by text, author, provenance, or other named and titled entities. Note that the first two search categories are "author" and "text." The "place of origin" option indicates a privileging of the manuscript's manufacture rather than its subsequent use, and small books like Simple Books were certainly made to travel, to be shared. Additionally, this search function only allows one to search for illuminated manuscripts, which Simple Books are not. Finding Simple Books requires slow, plodding work that is not made expedient by modern finding tools.

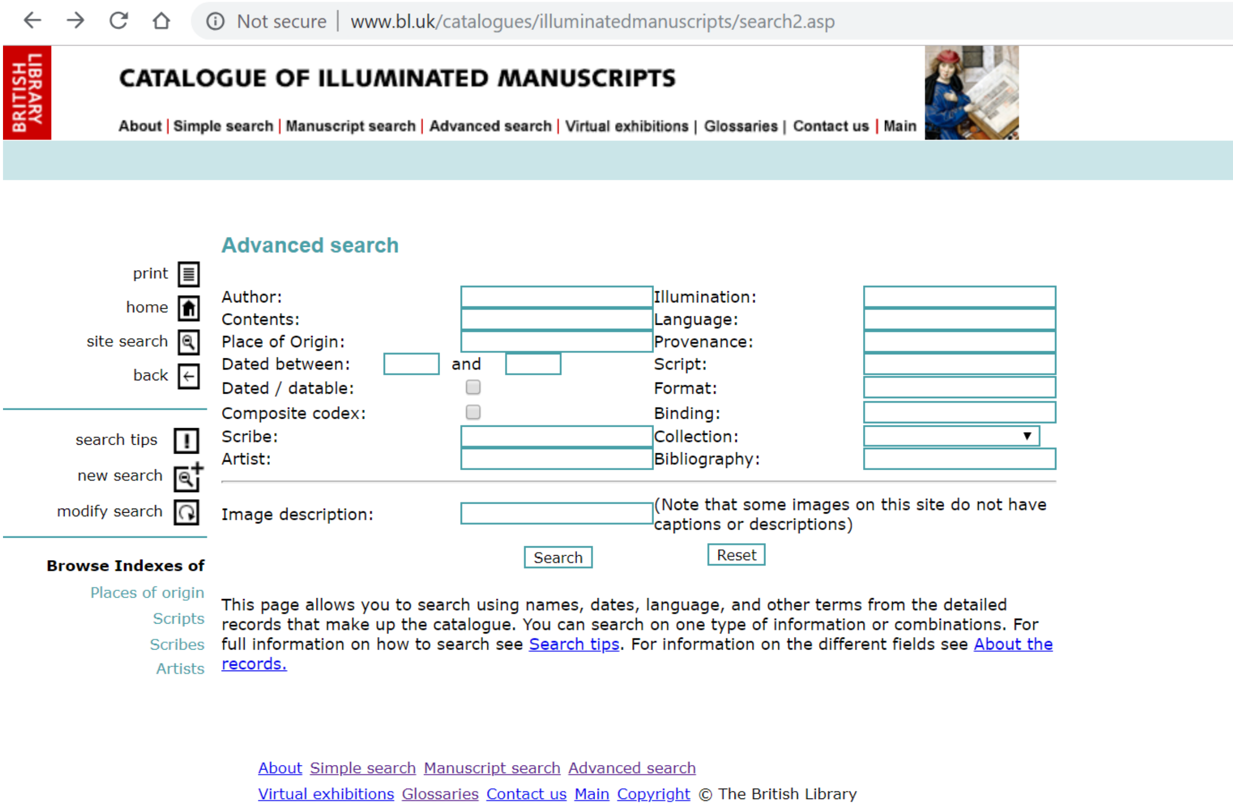


***Figure 3*** *Screenshot of British Library search function for Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts. Taken by author on March 27, 2019.*

Supplemental research tools have been developed over the decades, which intersect epistemologically with the ways of thinking presented by catalogues. A great variety of check-lists, handbooks, and atlases offer alternate ways to represent the content of manuscripts, which in turn impact the ways we conceive of what manuscripts are, which of their features deserve critical attention, and how they ought to be organized. Most important to the Simple Book project, I want to briefly explore the value systems inherent in the making of P. S. Jolliffe's *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance*, the *Index to Middle English Prose*, and the multi-volume, multi-editor series *Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*. Jolliffe's *Check-List* provides a series of lists of devotional tracts, divided by subjects such as "Forms of Confession" or "Growth in the Spiritual Life." A second section provides an

alphabetical list of *incipits*, with a final section providing lists of manuscripts referenced in the checklist. The work is described by Michael Sargent as "the only adequate reference guide" to devotional manuscripts, yet even here the scholar

> should be aware… of the limits that Jolliffe imposed upon his work: not only are all major works excluded, sermons and Wycliffite tracts, but so are lists and expositions of the articles of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments, the seven deadly sins, and so forth, intended rather for impersonal instruction than for personal guidance, as well as prayers and tracts for use in affective prayer, religious rules and writings that first occur in printed form *(Check-List,* pp. 25-32).[15]

Out of fourteen Simple Books, only two are not included in Jolliffe's *Check-List*—Illinois 80 and Harley 993. One Simple Book was discovered using Jolliffe's resource—Additional 10596. The *Check-List* remains primarily useful for finding manuscripts which share texts; Additional 10596 happens to share a prayer in common with Illinois 80, but verifying that it was indeed a Simple Book required once again the use of the catalogue. The *Index to Middle English Prose* poses a similar problem in that it is only successful at finding manuscripts which share texts with Simple Books, yet, as I have found to date, there is a great variety of texts included in Simple Books and with the exception of the *Pore Caitif*, these texts are not prone to repeat.

Similarly, the multi-volume *Manual of the Writings in Middle English* provides a genre-based approach to finding texts within manuscripts. Most relevant to the Simple Book is Volume 7: John Gower, Piers Plowman, Travel and Geographical Writings, and Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction. Derek Pearsall writes, in his review of this volume, that "the grouping of chapters is arbitrary… we have got so used to this disorderly and pragmatic procedure that

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[15] Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," 147–48.

there would be no point in complaining about it now."[16] More to the point, the section provided to editor Robert R. Raymo, "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction," is ill-defined. Where the volume's other three sections have a reasonable number of "items" to track (9, 1, and 23, respectively) Raymo has identified and categorized 250 such "works." Pearsall praises this "pioneering work" through what is considered "the most difficult terrain." No questions arise as to whether or not this literary genre, text-centric approach is appropriate for this body of literature. Medieval studies owes much to these resources, as they have enabled a great many manuscript-based research projects, and yet there are ways in which these resources occlude other, equally productive, lines of inquiry. Simple Books are not only hard to find because search tools do not allow us to find books by size; they are also hard to find because their contents defy simple categorization.

**The Simple Book: A Case Study for Object-Oriented Manuscript Research**

In this dissertation, I use the Simple Book as a case study to illustrate some potential positive outcomes of object-oriented manuscript work. Despite the barriers presented by the tools of manuscript research, scholars of medieval literature are increasingly reading manuscripts as objects worthy of study, as more than containers of text. The 2018 publication *Reading Books and Prints as Cultural Objects*, for instance, opens with two chapters on medieval devotional manuscripts. Henrike Lähnemann's chapter describes the production and dissemination of fifty (surviving) prayer books copied for personal and female relations' use by Cistercian nuns in fifteenth-century Medingen. In her object-oriented approach, Lähnemann discusses these manuscripts using "two major 'reading processes'" which "overlap and intertwine" by reading

[16] Pearsall, "Albert E. Hartung, Gen. Ed., A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500, Volume 7," 148.

them as both devotional aids and antiquarian objects.[17] She writes about the books' manufacture and subsequent use through several critical "stages," from the 1478 "model prayer books" to "Stage 7: Twenty-First-Century Internationalization and Digitization."[18] By examining these books through an expanded timeline, her object-first approach further undermines the call of the "*ur*-text." By identifying manuscripts based on physical similarities, Lähnemann discovered an entirely female manuscript production enterprise. Hers is the most recent, the most similar to this Simple Book investigation, among a growing number of object-oriented manuscript research projects.[19] Digital humanities initiatives offer new ways to present texts, such as the Exeter Domesday project headed by Julia Crick of King's College London.[20] Carol Symes's recent work on the Domesday satellites, in particular the interactive online version of her article, highlights how the mediated materiality of textual objects, placed in performative relationship with their makers and one another, can reveal new historical evidence.[21] Universität Hamburg's Cluster of Excellence, "Understanding Written Artefacts," brings together "altogether forty investigators from across the humanities and ten from the natural sciences, computer science and psychology" to study writing supports. One of the five research fields focuses entirely on the contents' formatting and the social conventions they reveal, which are "shaped by the interplay

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[17] Lähnemann, "From Devotional Aids to Antiquarian Objects: The Prayer Books of Medingen," 34. Some potential parallels between Lähnemann's manuscripts and the Simple Book are explored in Chapter 4.
[18] Lähnemann, 47.
[19] In addition to Henrike Manuwald's chapter in the same collection, "How to Read the "Andachtsbüchlein Aus Der Sammlung Bouhier" (Montpellier, BU Médecine, H 396)? On Cultural Techniques Related to a Fourteenth-Century Devotional Manuscript," see also Jessica Brantley *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England*; Sarah Kay, "Legible Skins: Animals and the Ethics of Medieval Reading;" Ryan Perry, "Objectification, Identity and the Late Medieval Codex;" and Daniel Wakelin, "'Thys Ys My Boke': Imagining the Owner in the Book."
[20] *Exon: The Domesday Survey of South-West England*, ed. by P.A. Stokes, Studies in Domesday, gen ed. J. Crick (London, 2018), available at http://www.exondomesday.ac.uk (last accessed 9 Nov 2018)
[21] Symes, Carol. "Doing Things beside Domesday Book." *Speculum* 93, no. 4 (September 19, 2018): 1048–1101.

of materials, social and economic settings and cultural patterns."[22] Even text-centric projects, such as publishing the edition of a text, are re-orienting their relationships to their material housing. Jack Stillinger's 1994 "A Practical Theory of Versions," by arguing that each of the eighteen versions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner" is its own authoritative, independent text, shifted the focus of textual editing eventually onto the authenticity of each text.[23] With the 1996 publication of Peter Shillingsburg's *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age* and the possibilities of multiple textual expressions made possible by digital editions, texts are able to retain some small aspects of their connections to their material housing.[24]

This dissertation fits within the framework of scholarship like Lähnemann's—it has taken shape organically, beginning slowly and taking on a life of its own as Simple Books find their way to me. The identification of the Simple Book begins to bring shape to that body of material most commonly called the "devotional miscellany" (a problematic, obfuscating term which is taken to task in Chapter 3). After the 1281 council of Lambeth, which produced Pecham's syllabus of basic tenets of faith which all priests and laypeople needed to know, England saw a growing need for devotional literature that was accessible to both priests who were deficient in Latin and to laypeople. Simple Books are just one subset of books that aim to answer this need; Books of Hours often provided supplementary material that covered some of the basics of Pecham's syllabus. Some books included basic lists, providing the most essential, stripped-down version of the syllabus, such as naming the seven vices without providing any commentary or guidance. Several scholars have noted the prevalence of devotional material in late medieval manuscripts, such that devotional content is said to make up well over half of all surviving

[22] For a full description of this research field, see https://www.written-artefacts.uni-hamburg.de/research/field-d.html (last accessed 7 April 2019).
[23] Stillinger, "A Practical Theory of Versions."
[24] Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practice*.

Middle English literature. This is the context within which Simple Books emerge, and because "devotional literature" is to this day a wide and largely unmapped "catch-all" for these most popular medieval books, the work of this dissertation provides one potential set of logical boundaries around this particular collection of such books. These plain, old-fashioned, simple books are particularly interesting in their careful mediation of the reading experience, both in their physical aspects and in their instruction. They do not keep to lists or simple rote prayers, but provide some level of guidance or education on these basic aspects of faith deemed necessary. Even though no two manuscripts share the same list of texts (aside from Harley 953, Harley 2336, and CUL Ff.6.34),[25] they are unified by a devotional, didactic narrative that guides the reader instructively through the contents of the books. While the physical format first drew my interest, it was the perfect marriage between the format's most cogent features and the companionable tone of instruction that compelled me to recognize the Simple Book as a cohesive genre.

My first chapter, "The Simple Book as a Material Object," lays the theoretical groundwork for object-oriented manuscript studies, and describes the Simple Book format as one that encourages active, reverent, daily participation with its contents. As the Simple Book genre is primarily defined by a specific, critical set of physical parameters, these criteria are listed and carefully described, then explored in depth. Each criterion affords its own possibilities for use, both individually and in relation with the text, so that the Simple Book manuscripts are perceived as a series of interconnected objects forming into a cohesive whole. Using Graham Harman's *The Quadruple Object*, I define what is meant by "object." Harman's approach is critical for my understanding of Simple Books, both individually and collectively. His model allows for objects

[25] These three manuscripts contain all (Harley 953, Harley 2336) or part (CUL Ff.6.34) of *The Pore Caitif*, with no additional texts.

to be approached in their own right, rather than as mere representatives of their manufacturers or users. As such, there are aspects of these manuscripts that can be known and evaluated, as well as aspects that cannot be fully understood. This theory is put into practice as I read the affordances of Simple Book Harley 993, exploring how each of its physical features functions on its own as well as within the manuscript at large. I offer some ways of reading the manuscript-as-object in the way that one reads poetry—allusively, suggestively—and contextualize my approach within a brief historiography of the poetic aspects of palaeography.

The Simple Book is primarily defined by physical properties, yet its textual contents play a vital role in further shaping what the genre can do. Thus, the textual corpus of the Simple Book is given focus in Chapter 2, "The *Pore Caitif*, Authorship, and the Problem of Names." Mirroring the book's simple yet reverent layout and construction, the texts that make up the Simple book corpus are carefully mediated for the reader by the use of a multi-layered narrative voice. In many of these books, the narrative voice offers an explanation of how the contents are compiled, each emphasizing the compilatory nature of the Simple Book's literary construction. Through the act of compilation, the narrator argues, the Simple Book reader has access to the most critical texts for spiritual development within the confines of a single codex. This cohesive, text-based, narrator-guided approach to spiritual development is read through the lens of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*, whose Christian rhetoric provides the theoretical, interpretive lens for Chapter 2. The primary text of focus here is *Pore Caitif*, a multi-tract devotional treatise that is present in nine of fourteen Simple Books discovered to date. While the narrative voice of *Pore Caitif* provides the main evidentiary support here, other Simple Book texts are brought to bear as well, as they echo the same didactic, supportive role.

The didactic aims of the Simple Book are explored in depth in the third chapter, "Defining Genres, Seeing Readers: Books of Hours, Devotional Miscellanies, and Simple Books." Books of Hours overlap in critical ways to Simple Books—they are portable, intimate collections of prayers and meditations, often featuring a single-column layout of text with a textualis or textualis-leaning script. However, the Simple Book encourages a strikingly different mindset than the Book of Hours, with distinct aims and potential uses. The Book of Hours is often, from conception to use and even as an inventoried collections item, an extension of the individual who commissioned or purchased it. The Book of Hours is inscribed with and by the owner's life, so that it is above all a possession. The Simple Book, on the other hand, is a portable guide, a devotional companion made available to a broad, anonymous body of readers who are conceived as "simple lettered men and women." Where Books of Hours are outcome-oriented, structuring and concretizing the otherwise fluid, unknown aspects of daily life, the Simple Book is process-oriented, asking readers to directly engage with the ongoing, open-ended nature of spiritual growth.

This first half of the chapter answers why it is critical to recognize the Simple Book as a genre, illustrating how thinking in terms of "genre" allows scholars to represent a body of readers. In this case, the genre of the Book of Hours represents a body of readers whose interests and goals for reading are very different from the body of readers represented by the Simple Book (though, undoubtedly and as is true of all genres, these bodies of readers overlap). The second half of this chapter explores the negative work that "genre" can do. Most scholars would agree, given the Simple Book's contents, that its given genre is "devotional miscellany." However, this genre is a problematic one, and I argue that it is not a true genre but rather a "catch-all" devised to contain manuscripts which otherwise defy neat categorization. The construct of the

“devotional miscellany” occludes not only the Simple Book but potentially other genres as well. I argue here that the genre as a whole can be placed on hold, or perhaps abandoned entirely, to make space for the emergence of new devotional manuscript genres such as the Simple Book.

My final chapter, “Finding Simple Books,” proposes ways forward, both for the methodology used in finding Simple Books, and for the Simple Book itself. The first half of this chapter explores existing methodological tools and experiments which, in varying degrees of success, are moving object-oriented projects forward. From the (failed) experiment to take manuscripts to the social media platform with Bodleian Library’s Tumblr account to the digitization and online availability of manuscripts, the tools available are offering an increasing number of supplements to the traditional catalogue while remaining dependent upon it. I explore the potential implications of the ongoing relationship to cataloguing-minded tools. I end this dissertation with potentials for future Simple Book research. Much work needs to be done on the connections between the Simple Book and common profit books, as well as the relationship between Simple Books and female readers. Illinois 80, for instance, is one of only two books extant to contain Dame Eleanor Hull’s translation of meditations for each day of the week, and where Simple Books name their audience, they are clear to articulate both male and female readers. The format of the Simple Book could readily lend itself to the domestic sphere, and so the relationship between the books’ materiality and the further theorization of medieval spaces would be informative to both fields of study. By providing further possibilities of study, I end by illustrating that we have much more to learn in, and through, the Simple Book.

# CHAPTER 1: THE SIMPLE BOOK AS A MATERIAL OBJECT

More generally, object-oriented philosophy is a useful antidote wherever the idea prevails that things can be defined in purely relational terms rather than as autonomous realities in their own right. This happens, for example, in literary criticism… The same relationist dogma has crept into art and architecture… But buildings do not bleed perfectly into their surroundings, however much the contemporary designer claims to be motivated by this goal. A building remains an autonomous entity with latent features that might someday be manifested if only the environment changes. Here too, a counterfactual criticism would look beyond the environmental relations of a building to speculate on its own integral features. In every field, the object-oriented method reminds us that an object is more than its constituent pieces, more than its relations, more than its qualities, and more than the events in which it happens to have participated so far.

Graham Harman, "An outline of object-oriented philosophy," 197-8

Concerned as it is with materiality, this dissertation necessarily begins with a description of these manuscripts' physical features. Though these manuscripts were not the works of the same scribe or even scriptorium or stationer, and though there are many crucial differences among them, all fourteen manuscripts considered in this dissertation share physical similarities which, when observed as a whole, reveal them as a cohesive type, which I am naming the Simple Book.[1] With some variation in each of the following criteria, generally these books share a format, including an overall small book size, generous margins, a single-column layout, and scripts that are either fully a semiquadrata textualis, a textualis rotunda, or a bastard Anglicana with strong textualis features. Before examining each of these features in detail, we may first simply observe the manuscripts' similarities from a purely visual perspective. Ignoring, for a moment, the trimmed pages' size, many of these manuscripts' text box dimensions are so close to one another that a page from one could be mistaken for a page from another. Both Harley 993 and Harley 2336, for instance, have text box dimensions of 108mm x 68mm. Additionally, Harley 993's bastard

[1] Thanks to Carol Symes for suggesting the phrase "simple book"—a term so perfect that it immediately stuck.

Anglicana with strong textualis features is quite similar to Harley 2336's textualis rotunda (see Images 1 and 2).

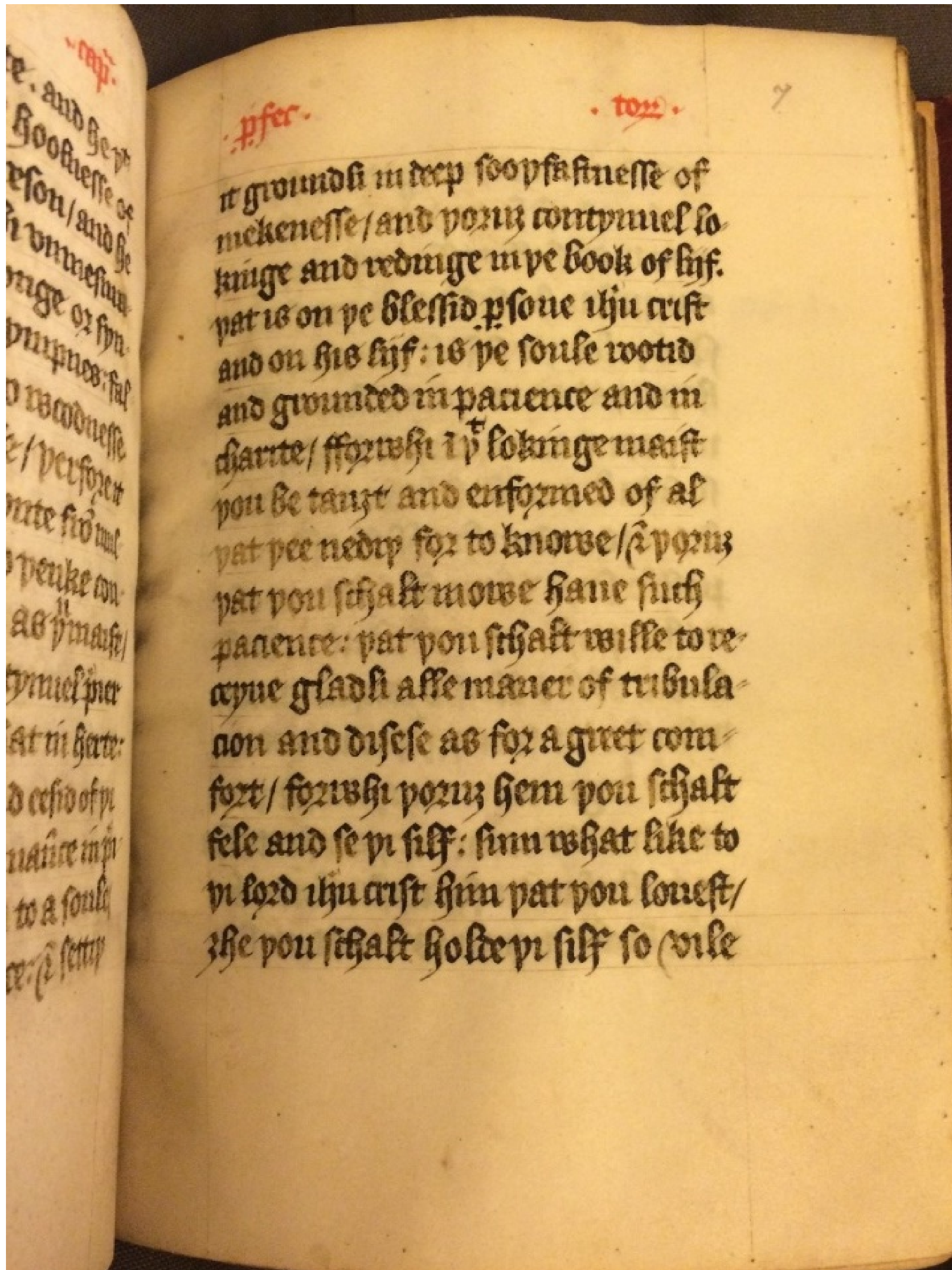

***Image 1*** *© British Library Board Harley 993 fol. 7r*

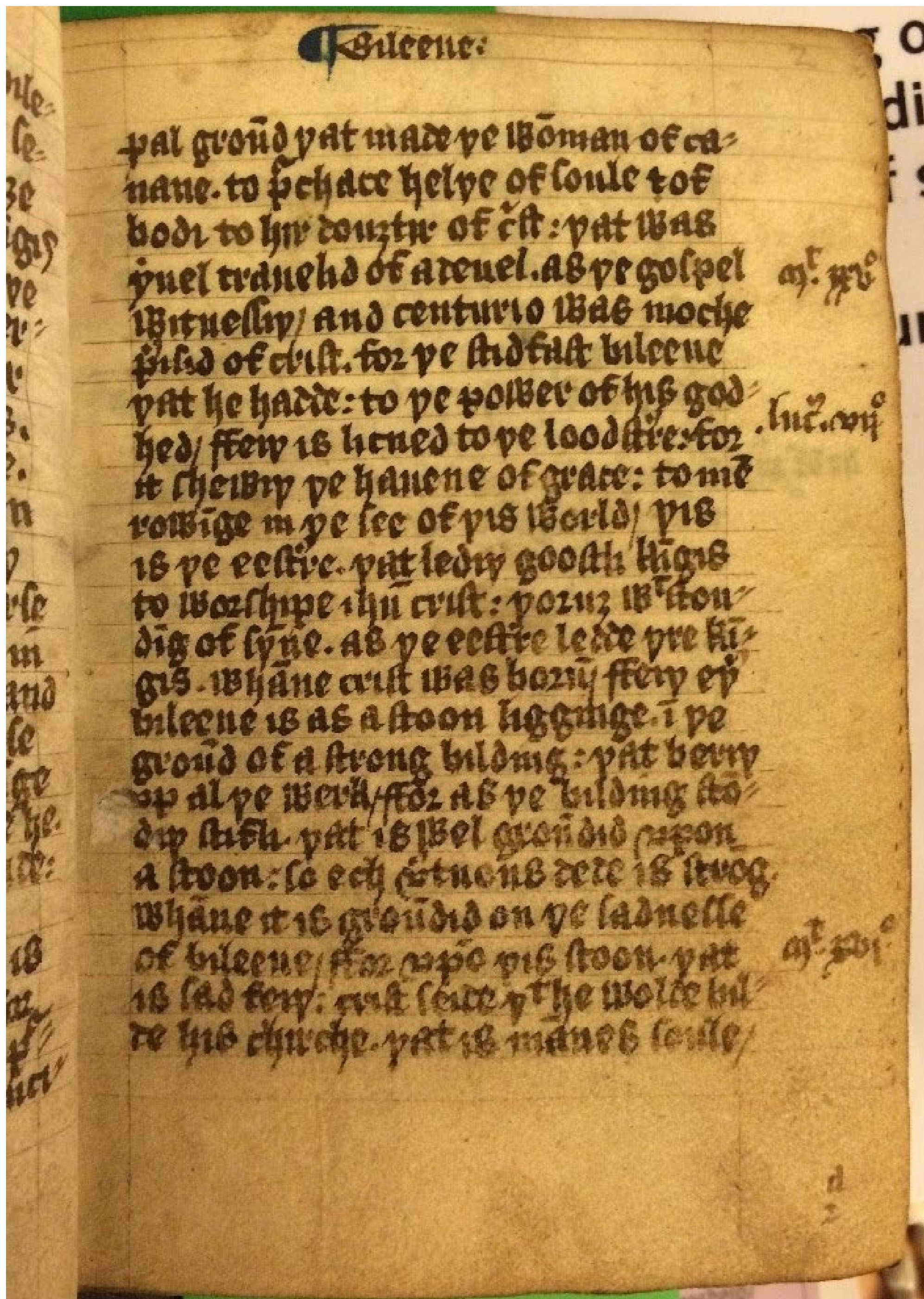

***Image 2*** *© British Library Board Harley 2336 fol. 2r*

Though Harley 2336 is generally rougher than Harley 993— the hand is less smooth, and the parchment shows more wear and splotchy aging—and though it is ruled for more lines per page, which slightly crowds the general appearance, the two share an unmistakably similar page feel.

The same could be said of Additional 10596 and Illinois 80, whose text box measurements are within millimeters of each other (see Images 3 and 4).[2]

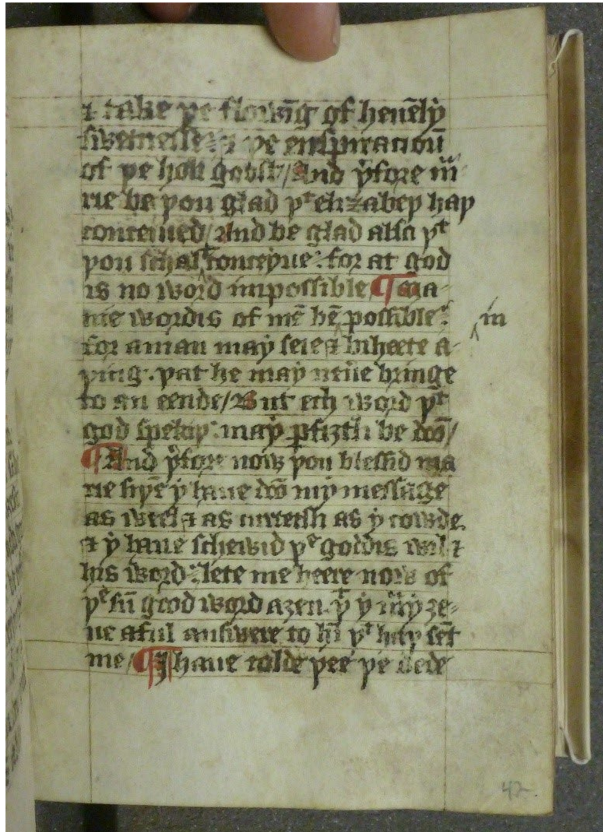

***Image 3*** *The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 42r*

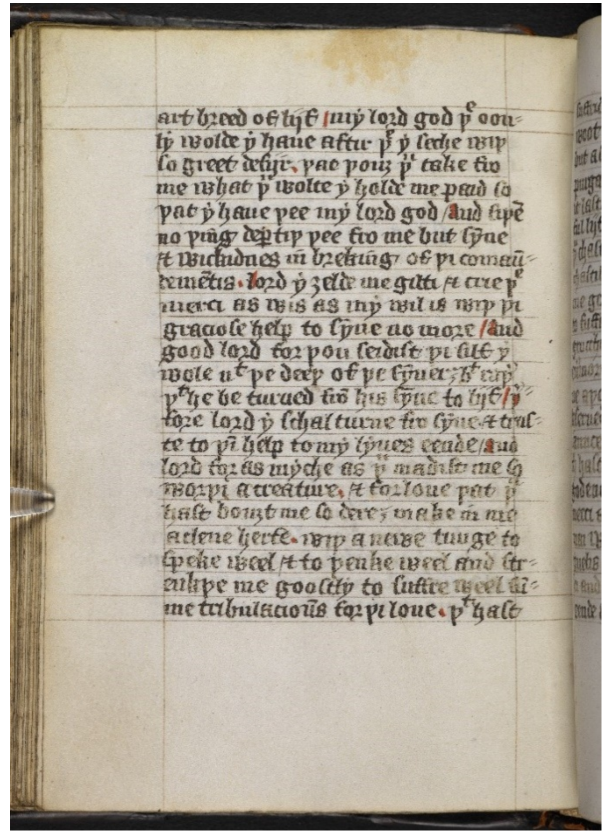

***Image 4*** *© British Library Board Additional 10596 fol. 53v*

Additional 10596 and Illinois 80 also share the same ruling pattern, and although the pages have been trimmed to different sizes (Additional 10596 measures at 139mm x 98mm whereas Illinois 80 measures in at 130mm x 90mm), both manuscripts are written in a medium-grade textualis semiquadrata, according to Lieftinck's typology of Gothic scripts.[3]

In addition to the material features that lend these books a distinctive "look," they all date within a century, perhaps even within a half century, of one another. These codicological

[2] All images of Illinois 80 are the author's own and are included here with many thanks to The Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
[3] Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, 20–27.

similarities might suffice to establish a typological relationship, but their family resemblance extends beyond form to content: they all share devotional texts in Middle English. Despite this striking evidence, no scholarship to date has considered them as a group or as common type of book. Although there was no specific medieval term for this book format, the makers of these fourteen manuscripts were evidently adhering to a common template, one which would have been perceptible to their users. It is certainly plausible that a medieval reader would have gathered some information about the sort of book they were holding simply by opening to a random page.

Readers and non-readers alike did, in fact, recognize certain types of manuscripts by their physical features. Books of Hours, as I will discuss in further detail in Chapter 3, were used both as pious objects of devotion and, as some contemporaries complained, as accessories to demonstrate wealth. Tudor painters often depicted royalty posed with small volumes—their patrons' Books of Hours. In these paintings, Books of Hours acted as visual cues, representing both piety and prestige simply by virtue of their physical appearance.[4] British Library Harley MS 2253's lyric, *Song of the Husbandman,* gives voice to laboring men who cannot bear the financial burden of taxation. In this poem, the men's literacy is not established, nor does it need to be; these men know their fate once they see the green wax seal on the bailiff's legal document. The bailiff knows the power of the green wax seal, demanding, "Greythe me selver to the grene wax. / Thou art writen y my writ, that thou wel wost!"[5] They do in fact know well, leading to the husbandman's lament that "the grene wax us greveth under gore / That me us honteth ase hound

[4] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*. Duffy provides examples starting on page 4.

[5] "Prepare for me silver for the green wax! / You are written in my book, as you well know!" (lines 38-9); translation mine. See Fein, *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, 2:128, 130. Article 31: "Ich herde men upo mold."

doth the hare."[6] As with the Book of Hours, the green wax-sealed legal document is recognized as a type of text that carries with it certain implications about the document's holder and his power. While the Simple Book format is not nearly as charged with meaning, with this number of surviving manuscripts sharing the defining features I have identified, the Simple Book format must have been recognizable to its users as a distinctive one, even if an explicit contemporary label for this format type either did not exist or hasn't made it down to us simply because of its ordinariness.

The number of surviving Simple Book manuscripts, as well as the variations in its execution, attest to the popularity of this style of book, so that at the very least, these books represent a format that was a popular manufacturing option for scribes and bookmakers in fifteenth century England, to which these manuscripts bear witness. In addition to the fourteen manuscripts that represent what I consider the core inventory of Simple Books, there are several kinds of outliers that share all the critical features described except for one. Some lack a textualis-leaning hand, for example, while others have margins trimmed nearly to the edge of the text block, or are so large that they no longer fit easily in one hand, or have several illuminations. These changes, while subtle, are enough to "disrupt" recognition of the Simple Book.

This chapter delineates the essential features of the Simple Book in turn and as a whole while exploring a variety of theoretical lenses through which we can approach this book format. Ultimately, object-oriented ontology, in the style of Graham Harman, allows us to usefully theorize the interplay between reader and book. Using Harman's quadruple object framework, these books and their readers, both medieval and modern, can be approached without resorting to analyses that ask us to answer unanswerable questions about scribal intent or reader response.

[6] "The green wax grieves us to the quick / While they hunt us like a hound does the hare." (lines 55-6). Translation by Susanna Fein.

Rather, we can consider what these books' physical properties made possible and what kinds of interactions they could have encouraged. We can put into words the narratives that these manuscripts' physical features make evident, as well as create possible narratives about these books' interactions with readers and bookmakers.

**The Simple Book Format**

Collectively, each of these codicological features makes up the Simple Book format:

- a portable size, ranging from 115mm x 80mm at the small end (Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.55) to 165mm x 115mm at the large end (Harley 993). The median-sized manuscript is British Library Additional 10596, measuring at 139mm x 98mm.[7]

- a small text box with ample margin space. Text box measurements range from 81mm x 55mm on the small end (Cambridge Trinity College MS B.14.53) to 120mm x 70mm on the large end (Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.31). The average text box size is 95mm x 65mm (British Library Harley MS 2322). While margin space, much like page size, is a more difficult measurement since pages get trimmed over time, the ample margin space in these manuscripts is a telling feature. Harley 993 has perhaps the most margin space, with a height of 57mm between the edges of the page and the beginnings of the text.

- a script that aims for a textualis look. Simple books are written in a variety of scripts, all of which attempt to approximate a Gothic textualis semiquadrata, such that the overall appearance of the page at first glance is that of a textualis bookhand. Some are successful in

[7] I calculated and sorted these results by turning the page and text box measurements into areas, then by sorting these areas by size. I found the averages by identifying which manuscript's measurements were closest to the mathematical average.

doing so; according to Lieftinck's criteria, the following manuscripts achieve textualis status:[8]

Illinois 80 (textualis semiquadrata)

Additional 10596 (textualis semiquadrata)

Harley 2322 (textualis semiquadrata)

Cambridge Trinity B.14.53 (textualis semiquadrata)

John Rylands English MS 85 (textualis semiquadrata)

John Rylands English MS 87 (textualis semiquadrata)

CUL Ff.6.31 (textualis rotunda)

CUL Ff.6.55 (textualis rotunda)

Oxford Bodleian Bodley MS 3 (textualis rotunda)

British Library Harley MS 953 (textualis rotunda)

Harley 2336 (a low-grade textualis rotunda)

The remaining Simple Book manuscripts (CUL Ff.6.34, Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson MS C.209, Harley 993) are in a hybrid bastard Anglicana hand, with varying degrees of textualis features. Many of these bastard Anglicana scripts follow all of Lieftinck's criteria except in one letter form; some characteristics favored by the Simple Book Anglicana are forked ascenders on *k, h,* and *l,* as well as quadrangular minims on *i, m, n, t,* and open-bottom box *a*. Generally speaking and regardless of script, some manuscripts exhibit more of the characteristics of a Gothic script than others, such as biting letters and a boxy ruling pattern

[8] Lieftinck's student, J. P. Gumbert, and Albert Derolez provide slightly different (yet compatible) summaries of Lieftinck's key letter forms for determining textualis, which are as follows: *zweistöckig* (two-compartment) *a*, *g* in an "'alter,' 'komplizierter' Form" (older, more complicated form), *sf* standing on their line (straight, without dipping below), and ascenders which are either straight or with "Ansatz von links" (with lines that start from the left) rather than looping to the right. See Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, 20; Gumbert, *Die Utrechter Kartäuser und ihre Bücher im frühen fünfzehnten Jahrhundert*, 204.

with text hovering between the ruled lines. Similarly, all Simple Books feature simple abbreviations such as a line above a letter to designate a missing *n* or *m*, though some manuscripts feature more abbreviations than others.

- a simple, one-column layout of text, averaging 20 lines of text per page, within a range of 16-26 lines (at least one of Rawlinson C.209's pages is ruled to 16 lines, and at least one of CUL Ff.6.34's pages is ruled to 26).
- basic finding aids, such as tables of contents, rubricated lines to open new sections of text or to signal the start of a prayer, page headers, and marginal textual references. Some Simple Books provide more than others; all provide mid-text titles in red to indicate the start of a new section.
- primarily black ink, with some red lettering to indicate instructions for use or to mark the beginnings and endings of a text. Some Simple Books also make minimal use of blue to accentuate paraphs or to provide some decoration in the form of simple scrolling lines. One Simple Book, Harley 2322, includes some gold-leaf illumination, each on an initial (see folios 4, 18, 23, and 39; an image of folio 18 is available on the British Library's "Detailed Record" page for Harley 2322). However, the majority of Simple Books' pages are in black ink only.

Having articulated these criteria, what do we accomplish by identifying this book format? We could speak of the various effects that a textualis script might have on readers. After all, Illinois 80's neat execution of textualis semiquadrata led to its initial misdating as a fourteenth-century book rather than its more probable dating of mid to late fifteenth century.[9] We could use

[9] As of 3 April 2018, Pre-1650 MS 0080 is still listed in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's library catalogue as dated "13xx"

modern typography studies as parallels to discuss the various effects that fonts have on readers to illustrate that they do, in fact, have emotional and intellectual impact, assuming that twentieth- and twenty-first-century cognitive science studies (on twentieth- and twenty-first-century subjects' responses to typeset fonts) can be cautiously applied to fifteenth-century subjects' responses to hand-written scripts.[10] Or, we could speak of material affordances—that is, what possible use can a human make of these books as objects? What kind of human behaviors are encouraged by these books' physical properties?[11] Another option still would be to examine the ways these books were constructed, comparing them to other book formats in order to understand why scribes chose this ruling pattern versus another, this page layout, this margin width. Looking at marginal comments leads us down yet another potential path of discovery as we imagine what might have motivated readers to make the marks that they did, or to wonder why some margins receive attention while others remain blank.

All of these potential inquiries can quickly lead us to questions of intentionality—did the scribe intend to evoke in future readers a pious receptivity, thus leading him to lay the page out just so? Did readers intend to read these prayers mindfully, solemnly? Do these manuscripts have intentions of their own—do they somehow, in whatever sort of object-life they have, exert pressure onto the humans who encounter them? While these are all fascinating questions, they are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I want to lay a framework that allows us to think not in terms of intentionality but in terms of object interactions. The manuscript page, a quire, the shape of the letter *a* on Illinois 80's pages (see Appendix B), readers' hands and eyes,

[10] Some recent studies investigate readers' responses to font appropriateness as well as the general legibility and readability of different fonts: Brumberger, "The Rhetoric of Typography"; Amare and Manning, "Seeing Typeface Personality"; Brumberger, "The Rhetoric of Typography: Effects on Reading Time, Reading Comprehension, and Perceptions of Ethos." For a foundational study on this subject, see Burt, *A Psychological Study of Typography*.
[11] The phrase "material affordances" is currently relevant to the field of product design and user interfaces; see Chemero, "An Outline of a Theory of Affordances"; Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*.

the size of readers' purses, the size of a bound manuscript, the readers' previous reading experience, the size of the scribes' pen nib, Harley 993's benefactor's instructions to the scribe when commissioning the book—all of these are objects, broadly conceived, that interact meaningfully with one another.[12] By giving equal weight to each one of these objects, we can avoid the sticky issue of intentionality and instead tread into this theoretical enterprise grounded by actual things—objects.

### Defining Objects with Harman

Perhaps the primary reason to think in terms of object interactions is that doing so allows us to confront our modern philosophical biases before they creep, unnoticed and unexamined, into our engagement with medieval books and texts. Putting objects at the center of our inquiry allows us a space outside of the "Philosophy of Human Access" that has become ubiquitous, the "gold standard of philosophical rigor," since Kant.[13] This philosophy privileges human cognition, claiming that all of reality is dependent on human knowledge. Graham Harman summarizes this philosophy's credo thus: "If we try to think a world outside human thought, then we are *thinking* it, and hence it is no longer outside thought. Any attempt to escape this circle is doomed to contradiction."[14] However, this is not a medieval philosophy; while medieval philosophers were certainly interested in epistemology, human cognition was not the *de facto* "reality" that it is in modern thinking. While we cannot replicate a medieval reader's mindset—in fact, such a singular "mindset" is itself a fabrication—it is productive to challenge the philosophical premises underlying our own approaches. No singular approach is without fault; however, each new

[12] The next section will address more fully what is meant by "object."
[13] Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 61.
[14] Harman, 60–61.

approach will make some new understanding possible. By engaging medieval books from a standpoint that does not assume human cognition as the only stable, knowable entity, we can generate new ways of thinking about them.

Circumventing the anti-materialist biases inherent in both the medieval and the modern epistemes, I follow instead the object-oriented ontology presented by Harman in *The Quadruple Object.* Harman addresses the logical fallacies at play in the Philosophy of Access[15] and provides instead, as the title indicates, a four-fold model that ambitiously takes on philosophy's charge to know "the whole of reality."[16] Within this model, every object (and here he includes both tangible objects, like books and hands, as well as fictional and imagined ones, like England or "the novel" as a concept) has two parts and can be experienced in two different ways.[17] It is both a *sensual object* (SO) which has accessible features as well as a *real object* (RO) with its own interiority. Each object can also be experienced through the senses, revealing its sensual qualities (SQ), as well as through intellectual probing, which reveals its real qualities (RQ). This model results in four tensions: the tension between an object's sensual object aspects (SO) and its sensual qualities (SQ), for example, is termed "time," and it accounts for the object retaining its recognizability even when small aspects change. A mailbox, Harman explains, remains the same

[15] While this section is too long to repeat fully here, Harman points to two assertions about the nature of reality outside of cognition: one asserts that since a tree cannot exist outside of our thinking of the tree, there is "*nothing* outside the human-world coupling." This is logically flawed, as a tautology—"my thought of the tree cannot exist without my thinking of it"—has led to a non-tautologous conclusion—"the tree does not exist." The second assertion is weaker and more ubiquitous, which is that "'there is no *thinking* without thinking.' To think of a tree may not prove that there are no trees outside thought, but does prove that there are no *thoughts* about trees outside thought." However, this treats two different meanings of the word "thought" as synonymous, as "to think of something is to make it present to the mind, but also to point at its reality insofar as it lies beyond its presence to the mind." This is a modern example of Meno's paradox at play. It is possible, Harman argues, to speak of a thing without quite speaking of it, which is to allude to it: "To say 'the tree that lies outside thinking' is neither a successful statement about a thought nor a failed statement about a thing. Instead, it is an allusion to something that might be real but which cannot become fully present." Harman, 64–66.
[16] Harman, 64.
[17] "Some of these objects are physical, others not; some are real, others not real in the least. But all are *unified* objects, even if confined to that portion of the world called the mind." Harman, 7.

mailbox to us even if the paint fades or the post is replaced or even when it is sensed by you or me or a dog or a weed growing near its base. The other three tensions—eidos (SO/RQ), space (RO/SQ), and essence (RO/RQ)—answer for all that is knowable. This means that all experience, all matter, all ideas, and all of what makes up reality can be described by the tensions between objects, by the ways objects interact with their own qualities as well as the ways they interact with one another. As there is no hierarchy of objects in this model, "the interaction between cotton and fire belongs on the same footing as human interaction with both cotton and fire."[18] Some of these object interactions are between human and object, and so they are dialectical; that is to say, some objects have attributes that were shaped by human need or human use, and this too is a part of the object's reality. All of experience is made up of objects interacting with one another, including humans as objects (and human components—brain, neurotransmitters, hands, and so on).

Harman's model is a useful one for thinking about genres-as-objects. Each attribute that makes up the genre plays its own role, creates its own tensions, within the whole of the genre. As Harman argues, an object can be coherent in one moment and be absent in the next; if the mailbox post needs mending, it is still the same mailbox, but if the mailbox burns down, the ashes cannot be said to "be" the same mailbox. Genre works in a similar way; some aspects of the genre can change and the genre remains intact, while other genre markers cannot change without completely altering the genre itself. Thinking about manuscripts through Harman's structure allows me to recognize the essential components of the Simple Book, theorizing how each one functions on its own as well as within its genre context. Harman's fourfold scheme

[18] Harman, 6.

Salso allows me to productively think through all features of the Simple Book both in relation to human makers and users—scribes, stationers, and readers—as well as in relation to themselves.

Within this framework, another useful analytical category for talking about Simple Books and their readers and makers as they encounter one another is "material affordances." Affordances are inherently relational; that is, they emerge when two objects encounter one another. First used in the field of psychology, the term "affordances" here refers to the possible "relations between the abilities of organisms and features of the environment," though this idea of relationality is a new development from older ideas that affordances were properties of the object itself.[19] Simply put, an object's affordances are those actions or uses which its physical properties make possible. From a design perspective, as described by Donald Norman in *The Design of Everyday Things*, they are "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used."[20] So, a book made of parchment has several possible affordances, only some of which we might consider conventional or even acceptable. It can be burned, used as a projectile, torn into pieces with pages being repurposed as flyleaves, eaten by worms, and so on.

Affordances alone do not dictate the interactions between objects; constraints, too, play a role in the ways that objects suggest potential uses by placing limitations on the type and number of affordances. Norman outlines four types of constraints: physical, semantic, cultural, and

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[19] Chemero, "An Outline of a Theory of Affordances," 189. Harman would certainly take issue with this, as ascribing properties to a "relation between organisms" seeks to look past the objects themselves. In Harman's framework, the way an object is used is a part of that object itself, as with Heidegger's tool-analysis. This feature of the object is borne of the tension between the Real Object (those features which withdraw from experience) and its Sensual Qualities (those qualities which emerge through sensual engagement with the object). Harman calls this tension "space." I will be following Harman's model in my analysis here, as the bias toward cognition ("relations between the abilities of organisms and features of the environment") precludes any conversation of the affordances between objects which, as far as we know, do not have cognition, such as the affordance of a font to its page or to its layout, for example.

[20] Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, 9.

logical. Physical constraints are fairly obvious; you can't, for example, carry a large codex in your pocket. Semantic constraints require you to utilize your knowledge of the world, such as being aware that a book is intended for the transmission of knowledge or understanding, either through word or image. Cultural constraints occur when you abide by the often unspoken rules that govern the use of the object. It is entirely acceptable (and, as Illinois 80 prescribes, sometimes necessary) to read a book aloud to others, but it might be a different sort of scene entirely if one were to stand up in church and loudly read a prayer from a Simple Book, thereby interrupting Mass. Logical constraints play less of a role for Simple Books, but it is true that some affordances make more sense than others. For example, it is logical that a book is used by turning pages; it is not logical that the book be disassembled into individual pages and stored in a box like a deck of cards, for instance. It is also not logical to store the book outdoors; while it is easy to do so, the book's materials are quickly ruined, and it is just as easy to store the book indoors.

**Harley 993**

Generally, these statements work for most books. However, the characteristics particular to the Simple Book offer a subtler set of material affordances. Harley 993 will demonstrate, as a test case, the way in which the Simple Book's defining features and affordances emerge as the book and its readers engage one another. Harley 993 is at once a useful book, one sturdy enough to be put to regular use without being dramatically altered, and a book evoking pride and respect. Sitting down with the manuscript in the British Library's reading room, I open the codex. On the front of its first page (folio 1r, Image 5), fine red ink scrolls extend up from an initial blue H in "HEere bigynneþ a tretis of viij chapitres necessarie for men þat ȝiuen hem to p*er*fection." These

fine red scrolling lines follow down along the text's left margins for seven lines of text, spreading as two branches into the left margin and framing the text by laying out on top of "HEere bigynneþ."

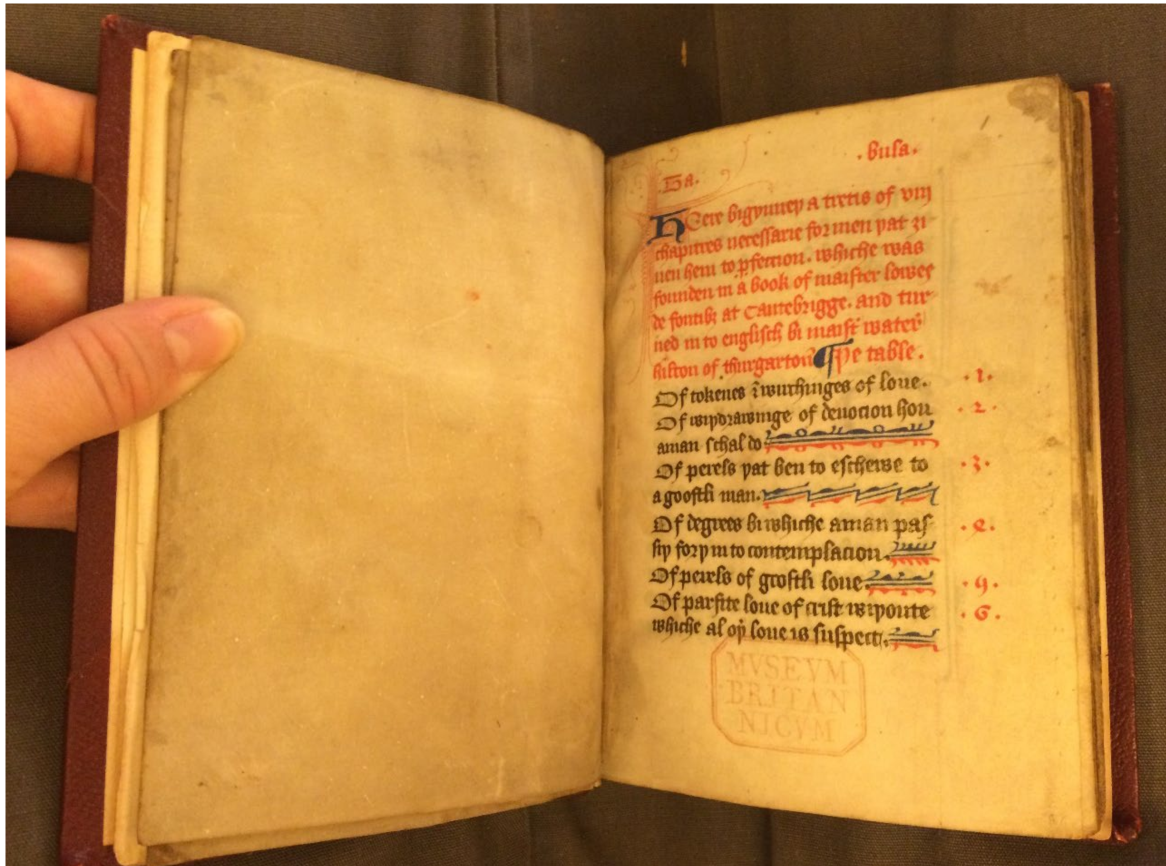


***Image 5*** *© British Library Board Harley 993 fol. 1r*

The visual framework strikes me as simple, yet it is welcoming rather than austere. Gothic manuscripts tend to favor an enclosed look; *o* shapes are boxy, creating a large hollow space inside the letter, and the page itself is often laid out as a large rectangle, with ruling lines left visible so that the text box is outlined.[21] Lines of text float in between the rule lines, and this "center-justified" look (to borrow a phrase from desktop publishing) creates the classically

[21] Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*, 39. This boxiness is "in conformity with the 'Gothic' preference for enclosed areas."

Gothic, oxymoronic look of enclosed open spaces. This sense of enclosure is part of what lends the page a welcoming aspect as visual space is carefully, neatly shaped for the reader, while creating open white spaces which provide some respite for the eye and mind. Erwin Panofsky describes how fourteenth-century art was impacted by the Gothic "new way of seeing—or, rather, of designing with reference to the very process of sight," so that sculptors and architects began to think of their forms "not so much in terms of isolated solids as in terms of a comprehensive 'picture space.'"[22] The ruling grid is a remnant from the scribe's work on the page, and this visual "witness" to the page's creation gives the viewer imaginative access to the book's creation. I can visualize the hand of the scribe moving across the page, balancing the pen nib between the lines as the ink is scratched into the page, and this creates a sense of familiarity or intimacy between myself, the scribe, and the book. These features—a Gothic-like aspect of enclosure, visible ruling lines, and minimal decoration—are present in all Simple Books, with subtle variations between and within these books.

Examining the handwriting in its own right, one can argue that it is useful and welcoming, yet it also resembles scripts from older, more costly productions and therefore encourages a certain amount of reverence. The Simple Books' general paleographical affect is one that borrows heavily from a traditional, formal Textura; Harley 993's black letters, for instance, are formed in a Gothic semiquadrata textualis, and though the script would pale in comparison to a thirteenth-century Gothic psalter or Bible, the overall impression of this seemingly old-fashioned text is one of respectability. A practical benefit to this sort of bookhand is its legibility. Keeping abbreviations and bitings at a minimum, the hand provides a clear, consistent execution of each letter. In contrast, a cursive hand, while flowing along (as its name

[22] Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 17.

implies) in terms of ductus, lends itself to greater variations in letter form and can be more difficult to read, at least until the reader has developed a familiarity with that particular script. Readers would have associated the textualis script with Books of Hours, Bibles, or psalters, all of which were much more costly endeavors. Though the letters in Harley 993 are more rounded than a formal quadrata, with the double-bow form of the *a* being a good indicator, hairline ligaments connect the letters *e, i, l, n, r,* and the letters *de* tend to bite.[23] It is less typical for manuscripts of the fifteenth century to showcase a true, textbook textualis. As Malcolm Parkes writes, by the fourteenth century a formal Textura had become "increasingly more artificial and more difficult to write... Although a version of Textura was still used for ordinary books in the late thirteenth century, by the second half of the fourteenth the scribes were using the script only for de luxe books and for 'display' purposes."[24] It is therefore less likely to find a well-executed textualis bookhand by the fifteenth century than it was in centuries previous, and it would have been particularly unlikely to find such a rare and difficult script in these simple, non-deluxe volumes. Though several Simple Books are classified as Textualis according to Lieftinck's guidelines, they are of a "media" quality; that is, they exemplify what Michelle Brown deems a "middle-grade" script, indicating the scribe paid some careful yet inconsistent attention to the precise ductus that Textualis requires. This is not to say that the rest of the Simple Books were not aiming for a respectable look—their scripts are classified as Bastard Anglicana, which as Parkes writes, filled the role that Textura had played in previous decades. "It was necessary to find something to supplement it [Textura] as a formal book hand, and for this purpose scribes developed what I propose to call the 'Bastard' variety of the Anglicana script,"[25] where a

[23] For a thorough analysis of various a-forms and their associated variations of Gothic Textualis, see Oeser, "Das 'a' Als Grundlage Für Schriftvarianten in Der Gotischen Buchschrift."
[24] Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands, 1250-1500*, xviii.
[25] Parkes, xviii.

"Bastard" script is the combination of a lower-grade script (cursive) with a more formal grade (Textura).

This "old-fashioned" look is an essential feature of the Simple Book, as it visually echoes thirteenth- and fourteenth-century deluxe religious manuscripts. Paging through the plates of manuscripts exhibiting a formal textualis in Derolez, books written in this script were missals (Rouen, Bibl. mun., MS 299; Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 53; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibl., MS 1844), pocket-sized and multi-volume Bibles (Dole, Bibl. mun., MS 15; Utrecht, Univ. Libr., MS 31 II), psalters (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Mus., MS 36-1950), and a few others (a copy of the *Roman de la Rose* as well as a history).[26] By visually echoing these deluxe codices—at least in their handwriting if not in other features—Simple Books would prompt readers to think of old-fashioned books they might have seen in the homes of the wealthy or perhaps even in use by prominent clergy or other religious leaders. These readers would have at least seen the outer covers of some Bibles in church; while "the Old Testament and Epistle readings were usually done from a lectern in front of the church, ...the Gospel was carried to the middle of the church in a more solemn procession and read there."[27] It is possible that the books containing the gospel texts were held open and aloft for the parishioners to view. Psalters, too, could have been visually accessible to a wider viewership than just their owners. They certainly were made to be used by a range of readers, such as children (the Copenhagen Psalter, Det Kongelige Bibliotek Thott 143 2º, was made for Canute VI when he was just seven) as well as adults.[28] Given as wedding gifts, tokens of affection, and sometimes even as talismans, "the Psalter was the one [of all the biblical books] whose very beginning offered medieval readers

[26] Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*. See plates 19, 27, 35; 20, 40; 21; 29, and 34.
[27] van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, 211.
[28] Panayotova, "The Illustrated Psalter: Luxury and Practical Use," 247–49.

practical advice on the way they should live their lives" and "completed the circle of life" as it ranged from including a simple ABC to instructions for performing the office of the dead. It is quite possible that the psalter, as a seemingly ubiquitous genre, was visually recognizable by many medieval people. Since many psalters were written in a textualis formata, the script would therefore have been associated not only with deluxe codices but also with those that served a practical, daily-use purpose.

Paleography has historically been interested in these sorts of associative qualities of texts, so that even while the field has aimed for scientific rigor, its taxonomy is laced with poetic language, as discussion of associations veers into the realm of the imagination. Historically, paleographers have used imaginative, poetic language to describe paleographic features, distinctive scripts, and in one famous case the hand of a particular scribe. Gothic textualis, for example, is always described as having "lozenge-shaped" finials or minims—a phrase that seems to be used primarily in paleography and crossword puzzles.[29] Cursive Merovingian chancery script is so difficult to read and unattractive that paleographers have long described its look as resembling "the wanderings of a demented spider."[30] While this specific phrase occurs mostly in reference to this particular hand, the imagined motions of a "demented spider" are called upon as figurative language in many works of fiction; one need only search Google books to produce a list of such books. One scribe had such shaky handwriting, growing progressively worse over his career, that his hand is known to this day as the Tremulous Hand of Worcester. Using recent

[29] This term is so ubiquitous that one need only google the phrase "lozenge-shaped" with an identifier like "paleography" to find numerous examples. If one googles only the phrase "lozenge-shaped," the first page of hits is made up of crossword puzzle solvers, suggesting that this phrase is dated.
[30] This phrase seems to be used without citation in a variety of sources to describe Merovingian chancery script, most notably in Gameson, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, c. 400-1100*; Brown, *The British Library Guide to Writing and Scripts: History and Techniques*; Insley and Owen-Crocker, *Transformation in Anglo-Saxon Culture: Toller Lectures on Art, Archaeology and Text*. Interestingly, it frequently appears in works of fiction as well.

neuroscience methods, Deborah Thorpe has identified the scribe's trademark tremor as symptomatic of "essential tremor," a neurological condition.[31] When this research was presented at a conference in Oxford, the audience chuckled with recognition at the scribe's moniker—an indication that this fanciful language could well have increased popular interest in this scribe and his health.

The poetics of paleography is particularly appropriate when the various objects that make up a manuscript—the handwriting and its history, the various colors of ink, the single-column layout, the texture and heft of the parchment—and their own qualities are examined. Some qualities are accessible to us, such as the feel of the parchment between our fingers, or the curve of the letter *s*, while other qualities, those which are essential to the object, can only "be approached indirectly by way of allusion."[32] We can use a system of handwriting classification to label the particular script of Harley 993 and each Simple Book in turn, but the essential qualities of Harley 993's hand, those features that make it true to itself, can only be hinted at or suggested. Paleographers have long talked about the feel of a particular script or manuscript, and here they are referring, though not explicitly, to what Harman calls the Real Object—that indescribable *something* which distinguishes one script from another. Although some might argue that talking about the "feel" of a manuscript goes against the scientific rigor that paleography has long aimed to establish and maintain, Harman's theory allows for both the scientific treatment of an object as well as the poetic, allusive description of an object's self that defies full comprehension.

In a Simple Book, then, these objects are in constant interplay with one another—textualis-leaning lettering, medium-quality parchment cut to a relatively small size, a single-

[31] Thorpe and Alty, "What Type of Tremor Did the Medieval 'Tremulous Hand of Worcester' Have?"
[32] Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 28.

column boxed-in ruling pattern that remains visible, Middle English devotional prayers and meditations, and so forth—and they also create, as a whole, a new entity: the manuscript itself. The manuscript is, in its own right, a cohesive object, more than merely an accumulation of the individual traits that make it up. These manuscripts, as a collection, make up a genre at the book level, too—the Simple Book—which is itself its own entity. Empiricist thinking has encouraged us to look past the object to its qualities, so that

> "[t]he word 'apple' is merely a collective nickname for a series of discrete qualities habitually linked together: red, sweet, cold, hard, solid, juicy… Nonetheless, it is a pure fiction. For what we encounter in experience are unified objects, not isolated points of quality. Indeed, the relation actually goes in reverse, since the individual qualities of things are already imbued with the style or feel of the thing as a whole."[33]

I describe the smaller "objects" that make up the Simple Book—the hand, the parchment, the layout—not as a way to describe any one Simple Book in terms of its individual qualities but rather to point out the myriad ways in which a Simple Book's qualities (which are also objects in their own right) are "already imbued with the style or feel" of the Simple Book "as a whole." That is, the old-fashioned, meditative, welcoming feeling of the textualis-leaning script of the Simple Book is informed by the old-fashioned, meditative, welcoming feeling of the Simple Book as a whole. Additionally, each of an individual Simple Book's qualities informs, and is informed by, the genre of the Simple Book. Rather than thinking of the Simple Book as a combination of specific features, Harman would have us think of a Simple Book (and the Simple Book genre) as a complete, whole entity, with its own accessible Sensual Object qualities as well

[33] Harman, 11.

as Real Object interior qualities, even though some of the qualities which make it up are themselves whole, complete entities with their own Sensual Object aspects and Real Object interior selves. In acknowledging this, we can look at and describe the individual aspects of the Simple Book while still addressing the format's cohesive whole.

In Harley 993, our case study for applying Harman's approach, this means that we can address both the particular affects and visual resonances of fifteenth-century executions of textualis-featured bookhands as well as the visual affect of Harley 993. All at once, Harley 993 comes across as a simply yet carefully, thoughtfully constructed book. The prologue to its text, Walter Hilton's *Eight Chapters on Perfection*, declares the following contents "necessarie" reading, and many of this Simple Book's features welcome the reader to use the book frequently and fearlessly, despite their prior, possibly limited experiences with books. Based on their small size and the minimal use of colored ink, Simple Books required fewer materials in their construction than, say, a fine psalter designed for the lectern. In total, Harley 993's first page showcases three colors of ink, with the blue occupying the least space—as the initial H in line one, a paraph mark in line 7 indicating the beginning of the table, and most noticeably as decorative lines varying in length and pattern (with a mirrored red line below) to finish out the row of text. Red ink appears as described above, plus red inked words provide introductory information and headings throughout the manuscript. In the right margin on the recto side next to the beginning words of each chapter, a red chapter number appears for easy reference. Compared to a manuscript whose fine vellum pages support colorful, illuminated images, Harley 993's use of colored ink—to provide some small decoration, yes, but primarily to offer reading aids—comes across as user-friendly; color is used to aid the readers' comprehension and does so without some of the intimidation that could be felt when reading an expensive, multi-color,

illustrated Book of Hours. The text's introduction and the table of contents on folio 1 recto take up the entire page, and rather than filling each line with text, the preference is toward giving each chapter title a line or two of its own, with red and blue decorations filling in what would otherwise be blank space (see Image 6). Such attention to format not only makes it much easier

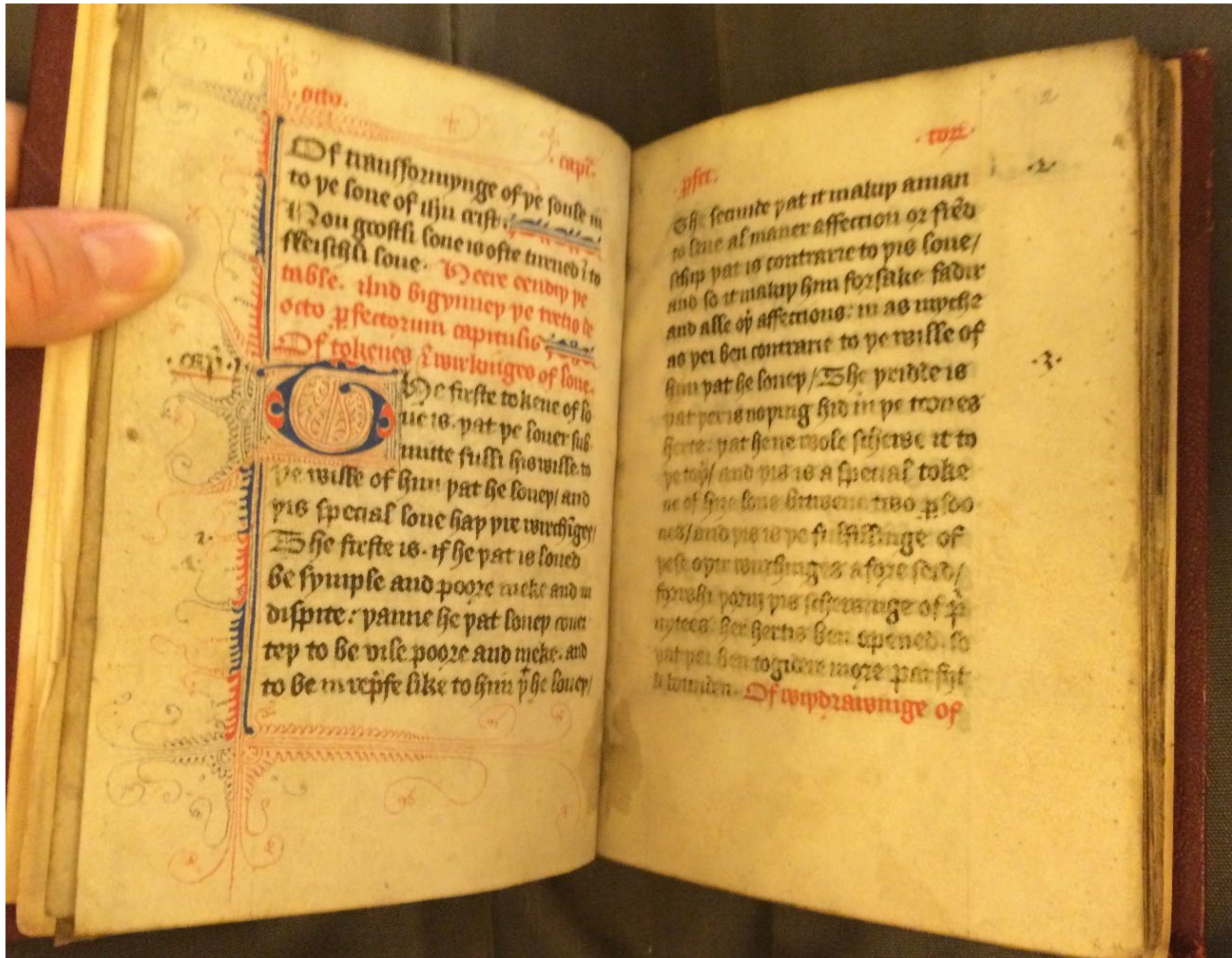

***Image 6*** *© British Library Board Harley 993 fol. 1v-2r spread.*

for readers to read and find the chapter titles they might want to read next, it also reinforces the concept of each chapter being its own unit. This in turn enables readers to see that the text can be read in easily-managed portions.

These markers of use suggest that Harley 993 is a book to be integrated into the daily workings of a busy life. Here is a book that a reader can hold in the hands, whose pages can be

touched without fear of smudging a costly image. The ink adheres well to the parchment, which is thick enough to allow for frequent handling rather than being kept on display. Unlike a luxury codex, this book still retains signs of its craftsmanship. Prick marks are visible on several pages as remainders of the ruling process, and quire catchwords are prominent, both signs that the preference was toward larger margins rather than a smaller, yet tidier, book. These margins make it easier to hold the book firmly in one's hands without fear of covering the letters. They may also encourage readers to provide their own written commentary, though Harley 993 does not preserve nearly the same level of readers' marginal commentary as does Illinois 80. It is also possible that the marginal space gave readers a visual place on the page in which they could imagine their own reactions to the text; I explore this idea in relation to Illinois 80, below. Parchment quality is fair, with only a few places in which the page shows holes or other imperfections. It is of medium thickness, and no follicles are readily apparent. However, once again, this is not the fine, thin, nearly see-through, bleached parchment of a fine Book of Hours, but rather a serviceable parchment that holds up to being handled on a daily basis. These qualities, along with the texts' minimal yet helpful reference tools, encourage readers to use the book, to read a portion in the day as time allows, and to return to it with ease as the evening approaches, or during a break from work the next day.

These descriptions sketch a quick portrait of Harley 993's Sensual Object qualities; so how does one go about talking about its Real Object identity, which can only be addressed allusively? This is perhaps where paleography's poetic side comes best into play, as we are accustomed to thinking of poems as objects with deep, real interiors that can never be fully voiced. The problem lies in our desire to paraphrase—to paraphrase with the purpose of colonizing, claiming, declaring understood. Poems, as Cleanth Brooks declares in *The Well*

*Wrought Urn*, cannot be paraphrased. Harman clarifies that "[w]hat this strictly means is that the poem cannot be rephrased as a series of literal propositions, yet it can also be taken to mean, as Brooks argues elsewhere, that poems cannot be reduced to the series of social influences or biographical facts that gave rise to them. The poem is an integral unit irreducible either to its ancestors or its heirs, not constituted by its relations in any decisive way."[34] The same can be argued of the manuscript; it cannot be reduced to a list of its contents nor to its manufacture, use, provenance, or traits.[35] Just as with a poem, there is a "something" at the heart of it, an identity, a realness to that object that can't be touched but only approached. This does not mean that we cannot discuss manuscripts; it simply means we need to change the way in which we do so. An analysis of a poem that only states the facts surrounding it would be deeply unsatisfying. In fact, Harman argues, paraphrase fails *all* objects, not just those in the arts, and it happens even to those outside human interactions. It is not the poem's irreducibility that is novel; it is the fact that *everything* is irreducible. So, we begin to see that we must treat all objects as if they were poems, and so we must try to do so with these Simple Books, both individually and as a category.

### The Simple Book as Poetry

One benefit of treating these manuscripts as members of a shared Simple Book format is that we can start asking questions about how these manuscripts are different from one another and from other categories of books. It is easy enough for us to see the differences between a Simple Book

[34] Harman, "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer," 188–89.
[35] Carol Symes argues that our "strip-mining" approach to medieval artifacts is anti-medieval: "My goal is to change the way we understand the evidentiary nature of texts… Everything we have learned about medieval documentary processes in the past few decades has revealed that these texts were shaped and conveyed by the specific circumstances of their negotiation and inscription; their fungible physical formats; and the embodied, performative contexts in which they were enacted, witnessed, displayed, declaimed, contested. Reading the writing is not enough." See Symes, "A Radical (Feminist) Writing of the First Crusade?"

manuscript such as Harley 993 and a book similar in location and date of composition and in content, such as British Library Additional MS 37049. Additional 37049 is a Carthusian miscellany made in the second or third quarter of the fifteenth century and contains meditations and prayers both in verse and prose.

By contrast with Simple Book manuscripts, this manuscript has been well-studied, most recently by Jessica Brantley in her innovative and widely reviewed book on devotional literature, *Reading in the Wilderness.* Despite this manuscript's similarities in date and contents to Harley 993, its size, illustrations, hand, and even possibly its readership make it a very different sort of manuscript; there is no mistaking Additional 37049 for a Simple Book (see Image 7). Comparing two Simple Books, on the other hand, narrows the field of discussion and allows for a nuanced look at these books, their contents, and how they function. It also helps us to think through that question of their Real Object qualities, their poetic qualities that elude direct knowing.

***Image 7*** *© British Library Board Additional 37049 fol. 9v.*

Illinois 80 and Additional 10596, both Simple Books, each house the only known copies of a prayer to the Trinity. By comparing the two manuscripts' treatment of this prayer, we can think through these manuscripts' Real Object qualities. By highlighting the differences between

the two manuscripts' physical features—both are Simple Books, yet both execute that format slightly differently—we can read the text of the prayer as well as the texts' material housings as poetry. Although Illinois 80 provides the title "A deuout p*re*ier to þe holi t*ri*nyte," Additional 10596 simply names its version "A preier." Indeed, there is not much contemplation of the Trinity specifically in this prayer, which addresses God and Christ in turns. It opens with thanks to God for making mankind in his own image when he "might have made him an unreasonable creature" instead, then it goes on to give thanks to Christ for his sacrifice, seamlessly shifting the address from God to Christ in a way that reflects the unity of the Trinity. The two versions follow one another nearly verbatim, though they differ in a few subtle but meaningful ways. Both Additional 10596 and Illinois 80 open the prayer by praising God's goodness to man—a goodness which exceeds language:

> Almyȝti lord god of eendeles liif þat art so ful of godenes. so ful of m*er*ci. & so ful of loue to sy*n*ful ma*n* þ*at* turneþ to þ*ee* & to þi lawis; þat noon herte mai it þenke. ne mouþ it mai speke. so myche is þi m*er*ci & þou lord askist of no man. but good wil & loue aȝen[36]
>
> [Almighty Lord, God of endless life, who are so full of goodness, mercy and love to sinful man who turns to you and to your laws that no heart can think it, no mouth can speak it—so great is your mercy and you, Lord, ask of no man anything but goodwill and love in return.]

Where Additional 10596 proceeds to thank God for making man a creature of reason when he could have instead made man "þe moost u*n*clene creature þ*at* is crepi*n*g on erþe," Illinois 80 continues,

[36] Additional MS 10596, fol. 54r; Pre-1650 Illinois MS 0080, fol. 9v.

> þ*ou* myȝtist hauve made hi*m* an vnreson*a*ble creature as aflie or aworme or eny oþ*er* such vnclene þi*n*g; lord of þi godenes þ*ou* didist not so.
>
> [you might have made man an unreasonable creature, such as a fly or a worm or any other such unclean thing, but in your goodness, Lord, you did not do so.]

Both texts invite the reader to participate imaginatively with the text. Additional 10596 leaves the imagining to readers; "the most unclean creature that is creeping on earth" is certainly an evocative phrase, as it encourages readers to imagine a host of creatures, both actual and fantastic, which would endure worse lived experiences than that of a human (from the human perspective, of course). Illinois 80 provides concrete examples—a fly or a worm—and these tangibles ground the text in an earthiness that lends it humility and relatability. It's also a bit simpler; the text provides a starting place for readers, in case the examples they might have come up with on their own were not sufficiently grotesque.

The holes and scrapes on Illinois 80's parchment certainly echo the "earthiness" of its imagery. Flies and worms are, after all, not only earthy; they are also associated with decomposition and decay. The dead flesh of the parchment is made intellectually tangible as the holes invite speculation and the scrapes reveal the texture of animal skin (see Image 8).[37] Medieval readers might have also read the parchment itself as a part of the manuscript. As Sarah Kay argues, Augustine wrote in Book 13 of his *Confessions*, "You know, Lord, you know how you clothed human beings with skins when through sin they became mortal (Genesis 3:21). So you have stretched out the firmament of your book like a skin [XIII.xv.16.]"[38] Skin is a wrapper here, an envelope of flesh that contains both the mortality and sin of mankind and the words of God that lead to man's salvation. So, if the parchment were notably rough or especially pristine,

[37] Holsinger, "Of Pigs and Parchment."
[38] Kay, "Legible Skins," 15–16.

“the book might potentially serve its medieval readers’ fantasy as a humble and abject skin, a masochistic flayed skin, a porous or wounded skin; or, in the case of luxury codices, as a protective and eternal skin, a sublime envelope.”[39]

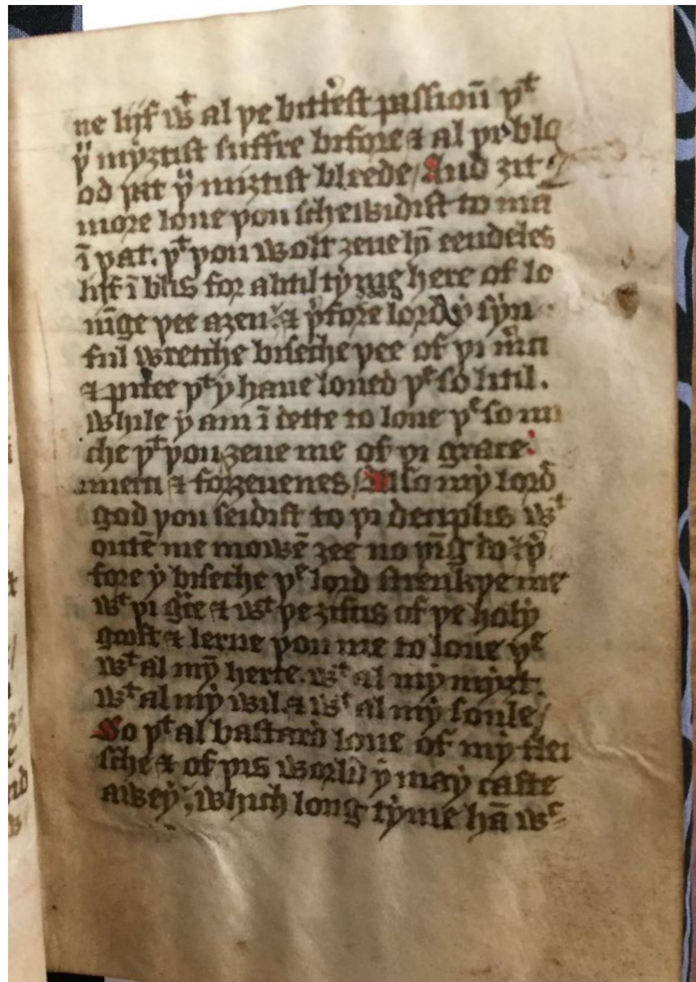

*Image 8 The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 10r*

Illinois 80 provides another way of thinking about the book as both a body (constructed out of the multiple bodies of animals) and as a container. In actuality, Illinois 80 is neither a “porous or wounded skin” nor is it a “sublime envelope.” It is, as we know, a Simple Book; it is small, made of inexpensive though serviceable parchment, uses primarily black ink and red ink sparingly (with the exception of folio 1 recto), contains no pictures, with text in a single column and margins just large enough to hold a few notes. Its “skin”—parchment—retains signs of its life as an animal skin, with the pores of its hair side still partially visible, and so it is neither flayed nor sublime, but something in the middle (see Image 9). It is ordinary parchment, a bit on the rough side (as we see when we compare it to Additional 10596). Moreover, the opening text of Illinois 80 describes the manuscript’s contents as being

[39] Kay, 16.

“ful needful, meedful, speedful, and profitable to eueri cristin man and womman that kunnen rede. to excite, stire, or induce symple lettred men and wommen to vertu.”[40] Treating the manuscript’s parchment and its text as equal contributors to the manuscript as a whole, we can argue that part of its Real Object-ness, one of its eidetic qualities, is its ordinariness, its simplicity; another is its roughness, its acknowledgment of the fragility of a flesh-embodied life. In a book of devotional works, these qualities invite intimate participation by its readers, who are encouraged by these material realities to see their own roughness, their own simplicity, as essential components of their devotional progress. The pages of Illinois 80 mimic the skin of its readers, providing a second skin upon which the readers make tangible their own devotional lives. This is one (of many) crucial capabilities of Illinois 80’s parchment, one that represents, composes, and mirrors an essential function of the Simple Book genre.

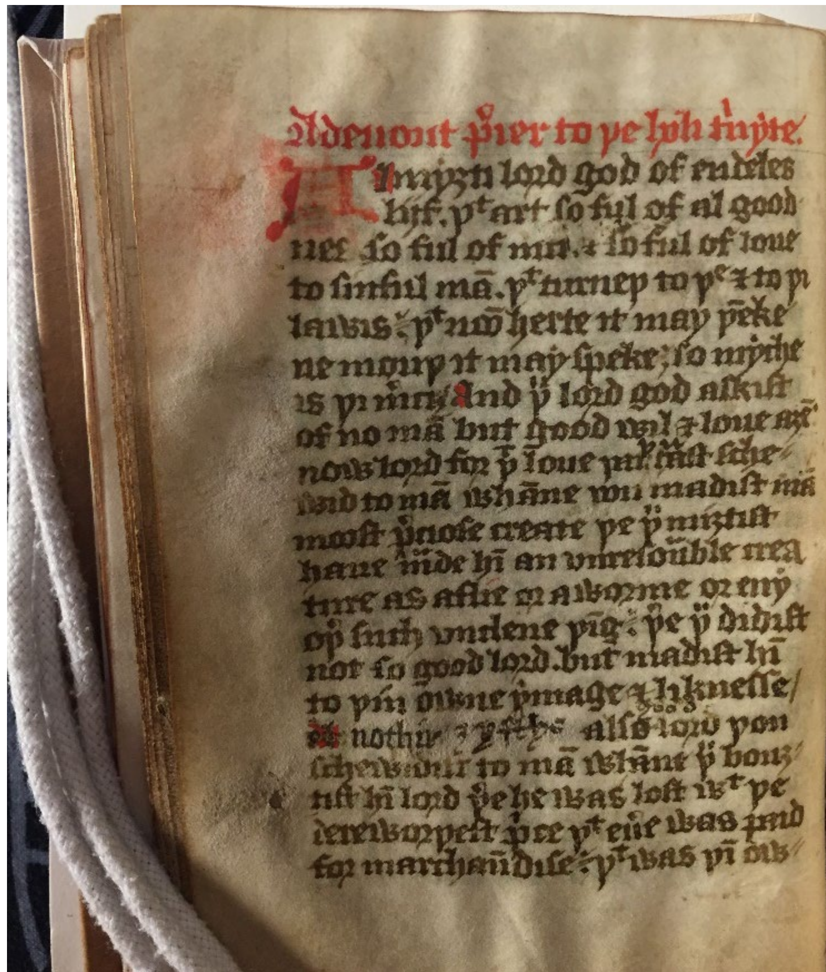

***Image 9*** *The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 9v.*

[40] Pre-1650 Illinois MS 0080 fol. 1r.

These differences between Additional 10596 and Illinois 80 are intensified by at least one reader's marks in the margins of Illinois 80, which have become a part of that object. Though it is difficult to make out, the margins surrounding this little book's copy of the prayer are filled with goodness; that is, they are marked by the word "good" and, at times, the phrase "good lord," repetitively and, it seems, earnestly written in a hand that is now quite faded. Beginning with folio 9v, the first "good" is marked after the occurrence of the word "good" in the text and before the occurrence of "lord." Further down the page, we see one very clear interlinear "good" appearing above the word "lord," with another "good" next to a line that includes the word "lord" (see Image 10). This pattern of marginal marking continues on all five folia of the prayer

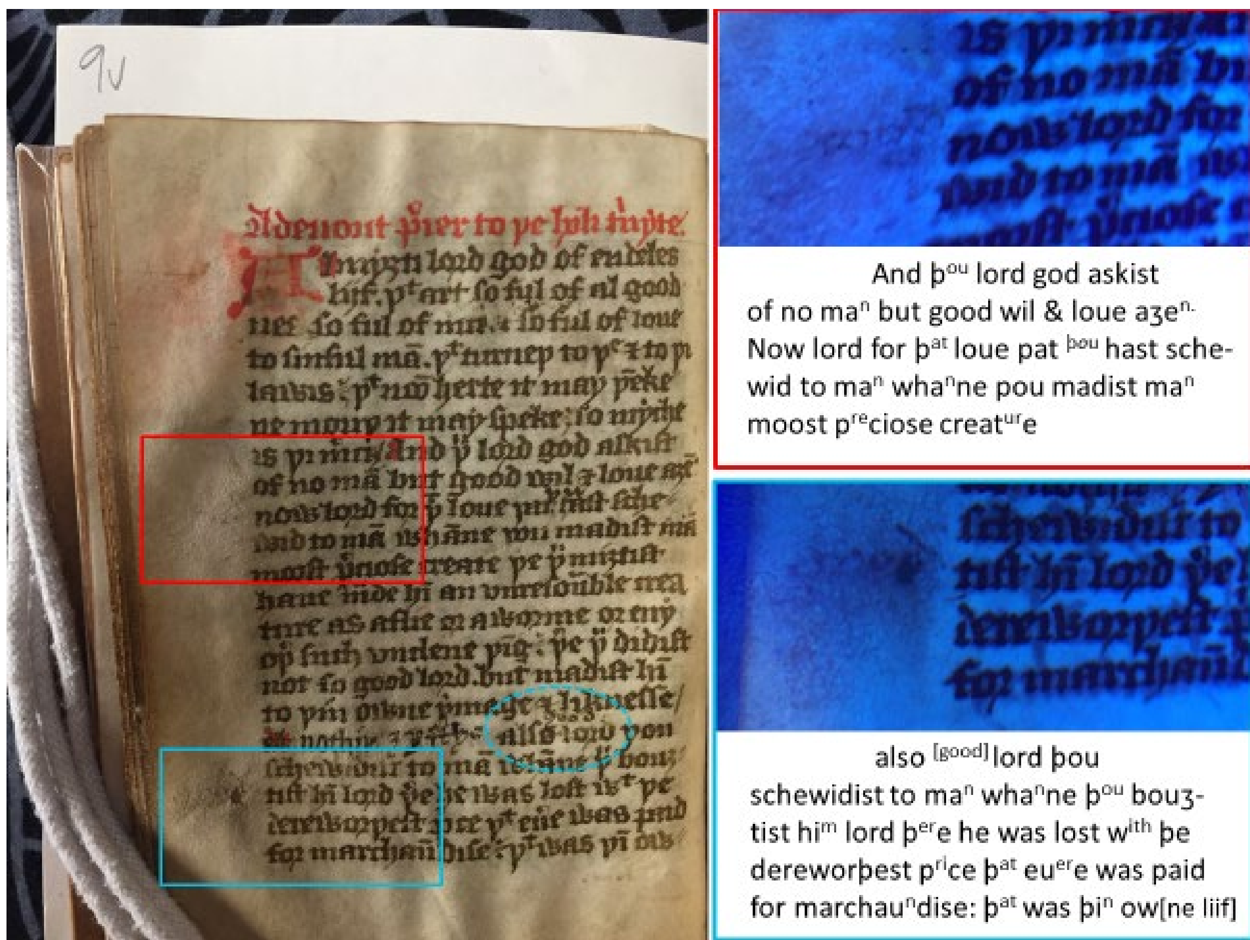


***Image 10*** *The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 9v. Images on right were taken under a hand-held UV light unit.*

(see Image 11). Perhaps the roughness of the parchment, or the width of the margins (just large enough for commentary), or the lack of existing commentary, or the text's references to flies and worms and the subsequent reminders of mortality, invited a deeply earnest, tactile engagement with the text.

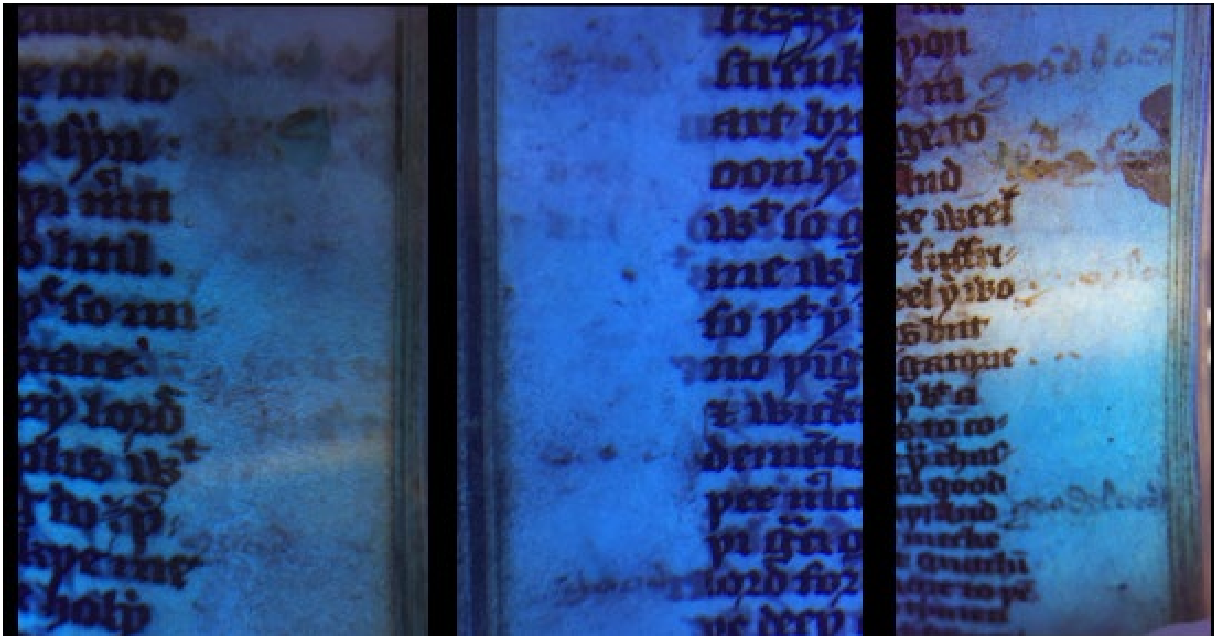

***Image 11*** *The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 10r, 10v, 11r. Images were taken under a hand-held UV light unit.*

Though we can never know what exactly prompted this reader (or, as I argue, these two readers) to write in the margins of this prayer, Harman's theory tells us that not being able to know something does not preclude us from intellectual play. In fact, sometimes it is the precise inability to know that makes intellectual work possible. We can agree that a poem's "true identity" or "true meaning" will never be fully excavated, so that poetry is a sort of inexhaustible resource for intellectual fuel. We have also agreed to try to treat all objects as such inexhaustible resources, and so imaginative play has become a valuable scholarly pursuit. Let's imagine, for a moment, what these moments of marking might have looked like. This query is a limited one; in fact, in Harman's model, all queries into objects are, by necessity, limited. But it is not the object

that is limited; it is our understanding of that object. "Praxis," he writes, "is not deep enough to do justice to objects, just as theory is not."[41] While this might cause one to despair, I see this as cause for hope, as it encourages the continual reinvestigation of objects. No investigation will ever, or could ever, deplete an object of its intellectual charge. Objects have infinite theoretical, practical potential.

This moment of "marking" is a moment of deep affect; as Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth write, affect is born out of the interaction between two bodies. In introducing affect theory, they ask, "How does a body, marked in its duration by these various encounters with mixed forces, come to shift its affections (its being-affected) into action (capacity to affect)?"[42] I would like to pose a hypothetical scenario—to tell a story about what might have happened to Illinois 80 and the reader who left these comments, to trace a possible trajectory of affections and actions which might proceed thus:

The reader, a "simple lettered man or woman," if Illinois 80's introductory remarks were followed, picks up the book and pages to the beginning of the prayer. She reads the prayer, holding the small book close to her so as to better decipher the small writing. Moved by the goodness of the God that is presented in the prayer, and feeling invited to participate in His creative work by the imaginative language, she reflects continuously on the goodness of God, and is moved by Christ's willingness to suffer in the ways the prayer outlines. What of the Holy Spirit, she might wonder? Where is the Holy Spirit in this prayer about the Trinity? She thinks of mystical texts she has heard read aloud, or has herself read, and wonders if this phrase that keeps occurring to her—"good lord"—is from the Holy Spirit. The book's margins are bare, and in those spaces she sees a space for her, for her thoughts to inhabit, for the Holy Spirit to dwell on

[41] Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 51–52.
[42] Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.

the page. She thinks about this as she continues her day, with the book tucked into her purse. The book is close to her, the prayer a part of her thoughts.

She reads it again later, and is once again moved. Her body and the book's body together have created this moment of action. She sees the word "lord" and her soul says, "good." She writes "good" in the margins next to the word "lord" and it feels correct for this second skin to bear the marks of her thoughts. She writes "good" wherever she sees "lord" mentioned in the prayer. She writes "good lord" again and again, recording the presence of the Holy Spirit, completing the Trinity of the prayer. She marks the body of the book to make tangible the mark of the prayer on her. The prayer becomes a favorite, one that she thinks of regularly, and this book, which itself was once bare parchment and was marked by words, which was once affected and is now affecting, records in its margins the moment when she was affected by it, marks the moment when she had the capacity to affect in turn.

A later owner inherits the book, reads the prayer, and sees her comments. He reads the prayer aloud to his family in the evenings, but he sees the marginalia and wants to communicate the depths of the goodness of the lord in these prayers that he can see marked in the margins. He adds the word "o" in a heavily inked hand, a reminder to him that when he reads this prayer, he would like to say "O My Lord," adding a depth of devotion that better reflects the emotional content of the prayer and the marginalia together, which have come to seem a complete unit (see Image 12). The manuscript's pages now hold a chain of affections and actions, and while the object of the manuscript has been altered, it still remains itself, carrying within it the combined desires of scribes, priests, laypeople; the echoes of older Latin prayerbooks; the slaughter of cows and the stretching and scraping of their skins; the later scrapings of a correcting pen; the

oils from so many hands medieval and modern. Additional 10596 carries some of these things, too, though its margins remain bare. We can imagine a different sort of reader for this book; we

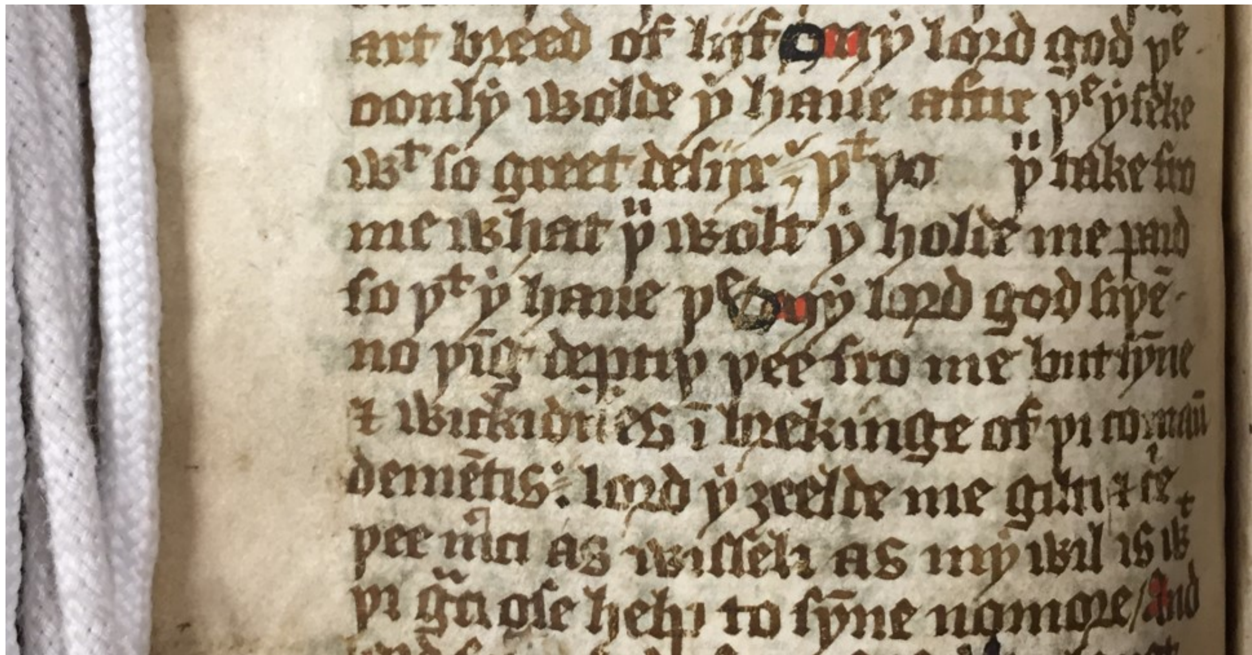

*Image 12* The Rare Book and Manuscript Library University of Illinois Pre-1650 MS 0080 fol. 10v.

can even imagine its being not-read, as it has been shelved for most of its existence, and think through what the life of a book in a temperature-controlled and carefully secured rare book collection might look like. Its life is certainly heavily mediated at this point in its history, and while its material affordances remain mostly the same, human interest in its contents has shifted. Additional 10596 demonstrates another possibility for the ways in which a Simple Book is used and was used.

### When is a Book not Simple?

When writing about how one might "do" object-oriented literary criticism, Harman offered that, "while many of the literary methods recommended by object-oriented criticism might already

exist," he had some of his own to propose. His suggestions are unconventional, such as asking the critic to

> try to show how each text resists internal holism by attempting various *modifications* of these texts and seeing what happens. Instead of just writing about *Moby-Dick*, why not try shortening it to various degrees in order to discover the point at which it ceases to sound like *Moby-Dick*? Why not imagine it lengthened even further, or told by a third-person narrator rather than by Ishmael, or involving a cruise in the opposite direction around the globe? Why not consider a scenario under which *Pride and Prejudice* were set in upscale Parisian neighborhoods rather than rural England—could such a text plausibly still be *Pride and Prejudice*? Why not imagine that a letter by Shelley was actually written by Nietzsche, and consider the resulting consequences and *lack* of consequences?

By decontextualizing, Harman argues, a text can once again be treated as an object in its own right rather than a product of its times and maker. While there is certainly some value to this, my goal is not to decontextualize per se, but rather to explore what happens when certain features of the Simple Book are altered. As Harman questions above, just when does an object stop being itself? What happens when a manuscript conforms to all features except size? or script? or layout?; what if the margins are tight, with each page fitting 30 lines of text rather than 16-26? In considering these questions, I compiled a second list of manuscripts, encountered in my search for Simple Books, that I titled "outliers." These were manuscripts that, in my estimation, veered too far from the group of manuscripts that was generated by my Illinois 80 comparanda search. While each Simple Book has its own affect, Simple Books as a whole share a certain "feel" that is a product of the sum of their qualities, and these "outlier" manuscripts aren't necessarily *not* Simple Books—situated at the borders of this format, these manuscripts will seem to "feel" more

like Simple Books to some viewers than to others. Their identity is therefore precarious, and by examining why they arguably do not fit, the category itself becomes clearer.

Some of the Simple Book outliers have slightly smaller margins, or more lines of text per page. As with the example of Illinois 80, the wide margins of the Simple Book encourage readers to see a space for themselves; that is, with only scant authorities listed in the margins (compared to, say, a university text), readers are free to imagine their own connections as inhabiting that space, and some did indeed add their own thoughts and emotional reactions to the text in the margins. Some readers may also see the open margins in terms of lack—they lack the beautiful illustrations of the Books of Hours—and could interpret that in a variety of ways. This lack might be read as a move toward simplicity and away from showiness, and therefore more truly devotional, or it could be a reminder of the book-owner's limited economic means. Smaller margins, or more text crammed onto one page, create a different affect, one that would encourage different behaviors and elicit different thoughts.

Page size is perhaps the easiest place to begin looking at how these differences might become significant. Take, for example, Lambeth 472. In many respects, it fits into the Simple Book category. Compared to Harley 2336, which is the median sized Simple Book, the hand is just as inconsistent in its quadrangular execution of Gothic script, straddling the line somewhere between Anglicana and textualis. Lambeth 472 folio 7v includes some executions of the letter *d*, for example, in which the letter is composed of almost all straight lines (line 7, first *d* in "deemyd"), though in that same word, the final *d* is much more curved. Harley 2336 is generally sloppier, but the hand includes more of an overall quadrangular attempt, as seen on the minims on most descenders on line 10. Generally speaking, the two scripts are similarly inconsistent in their attempt to replicate textualis-grade writing. Lambeth 472's margins are quite spacious with

minimal references, the layout is in a single column and is therefore easy to follow, it includes around 20 lines of text per page, and its contents (all works by Hilton, including *Eight Chapters on Perfection* as found in Simple Book Harley 993) are also akin to those found in Simple Books. It is also a Common Profit book, as are three other Simple Books.[43] This makes the book one that is marked by portability; the common profit colophon explicitly instructs owners to pass the book on after death and to lend it out when not in active use (see Images 13 and 14). The primary notable point of deviation from the Simple Book form is its size. At approximately

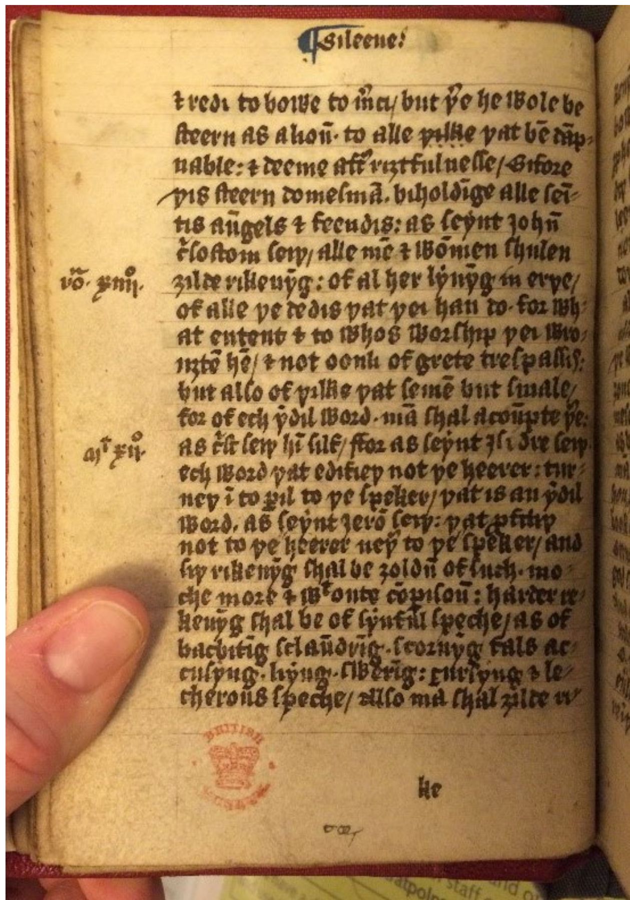

***Image 13*** *© British Library Board Harley 2336 fol. 8r*

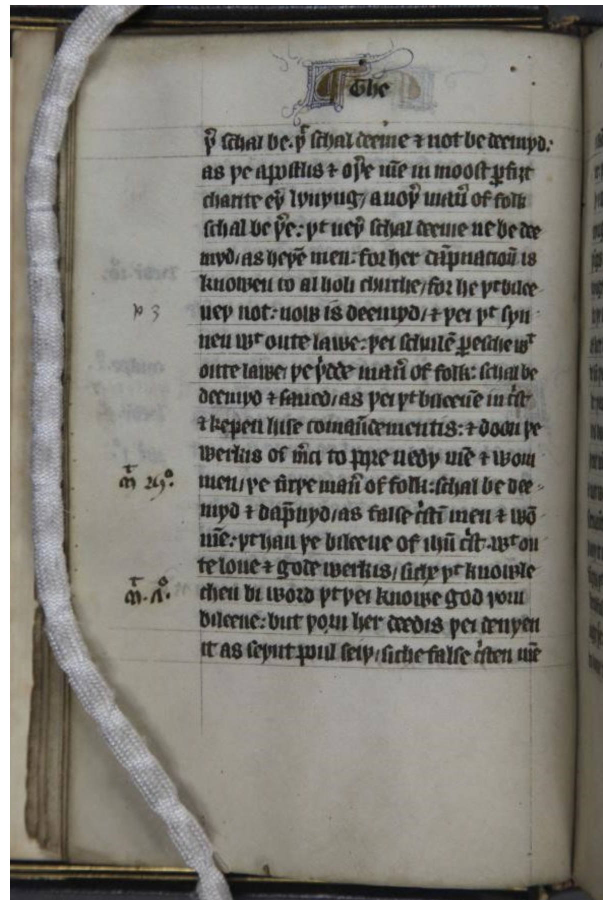

***Image 14*** *(with many thanks to) Lambeth Palace Library MS 472 fol. 7v*

[43] These books include a colophon that instructs readers to use the book's prayers for the benefit of the benefactor whose estate paid for the book's construction, as well as for their own benefit. The book should be passed on when the reader is finished with it, so that the prayers may continue to bless the benefactor and his family. There is some variation in this wording, but all colophons contain these essentials as well as the declaration that these books were made for "a comyn profite."

200mm x 145mm, Lambeth 472 outsizes Harley 2336 (145mm x 100mm) by 55 and 45 (approximately two inches) in height and width. While Harley 2336, when held open, measures about eight inches across, or nearly the width of American letter-sized paper (a size that is comfortably held in one hand), Lambeth 472 opens up to an eleven and a half inch spread. Some readers would be able to comfortably hold this book open with one hand while others would require two. This difference of a few inches would determine the circumstances in which one could read the book, since one hand could be occupied with book-holding and the other in, say, holding a child, or eating an apple. The smaller the book, logic dictates, the more easily it can be slipped into a handy bag or purse, or carried inside a sleeve. Though not many bindings have survived, garter books were small books whose leather bindings acted as a sort of bag or sack, so that the book could be hung from a belt or slung over the shoulder. The height range for a Simple Book is from 115mm to 165mm, and garter books similarly ranged from 90mm to 160mm in height.[44] While it is possible that Simple Books were originally garter books, there is insufficient evidence to make such an argument. However, their size ranges overlap, and this certainly argues for the Simple Book's potential for easy mobility.

Portability is not the only concern for book makers. As Andrew Taylor makes clear, sometimes books took on their distinctive shapes for practical, pragmatic reasons; the so-called "holster book," for instance, was perhaps not made explicitly to fit into a holster, and its long thin pages made it suitable for accounting, "since it allowed long lists of payments to be drawn up one item per line without wasting paper or parchment. In fact, the format was so convenient that books of this kind were prepared in advance and sold as blank copybooks."[45] While it is certainly true that the shape of a book dictated the way it could be used, the reverse is also true,

[44] Smith and Bloxam, "The Medieval Girdle Book Project," 19.
[45] Taylor, "The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript," 58.

so that the book's intended use determined how to best make use of the materials required for that book's manufacture. From an object-oriented perspective, this question does less to determine the book's value or worth than it might from a book history perspective; regardless of what the bookmaker and/or scribe intended, here is the book, and its shape makes mobility more possible than a book twice its size.

Mobility is a legitimate aspect of the Simple Book format, as it is closely associated with another category of books which was constructed with the intent to travel—the Common Profit book. Of the fourteen Simple Books identified to date, three contain a colophon which places them in the category of Common Profit manuscripts—three of five such manuscripts known to survive. The other two common profit books are near outliers, as both are written in much smoother scripts that do not seek to emulate Textura and one is much larger than a Simple Book. Common Profit books receive their title based on their colophons which tell the books' origin (a wealthy donor provides the funds necessary to produce the book), provide instruction for how the book is to be used (the prayers within are to be said for the reader's own benefit as well as for the wealthy donor and his family), and how the book is to be passed on (from person to person, with each ensuring that they use it frequently while they have possession of it). The "common profit" colophons, so-called because of the use of that phrase in every such colophon, do not offer much variance from manuscript to manuscript, with each providing the same basic information. Harley 993's colophon, for instance, reads:

> This book was maad of þe goodis of Robert Holond for a comyn p*ro*fite þ*at* þat p*er*soone þat haþ þis book co*m*mittid to hi*m* of þe p*er*soone þ*at* haþ pow*er* to committe it; haue þe uss þ*er*of þe terme of his lijf, p*re*yinge for the soule of the same Robert. And þ*at* he þat haþ þe forseid uss of co*m*missiou*n* wha*n*ne he occupieþ it not; leeue he it for atyme to

su*m* oþ*ir* p*er*soone. Also þat p*er*soon to whom it was co*m*mittid for þe teerme of lijf; vndir þe forseid condicion*n*s deliu*er*e it to a noþ*ir* p*er*soone þe teerme of his lijf; And so be it deliu*er*ed & co*m*mittid fro*m* p*er*soone to persoone man or wo*m*man as longe as þe book enduriþ

[This book was made of the goods of Robert Holond for a common profit, so that the person that has this book committed to him, by the person that has power to commit it, has the use thereof for the term of his life, praying for the soul of the same Robert. He that has this aforesaid use of commission, when he occupies it not, let him lend it for a time to some other person. He to whom this book was committed for the term of life, under the aforesaid conditions, shall deliver it to another for the term of *his* life, and so it will be delivered and committed from person to person, man or woman, as long as the book endures.]

It is identical, except for the name John Gamalinn, to the colophon in Harley 2336. The colophon reads as a legal formula, and yet, through its dry language, it remains compatible with the overall welcoming feel of the Simple Book. It is inclusive of female readers as well as male, and its openness to female readers is coupled with instructions for giving the book to future readers, ensuring that female readers are not forgotten when the time comes to pass it on despite the colophon's masculine pronouns. Provided the book's temporary owner uses it frequently, and uses it for the benefit of the donor as well as for him or herself, there is no reason to fear that the book will be taken away, even though it is not truly "owned" by that reader but is instead granted to the common profit. Both Harley 993 and 2336 are Simple Books, as is one section of quires of CUL Ff.6.31, whereas common profit Douce 25, also a small volume at 127mm by 95mm, is written in a distinctly rounded bastard Anglicana. Common profit Lambeth 472 is a bit on the

large side at 200mm high, and throughout its hand retains some of the features of a textualis look—the minims are fairly straight, with a few slight attempts at quadrangular feet here and there.

There is, therefore, a slight overlap between the Simple Book format and the common profit book scheme, and this suggests a few parallels between the two types of books. The readers of both were literate in English, reading for a devotional purpose, and were presumably interested in or receptive to a didactic approach to devotional literature. Simple Book introductions describe their readers as simple and eagerly receptive to devotional content, and the common profit book scheme suggests some economic limitations (which may or may not be the same sort of "simple" as our books' introductions intend) while they attempt to ensure a continual positive reception of their contents. Both categories of books share, too, a sense of mobility; that is, Simple Books lend themselves well to travel, while common profit books are made to be given from person to person. While Simple Books and common profit books are each discrete genres with some overlap, both book genres encourage readers to make regular, committed use of their devotional contents. Common profit books can rely on their colophon to provide explicit instruction, whether or not it was followed, while Simple Books rely primarily on their material affordances to encourage desired reader engagement.

**Conclusion**

The Simple Book as a genre is borne of each Simple Book's material facts. It is also grounded in the multiple, perhaps infinite, interactions that exist between each Simple Book's individual qualities as well as the interactions between one Simple Book and another. Lastly, the Simple Book is in part defined by the interactions that occur between Simple Books, both individually

and as a genre, and external objects, such as readers. We have examined the various material facts of the genre, as well as some material facts of a few specific Simple Books, and we have imagined the lively interactions possible between a few Simple Books and their readers. What then can be said about the potential interactions between the Simple Book genre and the humans who have come in contact with it? That is, what might a reader expect when they pick up any Simple Book? If all Simple Books were to be shown collectively in an exhibit, what might that exhibit highlight?

As a whole, and at their core, Simple Books encourage daily, active, reverent use. Their small size makes them both mobile and intimate. Their sturdy, smooth parchment is strong enough to be handled daily yet nice enough to be appreciated and kept in good working order. They provide finding aids, yet they don't crowd the margins with references. The remnants of craftsmanship, such as prick marks and ruling lines, show the labor behind their creation while not distracting from the text. Their simple one-column layout and clean, open Gothic-leaning scripts both make for an easy reading experience while visually echoing deluxe psalters. Everything about the Simple Book encourages the reader to make good, purposeful use of its content.

Of the Simple Book texts, one in particular—a tract from the *Pore Caitif* compilation—exemplifies the book genre's twin goals of reverence and usefulness. Appearing in eight of our fourteen manuscripts, *The Chartre of Oure Heuenli Eritage* compares Christ's sacrifice with the writing of a legal charter. Christ's crucified body, his flayed flesh, is the writing support upon which, in Christ's blood, mankind's salvation is writ large. In making this analogy, the text provides a level of descriptive language uncharacteristic of most Simple Book texts, which tend toward fairly generic prayerful language of supplication and gratitude. In this tract, the writing

process is described in vivid terms, down to the origin of the "wax" that creates the charter's elaborate seal. In describing Christ's body as a text, this tract plays on the concept of the corpus, emphasizing the essential connection between book and content, between Simple Book genre and Simple Book text.

In the tract's prologue, its purpose—to be put to careful, essential use—becomes immediately apparent. Addressed to "EV*er*i wise man þat cleymeþ his eritage, eþ*ir* askiþ greet p*ar*doun," the text anticipates a dignified reception, one where reader and text each acknowledge the wisdom and solemnity of the other.[46] These wise, self-preserving men are those who put the text to use, who "kepiþ bisili *and* haþ ofte mynde vpo*n* þe chartre of his chalenge. And þ*er*fore ech man lerne to lyue v*er*tuousli, *and* keep *and* haue mynde upon þe chartre of heuene blis, *and* studie stidfastli þe witt of þis bulle; for þe p*ar*dou*n* þ*er*of shal dure w*ith*oute eende."[47] If you are savvy, the text suggests, you work toward understanding the contract that ensures your salvation, keeping it in mind and studying steadfastly. Although the following analogy makes explicit that this work is tangible, we see a suggestion of the physicality of this mental work with the suggestion to "keep *and* haue mynde vpo*n*" the charter, treating intellectual labor as a tactile entity to be held.

As the tract explains that this bull, this charter of inheritance, is "oure lord ih*es*u c*ri*st, writu*n* w*ith* al þe myȝt *and* v*er*tu of god," a detailed parallel of manufacture—a standard charter on the one hand and this heavenly charter of Christ's body on the other—highlights the tangible reality, the object-like quality, of one of Christendom's central mysteries. While standard parchment is "so soore *and* hard streyned on þe tenture eþ*ir* harwe of ony p*ar*chemyn maker,"

[46] "every wise man that claims his heritage or asks for great pardon"
[47] Harley 2336 fol. 86r. "keep busily [in mind] and have often their minds upon the charter of this challenge. And therefore, each man [should] learn to live virtuously, and keep and have in mind the charter of heavenly bliss, and study steadfastly the wisdom of this bull, for its pardon endures without end."

Christ's body was even more brutally "streyned *and* drawu*n* vpo*n* þe gibat of þe cros."[48] Never did so hard and hideous a pen write so bitterly, so sore, and so deep, upon sheep or calves' skin, as wrote hard nails, sharp spears, and sore pricking thorns upon the blessed body and sweet skin of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each of Christ's wounds (5,475 wounds in total) equals a letter on the heavenly charter. The two laces that bind the charter, each representing contractual expectations between man or woman and God, are sealed not by wax but by Christ's blood, gathered from the cleanest drop of blood in the sweetest virgin, which excels any wax gathered from flowers in a field. Lastly, unlike any other charter or text, this heavenly charter cannot be destroyed, and its promise is eternal. In the course of this analogy, a few other parallels are drawn, one which describes Jesus's body as the coffer which houses all the treasure of God's wit and wisdom, and another which compares Christ's wounds to medicine and health.

It is telling that this tract, which so vividly highlights the tangible nature of man's salvation through Christ's sacrifice, does so through the narration of book construction. Moreover, this tract is it is well-represented among Simple Books and near outliers. Simple Books urge their contents be used, so that their readers can better understand their gift from, and debt to, God. Because this task is the most crucial undertaking of their readers' lives, Simple Books are constructed to help their readers take this work on with care, inviting their use. This invitation isn't purely created by literary narrative; rather, the Simple Book as a genre is composed of its unique combination of physical traits. By thinking in terms of the corpus, with its overlapping meanings of "body," "book," and "contents," and by utilizing the specific terminology of book manufacturing, this tract reiterates the centrality of the physical fact of the book to a reader's devotional life.

[48] Harley 2336 fol. 86v. "so sorely, so hard-strained on the tenter or harrow of any parchment maker… strained and drawn upon the gibbet of the cross."

## CHAPTER 2: THE *PORE CAITIF*, AUTHORSHIP, AND THE PROBLEM OF NAMES

The page transmits ideas, of course, but more significantly influences meaning by its distinctive embodiment of those ideas. Discernible in this embodiment is an ongoing conversation between designers and readers. As writers, artists, translators, scribes, printers, booksellers, librarians, and readers configure and revise the page, in each case they leave redolent clues about how the page matters to them and how they wish it to matter to others. The architecture of the page is thus a complex and responsive entanglement of platform, text, image, graphic markings, and blank space. The page hosts a changing interplay of form and content, of message and medium, of the conceptual and physical, and this shifting tension is vital to the ability of the page to remain persuasive through time.

Bonnie Mak, *How the Page Matters*, 5

While the previous chapter focused entirely on the physicality of the Simple Book format, this chapter will focus instead on its textuality. When we talk about a Simple Book, we now know what sort of physical features we will encounter and what those features make possible for the book's users. We can now examine the texts that are embraced by the Simple Book format, in order to see in which ways these texts relate to their physical housing. Simple Books do not rely on a standard set of titles, as each Simple Book contains its own unique set of devotional material. What unifies the Simple Book textual corpus is the spirit in which these texts were compiled—each Simple Book offers its readers a unique, cohesive, devotional "program" composed of prayers, meditations, and other tracts of a religious or spiritual nature.

While no two Simple Books contain identical texts, the *Pore Caitif* is an oft-repeated text, occurring in nine of the fourteen Simple Books I have discovered to date. Conversely, the material format of the Simple Book seems to be a particularly popular choice for the *Pore Caitif*; many *Pore Caitif* manuscripts resemble Simple Books, with some variations (*Pore Caitif* manuscripts are often a bit larger than the Simple Book, for instance). This presents us with a puzzle—if Simple Books don't tend toward repeated contents, why do over half of our Simple

Books contain this particular text? Why, too, do so many *Pore Caitif* manuscripts take on, either entirely or in part, the Simple Book format? Answering these questions may lead us to understand the relationship between the materiality and textuality of the Simple Book. In part, the *Pore Caitif*'s attitudes toward its potential readers, toward authority and authorship, and its notions of textual cohesion reflect the sort of openness and ease of use we saw in the Simple Book format itself. Simple Book texts as a whole share the *Pore Caitif*'s preference for a compilatory textuality that is disinterested in authorship as well as this work's careful concern that readers interact appropriately with the text. All Simple Book texts reflect this preference for compilation, finding didactic and spiritual value in textual anonymity and a piecemeal, anthologizing approach to authorship.

What processes might have motivated this collaboration between text and format? One way to approach this question is to start by investigating book production practices. Of our Simple Books that contain parts or all of the *Pore Caitif*, we know the most about Harley 2336's creation. A common profit book, Harley 2336 was commissioned by a certain John Gamalin for the "comyn profite" of whoever read it.[49] John Gamalin and John Colop both helped execute the will of a John Sudbury, and John Colop features prominently in the manufacture and dissemination of common profit books, as his "goods were used to make CUL MS Ff.vi.31" and can be linked to "three more of the manuscripts of the [common profit] group."[50] Richard Colop, who could have been a son or nephew of John, was a text-writer, and it has been suggested that he used his connections to the London book trade to produce common profit books with the help of two executors of his will, bookbinder/stationer Peter Bylton of Paternoster Row and scribe

[49] Chapter 4 considers the relationships between the socio-politically weighted phrase "common profit" and the descriptor "simple."
[50] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books.'" For more information about the connections between these men, see Sargent, "London Manuscripts Reconsidered," 205–7.

John Taillour.[51] As a charitable production aimed at lay readers, rather than a scholastic or monastic production, the common profit book scheme was invested both in creating books which would be desirable to a wide range of readers and which would make the best use of the funds available.

We can imagine, then, one of our mid-fifteenth century London bookmakers looking at his materials—mid-grade parchment, basic ink colors, ready-made tools for pricking and ruling a single-column page—and thinking of the Simple Book format as a suitable one for the materials and time allowed. Perhaps the thought process was something along the lines of, "I have the materials and the time for a Simple Book, so which texts would be best suited to that format?" Perhaps he has several texts to choose from; if indeed all common profit books were made by this group of London bookmakers, that list of texts is fairly representative of popular devotional works, and heavy on those by Walter Hilton. One common profit manuscript alone, Lambeth 472, contains Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, *Mixed Life*, *Eight Chapters on Perfection* (which is also found in Harley 993, a Simple Book and Common Profit book), *Qui Habitat*, *Bonum Est Confiteri Domino*, and his *Commentary on the Benedictus*. Other texts include the anonymous *Speculum Ecclesie* (*Mirour of the Chirche*), *Pore Caitif*, *A Treatise on the Discretion of Spirits*; Richard Hampton's *Propur Wille*; and a series of shorter treatises. Not all of these were given titles; in fact, of the common profit manuscripts, Simple Book CUL MS Ff.6.31 best demonstrates the Simple Book tendency toward generic titles and a wide variety of texts. Its treatises cover topics such as the seven deadly sins, the reading of scripture, the sacraments, unfaithful priests, "iii dyuers þouȝts þat comen often to men and ask to know to wiþstonde þem," "how a man owiþ to have him in alle temptacions," and "foure errours whiche letten þe uerrey

[51] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books.'"

knowyng of holy writt." Our bookmakers, it seems, did not merely copy out a single exemplar when making common profit books. Instead, they selected texts that were well-suited to that particular mode of charitable giving; that is, they started with the format, then selected appropriate texts.

This model of construction—starting with the physical materials first, then seeing what kinds of texts are suitable for that sort of book—would have worked just as well for the making of any Simple Book, not just those that are also common profit books. Most Simple Books contain a range of devotional texts, and many are simply labeled "A Preier" or "A Meditacyoun," so there is little to no attachment to a specific author or to a named text. Some texts do appear more than once; as I describe in Chapter 1, both Illinois 80 and Additional 10596 share a prayer to the Trinity, and both Bodley 3 and Harley 2339 share the *Myrrour of Synners*. Drawing a wider circle to include near outliers of the Simple Book format—manuscripts which are slightly larger, or have a Bastard Anglicana hand which does not aim for a textualis look—reveals further overlapping contents, such as "Thre arowis that shal be shette on domesday" and a variety of texts by Richard Hampole. Because these texts are not titled and, more problematically, are not always "cohesive" (sometimes a meditation's introduction is borrowed from another text, for example), it is difficult to state exactly how many textual overlaps exist within this body of manuscripts. And, despite these few overlaps, most Simple Books contain prayers and meditations that don't appear in other manuscripts, Simple Book or not. This could perhaps indicate that Simple Books are comprised of textual anomalies—works which are not seen in any other manuscripts—although it is also possible that, because Simple Book texts repurpose portions of texts, such as taking the prologue of one text and using it to introduce

another, portions of their texts could exist in other manuscripts but in a form (and lacking distinguishing titles) that would make it difficult to find these places of overlap.

What unites Simple Book texts is this tendency toward the generic and the malleable. The *Pore Caitif* is itself a compilation, assembled by a self-described "*Pore Caitif*" for the devotional edification of "symple men and wymmen of good will." Its title is only given in some manuscripts. Harley 2322, for instance, does not include the traditionally granted title *Pore Caitif* and in fact provides an alternative title on 152r with the explicit "Here endith this blessed tretis, that is, counseylor of wrecchis." A prologue present in all Simple Book copies of the text, again excepting Harley 2322, provides a narrative explanation of the purpose of the text as well as the logic behind the order of the first several tracts.[52] The prologue does not include a table of contents, so the list I give below is a modern invention based on the "average" *Pore Caitif* manuscript:

1. The Crede
2. Prolog of the Heestis
3. Prolog of the Pater Noster
4. Counceil of Crist
5. Vertuous Pacience
6. Of Temptacioun
7. Chartre of Heuene
8. Of Goostli Bateile
9. The Name of Ihesu
10. The Loue of Ihesu

[52] Trivedi, "Traditionality and Difference: A Study of the Textual Traditions of the Pore Caitif," 37.

11. Of Verri Meeknes

12. The Effect of Wille

13. Actiif Liif and Contemplacioun

14. The Mirrour of Chastite[53]

From one manuscript to another, there is variation in the order of these tracts, the total number of tracts included, and even in the textual cohesion of each tract. In some manuscripts, the prologue is altered to reflect a different order or shorter selection of texts; while in others, two tracts might be collapsed into one. Such is the case for Simple Book Harley 2336, which groups together "Vertuous Pacience" and "Of Temptacioun" under the single rubric "Off Temptacioun." Harley 2336 likewise combines "The Name of Ihesu," "The Loue of Ihesu," and "Mekenes" into one tract titled "To Loue Ihesu."[54] Some manuscripts, such as Simple Book Rylands 85, include only a small selection of tracts (Rylands 85 only includes "Þe Chartir of Heuen"). Sometimes all of these variables are present within a single manuscript. Simple Book Harley 2322 interpolates lollard texts in between the tracts of its version of the *Pore Caitif*, and the tracts proceed in an order not duplicated in any other surviving copy. The manuscript opens not with the standard prologue but simply with the tract on the Pater Noster (typically the third tract), ending on folio 17v with this brief rubric: "Heere endiþ þe pater noster; and here bigynneþ þe aue maria. HEil marie ful of grace þe lord is with þee…" This text, a Wycliffite commentary on the Ave Maria, is then followed by tracts one and two—the creed and the ten commandments. After another seemingly Wycliffite tract, introduced as "Answeris to hem þat seien þat we schulde not speke of holy writ," the remaining tracts finish the manuscript. Bodley 3 also muddies the tidiness of the

[53] Brady, "The 'Pore Caitif': An Introductory Study," 532. Since "twenty-three MSs testify to an identical number of fourteen tracts, and to an identical order of those tracts," Sr. Brady argues that this list, based on Trinity College Cambridge MS 336, is representative.

[54] For more examples of textual variations, see Brady, 530–36.

*Pore Caitif's* contents; on the verso of folio 180, a table of contents lists both the *Mirror of Synners* and *Thre Arrowis* as tracts belonging to the *Pore Caitif* rather than separate texts.

This malleability of the *Pore Caitif*'s structure, which allows tracts to appear next to orthodox as well as potentially heterodox ideas, and allows them to appear in any number and order, is a reflection of other Simple Book texts as well. In fact, textual flexibility and compilation are at the core of how a Simple Book communicates and narrates its usefulness and trustworthiness. One of the *Pore Caitif* tracts, often titled "Actiif Liif and Contemplacioun," ends with a passage in which the narrator reassures his readers that the texts' ideas are not his own but come from holy scripture and church fathers. He couples this information about the texts' construction with this statement about his own status as sinner:

> Alle þese sente*n*cis bifor goi*n*ge I haue gederid of hooli writ *and* of dyu*er*se seyntis *and* doctours, *and* no þing of myn owne heed, to shewe to my pore briþ*er*en *and* sist*re*n what grace and loue þat oure god *ihesu* haþ shewed to soulis i*n* þis liif. For ech ma*n* shulde stie up fro oon to an oþ*ir*, as he is clepid of god; su*m* in hier, su*m* in lower, as he is ablid of god þ*er*to. But for I my silf, caitif *and* wrecche, v*n*worþi þoruȝ dyu*er*se sy*n*nes bifor don, bei*n*ge byneþe alle þese p*er*fit poi*n*tis, semy*n*ge to me as fer hens to heuene. þ*er*for I biseche alle þat reden eþ*ir* heere*n* þis tretis to p*re*ie for me to god, þ*at* he forȝyue me my sy*n*nes *and* q*ui*kene my soule w*ith* grace, of his heue*n*li tresour of loue. And alle we togidir do þanki*n*gis to þe hooli t*ri*nyte þ*at* þus graciously liȝtneþ þe soulis of deedli me*n* w*ith* bemys of his heue*n*li grace. Blessid be þe name of oure lord, i*n*to þe world of worldis, ame*n*. Amen.[55]

[55] Harley 2336 fol. 118r-v. All these preceding ideas (wisdoms) I have gathered from holy writ and from various saints and doctors, and nothing from my own head, to show my poor brothers and sisters the grace and love that

Here we see, all in one short passage, several ideas about authorship, readership, and devotional life converge. Textual authority is determined by the traditional quality of source material ("of hooli writ *and* of dyu*er*se seyntis *and* doctours") rather than the originality of the scribe ("no þing of myn owne heed"). Devotional material is intended to instruct its readers, and each reader must respond to the text according to his own abilities ("ech ma*n* shulde stie up fro oon to an oþ*ir*, as he is clepid of god"). Readers have many ways to access the text, whether "reden eþ*ir* heere*n*," so that readers could also be thought of as listeners participating in a communal devotional experience. While the reader or listener must work hard to pray for himself, he must also work to pray for the narrator, who is just as sinful as the reader/listener. The ultimate goal of all of this devotional work is for the soul to be resurrected or lightened by the trinity's gifts of love and grace (Jesus, God, and the Holy Trinity are all referenced here). This passage is a perfect illustration of how the Simple Book functions. It is a simple enough request—pray for me, too, because I am also imperfect—but it also summarizes the essential components that define the Simple Books' attitudes toward reader responsiveness and responsibility, authorship and textual compilation, and the complex layering of narrators/compilers and their relationships between one another and the reader/listener.

This chapter explores these essential defining features, using primarily the *Pore Caitif* to provide textual examples, since the *Pore Caitif* is so well-represented among Simple Books and their outliers. All Simple Book texts mirror the Simple Book format in their central aim: to be

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Jesus has shown to our souls in this life. For each man should climb up from one to another, as he is called upon by God; some will be higher, and some lower, as God has enabled him to go. But for me, caitiff and wretch, unworthy through various sins I have previously committed, being beneath all these perfect points, I seem to be so far from heaven. Therefore, I beseech all that read or hear this treatise to pray for me to God, that he forgive my sins and revive my soul with grace out of his heavenly store of love. And we all together do thank the holy trinity that graciously lightens the souls of dead men with these beams of heavenly grace. Blessed be the name of our Lord, into the world of worlds, Amen.

put to good, careful, reverent use. The simplicity of the book, both in format and in contents, is echoed in its descriptions and expectations of its readers, in the narrative voice that shapes the collection of texts, and in the way its texts are structured and presented. As readers are also frequently described as listeners, and as the narrator includes himself in the devotional practice of the reader/listener, Simple Books create a sense of shared devotional practice, one which echoes the sort of didactic rhetorical reading practice outlined in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*. This communal, simple, well-rounded devotion is at the heart of the Simple Book, so that types of texts are prized over specific titles and traditional but anonymous source materials over named authors. Because the tools we are accustomed to use in order to establish a book's textual authority—a recognizable title, a known author, an unabridged and variant-free edition—are unimportant for the Simple Book, the Simple Book challenges us to rethink our methods of establishing authority. From an author-privileged perspective, Simple Books appear as hodgepodge miscellanies of devotional texts, as poorly conceived anthologies by novice scribes who borrow a prologue here, a prayer there, and haphazardly apply titles without any regard for concordance with other texts. But to categorize the Simple Book as devotional miscellany is to entirely miss its purpose.[56] This chapter therefore closes with a consideration of how modern classifications convey values that are at odds with the Simple Book's contents, hitherto ascribing this essential and useful genre to oblivion.

**Simple Readers, Simple Narrators, Simple Text: How "Simple" Confers Authority**

How can devout lay readers trust that their reading will bring them closer to a godly life? Simple Books offer their readers several ways to determine their contents' legitimacy: structurally, the

[56] Chapter 3 explores how the category "devotional miscellany" is constructed in scholarship.

texts provide readers with an acceptably humble ethos to adopt; meanwhile, didactic language guides readers through both the reading process and the acts of prayer and meditation; the narrator figure presents himself as equal parts humble and knowledgeable, sinful and repentant; and the narrator, paratexts, and narrative structure emphasize that the texts' ideas are not the narrator's own inventions but rather the wisdom of the apostles, saints, and/or church fathers. Not only are these qualities incongruent with our "modern" reliance on named authors and titles, they also challenge what it means for a text to be cohesive or complete. Rather than asking what we modern (and even post-modern) readers consider to be the basic questions to ask in order to get to know a book—who wrote it? what is its title? is the text an original, complete work, or is it anthologized? —we are prompted by the Simple Book to ask different questions: can I trust what this book has to offer? are its ideas spiritually legitimate? is it structured in a way that will guide devotional study?

The Simple Book's primary goal is to answer to its readers' didactic needs, and it does so in a cohesive, well-orchestrated way, establishing itself as trustworthy. In order to understand the complex manner in which a Simple Book accomplishes this, we have to also understand the needs and expectations of its readers as the narrative constructs them. Oft-repeated in Simple Books and in many prologues to vernacular texts, the word "symple" represents a whole host of attitudes for reader and compiler alike. "Symple" occurs most significantly in the prologue to the *Pore Caitif*, where the compiler/narrator declares his intent to "teche symple me*n* & wy*m*men of good will þe riȝt weie to heuene" (Harley 2336, 1r). We see it as well in Illinois 80, when the compiler introduces the *Ars Moriendi* prayers by declaring their ability to "excite, stire, or induce symple lettred me*n* and wommen to v*er*tu" (1r). The reader of a Simple Book, as conceived by these prologues, is one who is eager to learn, who has a noble purpose behind her reading ("of

good will"), who needs reassurance that the text will indeed help her draw closer to God ("the right way to heaven"). Though her motives are pure, she sometimes needs encouragement, and these texts promise to help "excite, stir, or induce" her to virtuous behavior. Essential to this attitude is the descriptor "simple," yet uncovering this word's connotations within this context is a complex endeavor.

The phrase "symple lettred" was in use at least by the early thirteenth century, when Archbishop of Canterbury Edmund of Abingdon wrote his *Speculum Ecclesie*, a Latin treatise which was quite popular in both Anglo-Norman and English translations throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Edmund addresses his reader as "qui es simplicis litterature," and this phrase makes it into the English versions as "þou þat art of symple lettrure" ("you who are of simple letters").[57] Atsushi Iguchi proposes that this phrase, at least in its Middle English version, means "those who cannot read as proficiently as those lettered in Latin," and references the prologue to the Life of Saint Elizabeth of Spalbec, whose writer refers to himself as "symple-letterd, neiþer can ne purposis to folowe þe [Latin] words, but vnneþis and wiþ harde þe sens" ("simple-lettered, who cannot follow the proper function of the Latin words, only [following the] sense with great difficulty").[58] In 1281, Archbishop John Pecham of Canterbury wrote a series of constitutions and presented them at the Council of Lambeth. The ninth canon, titled *De informatione simplicium sacerdotum* ("information for priests of simple learning") and more commonly known as *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*, outlined the basic tenets of the Christian faith which even the most feeble-minded priests should know well. "'The ignorance of priests', declared Pecham, 'casts the people down into the ditch of error, and the foolishness and lack of

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[57] Atsushi Iguchi, "The Visibility of the Translator: The Speculum Ecclesie and The Mirror of Holy Church," *Neophilologus* 93, no. 3 (July 2009): 543.
[58] Iguchi, p. 543 n. 28.

learning of clerics, whom the decrees of canon law order to teach the sons of the faithful, is all the worse when it leads to error instead of knowledge.' His remedy for such ignorance was to require every parish priest to expound four times a year to his parishioners, in English, 'without any fancifully woven subtleties', the basic tenets of the Christian faith."[59] Here, the Latin "simplicium" is unequivocally equated with a faulty education, and the seven elements of his syllabus provide the inspiration for many of the religious texts found in devotional anthologies.

While some of the word's connotations of "ignorance" may have been attached to "symple" as it appears in vernacular religious texts for lay readers—these texts were, after all, loosely based on Pecham's syllabus—by the fifteenth century, "simplicity" had come to represent a positive quality rather than a deficiency. Readers who were described as "symple" approached their own spiritual growth with a Christlike humility. In his *Mirror,* for example, Nicholas Love describes his readers as being of "symple vndirstondyng," yet throughout his text he "upholds simplicity (along with poverty and 'homely' interaction) as a virtue… [so that] simplicity becomes part of an ethos rather than a limitation."[60] Similarly, Walter Hilton's *tretis of viij chapitres necessarie for men þat ȝiuen hem to perfection* (typically catalogued as *Eight Chapters on Perfection*), as performed in Simple Book Harley 993, presents simplicity as a Christlike, aspirational quality. The first two chapters ask readers to consider Christ's character and, in doing so, to submit their will to him. While Chapter 1 asks the reader to consider the active signs of living a life modeled on Christ (the three "wirkinges" of each of three "tokens of loue"), these visible signs begin with interior work, which is the contemplation of Christ. Since Christ is "symple and poore, meke and in dispite, þanne he þat loueþ coueiteþ to be vile, poore, and meke" (fol 1v; "simple and poor, meek and in disdain, so he who loves [him] desires to be

[59] Jones, "Literature of Religious Instruction," 408.
[60] Fitzgibbons, "Poverty, Dignity, and Lay Spirituality in 'Pore Caitif' and 'Jacob's Well,'" 236.

vile, poor, and meek"). Contemplation of the loved one quickly becomes a transformative act, so that contemplation leads to the physical manifestation of love. One who loves Christ, who meditates on Christ's character, will be known by his own meek simplicity. Christ's humility—his symple-ness—is emphasized again in Chapter 2, as readers learn to make the best of such tribulations as might occur during the occasional periods of life in which devotional dedication slackens. When such tribulations occur, the reader is to read of the life of Christ in the "book of liif," whose life was marked by "pouerte, mekenesse, sorwe, dispite, affliccion, and sooþfast obedience" (fol 4r-v; "poverty, meekness, sorrow, disdain, affliction, and genuine obedience"). If such meditations further draw the reader to despair, praying will lead Christ to "send þee help and confort" (4v). In both cases, the text highlights Christ's alienation from elite society, marking him as a simple and humble figure. It is his humility, his "sooþfast obedience" to God's plan in the face of his social standing, that makes him accessible to similarly-minded simple folk.

"Simple" in Hilton's text, and in Simple Book texts as a whole, also implies that the active reader is dedicated in his devotion. While Chapter 1's use of Christ's character encourages readers to endeavor to become Christlike in their own characters in order to draw closer to him in love, Chapter 2 encourages readers to consider Christ's suffering when their own motivation to draw close to him is low. A devout reader does more than contemplate Christ as a figure of love; he also engages openly and earnestly with Christ's suffering. If such remembrances cause him to feel overwhelmed by the world's torments and imperfections, Christ's love is the balm for such pain. The pursuit of perfection, in these terms, is really a pursuit not necessarily to be perfect in oneself, as that is not possible, nor is it to be in perfect union with Christ. Instead, a simple reader is one who is in a constant state of spiritual self-improvement through self-awareness, by continually focusing on the life and character of Christ, emulating Christ's qualities, and looking

out at the world through that figure of Christ, using him as a sort of filter through which potential pitfalls are made more clearly visible.

By using the word "symple," Simple Book texts indicate that they are for active readers, those who are responsible for their own devotion. These texts are trustworthy because they provide a legitimate, humble, reading experience for the reader, and they put the responsibility for the subsequent devotional labor onto the reader. The *Pore Caitif* accomplishes this by frequently encouraging its readers to meditate on meaningful truths; Fitzgibbons points to several instances in which the phrase "haue in mynde," the "most conspicuously recurrent phrase" in all of the *Pore Caitif*, is used to direct the readers' focus inward. Readers are to keep in mind Christ's passion (Harley 2336 fol. 9r), for instance, or to occupy their minds on the Sabbath with God's love and all the ways in which they have broken God's commands. The Sabbath is therefore made holier not just by attending mass but by spending the day in the proper mindset, one that is offered by the *Pore Caitif's* many helpful tracts, effectively allowing the reader "the opportunity to exist within God's own mental space."[61] As the prologue itself emphasizes, the reader must "bisie he*m* to haue it i*n* mynde & worche þ*er*aftir" before salvation can be achieved, and this work is done in the mind through the vehicle of the text.[62] This is not just a feature of the *Pore Caitif*; Bodley 3's version of the *Þre Arowis* is written for whoever will "haue in mynde þe dredful day [of] dome."[63] Rawlinson C.209's version of the prayer "O Bone Jesu" opens by identifying its readers as those who would earnestly follow their love for Christ, inviting them to have his name in their minds:

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[61] Fitzgibbons, 227, 228.

[62] BL Harley 2336 fol. 1r, emphasis mine; CUL Ff.6.55 fol. 4r has simply ""if þei wole*n* haue it in mynde & worche þeraftir"

[63] The full rubric reads, "Here sueth a tretijs of Þre Arowis that schulen be schote at Domysdai upon hem þat þer schulen be dampned"

> What so evir thow be that araiest y*e* to loue god, if thow wult not be dissauied, nothir dissayve; if thow wilt savoure and not faile; if thow wilt stande and not falle; studi thow besili to haue this name ihu in thy mynde, and if thow doste soo, thine enemy schal falle and thow shalte stande…[64]

"Having in mind" is more than holding a thought; it is active, participatory labor. Holding the name of Jesus in mind has a tangible consequence to the reader/haver-in-mind. Moreover, it is an action that does not come easily, just as the consequences (either you fall, or your enemy falls) are not light. One must not be easily dissuaded from this taxing mental labor. By placing responsibility on the reader, the text argues for its own authority by taking on a position of authority to assign such work.

If the reader's "simpleness" implies a dedication to developing a Christlike mindset, the narrator's simpleness likewise confers humility befitting a sympathetic, authoritative teacher. While "simple" was occasionally used to describe a teacher's limited capacities, as in Pecham's prologue to his syllabus, when applied to works of literature and to authors/compilers/translators, the word must be dealt with cautiously. We cannot place too much emphasis on the implication that "symple" conveys a lack of skill, as the prologues to medieval translations rely on the language of default to define the position of the translator: "In the language of prologues, translations are true, false, strange, clear, dark, light, common, plain; translators are rude, simple, busy, or lewd," where potentially negative terms rhetorically cast the translator and his work as reliable.[65] Being "simple," whether "simple lettered" or not, is a part of the translator's ethos, and the word becomes part of the terminology of translation. Medieval translators and authors alike would employ this word to describe not only their potential readership but also to describe

[64] Rawlinson C.209, fol. 23r.
[65] Watson, "Theories of Translation," 75.

themselves, as does the anonymous author of the fifteenth-century manual for priests self-titled *A Discourse Upon þe Constitution: Ignorancia Sacerdotum.* An explanation of Pecham's constitutions, the text offers priests practical ways to "instruct the people in the vulgar language simply," as the Constitutions require.[66] The author employs the standard humility topos, first calling himself "nameles" in deference to that "excellent *doctour* of bothe the lawes, Lyndewode, Bisshop of Seynt Dauid," and then explaining that he found the laws to be "diffuse, intricate with lawe, and hard of intellecte." Fearing the law to be too difficult for other priests, he defines both his audience and then himself in what seems to be something beyond, or perhaps something other than, his earlier humble posturing. Yes, part of his "simplicity" lies in his inability to understand complex written materials with ease, and so carries a sense of "uncomplicated." This material, he says, is nearly beyond comprehension "to suche symple lettred men, namely in lawe, as I am," so that when he later refers to his audience as "symple curates," it is clear that this is in no way a demeaning term. Rather, he sees this material as being unsuitable, as it is now written, for a great portion of its intended audience, and he can help remedy this problem; there may indeed be a veiled criticism of the academic nature of a text intended to help fill educational gaps in a presumably less academic audience's background. This word, "symple," functions to reinforce the author's humility while it also points to a potential limitation in skill that both roles, author and reader, share. By opening with intellectual deference to church leaders, then including himself "as I am" in the same category of "symple lettred men" as his readers, the author wraps his audience into his humility topos. When he instructs them to take "this rude werk made in oure modre tunge," from which ideas are "drawe[n] out of the seid glose and other werkes of hooli *doctours*," and "declare vnto theire parisshens the matieres

[66] Hodgson, "Ignorancia Sacerdotum: A Fifteenth-Century Discourse on the Lambeth Constitutions," 2.

conteyned in the seid constitucioun, in fulfillyng of þe charge leide vpon hem," he makes clear who simple lettered men are. They are priests, himself included, who may share limitations to their experiences with intellectually challenging texts, but who regardless, and more importantly, share a devotion to their work. "Symple" summarizes these characteristics.

Authors of textual compilation also call themselves "simple," or apply what we can think of as the "simple" topos, to themselves and their authorial process. The inclusion of the act of compilation in the idea of an appropriate "symple" ethos is an important one, and it is one that helps establish textual authority. Most famously, the writer of the Wycliffite Bible's General Prologue describes his authoring as both translation and compilation, and both activities require a simple humility:

> First, this sympel creature hadde myche travaile, with diverse felawis and helperis, to gedere manie elde Biblis, and othere doctouris and commune glosis, and to make oo Latyn Bible sumdel trewe… to counseile with elde gramariens and elde dyvynis of harde wordis and harde sentencis… to translate as cleerli as he coude to the sentence, and to have manie gode felawis and kunnynge at the correcting of the translacioun.[67]

The translator here is a "symple creature" who, despite the difficulty of his task, created the translation by referencing a great number of resources. While the self-named poor caitiff does not call himself "simple," his prologue echoes many of the sentiments of the Wycliffite prologue above:

[67] Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings*, 69–70. Notice here, too, the inclusion of the phrase "comoun profyt," which suggests a further relationship between the word "symple" and the common profit book scheme, several of which are Simple Books. This idea is explored in further detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

> This tretis, co*m*pilid of a pore caitif *and* nedi of goostli help of al c*ri*sten people, bi þe greet merci *and* help of god, shal teche symple me*n* *and* wy*m*men of good will þe riȝt weie to heuene, if þei wolen bisie he*m* to haue it in mynde *and* worche þ*e*raftir, without multiplicacioun of manye bookis.[68]

These authors position themselves as trustworthy by showing their dedication to a challenging, spiritually critical task, often using words such as "symple" or "pore" to indicate that their humility is a crucial aspect of their work. Their tasks are difficult, and the difficulty of their task asks us, rhetorically, to see the value of their work; they have done the legwork for the benefit of their readers, giving them the means to find "þe riȝt wey to heuene… wiþouten multiplicaciou*n* of manie bookis."[69] By highlighting this act of compilation, the narrator suggests that readers now have access to far more books (manie bookis!) than they might have on their own, and they need not worry that the material will be intellectually unsuitable for them, or that they will need to wade through a text full of subtle and therefore unreadable meanings. All manner of "symple" characteristics are drawn in here—humble, willing to learn (and, for authors, willing to teach), needing guidance, and perhaps too the sense that reader and sometimes writer are limited with their time, resources, and access to the tools available to their wealthier, more educated counterparts.

As the creators of Simple Book texts take on the role of educator, they instruct their readers how to interact with the text, often likening the readers' spiritual development to that of children. If Simple Book creators are benevolent, humble teachers, readers are placed in the position of children learning from a trustworthy adult. A few Simple Books may have in fact been intended for children; Rob Lutton suggests this might be true of Rawlinson C.209, and the

[68] Harley 2336 fol. 1r
[69] CUL Ff.6.55 fol. 4r

same is suspected of Westminster School MS 3, which is a near outlier of the Simple Book genre.[70] Even those manuscripts that weren't specifically designed for children tend to offer their readers this sort of student-like role. The author of the *Pore Caitif* prologue, for instance, likens his text to a primer: "as a child willynge to be a clerk bigy*n*neþ first at þe grou*n*d, þat is his abice, so he þis desiring to spede þe beter bigy*n*neþ at þe grou*n*d of helþe, þat is cristen ma*n*nes bileeue."[71] Just as children who will become clerks need to learn their alphabet, so too does the pious Christian man or woman need to learn the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Their access to spiritual content has been mediated, with selections carefully curated so they can be sure that only the most educational, most edifying portions have been presented to them, in a format that they will find most engaging. As Fitzgibbons notes, the poor caitiff "seeks to assemble a useful learning resource for his audience. He wants their minds not to take flights of fancy, but to read and reflect."[72] By highlighting the compilation process, authors/compilers/scribes, whose complex author-voice is explored in more depth below, create a didactic tone to their prologues that is echoed in the texts' structures and is reiterated throughout.

On a structural level, Simple Books' overarching didactic purpose lends them cohesion. In another seeming paradox, the Simple Books' textual malleability and piecemeal treatment of texts allows, even encourages, scribe-compilators to create a unified book. The didactic purposes of the text are highlighted by the Simple Book's streamlined finding aids and careful formatting. Although many texts aren't given clear titles, their openings are clearly marked. Bodley 3 and Harley 2336, for instance, provide an initial sentence or two in red ink that introduces their texts, then provide running titles in the header space of each folio. Illinois 80 and Rawlinson C.209

[70] Lutton, "'Love This Name That Is IHC': Vernacular Prayers, Hymns and Lyrics to the Holy Name of Jesus in Pre-Reformation England," 127.
[71] Harley 2336 fol. 1r
[72] Fitzgibbons, "Poverty, Dignity, and Lay Spirituality in 'Pore Caitif' and 'Jacob's Well,'" 229.

provide a brief, generic, rubricated title at a text's opening, although running titles are missing. Illinois 80 explicitly declares the intended function of these rubricated portions. Because the texts that follow come from a variety of important sources, the reader should take care to read attentively. Inattention can happen because of distractions: "Thei be not for to be red in noise but in oonlynes & qwietnes not liȝtli & curtauntly eiþer hastily, but litil & litil in greet abidinge & leiser & with greet entent of þe mynde." The overzealous reader, too, might decide to take on too much and therefore overtax their ability to attend to the text, so "Neiþer þo þat reden þis schulen not sette her ententis for to rede hem al ouer at oonis, but to take þerof so miche at oonys. as þei feelen þat wole availe hem with þe help of god." The prologue continues its helpful advice to its readers, who might feel compelled to read starting at the beginning and move progressively through the book. This is not so, the book argues; "Neiþer it neediþ not alweies to bigynne at þe bigynnynge her of, but þere as him best likiþ & haþ mooste deuocioun to rede." This, the book clarifies, is why the text has been thus arranged. In order for readers to read with the most devotion possible, the texts

> ben deuidid bi chapiters, þat þei mowe bigynne where hem list, & leue whanne hem list, by cause her redinge schulde not turne hem to noie or to werynes for to long redinge. But raþer þat þe reders schulden gadere & kepe þo þingis in mynde wherfore þei ben maad, þat is, to haue pitee of herte & wil to loue god & for to knowe hem silf.

Not only are the texts divided by chapters (that is, main thought units), they are clearly labeled so that readers can easily identify the portions of the texts they are most interested in reading. This is not necessarily to make the reading process pleasurable; the text is clear that the intent is to

provide tools so that the reader can be well prepared for the kind of mindset that these ideas require.

Most Simple Books' tools for finding relevant passages are embedded within the text in the form of rubricated titles and instructions. Harley 993 is the only Simple Book to provide a Table of Contents; folio 1r opens with an attractive table which uses colored inks to provide visual separation between chapter listings. It is also the only Simple Book which contains a titled text by a named author, the *Eight Chapters on Perfection* by Walter Hilton. Unlike the *Pore Caitif*, which is also composed of many parts, the *Eight Chapters* are explicit about their number of parts, as is made clear by the title. Thus, a Table of Contents makes sense, and although it is unique among Simple Books, the structure it provides reinforces the didactic tone that we should now expect from a Simple Book. The *Pore Caitif* is a more typical example, as it does not offer a table or a numbered list of tracts. Instead, the compiler provides a narrative that introduces the logical progression of the texts in the order in which they typically appear, indirectly employing a ladder metaphor to describe stepping up by rungs from the ground of belief. A narrative is no less "user-friendly" than a table, as the narrative gives its readers a framework that, much like the instructive preface in Illinois 80, teaches its readers how to navigate the text. A clerk, the *Pore Caitif* explains, must begin with the ABC's. A Christian therefore begins with the basic beliefs of the faith; that is, the Apostles' Creed (*Bileeue*). But, faith alone is not enough, so in order to do good works to support that faith, the reader next learns the Ten Commandments (*Heestis*). Only then can prayer be useful, so the pore caitif introduces the prayer that Christ used to teach his apostles how to pray—the Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*). The order of the following treatises doesn't seem to matter much, as they are introduced only as "short sentencis excitinge men to heuenli desiir." Though not explicitly stated, readers learn through these instructions how to read

the text, as they now understand when reading in order matters (the first three tracts) and when it does not (the remaining tracts). Didactic structure is provided within the tracts, too, and this is particularly true of the *Ten Heestis*. Each commandment is broken down into meaningful lessons and is introduced with formulaic language—"the third asking of the second part…" or "the fourth asking of the second part"—so that readers can clearly follow the text's logic. The narrator's voice is an unobtrusive, active guide throughout the prologue and within each tract.

Beyond these more obvious learning aids, the act of compilation itself plays an educational role. Compilation, as we see it in Simple Books, is more than a convenient means to create a compact, complete volume; it is a useful tool that elevates the narrator to an authoritative position while minimizing the narrator's presence. If active participation with a Simple Book enacts the book's authority, then it is the task of the narrative voice to facilitate active engagement, rather than obstructing it. Narrators must find a careful balance, guiding without interfering. In part, this is accomplished by using compilation as a means to establish authority—a move that allows the narrator to establish trust while fading into the woodwork. When the compiler of Illinois 80 writes that "these orisouns and þese meditaciouns þat folowen here ben in parti taken of seint austin, a p*ar*ti of sei*n*t ancelm, & a p*ar*ti of seint Bernard, & a p*ar*ti of oþ*er*e writingis," he assures his readers that they can engage with the text fully and actively without fear of committing heresy (12v). This move on the compiler-narrator's part fulfils two important functions: by declaring that he merely copied from portions of other writings, the compiler performs the expected humility ethos, as we discussed above with the significance of the word "simple," while also lending authority to the text. When he writes that the ideas within are not his own, he is emphasizing that they are not merely made up. Rather, they are carefully selected from writings by godly, holy writers—church fathers whose authority has been long-established.

The text of a Simple Book is authoritative *because* the scribe declares that he is a mere conduit through which authoritative writers’ ideas move. Moreover, he is a guide, aiding the reader to explore these writings by his side—after all, both reader and narrator are simple, sinful wretches.

Some Simple Books contain texts that minimize the scribe-compiler’s existence by providing very little to no direct narration of the book, erasing the narrator figure and relying instead on the Simple Book’s didactic structure for guidance. One example of this is Additional

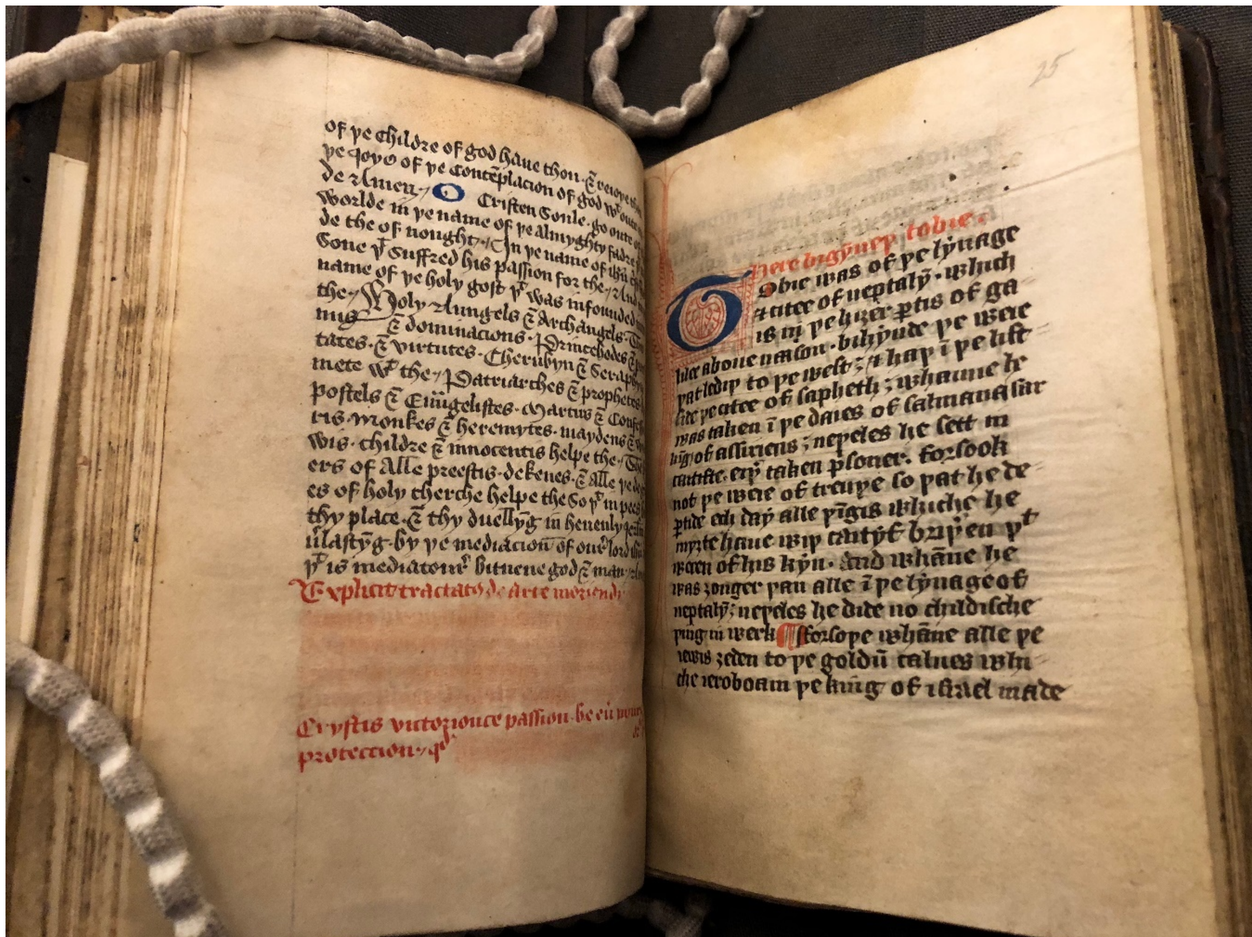


***Image 15*** *© British Library Board Additional 10596 24v-25r spread*

10596. This book, as well as CUL Ff.6.31, is only *half* Simple Book. The first few booklets of each manuscript are similarly sized but contain more lines of text per page and do not show the same careful textualis-leaning script that is a hallmark Simple Book feature. While the shift is

subtle, the overall affect of folios 1-24 is one that would have felt more contemporary to fifteenth century readers, whereas the book beginning from 25r has the tell-tale old-book look that Simple Books share (see Image 15). The first few pages of Additional 10596 even contain gold-embossed initials and an illustration. A. I. Doyle writes that the first half was "copied by a Dominican, it seems, and therefore possibly for nuns of the same order… the second, extracts of Scripture, meditations and prayers in English, [was] apparently written by or for one nun of Barking and owned afterwards by another one or more."[73] In this second half, each of the texts is briefly rubricated at the beginning with very clear, simple titles. The one scriptural extract, the story of Tobie (typically spelled "Tobias" or "Tobit"), is simply introduced with "Here bigy*n*neþ tobie" (25r). As with other Simple Books, such as Illinois 80, each new portion of the tale is marked by filling in the holes of box-shaped A with red ink. Following the story of Tobias, the text introduces the Magnificat with the phrase, "Magnificat a*nim*a mea d*ominu*m *et exultavit*," underlined in red, then proceeds with the Magnificat in English (47v). This pattern continues throughout the rest of the manuscript, so that the book becomes very much a resource text whose narrator-voice is buried in the structure of the text. It retains the features that other Simple Books make explicit—it is a compilation, it is simple to use, it is easy to select which passages one might want to read—while not providing the narrative instructions for how to make best use of these features. By erasing the narrator voice, however, this Simple Book, too, communicates that its authority rests not in the creator of the book but in the textual selections presented within.

As was true of the Simple Book's physical format, its textual format obscures those features which serve as primary finding aids in modern scholarship—the titles of texts and the names of authors. Even the *Pore Caitif*, which is generally catalogued with a title, is not always

[73] Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family and Barking Abbey," 233.

named in its manuscripts. Some books, such as Trinity College Library MS B.14.53, introduce the text as "þe prolog of a tretis þat is clepid þe Pore Caitif" (fol. 1r). However, other manuscripts follow a looser structure as does Simple Book Harley 953, which begins directly with the prologue, so that the first Harley cataloguer lists this text as "A Treatise concerning Faith, with an Explication of the Apostles Creed," parenthetically querying "if this be that called the Poor Caytif, or Pauper Rusticus, ascribed by Dr. Cave to John Wicclif."[74] Aside from the self-descriptor "pore caitif," nothing is known about the author of the text, but undoubtedly the similarities between the *Pore Caitif*'s prologue to that of the Wycliffite Bible must have influenced Dr. Cave's decision. Unable to resist the appeal of a potential authorial identity, cataloguers first named the text as Wycliffe's. Later cataloguers listed it as "falsely ascribed," so that the text remains defined by its *lack* of relation to Wycliffe.

The concern over named authors and titled texts is a primary point of dissonance between modern conceptions of medieval texts and the evidence we see within actual manuscripts, and this is true for roughly half of the texts found in Simple Books. Illinois 80, BL Additional 10596, Bodleian Rawlinson C.209, and Harley 2339 are all collections of primarily prayers, treatises, and meditations presented with neither title nor authorship, and when titles are present, they are generic offerings such as "A Preier" or a brief descriptor like "Here sueþ declaracioun of þe pater Noster." Titles are often delivered in a longer, narrative form, such as "Here sueth a tretijs of Thre Arowis that schulen be schote at Domysdai upon hem that ther schulen be dampned." Sometimes the text is simply introduced in a prologue, so that no discernible title emerges. The *Pore Caitif,* for instance, often opens with the text's general prologue, which introduces the text simply as a "tretis compilid of a pore caitif and nedi of goostli help of al cristen people," from

[74] *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts, in the British Museum. With Indexes of Persons, Places, and Matters*, 1:481. Sr. Mary Teresa Brady mentions this entry in her dissertation, "The '*Pore Caitif*': An Introductory Study," xvii.

which cataloguers would pull "Pore Caitif" as their catalogue entry.[75] Authorship is similarly veiled, for the explicit rhetorical function discussed above, and even source materials are not explicitly cited. Illinois 80's "orisouns and… meditaciouns" tauntingly opens with a list of potential source authors, "seint austin, a p*ar*ti of sei*n*t ancelm, & a p*ar*ti of seint Bernard, & a p*ar*ti of oþ*er*e writingis," yet without titles, this information frustrates the cataloguing mind more than it illuminates.[76] Throughout Simple Books, citations are rare; at times, our narrator might make a vague reference to an apostle, but this is much more a nod to authority than it is a formal reference.

Some Simple Books, such as Additional 10596 and Illinois 80, provide few or no citations. Others, predominantly those that contain the *Pore Caitif*, provide marginal citations that indicate the biblical book, chapter, and verse to which the text is referring. This is perhaps the most straightforward "citation," and it seems to be almost exclusively a feature of *Pore Caitif*. Even within the *Pore Caitif* text, citations tend to provide fewer specifics: "as seynt poul seith," or "as crist seith bi his apostle saynt iame," or "as he seith him silf in the gospel" (fol. 1a Harley 2336, fol. 1r). Harley 2336 quotes Christ without providing an internal citation on folio 3r, and later provides the even more vague "hooli doctours seyn" and "as a greet doctour seith" (3r-4r). Rhetorically, these are less "citations" than they are "communicators of legitimacy." These more ambiguous references are the most common form of citation throughout the Simple Book corpus, and they indicate that Simple Books are not interested in providing scholarly citations or in what we might call reference-checking. As these books are meant to replace entire

[75] BL Harley 2336, fol. 1r.

[76] Alexandra Barratt describes this passage with wry humor: "This introductory self-description is well calculated to make the prospective modern editor despair, given the many collections of prayers and meditations that circulated under the names of Augustine, Anselm, and Bernard throughout the Middle Ages." Barratt, "Dame Eleanor Hull: The Translator at Work," 279.

libraries, the assumption here is that readers will not look up references in their original sources. Instead, Simple Books are interested in communicating that their ideas are consistent with the teachings of the scriptures and church fathers, and this is intended to reassure their readers (and perhaps avoid ecclesiastical censure).

Harley 993 contains the one text from any Simple Book that has a named author—Walter Hilton's *Eight Chapters*. However, the scribe of Harley 993 clearly takes pains to present this information in a way that communicates reassurance of textual legitimacy rather than to provide authoritative weight to Hilton's good name. He opens the text with this short prologue:

> HEere bigynneþ a tretis of viii chapitres necessarie for men þat ȝiuen hem to perfection Whiche was founden in a book of maister lowes de fontibus at Cantebrigge and turned in to englisch bi maister waterer hilton of thurgarton (Harley 993 fol 1r)

Hilton himself was merely a translator of a (lost) Latin copy owned by "Maister Lowes de Fontibus[77] at Cantebrigge." He is not listed as an author; in fact, he is identified first as the finder, then the "turner into English," of a text that was in a book owned by a Lewis de Fontibus. The text is now referenced, by cataloguers, as Walter Hilton's, but Hilton is presented merely as one figure in a chain of many who contributed to the creation of this book, with the "original" author absent entirely. Not much is known about either Master Lewis or about his copy of "De Octo Perfectorum Capitulis."[78] Fumio Kuriyagawa writes that "Lewis of Fountains was supposed by some to have been a monk of Fountains Abbey, a Cistercian monastery… But this view was rejected by Dorothy Jones [1929], who suggested that *de Fontibus* was merely the

[77] It's possible that Lewis originated in France; "de Fontibus" can be translated "of Fontaines," as in Godfrey of Fontaines, 13th c philosopher from Belgium.
[78] The page headings read, from verso to recto: "Octo cap*itula* / p*er*fector*um*." However, neither of these two variations (with or without abbreviations spelled out) elicit any hits in my searches.

family name of Lewis" (43-44). To my knowledge, no further conjecture has been made as to who Master Lewis was, nor has any identification of the original Latin text been made. Harley 993 itself communicates all the information that it deems necessary on the subject, which is very little. It is just enough to confer respectability to the text, just enough to communicate that this text can be traced to a source outside of the scribe himself.

## Narrative Layering and Augustinian Rhetorics

At times, I have referred to a Simple Book's narrator, compiler, or scribe, often using these terms interchangeably. This is no mistake; the Simple Book archetype is structured in such a way that the roles of scribe, compiler, and narrator exist in fluidity, sometimes overlapping with one another, and always impossible to clearly delineate. The layers of narration involved in the reading of a Simple Book indicate that, while the texts themselves might present basic information to simple readers, that reading process itself is quite complex. This is perhaps most evident in the *Pore Caitif*, as the compiler has named himself (our caitiff), and so he exists separate from the scribe, who may choose to include only portions of the *Pore Caitif* text and is therefore also a compiler. So, the "I" of the text is a layered one, including the implied "I" of the authoritative original sources, so that each instruction issues from the mouths of many. The authorial "I" is simultaneously a church father or saint or Jesus himself, the initial compiler, the narrated self that the compiler has created (the "pore caitif"), and the scribe. This is true of all Simple Books, particularly those that provide instructive prologues. While the narrators of these books might not have provided themselves with imaginatively named identities, by directly addressing the audience they too have created a narrator identity. As readers engage with the text, they join this narrative layering, imagining themselves as a part of the text when they

choose to participate in its instruction. Depending on their level of engagement, readers may feel they are active participants at times, and at other times they may find themselves slipping out of direct engagement with the text. At times, readers became authors too, as some chose to write comments in the margins. Recall that an essential aspect of the Simple Book format is an undecorated, open margin, which invites reader engagement. As readers see their own responsiveness to the text align with their like-minded spiritual guide, the multiple narrative layers collapse and allow the reader to feel direct access to the texts' ideas.

For texts that contain prayers, this layering becomes even more complex, as each prayer is not only a text to be read but also an act that is performed while it is read, and it is presumably performed by the narrator (in the reader's mind) both as a prayer to God and as an educational performance to teach the reader how to pray. Illinois 80's prologue instructions for changing pronouns as one reads aloud, in order to encourage a feeling of inclusion in listeners, highlight another facet of performativity in prayer. When a prayer is read aloud, the reader is instructed to change the pronouns "y or me" to such inclusive phrases as "þi seruau*n*t or my broþ*er*" (f. 1r). While the reading of a prayer is, in and of itself, a performance of prayer, this collection purports that these prayers are to be read aloud (and not just when the audience cannot read) and in language as inclusive as possible.[79] Throughout the prayers, first-person pronouns are used, so that the speaker's "I" becomes a sort of placeholder for the reader, a space in which the reader and the speaker/compiler/narrator and the listener coexist.

[79] Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, 73. Coleman argues that even wealthy book owners who were quite literate preferred to have their texts read aloud; that the practice of reading as an aural act and not just a visual one was well and alive into the late medieval period. "At the Inns of Court… the records consistently associate public reading not with illiteracy or book-deprivation but with 'honest solace,' pleasure, and fellowship."

Consider, in the following prayer, how the speaker both asks Christ to forgive her sins and simultaneously instructs the readers and hearers how to engage their senses in order to successfully enact humility:

> O my lord ihu crist deliu*er*er of soulis þ*at* in so greet distresse swettist thi blood *and* watir to hele oure mischeues *and* to bringe us out of endelees p*ri*sou*n*: lord loke to me *and* hele my wretched soule of alle yuelis. ȝeue it breed to restore w*it* hise strenkþis. þ*at* is lord w*it* þi silf þat art breed of lijf.[80]
>
> [O my lord Christ, deliverer of souls, who sweats blood and water in great distress in order to heal our mischief and to bring us out of endless prison: Lord, look to me and heal my wretched soul of all evils. Grant it bread to restore it with its strength—that is, Lord, with yourself, which is the bread of life.]

The prayer opens with a vocative address to Jesus, along with an appositive phrase that engages both an affective response from readers as well as a multi-sensory experience. Helen Solterer argues that "reading was appraised throughout the Middle Ages as a sensorial operation," showing in particular how the descriptions of reading in the "*Ancrene Wisse*, a twelfth-century vernacular rule for women recluses, …detail the way the women's avid eyes, ears, etc. are mobilized in the process of deciphering a text."[81] In a devotional text, the sensorial elements, as well as the first-person pronouns, do not anticipate a physical act; the words of the prayer *embody* prayer itself, so that the physical act and the sensory text that creates it happen simultaneously. In Illinois 80, the engagement of the senses happens during the act of prayer, as readers are not only invited to see Christ in an intense moment of his crucifixion, they are asked to speak their prayer aloud with vivid language, inviting an imagined sense of touch. Jesus is

[80] MS 80 fol. 10v ln. 1-10

[81] Solterer, "Seeing, Hearing, Tasting Woman: Medieval Senses of Reading," 131.

asked to reciprocate this gaze and "loke to me" as the speaker anticipates the Eucharistic consumption of Jesus as the bread of life.

The prayer gradually involves the speaker more directly, beginning with a generalized plural "oure" and then shifting to the first-person "me." As the readers speak this prayer, they are also learning how to identify themselves within a larger communal group—all of sinful mankind. It is Christ's reciprocation of the gaze that initiates the intimate "me," so that the prayer functions to remind individuals of their own intimate relationship with Christ within this larger context. At the same time, the narrator is didactically reminding the reader of Christ's sacrifice. Within this simple prayer, then, are multiple levels of narration. There are two direct conversations happening that overlay one another: the textual speaker's prayer to Christ (the didactic example) and the reader's prayer to Christ (the prayer that is enacted while reading). However, it is also implied, and the introductory materials identifying this manuscript's audience further indicate, that the speaker is conversing with the reader by providing an example of prayer, so that the speaker is simultaneously praying and teaching, and the reader is simultaneously learning how to pray and praying. In the case of the Lord's Prayer, both speakers also are speaking Christ's own words as they pray to God.

Some of Illinois 80's prayers involve God as an aural and ocular participant, inviting God's gaze as well as the reader's attention, to Christ:

> Now lord fadir of heuen biholde þi sweete sone how he suffride grete þingis for me: reme(*m*)bre þee dere fadir what it is þ*at* he suffriþ, *and* for who*m* he suffriþ, *and* what he is þ*at* suffriþ. Forsoþe fadir it is þi dere sone, þat þ*ou* delivieridist to þe deeþ for us.[82]

[82] MS 80 fol. 14v

> [Now, Lord Father of Heaven, behold your sweet son, how he suffered great things for me! Remember, dear Father, what it is that he suffered, and for whom he suffered, and who he is, that he suffers these things. Indeed, Father, he is your dear son, that you delivered to death, for us.]

Here, the speaker and reader are once again overlaid, but the speaker is also being conflated with God. Because the speaker is still working in this didactic way with the reader, both the reader and God are invited to "biholde" Christ's suffering; God is being asked, by speaker and reader, to view the suffering of Christ and remember its purpose while the reader is also asking herself to view and remember Christ's suffering, and this viewing is enacted by reading and praying (which happen concurrently). The overlaying of audiences is made overt on folio 15v, where God is asked to behold Christ's innocent hands and therefore forgive the sinful acts of the speaker's hands. The speaker is also asking both God and the reader (who, when reading this prayer aloud, is asking both God and him/herself) to imagine Christ's body overlaying the reader/sinner's body.

This complex, hierarchical layering of narrative voices builds a communal reading feel. In the previous chapter, I used Harman's object-oriented ontology to "read" the Simple Book genre as an object; here, I draw on Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* as a framework to think through the Simple Book's community-building, text-based rhetoric. The narrative voice of each Simple Book, in harmony with the Simple Book's physical format, transforms the book into a spiritual guide for its reader. While *De doctrina Christiana* guides readers into engaging directly with the texts of the Bible—an act that Simple Books do not enable—the Simple Book's rhetoric of building a spiritual community of like-minded, devout Christians through textual engagement echoes the core sentiments of Augustine's text-based Christian rhetorical program. In his treatise,

Augustine provides those who are willing and capable with the appropriate rules for interpreting the scriptures and the tools to communicate their interpretations. In a departure from what he calls pagan rhetoric, Augustine claims the tools of classical rhetoric for Christianity, converting them from their pagan use and "retrofitting" them for use within the Christian community, using biblical texts as the foundation for all rhetorical learning and practice. In the first three books, he provides his readers with the tools needed to interpret scripture, such as understanding the difference between signs and things, understanding cultural institutions and theories of translation, and understanding the continuity inherent in the Bible so that one can determine when language is being used figuratively or literally. In the fourth book, Augustine argues that, once interpretations have been successfully arrived at, it is the reader's responsibility to communicate them. While rhetoric has been allied with paganism and falsehood, Christians can still use the skills of eloquent speech to further the Christian cause.

While *De doctrina* has often been described as a text divided between rules guiding biblical interpretation (Books 1 through 3) and the rhetoric of sermons (Book 4), the text is much better read as a unified whole, one which places the Bible as the primary site of rhetorical engagement and which teaches any readers of scripture how to use rhetoric to communicate their discoveries to other fellow readers.[83] This communication need not be in the form of a sermon, as the aim of such communication is always to return to the text—to make more effective the reader-writer dynamic. While Book 4 emphasizes the work of the preacher and seems to place

[83] For more on this, see Andrews, "Why Theological Hermeneutics Needs Rhetoric: Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana." Andrews addresses the problems inherent in dividing *De doctrina* into two units (one focused on hermeneutics, Books 1-3, with the remaining Book 4 emphasizing rhetoric), claiming that unifying the text allows readers to consider the ways in which Augustine sees hermeneutics and rhetoric functioning together in a generative loop. The text illustrates a natural progression from the deciphering of signs of various ambivalence to the communication of new understanding, within a religious community, that accompanies such interpretation. Communication of new understanding then compels a new look at the textual signs, and thus the modern inclination to create a divide between hermeneutics and rhetoric is faulty.

limits on what can be read in books 1-3 as a democratizing force in shifting from oral presentation to the reader-text relationship, the emphasis within *De doctrina* on the accessibility of the scriptures to a body of readers each with his own set of limitations, as well as Augustine's belief that all speech is addressed speech and therefore has the potential for truly dialogic self-reflection and self-improvement as discussed in the *Confessions*, together imply that the sermon is not the focus of Augustinian rhetoric. Rather, the hermeneutic practice of textual interpretation itself is where we see the three strands of rhetoric's history—the philosophic, poetic, and pragmatic—continuing through.

By redefining "rhetoric" to include hermeneutic practice, rather than seeing rhetoric as a subset of hermeneutics, Augustine not only cleanses rhetoric of its pagan history and claims it in the name of Christianity, he opens it up to Christians who are readers, beyond just those who will go on to preach. Rhetoric becomes a tool for Christians to use when they read the scripture and when they discuss their understandings of scripture with one another, and the aim is always to educate one another so that, when readers return once again to the text, they do so with greater understanding. If all communication is the correct divination of the usefulness of signs, and the most productive type of reading is that which better illuminates the holy scriptures, the text itself becomes the medium, or the context, in which rhetoric occurs. Rather than the courtroom or the symposium, the body of the book itself becomes the forum in which rhetoric takes place. Readers engage individually with the text in a discursive rhetoric that sees the self as both speaker and audience, then communicate their findings to one another with the intent of returning to the text better-informed. Just as the purpose of arbitration in a courtroom is to better understand the law and therefore lead to more clearly articulated future arbitrations (Aristotle), the purpose of reading the text is to better understand the text. The *telos* of such rhetorical

practice is not, as it is with Aristotle, to move the *polis* to its true end, but to move the human reader closer toward the *telos* of divine love. Thinking of *De doctrina* in these terms opens up the practice of rhetoric to those who read as well as those who read and preach about what they read, since all who are involved with the text are engaging in rhetorical practice. This is why Augustine downplays what he sees as pagan rhetoric; it is a limited way of thinking about the rich eloquence, divine wisdom, and literary greatness of the holy scriptures, all of which are essentially rhetorical.

Thinking about the many layers of narration inherent in the Simple Book structure in terms of Augustine's rhetoric rather than those of modern "authorship" clarifies the simplicity that must have been apparent to readers and writers of these little books. In practicing active interpretation of scripture, each reader engages recursively in a dialogue with herself. This dialogue serves each individual reader to better understand and aim toward the end goal of being united with divine love, which has inspired the original writings. By communicating their interpretations with one another, readers can return to the text to engage more fully with the divine. Simple Books merely add a layer to the existing rhetorical structure. Since simple readers have limited access to the Bible themselves (or may choose not to read it to avoid censure), they rely instead on the carefully collected understandings of the scriptures, gathered from writings by church fathers, church leaders, and summarized sayings rather than verbatim biblical texts, as presented in Simple Books. Through the medium of the Simple Books, which are an accompaniment to what is learned through the Mass and at church, simple readers can engage in this rhetorical tradition. While mapping the layers of narration would prove impossible, mapping its rhetorical function onto Augustine's proves simple and practical. Simple Books may complicate our understanding of what it means to be "simple" of letters and mind, and they

complicate our notions of how devotional texts are granted a sense of authority; yet, these concepts enact the rhetoric of devotional community that we see in Augustine.

**Moving Away from Lollardy**

This chapter has remained relatively silent on the question of the Simple Book's affiliation with the lollard heresy. At every point in this research project, some potential lollard connection has made itself known. British Library Egerton 2820, the first image to appear in Anne Hudson's "Lollard Book Production," looks very much like a Simple Book. Measuring 125mm by 95mm, with a text box of 90mm by 60mm, and written in a lower-grade textualis rotunda, Egerton 2820 meets the basic physical requirements, and it could very well be a fifteenth Simple Book.[84] From a textual perspective, too, Simple Books appear to reflect the lollard interest in vernacular access to scripture and hermeneutics. The General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, as discussed above, emphasizes the virtue of maintaining a "simple" character; indeed, the Prologue itself is said to be "a rare, if not unique, vernacular rendering of Augustine's Christian rhetoric."[85] In addition to being ("falsely") attributed to Wycliffe, the *Pore Caitif* is still described as if it were "affiliated with" lollardy. Harley 2322's interpolation of known lollard texts with *Pore Caitif* tract selections has been used to argue that it was part of a lollard book production scheme.

Without clear evidence for such production sites, and indeed, without clear evidence that "Lollards" as a cohesive, well-defined social group existed, this argument is difficult to prove. Even examining Simple Book texts for potentially dangerous views is a fraught activity; heresy

[84] While its text—one of three copies of Wycliffe's "Omnis Plantacio" sermon—falls slightly outside the pale of what a Simple Book tends to contain, I am tentatively considering it an outlier until I have the opportunity to investigate it further.
[85] Copeland, "Wycliffite Ciceronianism? The General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible and Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana," 187.

is in the eyes of the beholder, and what was dangerous to one reader could very well be a necessary improvement to another. Even so, scholars continue to try to draw clear boundaries around "heretical" texts associated with what is termed the Wycliffite movement.[86] Richard Melia, for instance, carefully combs through John Rylands English 85 for signs of heresy, identifying potential traces of lollard influence in two of the manuscript's five tracts and concluding that further research is needed.[87] In his work on the *Pore Caitif*, Kalpern Trivedi similarly categorizes manuscripts by their apparent orthodox or heterodox leanings, and while some Simple Books certainly appear to contain lollard ideas in their articulations of the *Pore Caitif,* others appear in his orthodox categories. In fact, Trivedi "reads" the physical affect of the manuscripts he investigates, noting in the process that those which contain lollard-leaning texts are also somewhat visually cohesive as a group, much more so than the orthodox grouping.[88] What he describes as the "lollard look" of this manuscript group is quite similar to the Simple Book format, as the volumes are "small enough to be carried in pockets… a typical volume would be in the region of 5½" x 3¾" or 141 mm x 96 mm, with between 22-29 lines of writing per side," with all but two of the manuscripts "copied in uniform book hands."[89] He notes that these manuscripts include "pink, blue, and gold initials at the beginning of major tracts," though it is an overstatement to describe this small use of gold leaf as "sumptuous," and one of these manuscripts, Simple Book Harley 2322, only contains four such initials, each taking about four

[86] By the mid-fifteenth century, there probably was no such single "movement;" certainly by the early sixteenth-century, as McSheffrey writes, "Lollards… [cannot] be said to have constituted a counter-Church; and arguably even the words 'sect', 'movement' and 'community' overplay the cohesiveness of their connections to one another." McSheffrey, "Heresy, Orthodoxy and English Vernacular Religion 1480-1525," 78.
[87] Melia, "'Non-Controversial Lollardy'?: The Lollard Attribution of the 'Diuers Treateses of Joh. Wiclife in English' (John Rylands Library, English MS 85)."
[88] Kalpen Dinkarray Trivedi, "Traditionality and Difference: A Study of the Textual Traditions of the Pore Caitif" (Victoria University of Manchester, 2001), 210-44. Trivedi makes his case for the lollard affiliation of this group of manuscripts based on the potential use of Wycliffite source material.
[89] Trivedi, 226–27.

lines (see Image 16). Of the thirteen manuscripts he identifies as lollard, three are confirmed Simple Books and an additional three are confirmed outliers.[90]

However, while it may be true that Trivedi's lollard grouping of manuscripts is more visually cohesive than his orthodox grouping, it does not necessarily follow that the lollard manuscripts were "produced in similar, possibly controlled circumstances, at about the same time."[91] Of the heterodox grouping, three are also Simple Books: Harley 953, Harley 2336, and Rylands 85. Two additional Simple Books containing the *Pore Caitif* are not analyzed by Trivedi—CUL Ff.6.34 and Rylands 87. Thus, of the eight Simple Book manuscripts that contain *The Pore Caitif*, three are labeled "lollard," three "orthodox," and two are not examined. If this were indeed a controlled production, that production was not a definitively heterodox one. Trivedi's argument is one that comes from a

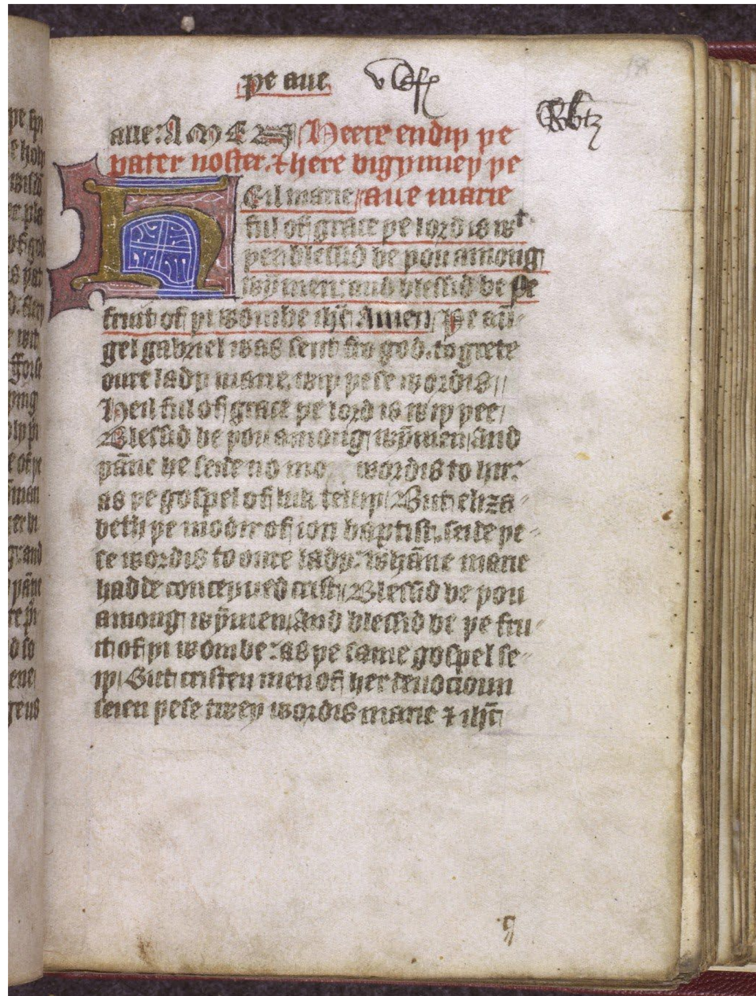


***Image 16*** *© British Library Board Harley 2322 fol. 18r*

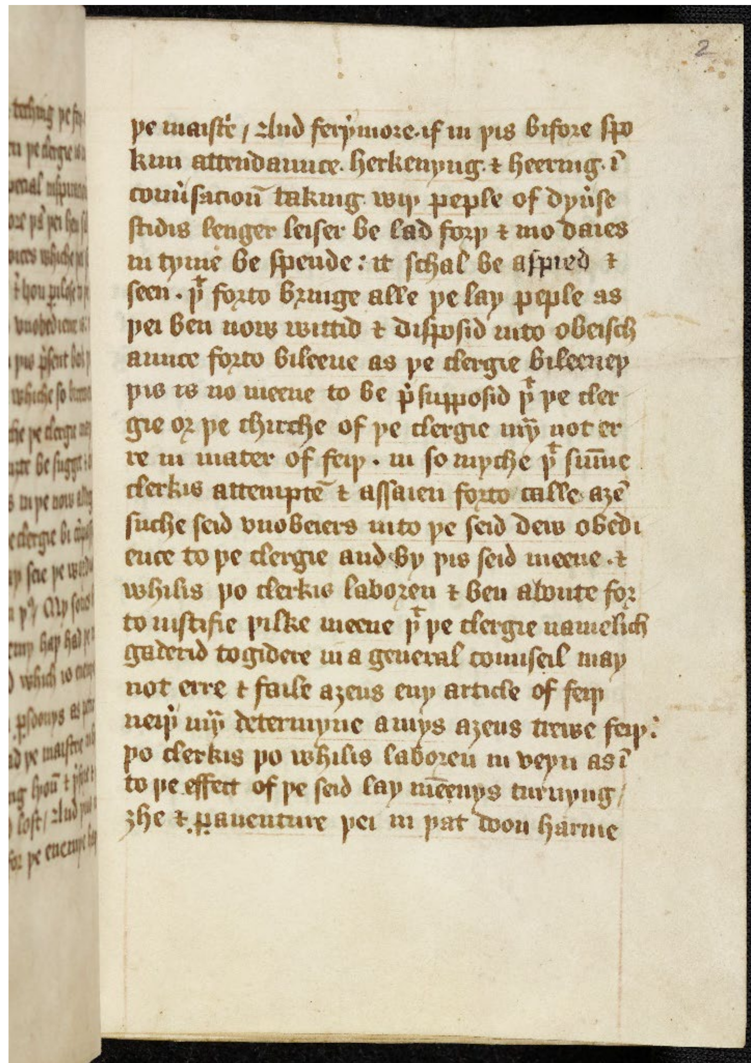
[90] Simple Books: Cambridge Trinity Library B.14.53, British Library Harley 2322, and Bodleian Bodley 3. A further two are suspected Simple Books: New York Public Library MS 68 and Westminster School MS 3. Lambeth 484 and Lyell 29 are outliers for their larger size, which exceed what I would describe as pocket size. Lambeth 484, for instance, measures 185mm x 125mm. Lambeth 541 is an outlier for its hand.
[91] Trivedi, "Traditionality and Difference: A Study of the Textual Traditions of the Pore Caitif," 227.

text-first perspective. While he acknowledges and addresses materiality, he uses "the tools of the codicologist and the critic" to understand the text using "the physical context of the volume in which it survives."[92] That is, the material conditions of the manuscripts he investigates are in the service of the text. From his perspective, the manuscript groupings appear to follow a heterodox/orthodox split. Beginning from a materials-first perspective leads to a different outcome—one that does not seem to implicate a manuscript production scheme based on heretical versions of texts.

Uncovering evidence for a centralized production of lollard books would indeed be an exciting discovery, and Simple Books could well be analyzed in the service of this aim. However appealing this argument might be, it isn't perhaps the one most readily available, and it may be untenable. We can make headway by simply concluding, based on the evidence of this collection of manuscripts, that books were produced with specific "looks" in mind, and then consider how those "looks" might be functioning. That is, a materials-first approach can lead us to conclusions about readers, compilers, and book manufacture without getting bogged down in the task of identifying precisely where and when a text becomes heretical. This task might ultimately be impossible, no matter how many calls for further research are issued. Writing about common profit books, Wendy Scase notes the personal connections between Archbishop Reginald Pecock and the London book manufacturers that we saw as we opened this chapter. While Pecock initially advocated his own program of vernacular books to disseminate authorized, orthodox ideas for the English everyman, in his later book, *The Book of Faith,* he "still argued for the importance of making authoritative books available for reading by the laity, but here he proposed a somewhat different scheme. He suggested that prelates and other wealthy and powerful men

[92] Trivedi, 44.

should perform acts of spiritual almsgiving by financing the mass production and distribution of English books such as Pecock's, in order that the erring laity might have the opportunity to read carefully books which they would not seek out or pay for themselves." Perhaps, she concludes, common profit books were a direct answer to Pecock's call. Cambridge Trinity College B.14.45, the only existing manuscript containing *The Book of Faith*, is, in fact, a Simple Book near outlier, excluded due to its very slightly larger size (170mm by 120mm) and its tendency toward a more rounded, cursive hand (see Image 17).[93] We cannot here conclude that the presence of Pecock's text in a near outlier clearly aligns Simple Books with orthodoxy; some common profit books appear to contain lollard-leaning texts, and Pecock himself was convicted of heresy in 1457 despite, or perhaps as a result of, his active work against lollardy.


2

þe maistir / And ferþermore if in þis bifore spo
ken attendaunce herkenyng & heeryng of
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whilis þo clerkis laboren & ben aboute for
to iustifie þilke meene þat þe clergie namelich
gaderid togidere in a general counseil may
not erre & faile a3ens eny article of feiþ
neiþir my3t determyne amys a3ens trewe feiþ:
þo clerkis þo whilis laboren in veyn as i
to þe effect of þe seid lay mennys turnyng
3he & peraventure þei in þat doon harme

***Image 17*** *© Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge Trinity College B.14.45 fol. 2r*

[93] For a full digital copy of Cambridge Trinity College B.14.45, visit http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/uv/view.php?n=B.14.45. This work is copyright the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. Last accessed 4 February 2019.

What a manuscript-first perspective *does* indicate about potential heresy is that heterodox and orthodox texts alike found themselves suitable to the same Simple Book format, and the textualis-leaning script is a crucial part of the format's appeal. Having looked at a wide range of "miscellaneous manuals" (thus named in Raymo's handbook), by comparing their scripts to those of other popular Middle English texts, Ryan Perry concludes that "fifteenth-century scribes of vernacular materials in England will generally employ what are known as Anglicana scripts."[94] However, and again from a very broad perspective with many data points, a general exception to this script preference occurs in pastoral anthologies as well as copies of the Wycliffite bible, both of which tend to employ "non-descript… comparatively old-fashioned scripts based on textualis forms… what might be called lower-grade textualis." The use of this script to produce these two categories of books—liturgical books on the one hand and copies of the Wycliffite Bible which were, by 1407, illegal to own—in tandem with the fact that low-grade textualis is also quite difficult to assign to a particular scribe as it lacks the characteristic signatures that are more predominant in texts written in Anglicana, makes this script a particularly difficult one to align with one cause over another.[95] By association, this script was both pious and dangerous, and it was (and remains) a script whose uniform look obscured the individual traits that might have revealed details of its manufacture. Employing a textualis could have therefore made it possible to "mix unproblematic religious materials with texts that might have attracted the disapproval of conservative ecclesiasts."[96] Whether or not this occurred or if Simple Books were a part of this creative shrouding of prohibited texts, the script's malleability itself is important. It performs its "orthodox" and "heterodox" texts equally well, and it is

[94] Perry, "An Introduction to Devotional Anthologies," 124.
[95] Perry, 125.
[96] Perry, 125.

reasonable to conclude that this flexibility allowed the script, and the Simple Book, to disengage from the heterodox/orthodox conundrum. A text written in a gothic textualis is not, by default, one that belonged to a particular genre or religious group. As a script that encourages slow, contemplative processes, is ambiguous in its religio-political identity, and, by practice, encourages erasure of scribal identity, textualis is the perfect choice for the Simple Book, as it reasserts the importance of an engaged, reader-focused experience, one that is as close to "uninterested" in heresy as may have been possible.

# CHAPTER 3: DEFINING GENRES, SEEING READERS: BOOKS OF HOURS, DEVOTIONAL MISCELLANIES, AND SIMPLE BOOKS

To claim that genres are environments within which familiar social actions are rhetorically enacted and reproduced is to reject traditional notions of genres as artificial forms or arbitrary classification systems for organizing and defining kinds of texts… Genres, in short, are the sites in which communicants rhetorically reproduce the very environments to which they in turn respond—the habits and the habitats for acting in language. This is why I argue that genres are rhetorical ecosystems that allow communicants to enact and reproduce various environments, social practices, relations, and identities.

Anis Bawarshi, *Ecology of Genres*, 70-71

When two objects enter into genuine relation, even if they do not permanently fuse together, they generate a reality that has all of the features that we require of an object. Through their mere relation, they create something that has not existed before, and which is truly *one*. When the sun and the moon join in a lunar eclipse, this eclipse has an identity and a depth that belongs to neither of its parts, and which is also irreducible to all of its current effects on other entities, or to the knowledge we may have of it.

Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, 85

This chapter explains why identifying the Simple Book as a generic category is necessary. What is gained by such an act? What does a generic category do; what does it allow us to do? These questions may at first seem at odds with the materialist aims of this project. Not only is "genre" an abstract notion, far afield from the concrete reality of the "book," it is also a concept, an arguably human creation, born from the anthropocentric mindset we sought to decentralize in Chapter 1. Moreover, twenty-first-century genre theory is still highly invested in the concept of the author, framing issues of genre in terms of supports and constraints that both shape and choke the writer's craft—issues that do not speak to the broader conceptions of authorship and composition we explored in Chapter 2.

Over the last thirty years, where it has thrived at all, the concept of genre has shifted from the static and rigid to the dynamic, the interactive. In film theory, "genre" has become a theoretically fraught term, so much so that Robert Stam advocated in 2000 for "intertextuality theory" to replace genre theory. "Intertextuality is less interested in taxonomic essences and definitions than in the processual interanimation of texts" and is "active," defying the passivity whereby a film either belongs in a genre or doesn't.[1] Writing Studies has picked up genre theory's momentum, with Anis Bawarshi's 2010 publication *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy* already netting 423 citations, according to Google Scholar.[2] Within Writing Studies, genres are being reframed in terms of ecologies, as Bawarshi writes above. Such a view allows teachers of writers as well as scholars of writing to teach and study genres as "connected to social purposes and to ways of being and knowing in relationship to these purposes. It calls for understanding how and why a genre's formal features come to exist the way they do, and how and why they make possible certain social actions/relations and not others."[3] This is particularly fruitful pedagogically; teaching genre in this manner empowers students to understand their writing as active engagement with the world, with their environment, and with other writers/writings. As a dynamic model, it works well for Simple Books, whose format and text both invite active engagement from their readers, reflecting their "social practices, relations, and identities" within their spiritual communities and in their own devotional practice.

This Simple Book project also aims to find out what the Simple Book genre facilitated and what it hindered or did not encourage. However, we want to do more with the Simple Book

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[1] Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, 202–3.

[2] https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=6075890594024361218&as_sdt=5,48&sciodt=0,48&hl=en. Accessed 27 February 2019.

[3] Bawarshi and Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, 4.

genre. As medievalists, we can only engage indirectly with the environment that produced these objects which in turn constitute this genre. If Simple Books are merely "the sites in which communicants rhetorically reproduce the very environments to which they in turn respond," we are limited in what we can discover about the Simple Book. By synthesizing genre theory with object-oriented ontology, we find a theory of genre that allows us to recognize the thing-ness of genres, granting them an agency that goes beyond its human co-collaborators. As Harman writes, cited above, when many objects join to form a new object, as these fourteen manuscripts to date join to form the Simple Book genre, "through their mere relation, they create something that has not existed before, and which is truly *one*." Being an object, it therefore has the fourfold structure that all objects have (its Sensual Object and Real Object selves as well as its Sensual and Real Qualities). We can therefore hypothesize the ways in which it becomes Itself (what Sensual Qualities must exist in order for it to still be the Simple Book Genre, and what Sensual Qualities can change over time). When we understand a genre as an object, we also more clearly understand how it functions—what it affords—and we can more clearly imagine the humans that engage with it. By recovering the Simple Book genre-as-thing, we also begin to see the Simple Book's readers. More than this, when we treat the Simple Book genre as an object in its own right, we acknowledge that it has a quality to it that we cannot ever expressly state, but which nevertheless is central to its identity (see discussion of Harman, chapter 1). In acknowledging this, we can describe the genre in a variety of poetic, allusive ways, each of which will uncover new ways of thinking about what the genre does and who it served. The Simple Book genre becomes a rhetorical well-spring of meaningful thought experiments.

The Simple Book genre does not emerge from nowhere; it does not exist in isolation from other genres, and Simple Books share many crucial features with contemporary manuscripts. On

the map of medieval genres, the Simple Book falls primarily within the confines of the larger category of "devotional miscellanies" and is neighbor to the Book of Hours. The Simple Book could arguably be a subset of "devotional miscellany;" however, as I argue below, the "devotional miscellany" remains a fraught genre, created more as a catch-all for problematic manuscripts than as a category in its own right. Scholarship is attempting to bring shape to this genre by providing alternate terminology that "rescues" intelligently-crafted manuscripts from its midst. The focus, in other words, is on scribal intent—if one can prove the manuscript has an intended organizing principle, it is deemed worthy of removal from this catch-all category. This approach is inherently at odds with the project of this dissertation, which finds the Simple Book to be a cohesive whole in its marriage of function and form, text and format. "Intelligent design" does not factor into the Simple Book's validity as a genre, and to operate within the confines of the "devotional miscellany" as it currently stands would muddy the clarity of the object-oriented perspective that initiated and continues to drive this project. Recognizing the Simple Book genre shifts the perspective of genre formation from scribal intent to object-driven analysis, allowing a more accurate discussion of what this body of manuscripts can do to bring a body of readers together, and it does so without casting judgment on other devotional miscellanies.

Similarly, while the Book of Hours shares many critical features with the Simple Book, as a genre it is not shaped in a way that can explain what the Simple Book is, or what it can do. As scholars define the Book of Hours, they invariably describe its readers—their hopes, their needs, and their expectations of the book itself. When a genre is defined, the narrative that builds that definition is, at its heart, a narrative about the potential relationships between a book and a reader—if the book is this kind of book, it will most likely attract this kind of reader, and these readers will enjoy this sort of reading experience together. Each definition will adjust, define,

zoom in or zoom out, on the painting of that genre's readership so that, over time, we have a mental image immediately at the ready when we see a manuscript and read the label "Book of Hours" or "devotional miscellany." What we see when we "read" the Simple Book format, and the readers it evokes, is not the same body of readers as the Book of Hours. Similarly, scholarship on "devotional miscellanies" reveals either no imaginable reader, as the category is discussed in its breadth, or we are given a view to only a few known readers, as is the case with individual miscellanies. That is, the genre as a whole paints no picture of who its readers are—a troubling clue to its misfit genre status. Neither of our two established, existing genres—Books of Hours and devotional miscellanies—is shaped in a way that can explain what the Simple Book is, or what it can do. To recognize the Simple Book as a genre is to also recognize and begin to see a body of readers. When Simple Books go unseen, so too do their readers.

**Books as Possessions versus Books as Mentors**

Categorizing medieval works by physical format is not a completely foreign practice, yet often book format categories become blurred over time as the preference to categorize by textual contents takes over. The Parisian pocket-Bible of the thirteenth century, for instance, is primarily defined by its contents, but the physical format itself has historically been a crucial aspect of that genre's definition. Ralph Hanna begins his introduction to the Wycliffite Bible's palaeography by first describing the Parisian pocket-Bible. "Certainly, books of this sort, thick volumes in small formats (generally under 200mm high), will have formed, at the time Bibles came to be produced in English, one model conception of what a biblical book should be," to the extent that the much larger "Wycliffite Bible will look distinctly deviant."[4] However, he cautions that this

[4] Hanna, "The Palaeography of the Wycliffite Bibles in Oxford," 247.

claim can easily be overstated, as the term "Paris Bible" defines not a book format but a textual one, as several Bibles were produced in different formats yet with the same textual content and these too are termed "Paris Bibles." The problem lies, it seems, in the conflation of two terms—"Paris Bible," which describes manuscripts containing the complete biblical text produced in the thirteenth century, with "Paris pocket-Bible," a subset of the larger category based on a unique physical format. In this case, then, the textual format serves as the umbrella term for the book format, and scholarship has tended to blur the lines between the two, with the resulting obfuscation of the physical.

The Book of Hours is similarly a genre that is defined partially by its contents and partially by its physical appearance, though the genre's visual appeal is repeatedly singled out as determining the genre's significance. When defining the genre, most scholars first address the physical, as these manuscripts are primarily known for their illustrations. Often filling the page, the illustrations in Books of Hours are "lavish," "radiantly beautiful," with "flamboyant displays of color and gold." [5] Paul Saenger opens his article about Books of Hours and reading habits by first describing this "most widely known of the many genres of medieval manuscripts" in terms of its "frequently attractive" artwork, which has made for many "lavish facsimile editions." Eamon Duffy's impressive study on the English Book of Hours, too, opens by calling the Book of Hours "one of the most glamorous and most familiar artefacts of the Middle Ages." While Duffy provides the monastic origins of the Book of Hours' text, he also writes that, "[by] and large,… it was their pictures and border-decorations that attracted, rather than their text" (5). Indeed, it isn't until page 28 that the genre's defining contents are succinctly summarized as "a

[5] Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and Their Books of Hours*, 1; Kennedy, "Reintroducing the English Books of Hours, or 'English Primers,'" 694; Saenger, "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages," 141; Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 30; Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 3. Both Smith and Kennedy use the phrase "lavishly illustrated."

standardised selection of psalms, antiphons, hymns and prayers, arranged for recitation in honour of Mary at each of the eight monastic divisions or hours of the day."[6] Based on the fondness for the use of "lavish" alone as an adjective deployed by numerous scholars as they describe specific Book of Hours illustrations or pen flourishes or even to describe an entire codex, the deluxe aspects of the genre's high-end exemplars are its primary draw, even though the genre's formation is based on these manuscripts' textual contents.

As is true of the Paris Bible, the Book of Hours too is a genre that seems to be primarily recognizable by its physical appearance, with the textual aspects serving as confirmation. However, both the Book of Hours' physical traits and its specific textual contents are generically fluid. The sheer number of manuscripts that fit both the (broadly-conceived) textual and physical criteria means the boundaries of this genre are quite blurry. While most Books of Hours are described as deluxe codices, many (and especially later versions) were not; as Nicholas Rogers's unpublished dissertation, "Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market in the Fifteenth Century," attests, some 170 surviving Books of Hours were mass-produced in the Low Countries for an English market, many of which were also inexpensive affairs.[7] Generically "devotional" images were purchased and added to existing booklets of hours, with the resulting blank pages filled in with devotional material by later scribes or owners. Kathryn Rudy writes extensively about this "modular" construction, which was at play even in more elaborate, expensive Books of Hours.[8] Yale Beinecke MS 360's plainness and vernacularity encouraged Michael Kuczynski to call it a "Lollard prayer book" rather than a Book of Hours, though Kathleen Kennedy identifies it as a "Psalter-Hours," or a Book of Hours

[6] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 28.
[7] Rogers, "Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market in the Fifteenth Century."
[8] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*.

which also includes psalms.[9] As a textual format, the genre is also quite fluid. "The label 'book of hours' itself conceals the variety of texts… which these books contained," remarks Paul Saenger, and he later refers to the genre as having a "peculiar combination of format and content."[10] Thus, when we define the Simple Book in opposition to the Book of Hours, we must consider that the latter category is much broader than the former, and so much of what we will be comparing is the complete genre on one hand and a series of representations on the other—Books of Hours which can be said to exemplify particular defining traits. As the Book of Hours is categorized by a combination of physical features and contents, both aspects are critical to our comparison, and ultimately, the physical and textual elements work in unison to convey an overall effect, to promote a devotional mindset, that is inherently distinct from that of the Simple Book.

When I first began working with Illinois 80, a fellow scholar suggested that it was a sort of "poor man's Book of Hours," based just on the manuscript's size, layout, and its catalogued title—"Prayers and Meditations." This is a reasonable suggestion, as both Simple Books and most Books of Hours are portable and afford intimacy between book and human. Both offer prayer-based devotional readings, and both are intended for a range of readers, including the laity as well as those who held positions in the church. However, Simple Books are quite distinct from Books of Hours, and we can begin to see their differences by first looking at a Book of Hours that, in many ways, *does* work like a Simple Book. This manuscript is Yale Beinecke 360, and it lies at the crossroads between both genres. While its contents make it a Book of Hours (a psalter in English, followed by the use of Sarum *Horae*, ending with St. Jerome's psalter), its plainer

[9] Kennedy, "Reintroducing the English Books of Hours, or 'English Primers,'" 695–96.
[10] Saenger, "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages," 141.

pages could be mistaken for those of a Simple Book (see Image 18).[11] While plain for a Book of Hours, folio 151r does follow a one-column format, as did most Books of Hours (and, of course, the Simple Book), and it makes frequent use of both red and blue ink—it would be considered a more elaborate page if it were in a Simple Book. However, this page is not representative of the majority of the manuscript's visual affect; most of its pages' margins contain hairpin scrolling emanating from capital letters (see Image 19), and a handful of pages feature illuminated initials with gold leaf (see Image 20). More importantly, it functions quite differently from the Simple Book. Organizing prayers by the hours creates a dramatic shift in the way Beinecke 360, and all Books of Hours, presents itself for use. The Book of Hours' affordances, both material and textual, encourage subtle differences in use that suggest dramatically different ways of engaging the book and the world, as I will discuss below; where the Book of Hours is a prized possession whose pages are marked by the owners' life, the Simple Book is a companion whose guidance is intended for many readers.

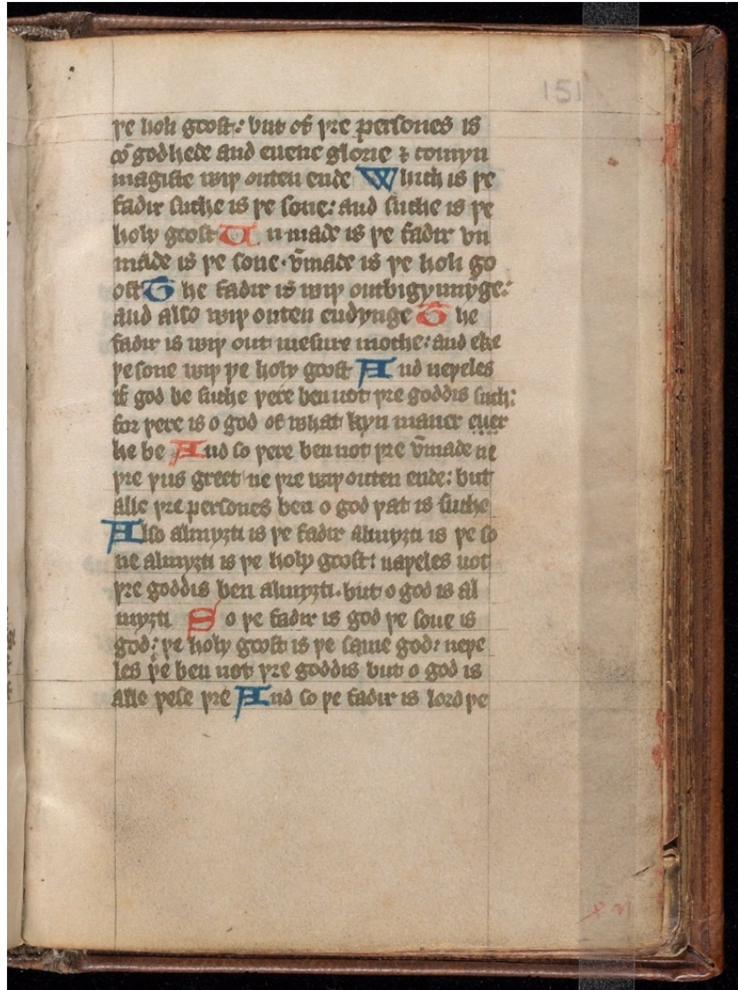

***Image 18*** *Yale Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Beinecke 360, fol. 151r*

[11] A digital facsimile of Yale Beinecke 360 is available here: https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3592303. Credit provided to Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Last accessed 1 March 2019.

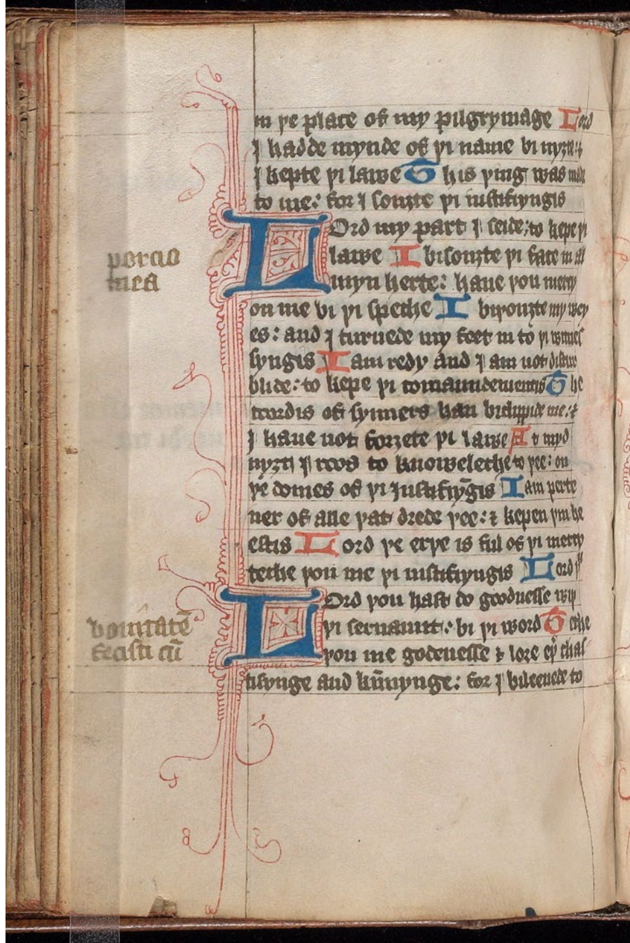

***Image 19*** *Yale Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Beinecke 360, fol. 116v*

***Image 20*** *Yale Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Beinecke 360, fol. 93v*

Books of Hours encourage readers to view life as regimented, one in which the uncertainty of life is mapped onto the assurance and truth of Christ's passion. Each twenty-four-hour period is divided into eight periods of prayer—Matins (recited at night), Lauds (dawn), Prime (early morning), Terce (mid-morning), Sext (midday), Nones (mid-afternoon), Vespers (evening), and Compline (before bed). At each hour, the reader is to recite prayers, read psalms, and contemplate a moment in Christ's passion; since "Christ's Passion occurred during a single day, so the impulse to link the main episodes of the Passion to the daily cycle of the canonical

hours was a logical one."[12] More than this, by mapping Christ's passion onto the daily cycle of prayers, each day becomes a remembrance of Christ's life, allowing both an intimate reminder of one's devotional obligations and providing a comforting, regimented structure to the fluidity of time.

Moreover, many Books of Hours provided spaces in which owners could document important events, and many readers did indeed use their Books of Hours to quantify, to solidify, the facts of their lives. Books of Hours became family documents, as they allowed owners to fold their own family histories into sacred timelines, to "personalize sacred time" by "integrating family history and notions of individual and family identity into the Christian salvation history that unfolded on its pages."[13] Describing Books of Hours as "absorbent objects," Kathryn Rudy describes the ways in which owners customized their books, making "ample use of them as repositories for prayers, notes, familial and historical information" such as legal transactions, births, marriages and deaths, and even sometimes "small devotional objects. In other words, these books became objects which represented their owners' best or idealized traits and, at the same time, places to store memory items."[14] They quite literally became containers for one's life, for those events and aspects of life deemed most critical. At times, these records provide startling insights into peoples' lives. One of the many Books of Hours owned by the thrice-married Tudor Anne Withypole contained a prayer for marital harmony; "the phrase in the prayer which asks for 'true concord and love between me and my husband'… has a blotted and scratched erasure, over which she has inserted the name of her third husband, 'Paulum.'"[15] This erasure perfectly

[12] Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and Their Books of Hours*, 58.
[13] Smith, 57–58.
[14] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 70, 77–79, 10.
[15] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 34.

represents the messiness of daily life that readers hoped to bring into a sensible order within the pages of these devotionally-minded time-keepers.

By concretizing an otherwise fluid life within the confines of a spiritual prayer-regime, Books of Hours provided stability and comfort. The manner in which they do so encourages a somewhat outcome-oriented mindset; that is, if one says these prayers at these times, if one records crucial events within the established structure of the liturgical calendar, those things are fixed and decided. Some Books of Hours included prayers that functioned in a talismanic manner, assuring the supplicant of a desired outcome. Netherlandish manuscripts included an image of the Veronica, and if the reader could gaze upon the image with devotion, he would enjoy "300 days' indulgence from the pope of Rome. Moreover, he will not die within 10 days from an unforeseen or sudden death."[16] Similar prayers were provided to assure the safe delivery of mother and baby in childbirth. English and French manuscripts contain some such prayers, as well as "prayers for help against enemies or protection against spiritual and material evils." These prayers required petitioners to fill in their names in a blank space, but "where patrons requested it, the name was often written out in full, as an integral part of the text by the scribe. The ostentatious De Bois Hours, written and illuminated in the 1330s for Hawisia De Bois, and crusted with her family's armorial bearings, also contains a series of prayers for protection personalised by the inclusion of Hawisia's name."[17] Having one's name written into the text by a professional scribe must have felt affirming, both in the fact of ownership and in the belief that such prayers would be successful. It grounds and secures the promises held within the book.

The mindset encouraged by a Simple Book, on the other hand, is process-oriented. Where Simple Books provide instruction, they do so in the voice of a guide rather than a prophet or

[16] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 260. The manuscript cited is HKB Ms. 132 G38, fol. 71v, transl. Rudy.
[17] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 32.

time-keeper. Explicit instructions exist to guide the reader through the process of prayer or to shape their reading experiences. While this has been discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter, it is worth once again noting Illinois 80's explanation of its textual structure, which contains instruction for reading. Because the meditations that follow are critical to the reader's spiritual well-being, "thei be not for to be red in noise but in oonlynes *and* qwietnes; not liȝtli *and* curtauntly eiþer hastily, but litil *and* litil in greet abidinge *and* leiser *and* with greet entent of þe mynde" (13r; "they are not to be read in noise, but in solitude and quiet; not lightly and certainly not hastily, but little by little, in great abiding and leisure, and with great intent of the mind"). To aid the reader in finding meditations that suit their current mindset, they are "deuidid bi chapiters, þat þei mowe bigynne where hem list, & leue whanne hem list, by cause her redinge schulde not turne hem to noie or to werynes for to long redinge." This "haphazard" reading style is not an invitation to read carelessly; as the previous excerpt indicates, the reader is invited to begin and end their reading where and when they wish because it is done in the service of their devotion. It would be an error for the reader to simply open the book and begin reading, "sett[ing] her ententis for to rede hem al ouer at oonis." Where a Book of Hours allows readers to open to a predetermined section, the Simple Book asks readers to think about their reading material; the act of opening the book itself already requires devotion and mental work. The structure provides guidance rather than containing the abstract; it prompts growth rather than containing one's worry about the unknowns of life. The goal, as always, is for the reader to "gadere & kepe þo þingis in mynde wherfore þei ben maad, þat is, to haue pitee of herte & wil to loue god & for to knowe hem silf." The reading style, the textual structure, and the intended outcome all embrace, and encourage their readers to embrace, an ongoing, long-term process of learning to love God and to know oneself in relation to God.

The *Pore Caitif*'s loosely-deployed ladder metaphor, most likely borrowed from Richard Rollle's *A Form of Living*, similarly invites readers to engage in an ongoing process of spiritual development. Antithetical to the structured approach of the Book of Hours and, too, to the form the metaphor takes in its original source, the ladder metaphor represents a cyclic, ongoing, reader-driven model of devotional reading. In *A Form of Living,* Rolle presents chapters that each gain in complexity, so that the reader begins with the lower rungs of basic understanding, climbs to the middle rungs of advanced understanding, and eventually ascends to the final chapters' explorations of higher-level, complex matters of spirituality. One cannot read whichever chapters he or she chooses; the rungs must be climbed in order.[18] In the prologue to *The Pore Caitif*, on the other hand, the basic understandings of "cristen ma*n*nes bileeue"—that is, the Creed—and the Ten Commandments form "þe grou*n*d of helþe" upon which rests "a laddir of dyuerse rongis." The rungs are not of any particular order; these "various" ("dyuerse") rungs instead each represent the work required to progress toward godly virtue (the reading of the remaining tracts), so that, by reading these "short sente*n*cis exiting men to heue*n*li desiir" one climbs "vp fro v*er*tu i*n* to v*er*tu til to he se god of syon, regny*n*ge in eu*er*lasti*n*ge blis; þe which to us alle grau*n*te he þat lyueþ *and* regneþ w*ith*oute eende, merciful god, Amen."[19] This is not a linear model but is, perhaps, a spiral staircase; such a mental image better represents the cyclic, upward motion represented here. Perhaps in isolation, this ladder metaphor would seem an ill-conceived copy of Rolle's more apt use of the metaphor, but when read within the mechanisms of the Simple Book genre, the metaphor takes on a new life, one which sees the actions of reading and contemplation as upward-moving, independent of the literal order of texts. As we noted in the previous chapter, this ladder metaphor reappears at the end of the tract often

[18] Brady, "Rolle and the Pattern of Tracts in 'The Pore Caitif,'" 457–59.
[19] Harley 2336 fol. 1v.

catalogued as "Actiif Liif and Contemplacioun." Here we find confirmation that this method of reading, just as we saw in Illinois 80, echoes a progression-minded, open-ended model of spiritual development: "For ech ma*n* shulde stie up fro oon to an oþ*ir*, as he is clepid of god; su*m* in hier, su*m* in lower, as he is ablid of god þ*er*to."[20] While, in Rolle's work, this sentiment is a judgment of a readers' capacity—some may not be able to read as far into the work as others—we read here an echo of Illinois 80's encouragement to read the tracts that are most meaningful, most critical, to the reader's spiritual needs in that particular moment, "as he is clepid of god."

Some Book of Hours instructions do overlap with those we find in Simple Books, and even in these moments of similarity we see subtle differences in approach. One such example is a prayer in The Hague Koninklijke Bibliotheek Ms. 132 G 38, which is followed by this reading instruction: "If he is not able to read this himself, he can just think it, or another person shall pray it for him."[21] Here we get an instruction similar to Illinois 80's advice to "lete su*m*me oþere good free*n*d" read the prayers aloud, if the book-possessor finds himself without the capacity to read (fol. 1r). The phrase "he can just think it" is a critical point of divergence between the two very similar sentiments. Much of the content of a Book of Hours comes from the Psalms, which readers (and listeners) would have known by heart from their recitations during Mass. Duffy points out that "overwhelmingly the prayers of the Hours were drawn from the Psalter," and even those few Books of Hours which are primarily in English contain standard Latin psalm incipits, as "Psalms were known by their incipit rather than number."[22] Listeners could therefore hear the incipit and fall into the rhythms of prayer, completing the prayers in their minds as part of a comforting cycle known presumably since a young age. Illinois 80's advice precedes a series of

[20] Harley 2336 fol. 118r.
[21] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 261.
[22] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 68; Kennedy, "Reintroducing the English Books of Hours, or 'English Primers,'" 701.

prayers from the Art of the Craft of Dying, which could have certainly been familiar but would have lacked the intimate knowledge of the psalm-based prayers of the Hours. Illinois 80's were not prayers, it seems, that one could mentally complete. Listening along to these prayers would have required a more active, perhaps more intellectual, engagement.

Because the Simple Book is guidance-based, the book itself can be read as a guide; it has a voice, and it also has a singular, cohesive body. To this end, the Simple Book manuscript is constructed all in one go; it is crafted to be a single, coherent volume. Illinois 80, Harley 953, Harley 2322, Harley 2336, Rawlinson C.209, CUL Ff.6.34, CUL Ff.6.55, Trinity B.14.53, Rylands English 85, and Rylands English 87 are all constructed in a cohesive manner, so that each new text follows directly after its preceding text, leaving no blank sections in between. Illinois 80 and CUL Ff.6.55 both have blank lined pages at the end of the book, and none intermittent. The remaining Simple Books pose a few difficulties; Bodley 3 is made as one cohesive unit from folios 1-172, and some blank space occurs on the last parts of folio 172, with a new text beginning on 173r. Additional 10596 is actually an independent booklet from folios 1-24 which was then bound together with what was once its own Simple Book and which is now folios 24-82. Harley 993 is missing a quire (perhaps more) between folios 23 and 24, so that the *Treatise on Discretion of Spirits* is lacking its first few lines. It is not, however, lacking an entire quire's worth of lines, so it is interesting to imagine what other texts this volume originally housed. These "problematic" Simple Books do not, however, challenge the model of a cohesive, unified voice implied by the rest of the genre's manuscripts.

Where the Simple Book presents a relatively unified, cohesive look, both in its formatting and in its construction, the Book of Hours is a format that lends itself well to a modular construction, one that encourages and even anticipates a great degree of customization by the

reader or owner. Several centers of production existed to create “customizable” manuscripts—London-based assemblages of shops, which created booklet-based miscellanies of a great variety of genres, as well as a modular kind of production in the Low Countries which produced primarily Books of Hours.

Writing manuscripts in booklet form worked well for popular book formats whose contents were relatively standardized, such as Books of Hours. In booklet construction, scribes copied popular texts into independent quires or gatherings of quires, within a standard physical format. This was an economical model of production; scribes need only own a few popular texts, and they could copy these with enough frequency so as to master their writing with both accuracy and speed. Bookmakers or even customers could then compile “customized” manuscripts by binding (or having bound) several choice booklets together.[23] Records indicate that the crafts of London book manufacture clustered around St. Paul’s consisted of “more than 260… makers and sellers of books before 1500, with the strongest concentration in the vicinity of the Cathedral.”[24] Bookmakers and sellers rented tiny storefronts, and the close proximity of scribes to one another encouraged booklet-based production. A great variety of books were constructed in this manner; the booklet provided “the prospective purchaser with a means of assembling, either gradually or immediately, groups of texts on various subjects or in various literary modes,” so that books created using the booklet method were not limited to prayers and psalters, but could also be collections of poems or works of fiction.[25]

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[23] Boffey, “From Manuscript to Modern Text,” 113–14.
[24] Christianson, “The Rise of London’s Book-Trade,” 129; Christianson, “Evidence for the Study of London’s Late Medieval Manuscript-Book Trade.”
[25] Edwards, “Manuscripts and Readers,” 96. Edwards ascribes the uniform look of the “Oxford-group” of manuscripts to the booklet production method.

The "modular" form of manuscript production is essentially a specialized form of booklet production, though "modular" in this case reflects an overarching organizing scheme to the book as a whole. As Rudy puts it, booklets are complete within themselves; it is "an autonomous unit and may comprise any number of quires. As such, the content, author, copyist, and date of one booklet may have nothing to do with that of its binding mates."[26] It is helpful to think of the modular Book of Hours as a machine constructed in assembly fashion. For each required part, several shops exist to supply that part, so the machine-assembler can choose which parts to use. This is precisely the image of the Book of Hours production we get from both Rogers and Rudy, who describe how "the scribe and the illuminator would work in separate ateliers. An illuminator would not make images for a particular book, but rather make 'interchangeable parts' that could be added to any book."[27] Illustrations "were drawn from stock… [and] it is also probable that some ateliers maintained stocks of the various sections of an Horae, to be combined as occasion or a client demanded."[28] This mode of production, particularly prominent in the Low Countries, became one of the primary methods of assembling a Book of Hours in the mid to late fifteenth century. Such a production created inexpensive yet illuminated books—those which would have appealed to a range of consumers—merchants, local gentry, and those who served them. [29]

As an easily customizable form, the fifteenth-century Book of Hours reflected its owners at a structural level. Owners used their Books of Hours as status symbols, saw them as porous objects which held their personal histories, and now they could shape their books to better reflect a desired self-identity from their construction. The modular fashion of construction created blank pages as a by-product—the reverse sides of images, or the last page of a quire—so owners would

[26] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 39.
[27] Rudy, 27.
[28] Rogers, "Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market in the Fifteenth Century," 39.
[29] Rogers, 48.

hire scribes to fill these pages with short, generic, devotional material.[30] While Books of Hours might have previously been personalized with additions in the calendar, the modular Book of Hours and its blank spaces in need of filling provided opportunities for owners to personalize the contents themselves. It is significant that, when writing about Books of Hours, we also write about owners; some of the more famous and elaborate versions to this day retain the names of their owners, such as the De Lisle, De Bois, and Neville of Hornby Hours. The books' and owners' statuses feed each other; these three manuscripts, for instance, belonged to wealthy lay women and they continue to invest their owners with lasting historical importance. Richard III most likely had his Book of Hours, complete with personalized prayer of protection, with him at Bosworth Field, and when this book was given to Lady Margaret Beauford by her victorious son Henry VII, she "acquired Richard's book as a trophy rather than a devotional aid"; to hold Richard's book is to utterly vanquish the man himself.[31] The book becomes synonymous with the book's owner, with his or her status, ambitions, desires, hopes, and, presumably, spiritual devotion too.

Where the Book of Hours has owners, the Simple Book has readers. The distinction is clearest among those Simple Books that contain common profit colophons; these books are defined by their use, not by their ownership, whose transferability is made explicit by the colophon. As Harley 993 and Harley 2336 stipulate, as long as the person to whom the book has been granted is actively using the book, he may keep it; if, however, "he þat haþ þe forseid uss of co*m*missiou*n*" finds there are times "wha*n*ne he occupieþ it not," he is to "leeue he it for atyme to su*m* oþ*ir* p*er*soone." Use dictates possession, to the extent that the book does not truly belong to anyone but is rather in the keeping of a series of readers. Because all Simple Books teach their

[30] Rudy, *Piety in Pieces*, 49.
[31] Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570*, 33.

readers how to pray, how to read most devotedly, how to engage their spiritual lives, their narrative voice is that of a guide, of a spiritual companion. This narrative layering was discussed in the previous chapter in terms of Augustinian rhetoric, placing the Simple Book within a community of devotionally-minded readers, listeners, and teachers. Because Simple Books take on such a clear mentor role, in the perfect marriage between their physicality and their narration, they also clearly define their ideal or imagined readers within their pages.

Simple Books are inherently relational, and so we can somehow more easily imagine the sorts of active engagements they encouraged and were quite possibly enjoyed by actual readers. Books of Hours could go unread; they could even become mere props to suggest their owners' wealth and piety. Simple Books could also go unread, but even in their unread state, they embody a potential guide, a spiritual helpmate or companion. Even without actual readers, we can see the Simple Books' potential readers—they are whoever would need such a guide, whoever these books implicate in their pages. Just as a travel guide suggests the kind of traveler who would need it, so too does a Simple Book suggest who its reader is or was.

**Rejecting "Miscellaneity" to Recover Genres**

Throughout this dissertation, I have resisted using the phrase "miscellaneous" to describe the Simple Book. In fact, many scholars would call these manuscripts examples of the "devotional miscellany," seeing no further need to define these books by their own generic title. However, the genre "devotional miscellany" often performs the *bad* work of genre—where "Book of Hours" and "Simple Book" help make books and readers legible, the "devotional miscellany" occludes both.

As vague, largely undefined terms, "devotional miscellany" and "devotional anthology" have been used interchangeably, and with increasing scrutiny, to describe what has always been a text-format genre. However, in this case, the texts that define the genre are themselves *un*defined, beyond containing text of a broadly-conceived "devotional" nature. The category has become a sort of catch-all for misfit manuscripts—those whose contents are difficult to contain under a single organizing principle, such as major author (Rolle, for instance), devotional approach (instructive, mystical, etc.) or a structured program such as the Book of Hours. Scholars have attempted to bring some order to the genre by "rescuing" manuscripts that do seem to have a thematic unity from its midst. Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards's recent work "Towards the Taxonomy of Manuscript Assemblages" proposes looking at manuscript construction to concretize the differences between "anthology," "miscellany," and "commonplace book," all of which "have tended to be used interchangeably… with misleading imprecision."[32] Codicological clues help answer the defining question—is the book shaped by a unifying principle? If so, the term "anthology" reflects this thematic unity; if not, "miscellany" captures the scrappy nature of text-collection. Even so, however, some books are neither anthology nor miscellany, but are instead "family books"—books with a unifying principle that is not thematic. The Findern manuscript is this sort of "'family' book created in a particular place over time to reflect the literary tastes and literary activities of individuals in a shared environment."[33] As a result of this methodology, the broader category "devotional miscellany" becomes a wasteland, a garbage heap of materials out of which manuscripts are rescued if they show signs of purposeful design. What is left of the genre, then, is a body (of manuscripts)

[32] Boffey and Edwards, "Towards a Taxonomy of Manuscript Assemblages," 264.
[33] Boffey and Edwards, 267.

without meaning, and the genre itself becomes devoid of scholarly potential. Attempts to rescue the "devotional miscellany" only further illustrate its inadequacy as a genre.

While the field struggles to find reasonable, equitable ways to sort through these epistemological quandaries, it remains a fraught place to do the sort of scholarship that focuses on realizable medieval readers. Bibliologia's 2018 collection of essays, *Collecting, Organizing and Transmitting Knowledge: Miscellanies in Late Medieval Europe*, opens with Marilena Maniaci's historiography of these terms, offering an analysis of the current state of the art. The "variety of terms and definitions still employed to refer to medieval manuscripts containing more than one single text ('miscellanies', 'one-volume libraries', multiple-text manuscripts', 'plural-text codices', and other more or less creative expressions) visibly reflects the lack of a clear identification of the corresponding research field." Maniaci offers a veiled criticism of the approach forwarded by Boffey, Edwards, and others, which lays emphasis on "the alleged 'organizing principles' that govern their [combinations of texts'] association."[34] Nearly half of the articles in the collection open with similar queries—what defines a miscellany, and what intellectual weight is placed on this term and its cognates? The collection questions the assumptions made not only about the terms used but, more importantly, about the scholarly value of manuscripts that are included or excluded when these terms are sharpened and refined. Maniaci notes an overall shift in the field from "content to materiality, which in the last few years has been the subject of important theoretical reflection, developed in parallel and independently by various authors and with reference to different contexts." By shifting back from the textual to the material to shape and define book genres, these studies are (re)turning to a

[34] Maniaci, "Miscellaneous Reflections on the Complexity of Medieval Manuscripts," 11.

productive method for acknowledging both the complexity and the unity of manuscripts made for daily life.

Removing Simple Books from a conversation utterly focused on scribal intent and textual unity allows them to present to us what is important about them—their materiality. By first acknowledging them as complete objects, we then move forward to more accurately discuss the intentions humans had in their making and in their use, in how their texts came to fill their pages. Beginning with human intentionality has generated valuable resources (catalogues, lists of incipits, relationships between different versions of texts), yet it is beginning to reach its limits of productive thinking. A shift toward analyzing and theorizing the material illustrates this need in the field, and, in a sense, so does the creative assemblage of terms that the field has generated. Perhaps some manuscripts *are* best described as "one-volume libraries" while others elicit the feel of a "plural text codex." To briefly summarize what we learn from Harman's approach to materiality from Chapter 1, all objects have a *real object self* that can only be approached allusively; that is, all objects are poems. Where a classification-minded approach finds its barriers, a poetry-minded one finds fuel for productive analysis.

Within "devotional miscellany" research to date, we have already begun to see glimpses of the Simple Book reader. Michael Sargent's contribution to *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres* provides an overview of the broadly-conceived category "Minor Devotional Writings."[35] Sargent clarifies the name of the category by explaining that

[35] Edwards, *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*. Prose material is divided into confusingly narrow and broad categories; as the subtitle suggests, the emphasis is on named entities ("major authors and genres"). Named authors who receive chapters include Richard Rolle ("and related works," as many anonymous works have been attributed to Rolle over the years, by medieval and modern scholar alike), Nicholas Love, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Mandeville, John Trevisa, Chaucer, and William Caxton. *Ancrene Wisse*, a work deemed significant despite its anonymous authorship, is awarded its own chapter, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* shares a chapter with Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*. Secular genres include "Historical Prose," "The Romances," "Medical Prose," and "Utilitarian and Scientific Prose," while religious material is divided as

these works are hardly "minor" in terms of scale or interest. "Some of the works described here," he writes, "are among the longest, and some among the most popular, of prose writings in Middle English."[36] Where the classification of "minor" does seem to fit, he argues, is in their construction. They are "derivative: virtually all of them are either direct translations of works originally written in other languages, or compilations made up from such works and earlier English writings." Sargent proceeds to outline the various ways in which modern methods of organizing texts—check-lists, catalogues, and editions—fail to capture all the texts that could fit into this amorphous category.[37] His chapter therefore focuses on what is currently known; that is, which of the minor devotional works have indeed received attention.

In the impressive array of texts presented by Sargent, manuscripts resembling Simple Book texts are mentioned twice, once toward the beginning of the chapter, where he suggests that scholarly tools fail these "most truly minor of the minor devotional writings." Scholarly neglect of these "most truly minor" works, "despite the fact that many of the unedited devotional writings are not long or common enough to be individually significant," is a true pity, as "the sheer number of such short confessions, prayers, exhortations, and meditations makes them important to any literary history of the period."[38] Further in, he describes compilations of Middle English mystic writings and Latin translations; these manuscripts "tended to be personal, and to reflect the concerns of the compiler or the person for whom the compilation was made." Some manuscripts are nothing more than "incipient compilations," but the occasional manuscript's "compilation transcended its limitation as a collection of snippets from other works and took on

follows: "Minor Devotional Writings," "Sermon Literature," "Wycliffite Prose," and "Works of Religious Instruction."

[36] Sargent, "Minor Devotional Writings," 147.

[37] Sargent, 147–48. Pages 163-175 include a thorough list of textual editions and studies.

[38] Sargent, 148–49.

an identity and literary form of its own." The *Pore Caitif* is listed as one such example, "and some of these are among the most popular and aesthetically pleasing of the minor devotional writings." Here is our glimpse of the Simple Book—it is a cohesive manuscript in its own right, one that "tends to be personal" in the sense that it engages the reader both through its materiality and in its narrative structuring. The Simple Book reader is one that wants a personal-use book, possibly custom-made, and wants texts which offer a holistic devotional "program." Limited by the approach of the volume, we see a tiny snapshot of the Simple Book and its potential readers. Viewed through the distorted lens of text-based organizing principles, we don't see the Simple Book or its readers emerging in his chapter as an entity, nor do we necessarily get the sense that these two cited portions are intending to refer to the same body of works. We can only find Simple Books here by mining for them after the fact.

Another instance in which the Simple Book's cohesion is recognized as noteworthy among other devotional manuscripts occurs in Margaret Connolly's article on "Six Devotional Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century London." She places one of our Simple Books—Rylands English MS 85—into an unusual grouping of manuscripts, collected based on "their contents which, though by no means uniform, seem to derive from a common stock of material which has been selected, reproduced, and reordered, according to the particular context of each volume."[39] They vary in size, shape, and codicological structuring, and what unites them is the union of three texts, titled by Connolly as "The Twelve Lettyngis of Prayer," "A Short Declaration of Belief," and "Eight Points of Charity."[40] Of the six manuscripts, Rylands 85 shows the compiler

[39] Connolly, "Books for the 'Helpe of Euery Persoone Þat Þenkiþ to Be Saued': Six Devotional Anthologies from Fifteenth-Century London," 170.

[40] It is worth noting that "Eight Points of Charity" is not provided a rubricated title in the text (see folio 25v); instead, the text begins with a two-line blue capital T, and the headings above each page read "of diu*er*se degrees [verso] of loue [recto]"

took particular "care to design a layout that will facilitate the location and identification of material" by supplying a rubricated *incipit* and a two-line capital letter at the start of each text—an identifying feature of the Simple Book genre.[41] The other five manuscripts also demonstrate this same "intention to design a devotional 'textbook,'" but each fails to provide the same level of cohesion that is present in Rylands 85, in which "the design and purpose of the compilation is more coherently and fully worked out."[42] Our Simple Book in particular illustrates a marriage between the book's layout, ink choices, and the text's indicated purpose; while the other manuscripts offer their own experiences of these three texts, the experience offered by the Simple Book is similar to that of a devotional "textbook" for lay readers. Within the context of Connolly's work, it is the Simple Book that provides the clearest picture of a potential reader—a devout man or woman who appreciated both the opportunity to better understand the basic principles of the Christian faith and a clear articulation of how they are to best go about their devotional reading.

**A Genre and A Community of Readers**

We have seen glimpses of the Simple Book and its community of readers in "devotional miscellany" scholarship, just as we have been able to define the mindset they encouraged in one another by examining Simple Books against the Book of Hours. Repeatedly, the Simple Book offers itself as a cohesive genre, one that is primarily physically determined and whose literary aspects reaffirm the meaning we read from those physical features. The Simple Book is made for readers—it is a thoughtful guide, a devotional companion. It offers collections of texts which are united in their didactic purpose while it instructs readers *how* to engage best with these didactic

[41] Connolly, 173.
[42] Connolly, 172, 175.

works. Because these books contain their readers, that readership always exists—when we speculate about Simple Book readers, where we cannot know them historically, we can know who they were from evidence that is found within the pages of the books themselves.

We do know a little about who these readers, in reality, were. In her conclusion, Connolly notes that Rylands 85 "seems always to have been in lay hands; it passed through a variety of owners in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, all presumably lay, including 'Johanni Ade,' 'Wyllam Vicary,' and 'Margett Kyghtley."[43] She further writes that many devotional compilations were enjoyed by lay and clerical readers alike, and suggests that perhaps the six manuscripts she writes about indicate some central metropolitan book construction. This is possible, and recalls our own imagined London bookmakers from Chapter 2. In concluding this chapter, I want to offer Ryan Perry's recent suggestion that, perhaps what we are seeing here is evidence of shared access to texts through the charitable library at the Guildhall.[44] John Colop, one of the London figures involved in the production of common profit books, is linked by association to the 1425 establishment of the Guildhall library. This library represented "not only a new form of charity, but also a new relationship between people and books, providing access to materials otherwise not easily available to humbler people, even to writings disapproved of by certain of the church authorities."[45] Perhaps what we are seeing in Simple Books evidence of a quite literal community of readers, those bound by association to the Guildhall. Either as library books or as books copied from those in the library, Simple Books are bound by their purpose to be put to good, careful use by readers who might not otherwise have such an opportunity.

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[43] Connolly, 179.

[44] Queen's University Belfast, 7 March 2019. Paper title: "'[M]ade for a comyn profite': John Colop's miscellany and cultures of devotional book production in fifteenth century London." Many thanks to Perry for providing a copy of his presentation.

[45] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books,'" 270.

# CHAPTER 4: FINDING SIMPLE BOOKS

> One needs to reverse or reduce the catalogue's sense of the static, and with it, the current proliferation of detail that assumes specialized user-groups. Cataloguers need to rethink their conception of 'basic widely useful information'. And they also need to investigate a less constrained and universalized format so that they can return to the books the dynamism of their making and subsequent existence. These forces are, after all, what constructed the object that currently inhabits a library shelf. In contrast to the modern profusion of descriptive detail, that dynamic development of books and their history ought to be recorded. Yet simultaneously, within what by present standards will be the resulting fragmentation of information—the potential division of the instant book into 'parts'—a care alien to contemporary cataloguing will be required to ensure that the presentation is holistic and integrated.
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> Ralph Hanna, "Manuscript Catalogues and Book History," 57-8

Finding Simple Books is ongoing and rewarding, as the exercise of finding them, and the meanings found within them, continue to lead to clearer understandings of both our own scholarly lives and the devotional lives of fifteenth-century readers. Ralph Hanna's article critiquing the conventional manuscript catalogue, first mentioned in this dissertation's introduction, concludes with his suggestions for ways to make the catalogue work for a variety of users, as I cite above. Manuscripts are dynamic objects, ones whose construction and subsequent lives have led them to take a variety of unique forms. When a catalogue asks manuscripts to align themselves to a rigid form or checklist, some manuscripts no doubt appear problematic, messy, uncooperative. Above, Hanna advocates for the reverse process—what, asks the catalogue to the manuscript, is interesting or important about you? What ought I to report about you, and how can I best do so? Such an approach would certainly do well by the Simple Book, whose contents should no longer be described as "miscellaneous." Simple Books would find, in their descriptions, a commonality with one another that traditional catalogue descriptions render invisible.

In this concluding chapter, I offer two ways in which this dissertation has the potential to move Simple Book research forward, beyond what is written here. In the first section, I briefly suggest ways in which this research project has used, and will continue to use, conventional research tools in unconventional ways, as well as offering some perspectives on emerging and growing resources. In one case, I explore the failure of a once-promising research "experiment," which creatively joined the worlds of manuscript studies and digital social media. In the second half, I look at ways the Simple Book suggests further research—avenues of discovery that have emerged as the writing of this dissertation came to its own natural close. In many ways, the act of finding Simple Books is linked to what the Simple Book allows us to find within it; researching the Simple Book's potential links to common profit books, for instance, or the existence of a medieval German parallel format, will undoubtedly add to the body of fourteen manuscripts found to date.

**New and Repurposed Finding Aids**

The experience of finding and working with Simple Books has often asked me to use traditional research tools in novel ways. This dissertation opened with a short narrative of the circuitous path that this research has carved, as Simple Books came to my attention gradually and often when I least anticipated their discovery. A footnote to a textual edition would mention in passing the presence of one particular prayer in a "remarkably small" manuscript, or a catalogue description of a "small volume" whose contents were "attributed to Wycliffe" would strike resonance with a Simple Book manuscript I was currently working on. Eventually, requested images would appear in my inbox, confirming the unmistakable Simple Book look. Taking on a

truly materials-first approach has proved productive, and the subsequent defamiliarization of traditional author-text approaches has allowed me to use these tools in unconventional ways.

By now, the reader of this dissertation should not be surprised to hear that catalogues offer a perspective wholly at odds with the Simple Book. Finding Simple Books in catalogues has often proved most successful when the catalogue "fails." Catalogue entries record ambivalent details in places where manuscripts "misbehave" by containing untitled works, or by including contents which appear, but are not in fact, Wycliffite. As Hanna describes, cataloguers aim to be objective in their reporting, laboring under the assurance that their reporting "stands as 'objective' or 'authentic'/'truthful' by virtue of having had removed from it any marks of critical interpretation."[1] Simple Books cannot often offer much by way of clear answers to many of the questions standard cataloguing asks of them, and some tell-tale signs of potential Simple Books—vague or generic comments provided in place of specific names and titles—have emerged over the course of my study. For instance, many Simple Books' contents are summarized as "Various Religious Tracts" or "Prayers and Meditations." While these are quite broad terms, they convey that this is the most clarity the cataloguer was able to ascertain from the manuscript itself—simply put, clear, recognizable titles are not provided. As I discussed in my chapter on the *Pore Caitif*, this is a hallmark feature of the Simple Book. Simple Books are also described as containing texts "falsely ascribed to Wycliffe."[2] This descriptor indicates once again that, most probably, the text itself does not include a reference to Wycliffe but was rather read as potentially "anti-mainstream" by early twentieth-century cataloguers. As I have discussed throughout this work, the contents of Simple Books often include concepts and vocabulary

[1] Hanna, "Manuscript Catalogues and Book History," 51.
[2] See, for instance, this description of Rylands 85 as "a collection of treatises attributed to John Wycliffe but of doubtful authorship." Two clues are provided here—the false attribution to Wycliffe and the issue of problematic authorship; https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/inthebigynnyng/manuscript/ms85/ (accessed 17 April 2019).

similar to those employed in the writings of Wycliffe and his direct followers. Where catalogues could be said to "fail," they also inform, albeit perhaps not in the manner originally intended.

The tools, approaches, and resources suggested here offer excellent supplements to the informative yet outdated catalogue. Seemingly, the answer to the problem of how to do research of this less conventional variety—that which does not follow the chronology of a particular text—is to employ a host of unconventional finding strategies. Where the catalogue may have been the starting place for manuscript research of the past centuries, this century is one that is marked by openness to hybridity and interconnected fragments, one that resists a single starting place. While we may have lost the safe, securing foundation of the catalogue, we have instead gained this lively mesh of interrelated methodologies and their various tools.[3] As a recent example of what "mesh-like" manuscript research can look like, Henrike Lähnemann in 2018 writes of her identification of some fifty manuscripts produced by fifteenth-century Cistercian nuns. This work began slowly, with two identified manuscripts at the Bodleian, and took on a life of its own. On the advice of a fellow scholar, Lähnemann teamed with Hans-Walter Stork, who had identified a group of five manuscripts which turned out to belong to the same convent as Lähnemann's books. "Further identifications of Medingen manuscripts snowballed from there," she writes, as additional manuscripts were subsequently discovered by both herself and others through photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum, a catalogue of musical

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[3] The concept of the ecological "mesh" is thoroughly introduced in Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, and it is briefly introduced in a three-part video series accessible through Morton's blog entry, "The Mesh." Blogspot. *Ecology Without Nature* (blog), May 20, 2009. https://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/2009/05/mesh.html (last accessed 11 April 2019). All objects constitute a mesh that is infinite and beyond concept; it is a complex situation, a snare, in which there is no definite background and no definite foreground. I find this a useful way of conceiving of an organic research methodology which prioritizes no particular tool over another, in which, to paraphrase Morton, there are no clear starting points, nor even linear clusters of starting points. Each point of the mesh is both the center and the edge of a starting point. Similarly, there is no clear starting point, no clear trajectory, within the lively mesh of scholars, tools, manuscripts, data sets, and so forth.

notations, newly digitized materials, an article in the Medingen-based *Uelzener Allgemeine Zeitung*, and a conference.[4] One missing actor in this narrative—the traditional manuscript catalogue—is unsurprisingly not missed, replaced by the interconnected mesh of scholars, manuscripts, photographs, local news articles, and any number of minor yet critical characters.

Two movements in the digitization of manuscripts are working in tandem and add complexity to the open, organic, idealized research narrative I propose above. The first, a progressive movement, is toward digitization and the open access to these images. Several libraries are working to digitize their holdings, and many are making these digital images available online. The entireties of Rylands English MS 85 and Rylands English MS 87, for instance, are available for viewing via the library's website.[5] The John Rylands Library's digitization and subsequent access is not an exception; as Peter Robinson writes, "few weeks go by without an announcement, that library A is putting a new collection of manuscripts online."[6] The Vatican itself is still in the process of opening its once closely guarded manuscript collections to any users with an internet connection via the Digital Vatican Library, or DigiVatLib.[7] Digitization is a large enough movement to have warranted, by some, the title "revolution," though the full nature of what exactly it is revolutionizing within *scholarship* has yet to be determined.[8]

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[4] Lähnemann, "From Devotional Aids to Antiquarian Objects: The Prayer Books of Medingen," 48–49.
[5] For Rylands English MS 85, see https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/6d6z46 (last accessed 11 April 2019); for Rylands English MS 87, see https://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/hr7h14 (last accessed 11 April 2019).
[6] Robinson, "The Digital Revolution in Scholarly Editing," 182.
[7] https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/ (last accessed 12 April 2019).
[8] Robinson in particular argues against the use of this term, as digital collections are precisely that—collections, not new editions or works of analysis. Digital imaging projects "look like nothing so much as the vast microfilming endeavours of the last century: updated to glossy digital, usually packaged in manners which put the creating and funding institutions in the best possible light, but still nothing more than the raw material of scholarship. As Edwards argued, the digital world only makes these more accessible. No revolution in that." Robinson, "The Digital Revolution in Scholarly Editing," 183.

While digital access to pre-determined manuscripts is growing, the access to digital images, either via microfilm or higher-quality color images through email transfer, is also growing, albeit in *cost* to the individual researcher. When libraries choose their digitization subjects, their choices are either determined by popularity—typically pretty manuscripts or those whose historical import is clear and significant—or based on the interests of those providing the external funding. Simple Books rarely make the cut. According to their pricing sheet, a fully digitized, research-quality copy of Simple Book Harley 2339—126 folia—runs £114.82.[9] If a microfilm copy exists, those cost a mere £16.55 per roll, though, as is true with digital images, only high-demand manuscripts tend to have a microfilm version available, and the library warns of long delays due to "a large backlog with microfilm digitization." Cambridge University Library's fee schedule is similarly costly.[10]

The result of these two forces moving in tandem is to sharply limit, to create institutional boundaries around the potential archive. Scholars are less able to define their own archives when thousands of images of selected manuscripts are made available online and yet those not included are made prohibitively costly. Because I was unable to make an additional trip to the British Library myself while finishing this dissertation, fellow medievalist J. E. Chris Anderson kindly offered to take a portion of his own travel time for the Simple Book cause and send some images my way. Along with the manuscript images I received from Anderson, I also received a photograph of a "restricted special material" slip, which had been inserted into the pages of both

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[9] Pricing calculated based on the information provided here: https://www.bl.uk/digitisation-services/pricing (last accessed 12 April 2019).

[10] Each microfilm roll costs £75, and the first 1-2 images of each manuscript run £18 each (the lowest cost per image is at the 100-image scale, where each image is £3.50). Images for all of Simple Book Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.55, at 155 folia, would cost £1,085. http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/digital-content-unit/pricing (last accessed 12 April 2019).

Harley MS 953 and Harley MS 2322 (see Image 21). Throughout this dissertation, I have argued for the importance of the physicality of the manuscript to the reading of its text. For the Simple Book, and for the undoubtedly dozens of other devotional genres waiting to be identified in the sea of "devotional miscellanies," visual access is a more essential finding tool than a list of incipits. Though the digital file will never replace the real physical object, access to at least a few representative images is essential to ensure scholars are not artificially limited in the construction of their primary archive. As A. S. G. Edwards cautions in a recent editorial piece, the computer screen displays all manuscripts equally; it is impossible to get a sense of scale when images can be zoomed in or zoomed out and are often displayed to fit the screen rather than in their native size. "It is also difficult," he continues, "to discern distinctions between materials such as parchment and paper, and between different textures of ink. Often we can't tell what the overall structure of the work is like, how many leaves it has, and whether it contains any cancel leaves; and we can rarely be confident that the colours have been reproduced accurately."[11] That is, the image plays an important function as a sort of "visual catalogue" for the real manuscript itself.

***Image 21*** *"Restricted Special Material" slip in the British Library Reading Room, delivered with Harley 953 and Harley 232*

[11] Edwards, "Back to the Real?" One cautionary tale occurs in E. J. Revell's prologue to his work on Palestinian pointing in Biblical texts. He affirms that, in all but a few notable exceptions, he made repeated examination of the actual fragments themselves, as this form of pointing is often obscured by the quality of microfilm reproduction. He once "had the shame of discovering that a dot recorded from a photograph as original pointing was in fact a

In 2015, Oxford's Bodleian library undertook an experiment in this sort of "visual cataloguing" by opening the doors of social media to the world of manuscript studies. As part of hosting the bi-annual Early Book Society conference, Judith Siefring (Head of Digital Research at the Bodleian Library, Oxford) and Daniel Wakelin (Jeremy Griffiths Professor of Medieval English Palaeography and Fellow of St. Hilda's College, Oxford) instructed conference participants to upload images to the Bodleian Special Collections group hosted on Flickr at https://www.flickr.com/groups/bodspecialcollections/, providing the hashtag #DIYdigitization. Some guidelines were put in place—users were to still adhere to the rules of the Reading Room—but the overall aim was to put the digitization of manuscripts into the hands of reading room users. After a rash of productive uploading, tagging, hash-tagging of images, as well as a series of queries for use posted to the group's discussion forum, the group went silent after a few months. With the exception of a few Simple Book images I myself uploaded earlier this year, no new additions have been made post-2015. What began as a promising enterprise for sharing images of manuscripts deemed relevant and interesting by scholars "on the ground" ended quietly and without ceremony. While there are many possible explanations for this soft death, from technical issues (the source of some complaint in the discussion forum) to the ambiguity of library guidelines concerning the sharing of images through this format, one possibility emerges as the primary reason—researchers were hesitant to share what they saw as their own research insights with a potentially unlimited audience. Perhaps in future scholars would be more likely to upload photos of manuscripts *after* their findings have been published, although this is unlikely to occur.

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spot of ink on the glass in which the fragment was kept" (xi-xii). Revell, *Biblical Texts with Palestinian Pointing and Their Accents*.

**Further Simple Book Findings**

This dissertation has focused on the difficulty, and the rewards, of defining the Simple Book genre, and so the main work on the Simple Book is just at its genesis. Here I offer the next steps for Simple Book research as they have emerged over the course of writing. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and it is meant to suggest the vitality of continued interest in object-oriented manuscript studies at large.

Since the identification of Illinois 80's physical similarity to common profit books Harley 993 and Harley 2336, the connection between the common profit book dissemination scheme and the Simple Book has suggested itself for further research. Simple Books find themselves intertwined in three intersecting threads of inquiry—Archbishop Reginald Pecock's reading program for vernacular spiritual development, the spread of lollard views through banned books, and the common profit book scheme. Kirsty Campbell's work on Pecock suggests the rich and potentially treacherous context in which Simple Books were created and disseminated. As a response to the perceived threat of heresy spreading through unauthorized and dangerous books in English, Pecock suggested that the right kind of vernacular books could provide an orthodox solution to the problem of heresy. Too many vernacular books which oversimplified the core principles of the Christian faith were available to lay readers, he argued, and these books left lay people and less educated priests vulnerable to false influence.[12] For this reason, he proposed a multi-book system, "manuals that are to be read at different stages of the learning process," to properly instruct lay readers.[13] His works, he argued, were sorely needed; just as a preacher held a duty to educating his parishioners, so too did "a teacher to his pupils, a master to his apprentice… parents to their children," and the materials to provide these educations were

[12] Kirsty Campbell, "Reginald Pecock and the Religious Education of the Laity in Fifteenth-Century England," 56.
[13] Kirsty Campbell, 53.

limited and faulty.[14] In addition to teaching the Christian essentials, Campbell clarifies, Pecock's book series works on "training their minds at the same time as he passes on religious knowledge." From these summaries of his work, a picture of Pecock's ideal readers emerges—their minds are untrained and are therefore easily led astray by books which over-simplify or misrepresent essential teachings. However, their minds are capable of rigorous thought and must be trained, as they in turn must teach either parishioners or their own children. They are eager to learn; in fact, their eagerness seems to be part of the problem, as they can access potentially dangerous books. Where Archbishop Arundel seeks to remove all dangerous books from circulation, Pecock wishes to replace them with appropriate reading material to curb the spread of heretical ideas.

The relationship between Pecock's books, the books he sought to replace for their dangerous simplicity, and common profit books was first sketched by Wendy Scase, and has most recently been taken up by Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry.[15] Common profit books were made possible by a small contingent of Londoners who left bequests for charitable giving in their wills, and while none of these men were wealthy (Robert Holland, who financed Simple Book Harley 993 and is recorded in this book's common profit colophon, was a shearman, and Lambeth 472's colophon names grocer John Killum), some were well-connected. John Colop not only financed his own common profit book, CUL Ff.6.31, but he was also executor to several other wills which produced common profit books. Moreover, Pecock and Colop worked in common with John Carpenter, whose funds established the Guildhall library. Perry has recently suggested a link between the common profit books and the Guildhall library. Common profit books, much like Simple Books, do not suffer from the sort of "exemplar poverty" first

[14] Kirsty Campbell, 51.
[15] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books'"; Kelly and Perry, "Devotional Cosmopolitanism in Fifteenth-Century England."

suggested to be the cause of textual miscellaneity in devotional manuscripts by Ralph Hanna in 1996.[16] Perry argues that the existence of the Guildhall would have certainly provided a rich body of exemplars from which to pull devotional material for the production of common profit books.[17] Was the Simple Book, too, associated with the Guildhall library? Can the study of Simple Book hands reveal connections to the makers of common profit books?

Several scholars have called for the study of common profit books, as well as all copies of the *Pore Caitif*, in relation to lollardy.[18] Some common profit books, as with some Simple Books, contain material that has, at times, been labeled by scholars as "lollard." Simple Books and common profit books certainly reflect what Kelly and Perry call fifteenth-century London's appetite for "devotional cosmopolitanism"—an approach to devotional texts that work to "*accommodate* theological difference to particular religious positions."[19] These intersecting threads of connections provide a host of potentially groundbreaking avenues of research for the Simple Book and for fifteenth-century devotional life at large.

Much more needs to be done with the phrase "common profit" and its connections to the Simple Book. As Kellie Robertson writes, the "notion of 'common profit' (or communal welfare) was one of the most politically expedient phrases of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, frequently found in both labor ordinances and heresy legislation."[20] The Middle English variants in particular, *comoun profyt* and *commune profit*, can trace their history to the

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[16] Hanna III, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts*, 31. Since this phrase's first introduction, it has been oft-repeated by scholars of devotional miscellanies as a way to explain why manuscripts were constructed in a "miscellaneous" manner. The argument runs thus: Miscellanies contain an assortment of texts not because they are intended to be compilations but rather because these were the only texts readily available to these stationers.

[17] Perry, "'[M]ade for a comyn profite'," Queen's University Belfast, 7 March 2019. See also Chapter 3 note 44.

[18] Scase, "'Common-Profit Books'"; Brady, "Lollard Sources of 'The Pore Caitif'"; Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif*. See in particular Somerset, p. 39 n.32: "Much more needs to be said about the *Pore Caitif*'s lollard affiliations, but I will not treat them in this book."

[19] Kelly and Perry, "Devotional Cosmopolitanism in Fifteenth-Century England," 379.

[20] Robertson, *The Laborer's Two Bodies: Literary and Legal Productions in Britain, 1350-1500*, 10.

“classical concept of *res publica* that viewed the public good as a function of an individual’s responsibility to the public.”[21] Within the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, variations of this phrase were deployed by Edward III to justify post-plague labor laws, in moralizing sermons criticizing greed in landowners, as justification both for and against taxation, to organize and record the history of the 1381 rebellion (as well as subsequent labor-based uprisings), to organize guild labor, and to justify biblical translations in Wycliffite writings.[22] Simple Books are inherently bound up in the concept of the “common profit,” as their format and contents work together to make themselves whole, complete collections of the essentials of Christian faith, to be read and used without need for external resources, by whoever might find the need, men and women alike. They are very much in line with what Robertson calls the Wycliffite effect of turning “common profit” into “something akin to ‘community standards’; moreover, it comes to be associated with the development of a lay (vernacular) hermeneutics, a hermeneutics developed in opposition to a clerical Latin exegesis.”[23] While Simple Books are not strictly a part of biblical hermeneutics, they work to connect lay readership with biblical essentials. They are active, responding participants in the social movement for vernacular devotional book education.

Simple Books were certainly created for, and read by, women as well as men, and the Simple Book’s connection to female scholars and readers is a keenly-felt absence in Simple Book scholarship to date. Only two copies of Dame Eleanor Hull’s translation of a set of Anglo-Norman meditations for the seven days of the week are known to exist to date, and one is in Simple Book Illinois 80.[24] Portions of the *Pore Caitif* are repurposed sections of the *Ancrene*

[21] Robertson, 82.
[22] Robertson, 83–97.
[23] Robertson, 97.
[24] Barratt, “Dame Eleanor Hull: The Translator at Work.”

*Wisse*.[25] The format of the Simple Book itself is well-suited to a busy domestic life; its margins can handle frequent and rough use, its size suitable to be held while nursing an infant or to be slipped into an apron sleeve or bag. Simple Book research has also often coincided with the work of Nicholas Orme on educational books, particularly those for children. Each of these suggestions is brief, yet the implications for further findings are rich. How were domestic spaces designed for women married to men such as John Colop? What expectations were placed upon them as mothers and as keepers of domestic spaces? How were they educated, and would they have been expected to teach basic reading to their children? Were women as well as men expected to teach their children, as Pecock writes? The visual similarity between Simple Books and those devotional manuscripts created by fifteenth-century Medingen nuns suggests there is much more to be done with potentially gendered aspects of these small volumes' visual rhetoric.

[25] Brady, "The 'Pore Caitif': An Introductory Study."

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Pre-1650 Illinois MS 0080

British Library Additional MS 10596

British Library Harley MS 953

British Library Harley MS 993

British Library Harley MS 2322

British Library Harley MS 2336

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.31

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.34

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.55

Cambridge Trinity College MS B.14.53

John Rylands English MS 85

John Rylands English MS 87

Oxford Bodleian Bodley MS 3

Oxford Bodleian Rawley MS C.209

**Near Outliers**

Bodleian Bodley 789

Bodleian Bodley 938

Bodleian Bodley 978

Bodleian Douce 25

Bodleian Lyell 27

Bodleian Lyell 29

Bodleian Rawlinson C.69

British Library Harley 2335

British Library Harley 6615

Cambridge St. John's College G.28 (MS 195)

Cambridge Trinity College B.10.12

Cambridge Trinity College B.14.45

Lambeth Palace Library MS 472

Lambeth Palace Library MS 484

Lambeth Palace Library MS 541

Westminster School MS 3

**Other Manuscripts Cited**

British Library Additional MS 37049

British Library Egerton MS 2781 (Neville of Hornby Hours)

British Library Harley MS 2253

Cambridge Corpus Christi MS 53

Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum MS 36-1950

Cambridge University Library MS Kk.1.6

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.31

Cambridge University Library MS Ff.6.35

Dole Bibliothèque municipale MS 15

The Hague Koninklijke Bibliotheek Ms. 132 G 38

Det Kongelige Bibliotek Thott 143 2º (The Copenhagen Psalter)

Morgan Library MS G.50 (De Lisle Hours)

Morgan Library MS M.700 (De Bois Hours)

Rouen Bibliothèque municipale MS 299

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## APPENDIX A: SIMPLE BOOK PAGE SIZES (TO SCALE)

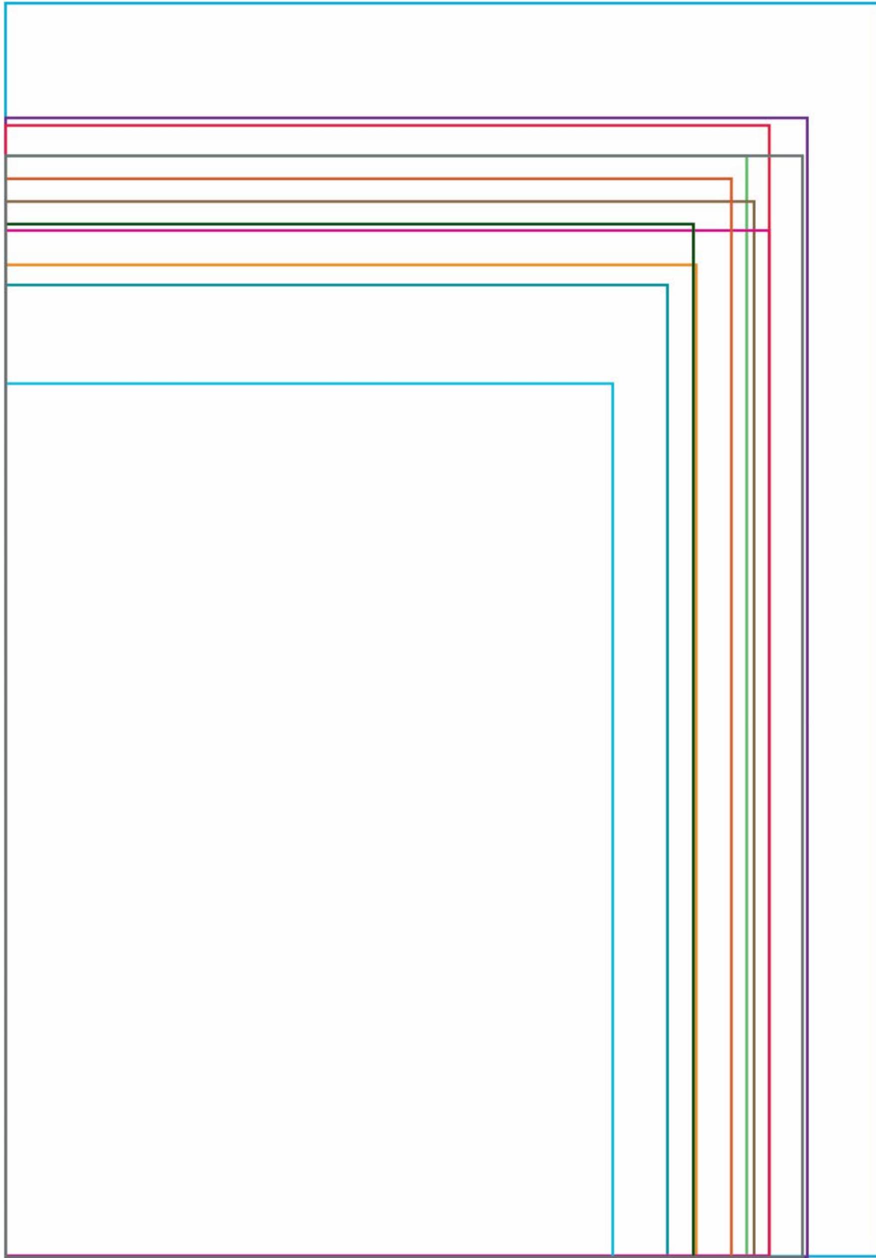

***Figure 4*** *All Simple Book page sizes, presented in actual milimeter measurements. Created by author.*

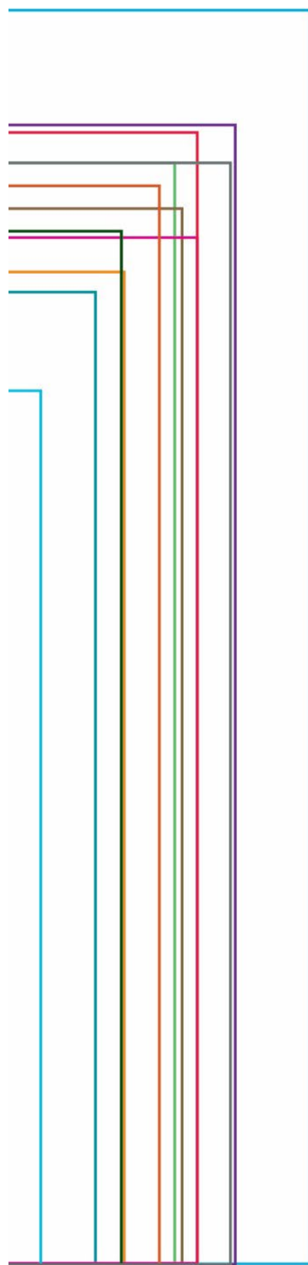


***Figure 4 (continued)*** *All Simple Book page sizes, presented in actual milimeter measurements. Created by author.*

## APPENDIX B: PRE-1650 ILLINOIS MS 80 (ILLINOIS 80)

Illinois 80 is a small manuscript, measuring approximately 130mm x 90mm. It was rebound in the mid-twentieth century by D. Evetts in New York, as commissioned, by the University of Illinois. Five paper flyleaves were added in what appears to be the 19th century. These flyleaves, pencil-labeled in a later hand as A-E and constructed as a single sheet followed by two bifolia, provide a litany of the saints in an elaborately cursive hand.

The manuscript itself is composed of fifteen quires, where quires 1-14 are regular quires of eight leaves each. Quire 15 (f. 113-122) is a ten-page gathering with gutter reinforcement of the outside pages to the internal quaternion between pages 113-114 and 121-122, and is the only quire with anomalous composition in the manuscript. The quires consist of the following pages: Q1 (1-8); Q2 (9-16); Q3 (17-24); Q5 (25-32); Q6 (33-40); Q7 (41-48); Q8 (49-56); Q9 (65-72); Q10 (73-80); Q11 (81-88); Q12 (89-96); Q13 (97-104); Q14 (105-112); Q15 (113-122).

On folio 122v, a sixteenth-century cursive hand has added a brief summary of Illinois 80's contents, calling it a collection of prayers and meditations set forth in English. A few top-margin comments scattered throughout the manuscript are written in this same hand and, in all cases, have been trimmed to illegibility, suggesting that the manuscript's original size was slightly larger than its current size. As it is, the manuscript's text is still nicely demarked by marginal space, with the top margin measuring approximately 13mm, the exterior side 17mm, and bottom margins measuring 22mm. Additionally, none of the quire catchwords are trimmed; they are either clearly visible or lacking entirely.

Though all fifteen quires follow the same flesh/flesh, hair/hair construction throughout, the ruling patterns are slightly different between quires. Quire one is unique to the other fourteen

quires, being composed of twenty-four lines per page in contrast to later quires' twenty lines. Figure 5 illustrates that its ruling pattern, too, is more complex than later quires. Quires two and nine appear to have been ruled in pencil, as the ruling lines are absent or partially visible. Quire two is ruled to provide 22 lines of text per page, whereas quires 3-15 are composed of 20 lines per page. Quires 3-7, 10, and 12-15 provide the predominant ruling pattern, which is also the simplest (see Figure 6). Quires eight and eleven are ruled similarly, with the addition of one horizontal line dividing lines 10 and 11 (Figure 7). Quires 1-12, with the exception of the aforementioned quires 2 and 9, are ruled in a reddish-brown ink. Though quires 13-15 exhibit the same ruling patterns as previous quires, their ruling marks are grey, suggesting they are either lightly ruled in black ink or ruled with iron. Catchwords are present, and in some cases boxed in red, in the bottom margin on the last pages of all quires except one and four.

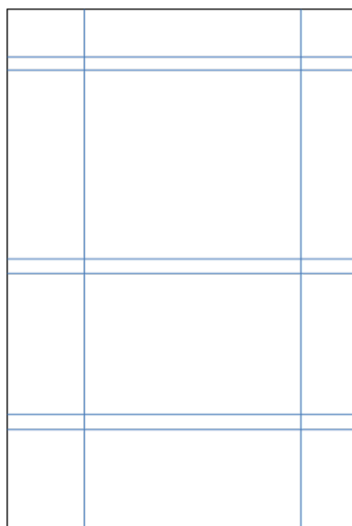
***Figure 5*** *Illinois 80 Quire 1 ruling pattern*

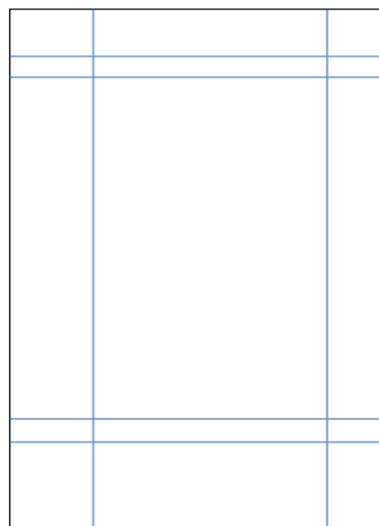
***Figure 6*** *Illinois 80 Quires 3-7, 10, 12-15 ruling pattern*

***Figure 7*** *Illinois 80 Quires 8, 11 ruling pattern*

The first line of writing is placed below the top ruled line, providing reasonable evidence that the manuscript aimed for a formal affect. The writing hangs in the middle of the ruled lines rather than resting its feet on the baseline. Albert Derolez describes the Gothic preference for

“enclosed areas,” so that any text is neatly bound within lines, to the extent that mid-page text is neatly encapsulated within its own top and bottom lines. Derolez continues to explain that “[t]his tendency is best observed in the most formal manuscripts, in Textualis Formata” (39). Illinois 80 does not maintain an accurate execution of consistently same-shaped letter forms and cannot be considered *formata*, but the text’s placement in the middle of the line does indicate a scribal attempt for an overall formal impression.

Abbreviation marks are consistently used throughout the manuscript, including the tironian *et* rather than the previously popular ampersand. Though the abbreviations used are borrowed from Latin, they are adapted for specifically English purposes. For example, the crossed stem of the first *p* in “p*ro*phitable” on folio 8r line 20 stands for “ro”, whereas the same crossed-stem *p* stands for “ar” in “p*ar*ti” on folio 12v, line 13. Similarly, a hooked shape above the letter *p* in “p*re*ier” represents “re,” where the same shape above *þ* in oþ*er*e stands for “er” (f. 8v ln. 3 & f. 12v ln. 15, respectively). A line above any letter stands in for *m* or *n*; see for example noūbre (abbreviating “noumbre”) on folio 75v line 6 and seīt (for “seint”) on folio 30r line 17. In every instance of the tironian symbol for *et*, the bar is crossed, which “seems to be specific to English Textualis Formata” (Derolez 97).

Illinois 80’s text is written in black ink, with the occasional use of red lettering for instructions and prefaces. Some sentences begin with a black letter filled in with red ink. Though the hand understandably shows some variations, it is generally classifiable as *littera minuscula gothica textualis semiquadrata media*. According to Derolez, a crucial first step in categorizing a gothic book hand is to closely examine the minims of *m* and *n*. Such an analysis will determine whether the text is *textualis quadrata*, *textualis semiquadrata*, *textualis rotunda*, or *textualis praescissa*. However, Illinois 80 consistently provides examples of the first three of these four

categories. A key feature that distinguishes *textualis quadrata* from *textualis rotunda* is quadrata's sharply-pointed rectangular shapes that start and end each minim, particularly visible in the formation of the letters *m* and *n*. In *textualis quadrata*, the minims on a lowercase *m* will appear relatively straight, and the corners of a quadrangular shape will be visible on the top and bottom of each minim, giving the letter a spiky or horned look. Illinois 80 provides all three variations of these fluid categories. In Image 22, the quadrangles of the last minim of letter *m* are particularly visible; the top minim is given a decidedly angular look as three of the four corners of each quadrangle are visible. Each minim also seems to stand upright without listing to either side. Although a quadrangular shape is visible within the minim heads and feet of a *textualis rotunda m* or *n*, its corners will be smoothed or blurred, giving an overall softened or swooped effect. Image 23 illustrates Illinois 80's version of the textualis rotunda m. Rather than sharp corners, the minims squeeze out gently into hairline curves that legate one minim to the next. The shafts of the minims themselves can appear curved, as if they are leaning slightly to the left. Notice how the tops of the minims in Image 24 appear to be resting on the preceding shafts. The curvaceous aspect of *rotunda* is particularly visible in the inside curve of the third minim's head. In Image 22, this same space (the inside top of the third minim) angles sharply into a corner. Conversely, the *m* of Image 23 flows seamlessly. *Semiquadratus* generally combines these traits; sometimes the minims are curved, and sometimes clear quadrangles are present. In Image 24, the second minim leans to the left, and though the third minim ends in a quadrangle, the inside top is curved as in *textualis rotunda*.

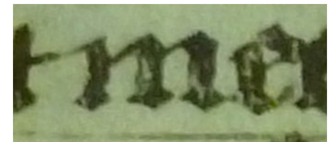

***Image 22*** *Illinois 80 fol. 33r*

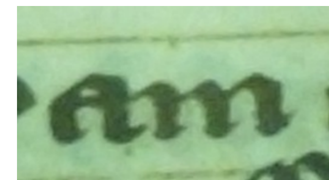

***Image 23*** *Illinois 80 fol. 73r*

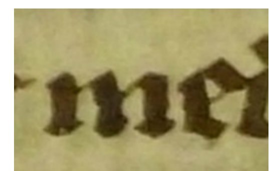

***Image 24*** *Illinois 80 fol. 12r*

With such variations in the treatment of *m* and *n*'s minims, how is a comprehensive classification possible? One possible way to resolve this problem within the current classification system is to presume that, since sometimes quadrangles are present and sometimes not, the hand is by default *semiquadratus*. However, the preponderance of definitions of *semiquadratus* do not designate it simply as a generalized medial form; Oeser, Bischoff, and Roberts each define *semiquadratus* as a form in which quadrangles appear on minim tops, with the minims ending in hairline strokes that connect to each other. Oeser writes,

> "Die im 'Semiquadratus' fehlende Brechung der auf der Zeile endenden Schäfte (besonders augenfällig beim 'm' und 'n') nähert [Variante VII],besonders wenn die *Schaftenden von 'm' und 'n' durch einen Haarstrich verbunden werden*, dem Textus rotundus und rechtfertigt so den Namen Semiquadratus (nicht voller Quadratus)" (*Beobachtungen* Oeser 410).

Similarly, Bischoff (whose definition Derolez cites) defines the minims of *semiquadratus* as being broken into quadrangles at the tops, with minim bottoms touching (Bischoff 129). Roberts follows course, distinguishing *semiquadratus* from the more formal *quadratus* by its "having wedges consistently only at the top; the minims often end with simple hairlines from the turn of the pen" (141). However, Illinois 80 appears to follow the exact opposite rule, where great attention is paid to the bottom of the minims rather than the top. The letters in Image 25 illustrate a concentrated effort to present regularly quadrangular shapes on the bottoms of the minims whereas the top minims resort, in places, to hairline legation. In her *Guide to Western Historical*

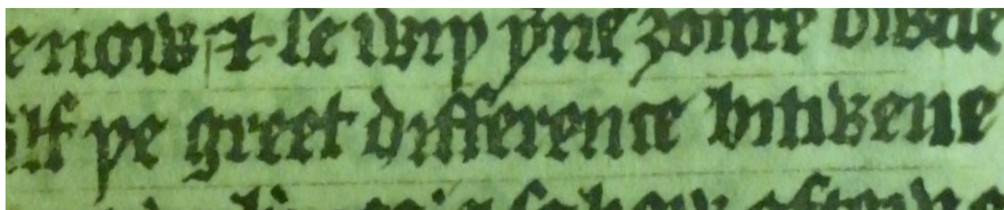

***Image 25*** *Illinois 80 fol. 73r ln. 11*

*Scripts*, Brown states that *semiquadrata* "is determined by the treatment of the bottoms of the minims which have sporadically applied feet to some minims (as in *quadrata*) whilst others are simply rounded off (as in *rotunda*)" (86). This definition more readily describes Illinois 80.

Adopting Brown's definition of *semiquadratus*, however, creates problems in Oeser's system. Based on the manuscript's haphazard use of double-bow *a*, Oeser would most likely place this manuscript in Variant IV, which he designates as "eine originär englische Schriftmodifikation" (*Beobachtungen* 396). Variant IV is marked by a preference for *rechteckige a*, or box-*a*. Sometimes a double-bow *a* is used, and though it often appears after the letters *c*, *e*, *g*, *r* and *t* and at the beginnings of words, it is also said to "tritt darüber hinaus ohne feste Regel," an aspect of this variant that Derolez neglects to mention in his summary of Oeser's system (396). In Illinois 80, double-bow *a* is used as a capital letter and, in many places, also at the beginning of words. It is generally either written in black ink and later filled in by the rubricator, or is written in red. Otherwise, all mid-word and most first-letter *a*'s follow the box form, or a variation thereof (see section below on open-bottom box-*a*). In my analysis to date, the only exceptions occur on 73v and 74r, where double-bow *a* is used at the beginning of words and after letters *d*, *i*, *m*, *T*, *u*, and *w* (see Image 26).

***Image 26*** *Illinois 80 (top to bottom) fol. 73v ln. 11-12; fol. 74r ln. 5, 8, 12, 17*

The only designated *semiquadratus* text in Oeser's system is Variant VII, which utilizes "nur das Köpfchen-*a* des Textus quadratus, zeigt im übrigen aber die Formen des Textus rotundus" (*Beobachtungen* 363). In this instance, Oeser

is using Johann vom Hagen's definition of *semiquadratus*, which differs from that proposed by the paleographers mentioned above, and is unique to manuscripts originating from southeastern Europe in the fifteenth century (Derolez 86). Thus, the only place for this manuscript in Oeser's system is as a sloppily-constructed *textus quadratus*. Either Oeser's definition of *semiquadratus* is not consistent throughout his work, or the form that Illinois 80 represents and that Brown's definition designates is not represented in his system. With the further complications created by Oeser's system as described below, I argue for the allowance of *semiquadratus*, as defined by Brown, within Oeser's Variant IV system.

In his prominent work on the gothic formation of *a* as a useful tool for identifying script variations, Oeser describes box-*a* (or, as he calls it in German, "kästchen-*a*") as "ein rechteckiges, kastenförmiges doppelstöckiges *a* [wie es im textus rotundus] geschrieben [ist], dessen Vorderseite ein senkrechter, ungeteilter und ungekerbter Schaft bildet" (*Beobachtungen* 361). Likewise, Derolez describes box-*a* as "consisting of two vertical strokes connected with each other at the top and at the bottom… [with] an intermediary horizontal stroke" (84). Both descriptions indicate a closedness of the letter shape that is not readily evident in Illinois 80. Certainly, some letter forms conform to the descriptions provided, and one such example is provided in Image 27. Here, the left and right vertical strokes rise relatively straight up, connecting with upward-sloping hairline legations at top and bottom. The "box" is then divided in the middle, just as Oeser and Derolez describe (incidentally, notice that the *m* in this image looks remarkably like *Textura praescissa*). Most of the letter forms, however, do not depict a clearly closed bottom, with great variations in execution throughout.

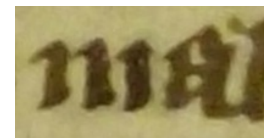

***Image 27*** *Illinois 80 fol.12v ln. 20*

Quire 12 in particular illustrates a variation of box-*a* whose classification is problematic. Derolez acknowledges it is often difficult to clearly distinguishing the shape of box-*a*, both in comparison to double-bow *a* and in its own right, “especially in the early phase of Textualis or in rapid script” (84). Moments certainly occur in Illinois 80 where the scribe seems to have written hastily, and perhaps this rapidity of letter formation allowed some box-*a* bottoms to not quite close. The *a* shapes in Image 28 treat the vertical shafts of *a* as minims, where the minim feet are rounded in the style of a *textus rotundus m* or *n*. The *a* in “as” almost appears to be shaped as a double-bow *a*, though even upon close examination, it is difficult to distinguish whether it is the product of a sloppy execution of the a’s as seen in “largely” or “delyu(er)au(n)ce.” The *a* of “delyu(er)au(n)ce” does, however, follow the same *ductus* as box-*a*, where the bottom bar, rather than neatly closing or “rectangularizing” the letter-form, curves up to legate with the following *u*.

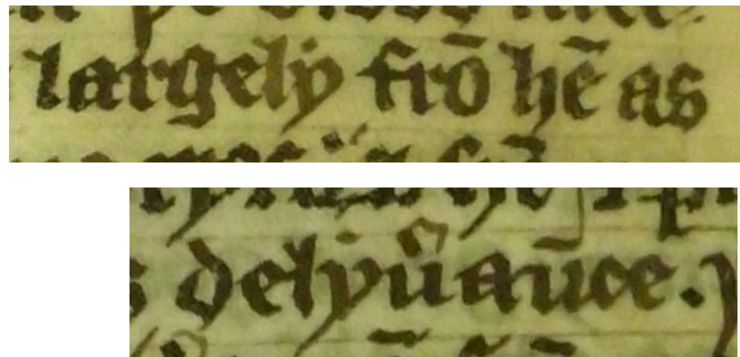

***Image 28*** *Illinois 80 fol. 91v ln. 7; fol. 95v ln. 13*

Though this rounded-minim version of *a* is not limited to quire 12, a more prominent form of a box-*a* variant, and one which is more carefully executed, is provided in the bottom image of Image 29, where one *a* is closed in regular box-*a* fashion and the other remains open. Both appear at the beginning of a line and at the beginning of a word and neither are capitals, meaning it is logical to presume that the forms should be relatively

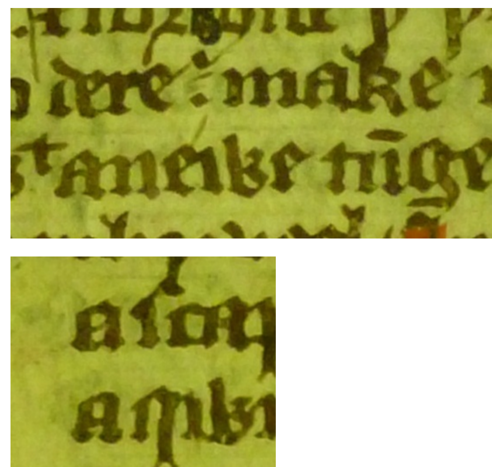

***Image 29*** *Illinois 80 fol. 11r ln. 5-6; 12-13*

identical. The top two *a* forms in Image 29, however, deviate greatly from the definitions provided by both Oeser and Derolez, though Derolez does provide a brief description of this possible form. With its prominent vertical strokes, Derolez suggests that box-*a* must have been an appealing choice to scribes, as these strokes' minim-like quality more readily attuned to the "Gothic aesthetic." He further observes that "these two strokes were only very rarely treated fully as minims in Textus Quadratus, and were seldom given quadrangles at their base" (84). Illinois 80 appears to be just such an example. The forms shown in the top image of Image 29 are representative of approximately half the *a* forms in the manuscript. In both instances, the *a* is next to an *m* or an *n*, both of which exhibit the reverse-*semiquadratus* treatment of minims, where the top minims curve into one another and the bottom minims separate into clear quadrangles. Here, the vertical shafts of the *a*'s could easily be called minims and are given the same careful quadrangular treatment as the minims of *m* and *n*.

One could make the argument that, because this is a rare form and is therefore less probable, these letter forms are simply constructed carelessly, perhaps by a scribe eager to write quickly and therefore cost-effectively, as with the form of box-*a* that appears in quire 12 and elsewhere (Image 28). Indeed, the forms of *a* in the word "was" in Image 30 illustrate two different treatments of box-*a*, one of which does follow the current, scholarly-accepted description. On folio 69v, each of the letters is articulated differently; for example, the curve of the *w*'s middle ascender is, at times, straighter (line 17) than at others (line 13). The *s* also shows minor variances; in lines 7 and 17, the top stroke begins with a flat edge, whereas lines 2 and especially 13 show the top stroke as more

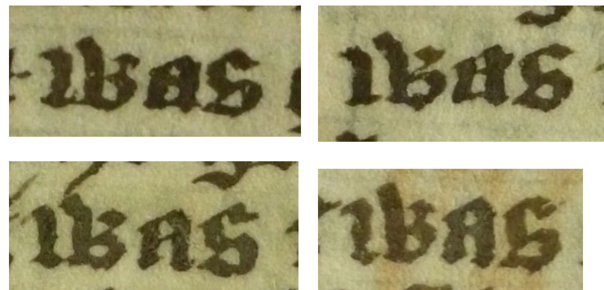

***Image 30*** *Illinois 80 (from left to right, top to bottom) fol. 69v ln. 2, 7, 13, 17*

stylized, with a thin bar leading into the main part of the stroke. Most significantly, Image 30 portrays the box-*a* as closed on the bottom (lines 2 and 7) and open (lines 13 and 17). The simplest explanation is often the most accurate, and here it is easy, and logical, to assume that the open-bottom forms of box-*a* are the result of hasty writing.

However, the preponderance of evidence suggests that *a*, as seen elsewhere in Illinois 80, was purposefully treated as a letter with minims to be formalized with quadrangular endings. Starting with the most formal hand (that of Quire 1), the box-*a* of "last" illustrates an identical treatment of the feet of *l* and *a* (Image 31). Even more compelling are the a-formations shown in Image 32. Here, the minims of *m*, *t*, *e*, *a*, *u*, and *l* are all given clearly-defined quadrangle-shaped endings. The careful construction of this hand is evident in the regularity of the quadrangular shapes and the consistency with which the quadrangles are formed. In this example, the *m*'s are legated with hairlines at the minim's tops, in keeping with my description of *m*-forms provided in the preceding section and, using Brown's definition, are designated semiquadratus, a semi-formalized version of textualis. This is not the work of a scribe hastily finishing a passage; rather, this is the concentrated effort to produce a manuscript worthy of its content.

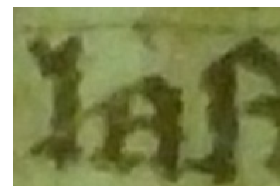

***Image 31*** *Illinois 80 fol. 1v ln. 2*

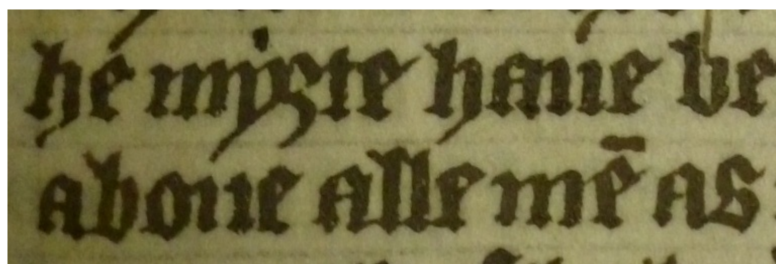

***Image 32*** *Illinois 80 fol. 70r ln. 18-19*