

The Earls of Leicester, Sygerius Lucanus and the Death of Seneca:
Some Neglected Evidence for the Cultural Agency of the Norman Aristocracy

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This article investigates the claim found in London, British Library, Burney 357, fol. 12rv, that a count of Leicester called Robert used to recite from memory certain verses found in this manuscript. Revising previous reports that the remark refers to a poem in praise of holy monks by an otherwise unknown poet “Sygerius Lucanus”, it argues for its plausibility by suggesting that it concerns two brief poems of a different character, most notably the *Epitaphium Senecae*, a poem that evokes the deeds and ideas of the Roman philosopher Seneca. Since the poem was well-known for its associations with Seneca, the note suggests that an earl of Leicester, probably Robert II (1120–68), but perhaps Robert I (1107–18) or Robert III (1168–90), was interested in classical life and thought. The article goes on to offer a critique of the tendency to dismiss the cultural agency of magnates like the Beaumonts in preference for that exercised by the cathedral schools and religious houses. Arguing for a more nuanced approach, it suggests that greater weight ought to be given to evidence such as the remark in Burney 357—evidence which suggests, despite the surviving record’s profound bias in favour of religious persons and institutions, that certain lay magnates helped to promote some of the period’s most striking cultural fashions, not least its surge of interest in Senecan texts and ideas. Other issues treated include the dissemination of Senecan anthologies, Sygerius Lucanus, his poems, their sources, and their gender politics.

In the introduction to their documents for the Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows near Leicester the nineteenth-century editors of Dugdale’s *Monasticon Anglicanum* included some data from London, British Library, MS Burney 357. They reported that among the contents of this book was a text headed *Versus Sygerii Lucani in sanctorum laudem monachorum*, “at the end of which it is said *Rob. comes Lecestriae solebat hos versus memoriter recitare*”.¹ If, as the editors inferred, “the verses and the remark are in a hand not later than the twelfth or the thirteenth century”, it would follow that there are four earls of Leicester to whom it could refer: Robert de Beaumont, count of Meulan (d. 1118), his son Robert (1104–68), his grandson, Robert de Breteuil (c. 1130–90), or perhaps the great-grandson, also known as Robert de Breteuil (c. 1165–1204). Robert I received the earldom in 1107, Robert II held it from 1120, Robert III from 1168,

¹ William Dugdale, Roger Dodsworth and John Stevens, (eds), *Monasticon Anglicanum: A History of the Abbies and other Monasteries, Hospitals, Friaries and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches*, revised John Caley, Sir Henry Ellis, Bulkeley Bandinel and Richard C. Taylor, 6 vols. in 8 pts. (London: T. G. Marsh, 1817–30), 6:462, n. a.

Robert IV from 1191. But the editors of the *Monasticon* presented this material as evidence for Robert II's reasons for founding Leicester Abbey,² drawn perhaps by the way in which the subject of these verses seemed to chime with this act of piety.

Yet whatever the editors' reasons for including them, the details that they recorded have crept into later scholarship. James Westfall Thompson, for example, quoted them in support of his view that the Norman aristocracy of England achieved a high level of literacy.³ David Crouch, on the other hand, cast doubt on their authenticity in the course of his survey of the evidence for Robert II's intellectual life. Construing the heading as "verses of 'Siger to Lucan' on the merits of monastic life" and referring to the remark as "a story", he asserted that it could not refer to the three Norman Roberts of Leicester, because "both Sigers were thirteenth-century figures".⁴ It is true that the Sigers best known to history—the philosopher from Brabant and the logician from Courtrai—flourished in the later centuries,⁵ but that cannot prove that an earlier writer of the same name never existed, that the poetry of another "Siger" was not available to be memorised and recited in the twelfth century. Yet, Crouch is surely right to think that there is something suspicious about this material.

Though he died at Leicester Abbey clothed in the habit of a regular canon,⁶ Robert II's passion for monasticism seems to have been modest. Certainly, his generosity to the abbey was restrained relative to the resources at his disposal. His grandest foundation, it was endowed using the lands and rights that his father had previously used to set up a collegiate Church of St Mary within the walls of the nearby castle. Further incomes came from Robert II's retainers and

² In keeping with received tradition the editors dated the foundation to 1143, but for the likelihood that it took place in early 1139, see David Crouch, "Early Charters and Patrons of Leicester Abbey Appendix: The Charters of Leicester Abbey, 1139–1265," in Joanna Story with Jill Bourne and Richard Buckley (eds), *Leicester Abbey: Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies* (Leicester: Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2006), 225–87 (esp. 227–30); idem, "The Foundation of Leicester Abbey and Other Problems," *Midland History* 12 (1987): 1–13 (esp. 2–3). Cf. John C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England* (London, 1950), 141–2, 295.

³ James Westfall Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1939), 173–4.

⁴ David Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th ser. 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 209, n. 93. Crouch surveys the evidence for the Beaumont twins' intellectual activities at *ibid.*, 207–11.

⁵ Siger of Brabant was murdered in about 1283; Siger of Courtrai died in 1341: see N. Angermann et al. (eds), *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (Munich: Artemis and Winkler, 1977–99), 7:1880–2.

⁶ Writing in the late fourteenth century, the chronicler Henry Knighton (d. 1396) alleged that Robert II spent the final fifteen years of his life "fighting for Christ" as a canon of the abbey, but ample evidence for his continuing involvement in public affairs implies that he postponed his vows until near the end: see *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6:467, with Crouch, *Beaumont Twins*, pp. 95–96.

neighbours.⁷ Since it involved, moreover, the re-allocation of resources from secular to regular canons for their *opus* and *usus*, the creation of the abbey is perhaps best understood as a gesture of support for the reform of the secular Church rather than as signifying a profound interest in monasticism in the conventional sense. In time some fifty parish churches were entrusted to the abbey's care.⁸ Moreover, with places for some forty canons and for twenty-six boys in its school the foundation can be read as a calculated attempt to equip the earldom with administrative and educational resources.⁹ Since it is easy to find grounds for minimising Earl Robert II's interest in actual monasticism, one might also doubt whether he would have devoted time to memorising a poem "in praise of holy monks".

The matter merits proper investigation. All four earls played crucial roles in the Norman and Angevin regimes. Robert I was so influential that Henry of Huntingdon could claim that "at his pleasure the kings of the French and the English would be united as allies one moment and quarrelling as enemies the next".¹⁰ Having inherited the earldom and most of his father's estates in England (while those in Normandy went to his twin brother Waleran), Robert II was a vital figure in the regimes of both Stephen and Henry II. In return for switching sides in the last year of the Anarchy, Henry made him the justiciar of England in 1154, an office that he held until his death in 1168. Though he suffered many setbacks owing to his participation in the Great Rebellion of 1173/4, Robert III's lands and honours in Normandy as well as England made him a key player in the struggles between Henry II and his sons. Having won a reputation as a great

⁷ For discussion of the financial aspect of the foundation, see Crouch, "Early Charters and Patrons," 230–2; for the revenues that Robert II enjoyed as earl of Leicester and the Cistercian abbeys which he founded at Garendon and Biddlesdon, see also idem, *Beaumont Twins*, esp. 83, 177–95, 202–4.

⁸ For a critical edition of the foundation charter, see Crouch, "Early Charters and Patrons," pp. 234–5. On the diverse forces—clusters of reform-minded clergy and bishops, chiefly in France and Italy, and the Gregorian papacy—that came together to produce the Augustinian canons, see Yannick Veyrenche, "*Quia vos estis qui sanctorum patrum vitam probabilem renovatis...* Naissance des chanoines réguliers, jusqu'à Urbain II," in Michel Parisse (ed.), *Les chanoines réguliers: Émergence et expansion (XI^e–XIII^e siècles)*, CERCOR Travaux et Recherche 19 (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2009), 29–69. Cf. Jean Châtillon, "La crise de l'Église aux XI^e et XII^e siècles et les origines des grandes fédérations canoniales," *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité* 53 (1977): 3–45; Dickinson, *Austin Canons*, esp. pp. 26–58.

⁹ Cf. Georges Duby, "The Culture of the Knightly Class: Audience and Patronage," in Giles Constable and Robert L. Benson with Carol Lanham (eds), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 248–62, at 255–7.

¹⁰ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, viii, *De contemptu mundi*, § 7, ed. Diana E. Greenway, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 598. See, likewise, William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, v.407, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998–9), 736: "[Robert I's] counsel was regarded as if some divine sanctuary had been consulted... ."

warrior on the Third Crusade, Robert IV led the defence of Normandy under Richard I and later John.¹¹ Any item that can shed light on the values and cultural interests of these figures needs to be known, not least because the literary competence of the Norman elite—the question of what types of literature they enjoyed and could comprehend¹²—is essential to a proper understanding of how political and intellectual life worked in their time.

This essay will argue that the relevant leaf of Burney 357 provides a remarkable insight into the learning and cultural pretensions of one of the earls of Leicester—most likely Robert II, but perhaps Robert I or Robert III. Sygerius Lucanus and his verses will be discussed in passing: his poems ought to be better known, not least for their treatment of gender—for the contrasting approach that they take to the celebration of male and female asceticism. But closer scrutiny of the contents of the manuscript reveals that they are largely immaterial to the present issue, for the “remark” appears to refer, not to these verses, but to two poems of a rather different character, including one that associates the earl in question with the high medieval revival of interest in the works of the Roman philosopher and dramatist, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (d. AD 65).¹³ Arguing against the common tendency to assume that the aristocracy were the passive recipients of intellectual fashions, the essay will conclude with some observations about the relative merits and significance of the evidence that survives for their role in the period’s cultural developments.

¹¹ For further details, see David Crouch’s essays, “Beaumont, Robert de, count of Meulan and first earl of Leicester (d. 1118),” “Robert, Second Earl of Leicester (1104–1168),” “Breteuil, Robert de, third earl of Leicester (c. 1130–1190),” and “Breteuil, Robert de, fourth earl of Leicester (d. 1204),” in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, 60 vols. and index (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4:673–4; 7:478–82; 47:96–98. For the career of Robert I, see also David Crouch, “Robert of Beaumont, Count of Meulan and Leicester: His Lands, his Acts, and his Self-Image,” in Donald F. Fleming and Janet M. Pope (eds), *Henry I and the Anglo-Norman World: Studies in Memory of C. Warren Hollister*, Haskins Society Journal, Special Volume 17 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 91–116; Sally N. Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan: The Innocence of the Dove and the Wisdom of the Serpent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), esp. 313–7 and 353–6.

¹² On the concept of literary competence, see Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), esp. 113–30.

¹³ On this revival of interest in Seneca and the forces driving it, see Michael Lapidge, “The Stoic Inheritance,” in Peter Dronke (ed.), *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 81–112 (esp. 88, 93–95); Gilles Gerard Meerseman, “Seneca maestro di spiritualità nei suoi opuscoli apocriefi dal XII al XV secolo,” *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 16 (1973): 43–135 (esp. 44–46); Klaus Dieter Nothdurft, *Studien zum Einfluss Senecas auf die Philosophie und Theologie des zwölften Jahrhunderts*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), whose findings are briefly summarised and assessed in Michel Spanneut, “Senèque au moyen âge: Autour d’un livre,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 31 (1964): 32–42; and Pasquale Smiraglia, “Presenza di Seneca nella cultura del XII secolo,” *Aevum Antiquum* 13 (2000): 265–82. The fathers of the Church had not been so enthusiastic: see Paolo Mastandrea, *Letteri cristiani di Seneca filosofo*, *Antichità classica e cristiana* 28 (Brescia: Paideia, 1988); Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (2nd imp., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), esp. 1:14–19.

It is essential to begin, however, with an account of the manuscript itself.

1. LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, MS BURNEY 357

Burney 357 comprises four “booklets” that originated, judging by the scripts in which their texts were copied, at various points in the twelfth century.¹⁴ They are roughly the same size but are set apart by variations in script, ruling and layout.¹⁵ Their contents comprise a diverse gamut of short items, ranging from Hugh of St Victor on the Ten Commandments to a polyphonic motet for two voices.¹⁶ Though some of them seem to have originated elsewhere, by the mid thirteenth century these booklets belonged to the Cistercian abbey of Thame Park. By that time, if not earlier, they had been combined into a single volume with another six “sub-units” of similar size—today, Burney Manuscripts 246, 285, 295, 341, and 344. This much can be inferred from the thirteenth-century *ex libris* inscription on folio 24v of Burney 357. It leads into a table of contents which was much elaborated in the seventeenth century, and it was with its help that Neil Ker identified the other components.¹⁷ The volume was broken up after it came into the possession of the classicist and book collector Charles Burney (1757–1817): four units were preserved as Burney 357, two as Burney 341, while the rest were arranged as Burney 246, 285, 295, and 344. The British Museum acquired all six manuscripts along with the rest of Burney’s

¹⁴ Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c.1066–1130)* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1999), no. 363, treats all of Burney 357 as a product of the second quarter of the twelfth century, but these limits are too narrow.

¹⁵ All four “booklets” measure around 215×125 millimetres, but their folio numbers, text areas, and ruling differs as follows: (1) fols. 1–4, 180×110mm, 35 lines; (2) fols. 5–12, 190×105mm, 33 lines; (3) fols. 13–16, 155×115mm, 35 lines; (4) fols. 17–24, 140×85mm, 23 lines. I put “booklets” in speech marks because the binding is so tight that the quiring remains uncertain, and because several of these groupings fail to meet all the criteria for a booklet as set out in Pamela R. Robinson, “The ‘Booklet:’ A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts,” *Codicologica* 3 (1980): 46–69. They look like booklets, but matter remains somewhat uncertain. The present arrangement of the folios may well have been altered, furthermore, by Charles Burney. Certainly, the many leaves of paper that occur between the various units were inserted when he had the book rebound—leaves that were omitted from the standard folio numbering. Cf. Ralph Hanna, “Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations,” *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 100–11, and A. Gillespie, “Medieval Books, their Booklets, and Booklet Theory,” *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 16 (2011): 1–29 (esp. 21–25).

¹⁶ Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music: <http://www.diamm.ac.uk> [Accessed 18 March 2014]. Cf. Augustus Hughes-Hughes, *Catalogue of Manuscript Music in the British Museum*, 3 vols (London: British Museum, 1906–9), 1:252.

¹⁷ Neil R. Ker, “Membra disiecta,” *British Museum Quarterly* 12 (1938): 130–5, at 134–5. Ker prints the *ex libris* and the contents list. See also idem, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 3 (2nd edn, London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), 188. David N. Bell, *An Index of Authors and Works in Cistercian Libraries in Great Britain*, Cistercian Studies 130 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 27, 59, 77, 104, 113, 134–5, 204, 215, 221–2.

collection in 1818.

The verses of Sygerius Lucanus and the comment about Robert of Leicester occur on folio 12v of Burney 357. This leaf preserves three or perhaps four poems which were copied in scripts datable to the mid-to-late twelfth century.¹⁸ Folios 5 to 11 appear to be from the same sub-unit. These folios house an incomplete copy of Anselm's *De conceptu uirginali et originali peccato*, a work composed between 1099 and 1100.¹⁹ Written in a late Caroline or early proto-Gothic script of a kind that flourished in the first third of the twelfth century—in a period that predates the founding of Thame Park in 1138²⁰—the text begins on folio 5r and breaks off at the foot of folio 11v, in the eleventh of its twenty-seven chapters.²¹ Folios 5 to 12 may well consist of four bifolia, but the present binding is too tight to permit a confident assessment of their physical structure, and the way in which *De conceptu uirginali* ends imperfectly, so far from its usual conclusion, suggests that this “booklet” (if that is not a misleading term) probably contained many more folios than are now extant.²² But even if some leaves have been lost, the continuity in layout—the folios are identical in size and ruling—suggests that all eight were once part of the same sub-unit within Burney 357. That is, it seems likely that folio 12 began its life as a blank leaf in a booklet containing Anselm's tract, and that the poems were inserted some decades after the unit was first made.

The way in which the verses are laid out requires close attention. Both sides are ruled

¹⁸ Curiously, the description of fol. 12 in the *Catalogue of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, n.s., vol. 1, pt 2, *The Burney Manuscripts* (London: British Museum, 1840), 96–97, echoes that in the revised *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6:462, n. a, suggesting that its editors relied on drafts of the catalogue, even though the publication of volume six in 1830 predates its appearance by a full decade. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why both focus on the same details to the exclusion of other data. One of the editors responsible for the revised *Monasticon*, Sir Henry Ellis (1777–1869), was a trustee of the Museum from 1814 and its principal librarian from 1827 until 1856.

¹⁹ Eadmer of Canterbury, *Vita s. Anselmi, archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ii.44, ed. Richard W. Southern, *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, by Eadmer*, Oxford Medieval Texts (2nd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 1–145, at 122.

²⁰ The community was founded at Otteley in 1138, but moved to Thame Park around 1140: see Herbert E. Salter, “The Abbey of Thame,” in William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press for the University of London, 1907), 83.

²¹ It ends in mid-sentence with the words *sicut est uersus homo quilibet uir aut mulier* (Anselm of Canterbury's tract *De conceptu uirginali*, § 11, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi Cantuarensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: T. Nelson, 1946–61), 2:139–73, at 154). Proceeding in the usual order, this copy comprises the list of capitula and chapters 1–11 as far as line 18. It appears to be the work of two scribes: the first begins each chapter with a new line and an initial; taking over at fol. 10r6 and treating the text as single, continuous block, the second ignores these divisions.

²² It would have required six, perhaps seven, more leaves to house the entire text—more than just a few singletons. Cf. Richard Sharpe, “Anselm as Author: Publishing in the Late Eleventh Century,” *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 19 (2009): 1–87, at 48.

with thirty-three lines in dry point. As can be seen from the plates I and II, the first of three scribes has copied the heading (*Versus Sygerii Lucani in sanctorum laudem monachorum*) and sixty-three lines of verse, one line for each hexameter, leaving the right-hand half of the page largely empty. The verses continue almost to the bottom of the reverse side, where the last two lines of the page remained unfilled, eliminating the possibility that they might have continued onto another folio now lost—or into the area where the other poems were inserted. In keeping with the common convention of the period each line begins with a *littera notabilior*, a capital letter with a small gap before the rest of first word. The verses copied by this hand appear, moreover, to represent two stanzas or perhaps two poems, judging by the evidence of the paraph (¶) at line thirteen on the reverse side and the shift of subject matter that occurs at this point. Writing in a similar but squatter,²³ mid-to-late twelfth-century, protogothic script, the second scribe adds two short poems of six lines in the space available in the upper-right-hand quarter of the reverse side. Paraphs—paraph marks whose form differs from those used by the previous scribe—signal the start of each poem; there are no gaps between the capital letter with which each line begins and the rest of the line. The work of a third scribe, the inscription saying that “Robert count of Leicester” used to recite these verses from memory sits on the right-hand side of the page, directly below the second of the two short poems. The character of the script, in so far as it can be dated, suggests that the annotator was writing in the second half of the century—that he was thinking of Robert II (who died in 1168) rather than Robert I or Robert III. It is possible that this remark refers to all four poems, but its proximity to the two additional poems strongly suggests that it refers to them alone rather than to those attributed to Sygerius Lucanus. Close examination of the texts themselves supports this inference.

2. THE POEMS AND THEIR AFFINITIES

With respect to their form, Sygerius’s poems show the usual tendencies of medieval quantitative verse.²⁴ Like many poets of this eleventh and twelfth centuries, he tends to introduce repetition

²³ Significant differences between the two hands include the relative fluidity of their capital “S”, the forms of the capital “N”, the length of the horizontal bar in “f/s”, the shape of the “-er-“ abbreviation, and so on.

²⁴ Neither poem is reported in Hans Walther (ed.), *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi posterioris latinorum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1959). Since the poems and their author remain unknown, a tentative edition has been included as an appendix to the present article.

and rhyme, five instances occurring within sixty-two lines;²⁵ but his command of metre and prosody are sound enough. All of the lines that can be recovered from Burney 357 comprise relatively solid hexameters.²⁶ To be sure, Sygerius sometimes shortens words ending with a long *-o*,²⁷ and he reads the first syllable of *rēligiō* as a *longum*,²⁸ but in these deviations from classical norms, he was in good company.²⁹ Just four of the sixty-two relevant lines lack a *penthemimeral* caesura,³⁰ and all but one of these third-foot caesurae follow a multisyllabic word, a scriptural allusion being the cause of the only exception to the rule.³¹ A significantly greater proportion of lines lack a caesura in the second or fourth foot—some thirteen and twenty-one instances respectively—all of which suggests that Sygerius took some care over the placement of pauses and caesurae. He also has some recourse to elision—just two instances of *ecthlipsis*,³² but thirteen of *synaloepha*,³³ and in keeping with the example set by the best practitioners of

²⁵ That is, poem 1, lines 23 (“habendo... ferendo”), 29–30 (“corpore in isto... corpore ab isto”); poem 2, lines 7 (“uenient... intrent”), 10–11 (“per istas... fenestras”), 12 (“desponsat... subarrat”). For reasons explained in n. 26 below, the 62 lines considered here exclude line 33 of poem 1. On the rise of repetition and rhyme, see Dag Norberg, *An Introduction to the Study of Medieval Latin Versification*, trs. Grant C. Roti and Jacqueline de La Chapelle Skubly (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), esp. 31–34, 59–60; and for a general introduction to the trends affecting the art of verse composition in the long twelfth century, see also Jean-Yves Tilliette, “Verse Style,” trs. Emily Blakelock in Ralph J. Hexter and David Townsend (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 239–64.

²⁶ The exceptions are the two lines whose precise contents remain uncertain: that is, poem 1, line 33, where the upper two thirds of the letters were removed with the trimming of the leaf; and poem 2, line 4, where Burney 357 has the obscure form *cci* with a macron over the second letter, which may well have been overwritten. The word *certi* seems the most plausible reading, but it produces a line that has too many long syllables in the fourth foot: “Sē sūpēr|ānt, ēt | quīnquē sū|ōs cēr|tī | lūmīnē | sēnsūs.” Since *cum*, possibly the original form, produces a hexameter, it has been adopted below; but the line remains an issue.

²⁷ For instances of shortening, see poem 1, lines 12 (“nemō”), 23 (“habendō”); poem 2, line 10 (“conspiciendō”); for instances of retention, see poem 1, lines 10 (“religiō”), 20 (“deuotō”), 25 (“modicō”), 28 (“mundō”), 39 (“illō”), 40 (“odiō”); poem 2, lines 3 (“animō”), 5 (“oleō”), 14 (“modō”).

²⁸ Poem 1, line 10.

²⁹ For deviation from the norms just mentioned, see Norberg, *Medieval Latin Versification*, 3; Lucian Müller, *De re metrica poetarum latinorum praeter Plautum et Terentium* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1861), 361; S. E. Winbolt, *Latin Hexameter Verse: An Aid to Composition* (London: Methuen, 1903), 112, 205, 209–10.

³⁰ The main exceptions are poem 1, lines 15, 27, 44; an elision in poem 1, line 31, creates an apparent or quasi caesura. Of the 59 caesurae in this foot, 49 are “strong” opposed to 10 that are “weak” or “trochaic”.

³¹ Poem 1, line 32: “Īstā Mā|rī(ē) ēst | pārs, / quē | nōn tōl|lētūr āb | illīs.” Cf. Luke 10.42. On the need to avoid a monosyllable before a caesura, see Winbolt, *Latin Hexameter Verse*, 94–95.

³² Poem 1, lines 7 (“oper(um)”), 8 (“minim(um)”).

³³ Poem 1, lines 23 (“sanctocu(e)”), 24 (“nis(i)”), 27 (“Christ(i)”), 29 (“corpor(e)”), 30 (“corpor(e)”), 31 (“domin(o)”), 32 (“Mari(ē)"); poem 2, lines 2 (“deuot(o)”), “habit(u)”), 3 (“sexuqu(e)”), 5 (“perpetu(o)”), 14 (“honor(e)”), 17 (“uit(a)”). Five of the elisions are affected by the issue of whether medieval poets allowed elision by aphaeresis, i.e. the cancellation of the initial *e-* of *es* or *est* rather than the final vowel of the word that precedes them. The present analysis assumes that Sygerius followed Bede and other theorists in denying its validity, but he may well have thought otherwise: see Norberg, *Medieval Latin Versification*, 30.

quantitative verse, he nowhere allows hiatus. Sygerius seems, in short, to have been a more than competent versifier.³⁴

As for his subject matter, the two poems eulogise the celibate life, but there is a powerful sub-text. In the first set of verses Sygerius attempts to dignify the religious life by resorting to images of war and conflict. He begins, in keeping with orthodox eschatology, by stressing the individual's dependence on divine mercy, but he implies that one merits grace by "fighting under the glittering weapons of virtue". In this "powerful and delightful battle God is the general" who has prepared "unfading crowns": in his mercy he summons "us" to return to him, he forgives crimes, and he provides the vast and diverse support that is religion. The saints "strive to win" by "trampling on the various tumults of the world"; the monks "follow Christ by holding and bearing his cross with holy love"; they "repress and subdue" the flesh; he "to whom Adam yielded" aches because he is repelled "by lords [abbots?] whom the Holy Spirit arms with Christ's soldier-monks"; their Job-like patience is "undefeated" by delight or disaster. In the first set of verses, then, Sygerius celebrates the life led by male religious as a strenuous, warlike, activity. With the second set of verses the subject shifts from male to female religious. These verses display a similar emphasis on overcoming the body, but rather than make struggle against the passions of this life the means by which this is achieved, they stress the maintenance of self-control through withdrawal from the world:

Hę fragiles animo sexuque et corpore lenes,
 Se superant, et quinque suos cum lumine sensus
 Perpetuo humectant oleo, ne deficiat lux
 Lampadibus delata suis, ut ad hostia quando
 Prudentes uenient, fatuis remanentibus intrent.
 Hę uultus etiam fugiunt et uerba uirorum,
 Ne per eas ipsi per eos peccare, uel ipse
 Conspiciendo queant, nam mens humana per istas
 Corpora non modice solet infestare fenestras.

Fragile in soul and gentle in sex and body, [holy virgins] conquer themselves, and they fuel their five senses with the light of the certain—with everlasting oil—lest, their lamps having been brought [with them], the light should run out—so that the prudent [virgins] may enter when they come to the doors, the foolish ones being left behind. They also shun the features and words of men, lest because of the women, because of their own features, the men themselves should sin, or lest the women themselves should be capable of being seen, for through these windows the human mind is used to being severely injured with bodily things.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 26–30; Winbolt, *Latin Hexameter Verse*, 195–7.

The second set of verses depends, indirectly perhaps, on a sermon by Caesarius of Arles (468/70–542) about the Parable of the Ten Virgins.³⁵ To explain, the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus liken humanity’s fate at the Second Coming to that of the ten virgins were sent with lamps to greet a groom and his bride. All ten slept while the groom tarried elsewhere. When he finally arrived at midnight, the five prudent ones could greet the groom, because they had brought sufficient oil to keep their lamps lit. The five foolish virgins had to hasten elsewhere to purchase more oil, and when they returned, they found that door was no longer open to them. Thus, only the five wise virgins could accompany “the groom” to the marriage.³⁶ In his sermon Caesarius takes up the exegesis, previously floated by Jerome, that the wise virgins represent those who use the five senses “to hasten to the celestial” while the “stupid” virgins signify those who, “craving earthly detritus, lack the nourishment of truth with which they might illuminate their hearts”.³⁷ Re-working this interpretation, Caesarius likens the senses to “doors or windows” through which “either death or life approaches the soul”,³⁸ and he goes on to explore the ways in which they can be used “either to guard virginity or to subject it to corruption”. He details, most notably, how gazing on another with unlawful desire allows “the poison of death to enter the hidden reaches of the heart through the eyes, that is, the windows of the body”.³⁹

Sygerius’s debt to this sermon is clear enough, but he adapts its contents for his own purposes. Whereas Caesarius treated the parable as a lesson, not just for religious, but for all men and women,⁴⁰ Sygerius uses it to praise the segregation of female religious—their flight from the bodies and conversation of men. He goes on, furthermore, to suggest that the function of the ring given to nuns when they took her final vows was to deter those who might seduce them:⁴¹

³⁵ Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, clv, ed. Germain Morin, CCSL 103–104 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), 2:632–5.

³⁶ Matthew 25.1–13.

³⁷ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*, iv, ed. David Hurst and Marc Adriaen, CCSL 77 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 236 (lines 718–22): “Possumus quinque uirgines sapientes et stultas quinque sensus interpretari quorum alii festinant ad caelestia et superna desiderant, alii terrenis faecibus inhiantes fomenta non habent ueritatis quibus sua corda inluminent.”

³⁸ Caesarius, *Sermones*, clv.1: “...per istos sensus uelut per quasdam ianuas uel fenestras aut uita aut mors ingreditur ad animam nostram”.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, § 2, alluding to Jeremiah 9.21: “per oculos, id est, per fenestras corporis in secretum cordis uenenum mortis intrauit”. Note also Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones*, xxviii.10, ed. Gaetano Raciti, *Sermonis I–XLVI (Collectio Claraeuallensis prima et secunda)*, CCCM 2A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 231: “Proni sunt enim sensus hominis et cogitationes in malum ab adolescentia et, nisi diligenti custodia muniatur, facile mors illabitur per fenestras istas.”

⁴⁰ Caesarius, *Sermones*, § 4: “non solum sanctaemonialium, sed etiam omnium uirorum uel mulierum animae”.

⁴¹ The ring is also treated as a “sign” in the ordo for the consecration of sacred virgins in the *Pontificale*

Has sibi desponsat Deus, et per signa subarrat
 Aurea, ne quis eas uexare uel audeat ullo
 Attractare modo....

God has engaged and betrothed them to himself with golden signs, lest someone should dare to harass them or to draw them off in some fashion....

Though the second set of verses begins, in short, as a celebration of holy virgins, its actual point seems to be the need to provide them with strict enclosure. But this pattern is typical of the period in which Burney 357 was produced: in the long twelfth century recognition of the spiritual potential of celibate women was often combined with efforts to insulate them from the world.⁴² Sygerius's verses comprise, in short, a relatively conventional attempt to promote the monastic life—one that is representative of the gender politics of the period.

The short poems added by the second scribe differ significantly in brevity, standpoint and subject matter. Comprising six hexameters unified by the five-fold repetition of the interrogative format *Si... quid inde*, the first of the two poems laments the impermanence of this world—the way in which even the best results and circumstances never endure. Here the poet assumes the persona of a lord considering the consequences of his achievements:⁴³

Si supplex hominum mihi seruiat ordo, quid inde?
 Si mihi sit rerum possessio larga, quid inde?
 Si mihi sit coniunx generosa pudica, quid inde?
 Si caute uiuat mea cara propago, quid inde?
 Si doceam socios in qualibet arte, quid inde?
 Tam cito pretereunt⁴⁴ hec omnia, quid nichil inde.

Romano-Germanicum, xx.23, ed. Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Elze, *Le pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle*, 3 vols., Studi e Testi 226, 227 and 269 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963–73), 1:45, but of a quite different sort. The words to be uttered by the bishop at the giving of the ring define it as “a little sign of the Holy Spirit that, if you have served him faithfully, you may be called a bride of Christ” (*signaculum spiritus sancti, ut sponsa Dei uoceris, si et fideliter seruiaris*). Cf. also Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones*, clxxiv.5, ed. Gaetano Raciti, *Sermonis LXXXV–CLXXXII (Collectio Radingensis)*, CCCM 2C (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 574), where the nun's ring is treated as “a token of love and chastity, with which the wise, betrothed, virgin glorifies herself”.

⁴² See Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65–74, together with Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450–1500* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), esp. 196–202, and Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (2nd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), esp. 63–64.

⁴³ Walther, *Initia*, no. 17985. Contrary to earlier classical usage, the poet uses a short final -o in *ordō*, *possessiō*, and *propagō*, but all six lines scan reliably as hexameters.

⁴⁴ MS *p⁷teunt*

If a compliant order of men should serve me, what then?
 If the copious possession of things should fall to me, what then?
 If a noble and pure wife should come to me, what then?
 If my precious offspring should live circumspectly, what then?
 If I should instruct my companions in a particular skill, what then?
 So quickly do all these things pass away, “what then” becomes nothing.

Whereas the verses of Sygerius seem to be unique to Burney 357, this poem is attested elsewhere, in several manuscripts produced in England. It appears, for example, in the register-cum-commonplace-book of Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London (1163–87), a large compendium of correspondence and other documents that his clerks assembled in the late 1170s.⁴⁵ Adam of Barking assimilated it into his *De serie sex aetatum*, a vast salvation-history which he compiled in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries,⁴⁶ presumably at Sherborne Abbey in Dorset where Leland says he was a monk.⁴⁷ A much altered version also occurs in an anthology of short poems about the vanities of the world found in a book that dates from much the same period.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 249, fols. 133vb32–134ra2. The poem appears in a discrete section of the book (fols. 121r–135v), among the many additions to its chief contents, a decretal collection known as the *Collectio Beluerensis*. There are several variants: line 4 comes before line 3; the final line reads *Cum \Tam/ cito pretereunt hec omnia, fit \quid/ nichil inde*. It was printed, inaccurately, from this source in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. James C. Robertson and Joseph B. Sheppard, Rolls Series 67, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1875–85), 5:128, as part of the letter of Pope Alexander III (JL 13814) which it follows in Musaeo 249. There is no connection between the two items, but both were copied by a clerk in Foliot’s service during the 1170s known as “Hand I”. For a full description of this complex manuscript and an account of its development, see *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot, Abbot of Gloucester (1139–48), Bishop of Hereford (1148–63), and London (1163–87)*, ed. Zachary N. Brooke, Adrian Morey and Christopher N. L. Brooke (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967), xxxv–li and 2–11, together with Christopher N. L. Brooke’s appendix on the dating of Foliot’s letters in Falko Neining (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta*, vol. 15, *London 1076–1187* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1999), 146–8.

⁴⁶ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 277, fol. 16r. Separated from the verses that precede and follow it by an item symbol and one-line gaps, the present poem occurs in a section called the *Tractatus de Adam* (fols. 1–16) which was added to the poem at a relatively late stage in its development. The manuscript is Adam’s unfinished autograph: see A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 133–5. Cf. Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 5–6.

⁴⁷ John Leland, *Commentarii de scriptoribus Britannicis*, ed. Anthony Hall, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1709), p. 232.

⁴⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C.22 (SC 15408), p. 134 (col. b, lines 11–16). The anthology appears among diverse items, mostly in verse, and compiled by various hands (pp. 128–35). In this version, the poem is re-worked as a miniature sermon: e.g. “Si supplex hominum *tibi* seruia[t] ordo...” (“If a compliant order of men should serve *you*...”); “Si *superes* socios in qualibet arte...” (“If *you* should triumph over your companions in some art...”). And the six lines are preceded, under the same paraph (col. b, lines 9–10), by a couplet which echoes verses found in Adam of St Victor’s epitaph and in Herrad of Hohenbourg’s *Hortus deliciarum*: “Vana salus hominis, uanus decor, omnia uana. / Inter uana nichil uanius est homine”; “Vain is the health of men, vain is beauty, everything is vain / Among the vain nothing is vainer than man.” For Adam’s epitaph (Walther, *Initia*, no. 7722), see Giles Corrozet, *Les antiquitez, chroniques et singularitez de Paris, ville capitale du Royaume de France* (2nd edn, Paris: Benoist Preuost, 1561), fol. 55rv; for Herrad’s use of the couplet, see her *Hortus deliciarum*, ed. Rosalie Green, Michael Evans, Christine Bischoff and Michael Curschmann, Studies of the Warburg Institute 36 (London: E. J. Brill for the Warburg Institute, 1979), 2:348 (no. 734).

The provenance of the latter codex remains unclear, but the script, the decoration, and the presence of prayers and other works by Bernard of Clairvaux, of a tract on the vanities of the world addressed to “Abbot J. of Combermere” in Cheshire,⁴⁹ and of an poem in early Middle English point to a Cistercian house in England.⁵⁰ Though its stylistic modernity suggests that it was a relatively recent composition, *Si supplex hominum* seems to have been well known in England by the late twelfth-century.⁵¹

Though there is no rubric in the manuscript, the second of this scribe’s additions is easily identified as a variant of the *Epitaphium Senecae*, a poem associated in the Middle Ages with the story of how the Emperor Nero accused his former tutor of complicity in the Pisonian conspiracy and compelled him to commit suicide. Much more classical in form than *Si supplex hominum*, it comprises three elegaic couplets.⁵²

Cura, labor, studium,⁵³ sumpti pro munere honores,
 Ite, aliam posthac sollicitate animam.⁵⁴
 Me deus a uobis procul⁵⁵ euocat. Illicet actis
 Rebus terrenis, hospita terra uale.
 Corpus, auara, tamen sollemnibus excipe⁵⁶ saxis.

⁴⁹ Presumably the John who was abbot of Combermere from before 1181 until after 1190: see David Knowles, Christopher N. L. Brooke, and Vera C. M. London (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales*, vol. 1, 940–1216 (2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 131, 272.

⁵⁰ The poem, *Eueriche freman hach to ben hende*, appears on p. 298 (lines 6–8). It has been printed with a little discussion in Carleton Brown (ed.), *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 113, 211–2. See also Margaret Laing, *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 139. For the contents and provenance of Rawlinson C.22, see William Dunn Murray, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae*, vol. 5, pt 2 (Oxford: E Typographeo Academico, 1878), col. 7, with Otto Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966–73), 3:34 (no 351).

⁵¹ The same lines, slightly improved, also appear Hugo de Miramari’s *Liber de hominis miseria, mundi et inferni contemptu*, i.9, ed. Fabrice Wendling, CCCM 234 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 3–253, at 22–23. A Carthusian monk and later prior at Montrieux from around 1236/8 until his death after 1249, Hugo is thought to have been writing in the early-to-mid 1240s. See also Fabrice Wendling, “Le *De hominis miseria, mundi et inferni contemptu* de Hugues de Miramar, une oeuvre ‘autobiographique’ dans la postérité des *Confessions* d’Augustin?,” *Rursus* 6 (2011): 1–16 (<http://rursus.revues.org/517>).

⁵² Walther, *Initia*, no. 3960; Dieter Schaller and Ewald Könsgen, *Initia carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquiorum: Bibliographisches Repertorium für die lateinische Dichtung der Antike und des früheren Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977), no. 3242.

⁵³ This is the present text’s most distinctive variant. The standard editions and all the other copies discussed here have *meritum*.

⁵⁴ The presence of as many as three elided vowels in the first couplet might be considered problematic—i.e. “mūnēr(e)”, “īt(e)” and “söllīcītāt(e)”—but the poem is otherwise consistent with the usual rules for the construction of elegaic verse. Cf. Maurice Platnauer, *Latin Elegaic Verse: A Study of the Metrical Usages of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1951), esp. 72–90.

⁵⁵ The usual text places *procul* before *a uobis*, but the present order does not affect the metre.

Nanque animam celo reddimus, ossa tibi.

Care, toil, striving, honours received for service,
 Be gone, harass another soul henceforth.
 God summons me far from you: it's over, my earthly
 Things are done. Farewell earth, my hostess.
 Still, grasping one, receive my body for your solemn stones,
 For we return the soul to heaven, the bones to you.

This poem occurs in many manuscripts, the vast majority of which are collections of Senecan texts.⁵⁷ It appears, for example, under the rubric *EPITAPHIUM SENECAE* on the final page of Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 390 (formerly 373). A short collection of grammatical texts from Saint-Amand, the book dates from the ninth century, but the epitaph occurs here as a later addition, on an outer flyleaf. Written in Caroline minuscule, it might have been added at any point between the late ninth and the eleventh century.⁵⁸ It appears under the rubric *Epitaphium M. L. A. Senecę* among the preliminary matter to “Etruscus”, the famous eleventh-century copy of Seneca’s Tragedies from Pomposa.⁵⁹ It occurs under the rubric *EPITAPHIUM SENECAE* at the conclusion of a mid ninth-century copy from Sankt Gallen of the putative correspondence of the Apostle Paul and Seneca.⁶⁰ Along with these letters and

⁵⁶ Burney 357 shares this reading with the version of the poem found in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana, MS Plut.37.13, fol. 1r7–11 (see n. 59 below) and London, British Library, MS Additional 11983, fol. 39r7–12; most MSS read *accipe*.

⁵⁷ For a brief but useful overview of the manuscript tradition, see Giuseppe Flamini, “L’*Epitaphium Senecae* (667 R) nella tradizione del genere epigrammatica,” *Giornale italiano di filologia* 52 (2000): 101–12, at 103–4. There are many editions, the most influential being those in *Anthologia latina sive poesis latinae supplementum. Pars Prior: Carmina in codicibus scripta*, ed. Alexander Riese, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1869), 2:138 (no. 667), and *L. Annaei Senecae opera quae supersunt supplementum*, ed. Friedrich Haase (Leipzig: Teubner, 1853), 3:482. For a recent edition of the standard text, based on a fuller group of manuscripts, see *Senecas Epigramme und andere Gedichte aus der Anthologia Latina*, ed. Joachim Dingel, Wissenschaftliche Kommentare zu griechischen und lateinischen Schriftstellern (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), no. 71.

⁵⁸ Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 390, fol. 73v. The manuscript may be consulted online at *Gallica*: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452587q>.

⁵⁹ Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana, MS Plut.37.13, fol. 1r7–11. The manuscript appears in the catalogue of the books belonging to the abbey of Pomposa which the monk Enrico compiled in 1093: Modena, Biblioteca Estense, lat. 390, fols. 70r–76r (at 72r). For a reproduction and discussion, see Antonio Manfredi, “Notizie sul catalogo e sui codici di Pomposa nel secolo XI,” in Giuseppe Billanovich (ed.), *La biblioteca di Pomposa: Pomposia monasterium modo in Italia primum*, Medioevo e Umanesimo 86 (Padova: Antenore, 1994), 11–65 (esp. 22–23, 30 and table III). See also Alexander P. MacGregor, *The Manuscripts of Seneca’s Tragedies: A Handlist* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), no. 154; Leighton D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 379.

⁶⁰ Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, MS C.129, fol. 99v. The fourteen letters occupy fols. 97r–99v; the *ex-libris* of St Gallen appears on fol. 1r. For a facsimile, see *e-Codices*: <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/description/zbz/C0129>; for a survey of the manuscripts and an edition, *Epistolae ad Paulum Apostolum et Pauli ad Senecam*, ed. Claude W. Barlow, Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 10 (Rome: American Academy in Rome,

Jerome's brief notice about Seneca,⁶¹ the poem became one of the standard auxiliary texts in anthologies of Senecan works. These works appear, for example, at the end of Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 90 inf., the famous collection of Senecan tracts made at Montecassino in the later 1070s or 1080s—the collection which includes the earliest copy of the *Dialogi*.⁶²

At least seven Norman and English books of this sort, in which the epitaph appears as an auxiliary text, survive from the long twelfth century. For example, it appears in this role along with the brief life by Jerome and the Seneca-Paul correspondence among the preliminary matter in Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 931, and Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 239—twelfth-century copies of Seneca's *Epistulae morales* that belonged to Jumièges and Mont-Saint-Michel respectively.⁶³ It occurs with the Seneca-Paul letters among the closing leaves of London, British Library, Egerton MS 654—a copy of the *Epistulae morales* (1–88) that was made at St Albans in the first quarter of the twelfth century.⁶⁴ It occurs with the brief life by Jerome and the alleged Seneca-Paul letters in London, British Library, Harley MS 2659—a collection of Senecan texts produced at Gloucester Abbey in the mid-twelfth century.⁶⁵ It also appears with the same companion texts among the preliminary matter to the *Epistulae morales* in London, British Library, Royal MS 15.C.II and in Oxford, St John's College, MS 36—two compendious collections of Senecan materials produced in England at the start of the thirteenth

1938), pp. 8–26 and 123–8.

⁶¹ *Liber de uiris inlustribus*, § 12, ed. Ernest C. Richardson, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, vol. 14 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), 1–56, at 15.

⁶² Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 90 inf., fol. 88r–90r; the epitaph appears at fol. 90r. See Barlow, *Epistolae ad Paulum*, 14–15; Francis Newton, *The Scriptorium and Library at Monte Cassino, 1058–1105*, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology 7 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. 133, 259–61, 266, 273, 275, 348, and pl. 59; Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 366–9.

⁶³ Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 931, fols. 1r–3v; Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 239, fols. 1r–2v. See also Leighton D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 45–49, 73–74, 76, 78, 105, 108, 111, 150, 154; idem, *Texts and Transmission*, 374–5. See also Henri A. Omont, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France: Départements*, 63 vols in 68 pts (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit and Co., 1885–1984), 1:234–5; 10:116.

⁶⁴ London, British Library, Egerton MS 654, fols. 154r–156v; a defective text of the epitaph, lacking *Illicet... uale*, occurs on fol. 156v. For Egerton 654's provenance and manufacture, see Rodney M. Thomson, *The Manuscripts of St Albans Abbey, 1066–1235*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer for the University of Tasmania, 1982), 2:17–19 and 92. See also Reynolds, *Seneca's Letters*, 73–74, 105, 108.

⁶⁵ London, British Library, Harley MS 2659, fols. 10ra–12vb; the epitaph appears on fol. 12v. See also Rodney M. Thomson, "Books and Learning at Gloucester Abbey in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite (eds), *Books and Collectors 1200–1700. Essays presented to Andrew Watson*, The British Library Studies in the History of the Book (London: British Library, 1997), 3–26, at 12 and 18; Reynolds, *Seneca's Letters*, 74–76, 78, 105, 108–9, 111, 120, 123; idem, *Texts and Transmission*, 375, n. 23.

century.⁶⁶ Further examples could be mentioned.⁶⁷

The epitaph may also have reached Normandy and England in rather different sorts of Senecan miscellanies, such as London, British Library, Additional 11983. This small, post-card-sized book, brings together two Seneca-focused sub-units, the first from the late eleventh or early twelfth century (fols. 4–47), the second from the early twelfth (fols. 48–84). The principal items in the former part are Seneca’s *De clementia* (fols. 4r–21v) and his *Apocolocyntosis*—his satire about the deification of the Emperor Claudius (fols. 21v–28v); the main item in the latter is an epitome of his *De beneficiis* (fols. 48r–70r). The epitaph appears in the former part, on fol. 39r, in the midst of the poetic anthology that occupies its final leaves (fols. 36v–47r). This anthology embraces recent verse, such as Marbod of Rennes’ *Liber metricus de ornamentis uerborum* (fols. 43r–46v), as well as classical (or pseudo-classical) poems such as those attributed to Julius Caesar and the Emperor Hadrian (fol. 39rv). The book is thought to have originated in northern-eastern France whence it migrated to England, but at what date remains unknown.⁶⁸

The authorship of the *Epitaphium Senecae* remains a moot point. Rubrics identifying it as Seneca’s epitaph occur in the earliest manuscripts to feature it,⁶⁹ rubrics saying that it was actually “dictated by him” first appear in the fourteenth-century;⁷⁰ but, as Giuseppe Flaminio

⁶⁶ London, British Library, Royal MS 15.C.II, fols. 1r–2v (with the epitaph on fol. 2v); Oxford, St John’s College, MS 36, fols. 44vb–46ra (with the epitaph on fol. 46r). The former volume is thought to have belonged to Salisbury Cathedral: see Reynolds, *Seneca’s Letters*, 108. For descriptions of the latter volume, see *ibid.*, 73–74; Ralph Hanna, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western and Medieval Manuscripts of St John’s College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53–55.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that there are two more twelfth-century English MSS of the *Epistulae morales* in which the epitaph might have figured in this role if their initial folios had not been lost: Oxford, Magdalen College, lat. 22; and Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Lipsius MS 49. The former is from Evesham, the latter’s exact provenance remains uncertain. On these MSS and their place in the transmission of Seneca’s correspondence, see Reynolds, *Seneca’s Letters*, 71, 73–75, 77, 105, 108–9, 111, 123; *idem*, *Texts and Transmission*, 375, n. 23. See also Henry O. Coxe, *Catalogus codicum MSS qui in collegiis aulisque Oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, pt. ii, *Collegii beatæ Mariæ Magdalensis* (Oxford: E Typographeo Academico, 1852), 16; Jacob Geel, *Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum qui inde ab anno 1741 bibliothecæ Lugduno-Batavæ accesserunt* (Leiden: Brill, 1852), no. 459.

⁶⁸ Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, ed. P. T. Eden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 20 and 24; Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 361–2, 364–5, 367–8.

⁶⁹ Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, MS C.129, fol. 99v.

⁷⁰ E.g. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 174, fol. 12v (*Epitaphium Senecae a se dictatum*). Writing in the 1420s, Sicco Polenton (1375/6–1447) reports the idea that Seneca composed the “epigram” as the blood was being coaxed from the veins of his aged body in a warm bath as a possibility, and debates whether the direction given there that his body “should be removed to the solemn stones” implies that his funeral was carried out with great pomp: *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII*, ed. Berthold L. Ullman, Papers of the American Academy in Rome 6 (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1928), 492–3. Tacitus, as Polenton notes, contradicts this notion with his statement that the body was cremated without ceremony, just as Seneca had ordered at the height of his power and wealth: *Annales ab excessu diui Augusti*, xv.65, ed. Henry Furneaux and rev. H. F. Pelham and C. D. Fisher, 2 vols. (2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896–1907), 2:403.

observes, the notion that he had composed it had long been implicit in its inclusion in Senecan anthologies—in its placement in close proximity to his *Epistulae morales*.⁷¹ Citing intellectual and stylistic affinities to the known works, some scholars have argued that Seneca did indeed compose it, shortly before he committed suicide.⁷² Others have taken the poet's "optimistic view of the afterlife" as evidence that the author was a Christian writing with an "eschatological doctrine in mind".⁷³ Neither position seems particularly strong. The poem nowhere suggests, for example, that the subject's body would be resurrected at a future date, to undergo the Last Judgement. None of the poem's ideas are exclusive to Christianity, and parallels for every nuance can be found in pagan texts. Cicero writes, for example, of *caelum* as the realm of the happy dead—as the natural home of the soul and as a place in which the dead might hope to find freedom.⁷⁴ The poem would have been as compatible, in short, with some of the more philosophical varieties of paganism as it is with Christianity.⁷⁵ Yet it matters not for present purposes whether Seneca was the author, or even whether he was believed to have authored the poem. The crucial questions are whether those who memorised and recited it appreciated that it was *about* the Roman philosopher and whether their cognizance of this poem implies knowledge of his works.

Knowledge of Seneca's story and works seems to have been scarce before 1100, especially in England.⁷⁶ Of the writers active there, Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, a hagiographer educated in Flanders, is perhaps the earliest to show knowledge of the *Epistulae morales*.⁷⁷ But

⁷¹ Flamini, "La tradizione," 103–4.

⁷² E.g. Domenico Romano, "L'*Epitaphium Senecae* (Anth. Lat. 667 Riese) e l'ultimo Seneca," *Orpheus: Rivista di umanità classica e cristiana* n.s. 4 (1983): 384–90, who develops the views of Carlo Pascal, "L'epitaffio di Seneca," *Atene e Roma* 10 (1907): 22–25, and Léon Herrmann, *Sénèque et les premiers chrétiens*, Collection Latomus 167 (Brussels: Latomus, 1979), 16–17. For a skeptical response, see Dionigi Vottero (ed.), *Lucio Anneo Seneca: I Frammenti* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1998), 83, n. 397.

⁷³ James Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 186. Cf. Ernst Bickel, "De epitaphio Senecae," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 63 (1908): 392–405.

⁷⁴ E.g. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, i, 22.51 and 29.71, ed. Max Pohlenz, *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1965), 243 and 253–4.

⁷⁵ See Dingel, *Senecas Epigramme*, 315–8; Flamini, "La tradizione del genere epigrammatica," 108–12.

⁷⁶ But note Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology and the Source of the First Old English Riddle," *Anglia* 112 (1994): 1–25. Cf. idem, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66, 68, 129.

⁷⁷ *Liber Confortatorius*, ed. C. H. Talbot, "The *Liber Confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin," *Analecta Monastica* 3 (1955): 1–117, at 78 and 79 (where he cites Seneca's *Epistulae morales*, nos. lxxxix.21 and cxxiii.2). See also William R. Barnes, "Goscelin's Greeks and Romans," in Stephanie Hollis (ed.), *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Liber confortatorius and the Legend of Edith* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 401–17, at 402, 405, 412; Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, p. 375. Goscelin wrote his *Book of the Encourager* after 1078, probably in the early 1080s.

the manuscript record shows that a surge of interest in the man and his ethical ideas took place in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. During this period Normandy became an important source for better and more complete texts of the *Epistulae morales*. As Reynolds puts it, they crossed the Channel with the Conquest, “manuscripts were imported from France, and England began for the first time to play an active part in the transmission of the text”.⁷⁸ Since the vast majority of Norman and English copies of the poem often occur in manuscripts of the letters whose rubrics identify it as Seneca’s epitaph,⁷⁹ it seems certain that those who read and heard it in these regions will have known or been told that the Roman philosopher was its subject. Memorisation of the epitaph may be taken, in short, as strong evidence for an interest in Seneca and what he represented—as evidence, moreover, that the memoriser was probably familiar with a collection of Senecan texts.

To be sure, some Norman and English readers may have known the poem as the work of a medieval author. That an attribution to Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans (1096–1125) and later archbishop of Tours (1125–33), may have arisen in the Middle Ages is suggested, for example, by the epitaph’s inclusion in Antoine Beaugendre’s 1708 edition of the poet’s collected works.⁸⁰ Beaugendre’s apparatus implies that he found it in a manuscript of Hildebert’s compositions that belonged to the Cathedral of Saint-Gatien, Tours. Yet it still appears in this edition—and, presumably therefore, in the lost exemplar—under the rubric *Epitaphium Senecæ*. It follows that even if—and this should be seen as an extremely remote possibility—our earl of Leicester knew the poem under this spurious attribution, it remains likely that he will have regarded it as an attempt to encapsulate the Roman philosopher’s life and ethos.

3. THE EARLS OF LEICESTER AS CULTURAL PIONEERS

It is not difficult to imagine one of the earls of Leicester memorising and reciting the shorter

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *Seneca’s Letters*, 104.

⁷⁹ E.g. Additional 11983, fol. 39r6; Harley 2659, fol. 12vb15; Royal 15.C.II, fol. 2v. There is no rubric in Egerton 654, fol. 156v, but the poem appears in the midst of Senecan materials.

⁸⁰ Hildebert of Lavardin, *Opera tam edita quam inedita*, ed. Antoine Beaugendre (Paris: L. Le Conte, 1708), col. 1369; rpt. in PL 171, col. 1446. The attribution is contradicted, of course, by the existence of ninth-century manuscripts of the poem, such as Zurich C.129, fol. 99v. Cf. Jean Barthélemy Hauréau, *Les mélanges poétiques d’Hildebert de Lavardin* (Paris: G. Pedone-Lauriel, 1882), 140–1.

poems on folio twelve of Burney 357, not least because it bears out the considerable anecdotal evidence for their learning and intellectual prowess. Eadmer recounts, for example, how Robert I “interpreted” one of Anselm’s letters when it was “shown” or “set out for him” at a meeting of Henry I’s court that was held in 1109,⁸¹ implying that he could grasp epistolary Latin for himself. Henry of Huntingdon describes Robert I as “outstanding in knowledge, suave in rhetoric, astute in perspicacity, sagacious in foresight, subtle in nature, insurmountable in prudence, profound in advice, and great in wisdom”.⁸² William of Malmesbury’s story about how the Beaumont twins used dialectic to defeat the cardinals in debate needs to be treated with scepticism—as a potential instance of his capacity for misrepresentation,⁸³ but he is not the only source to suggest that Waleran and Robert II received an advanced education. *Historia ecclesie Abendonensis* claims, for example, that Robert II received part of his education at Abingdon Abbey,⁸⁴ where a learned writer, doctor and royal favourite, Faricius of Arezzo, was abbot (1100–17).⁸⁵ Robert II and his wife Amice are known to have exchanged letters with Aelred, abbot of Rievaulx (1147–67), and with Gilbert Foliot,⁸⁶ whose register includes a copy of the poem *Si supplex hominum*. Richard fitz Nigel, writing after Robert II’s death in 1168, described him as “a man of discretion, erudite in letters, and experienced in legal matters”.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Eadmer of Canterbury, *Historia nouorum in Anglia*, 4, ed. Martin Rule, Rolls Series 81 (London: Longman, 1884), 207: “Quam Robertus comes de Mellento sibi expositam ubi intellexit... .” The Latin is, admittedly, somewhat ambiguous.

⁸² *Historia Anglorum*, viii, *De contemptu mundi*, § 7 (p. 598): “Fuit scientia clarus, eloquio blandus, adstucia perspicax, prouidentia sagax, ingenio uersipellus, prudentia insuperabilis, consilio profundus, sapientia magnus.”

⁸³ *Gesta regum Anglorum*, v.406.2 (pp. 734–6).

⁸⁴ *Historia ecclesie Abendonensis*, ii.301, ed. and trs. John Hudson, *The History of the Church of Abingdon*, Oxford Medieval Texts, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002–7), 2:312–13. The passage is, unfortunately, rather problematic: the chronicle claims that Robert was at the abbey during the reign of “King William” (i.e. before 1100), yet Robert and Waleran cannot have been alive then, as they had still to come of age when their father died in 1118. Cf. Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan*, 317.

⁸⁵ A testament to Faricius’s learning is provided by his *Vita S. Aldhelmi episcopi et confessoris eximii* (BHL 256), ed. Michael Winterbottom, “An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 15 (2005): 93–147, at 97–131. See also idem, “Faricius of Arezzo’s Life of St Aldhelm,” in Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe and Andy Orchard (eds), *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, Toronto Old English Series 14, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 1:109–31 (esp. 117–22, where Winterbottom considers the eccentricities of Faricius’s diction and syntax). On his relationship with the king, see also K. L. Shirley, “Faricius of Abingdon and the King’s Court,” *Haskins Society Journal* 9 (2001 for 1997): 175–84.

⁸⁶ Walter Daniel, *Vita Ailredi Abbatis Rieualle* (BHL 2644as), ed. and trs. Maurice Powicke, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*, Oxford Medieval Texts (2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 1–64, at 42; Gilbert Foliot, *The Letters and Charters*, nos. 120, 137, 194–6.

⁸⁷ Richard fitzNigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario*, 1.11, ed. and trs. Emilie Amt and Stephen D. Church, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 88.

Robert II seems, furthermore, to have attracted some attention from scholars in search of a patron. Robert of Cricklade, for example, addressed his *Speculum fidei*, a collection of extracts from the Bible with a little commentary,⁸⁸ to Count Robert II, apparently at his request.⁸⁹ The work is thought to have been written before 1160, while the author was prior of St Frideswide's, a house of Augustinian canons in Oxford.⁹⁰ In the mid-twelfth century an anonymous author dedicated a redaction of Raymond of Marseilles' *Book of Judgements* to a "Count R. of Leicester" who was probably Robert II. The redactor re-worked Raymond's compendium of Egyptian, Indian and Arab ideas about astrology adding, among other matter, a preface which commended the earl for his learning and judicial achievements:⁹¹

We have rightly attended to explaining [these things] thoroughly for the most learned and reverend count of the English, R. of Leicester, since just as we reckon that to scatter a collection of pearls before swine is in no way right,⁹² so we consider that it is not fitting to hand over to the stupid and unskilled the ideas of skilled philosophers, proven by study. Indeed, because such a noble man whom we know to be enriched with the wealth of justice, ought not to be kept from being aware of such ideas [as are] deserving of human utility, we have excerpted the more elegant flowers from the works of the

⁸⁸ See Richard W. Hunt, "English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser. 19 (1936): 19–42, at 33, who briefly characterises the *Speculum fidei* as a "disappointing" sort of *summa* which collects and discusses "rather slightly the texts from the Old and New Testament supposed to refer to the Trinity and the Incarnation and so forth". The work seems to have been directed, in part at least, against the christological theories of Peter Lombard.

⁸⁹ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 380, fols. 1r–132v, at fol. 2rv: "Et quibus tibi uir illustrissime Rodberte comes Leicestrie, ego tuus Rodbertus pauca perstrinxi, deuotissime uerens petitioni tue non acquiescere.... Exposuit me moribus malignantium reuerentia tua optime comes, pro opusculi huius executione.... Sed eorum lacerationem securus expecto, quia non ex mea | presumptione, sed pro tua beniuola petitione, opus istud aggressus sum...."; "I, your Robert, most devoutly afraid not to comply with your request, have abbreviated a few things from among them [the pages of both testaments] for you, O most illustrious man, Robert, count of Leicester.... O good count, because of the production of this little work your reverence has exposed me to the habits of the malicious.... But I anticipate being secure against their gouging, because I undertake this work, not out of my presumption, but at your kind request...."

⁹⁰ Robert was abbot of St Frideswide's from before 8 January 1141 until 1174×1188: see Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 180, 284.

⁹¹ *Liber iudiciorum III*, pref., as found in London, British Library, Royal MS 12.E.XXV, fol. 172v, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 57, fol. 137v: "...reuerentissimo comiti Laycestrie R. Anglorum iure peritissimo medullitus enucliare curauimus, quoniam quemadmodum margaritarum collectionem porcis aspergere minime fas esse iudicamus, ita nec sentencias peritorum philosophorum studio approbatas stolidis aut imperitis tradere dignum esse pensemus, uerum quia tam illustrem uirum quem novimus iusticie diuiciis locupletem, tantarum sentenciarum utilitati humane deseruentium cognicio latere non debet, stilo paruitatis nostre ex libris pretaxatorum philosophorum flores eleganciores excerptimus ut illum tanquam iusticie pratum decoraret et sic commodum inferendo posteris, ipse instrueret et eruditus ab omnibus benedictionem et a deo laudem perciperet, cuius nomini hoc opus deputatur, et ne inuidorum ignavia huius opusculi autoritatem sibi usurparet nomine humilitatis uestre initia pretitulare monemur." I am grateful to Charles Burnett for sharing this material with me ahead of the publication of the critical edition that will appear in vol. 2 of the CNRS edition of Raymond's *Opera omnia*.

⁹² Cf. Matthew 7:6.

aforesaid thinkers with our meagre pen, so that by thus delivering assistance to those to come, he might embellish, as it were, the field of justice—that he might instruct and obtain both the blessing of erudition from everyone and praise from God, in whose name this work is dedicated. And lest the laziness of the envious should usurp for themselves the authority of this little work, let us remind them that its opening has been inscribed in the name of your humility.

Since Raymond was active around 1141,⁹³ the count of Leicester to whom this tract was directed cannot have been Robert I. Moreover, the preface's play on R.'s judicial prowess suggests that it was directed at Robert II and devised between 1154 and 1167, during the period when he was Henry II's justiciar. All of this helps to show that the Beaumonts were reputed for their learning and a willingness, perhaps, to engage with relatively arcane material; but since self-directed memorisation implies an active engagement with a text, it is arguable that the additions to folio 12v of Burney 357 offer a more convincing insight into the nature of their interests.

One explanation for their interest in the two poems might be their relevance to the situation of lords like the earls of Leicester. Their emphasis on renunciation and contempt for the world, well attested themes in twelfth-century religious literature, may help to explain their presence in a miscellany that belonged to a Cistercian monastery; but both were written from the standpoint, not of a monk, but of a successful man of the world. The good things which the speaker in the first poem considers so ephemeral represent the worldly attachments for which many lords will have yearned: faithful servants, vast estates, a well-born and faithful wife, sensible children, and receptive followers. The life which the speaker is renouncing in the epitaph is, in similar fashion, one that a magnate would be expected to admire: a life of *negotium*, of onerous service that has elicited "honours"—that is, lands and titles. His attitude of stoical detachment, of exhaustion with the toil and worries of high office, and especially his desire to be remembered for the manner of his death by the implied audience—by an audience of his peers—align the poem with the situation of the secular aristocracy. It is easy to think that highly educated lords whose careers were pursued amid the vicissitudes of Norman politics would have found both poems, but especially the *Epitaphium Senecae* with emphasis on the vicissitudes of public life, compelling. Written from a secular standpoint, tautly constructed and

⁹³ Raymond wrote part of his treatise on the astrolabe in 1141, and the longer version of his *Liber Iudiciorum* includes a horoscope dated to 24 January of the same year: see Raymond of Marseille, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, *Traité de l'astrolabe; Liber cursuum planetarum*, ed. and trs. Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, Charles Burnett and Emmanuel Poulle, *Sources d'histoire médiévale* 40 (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009), esp. 9–10, 31; Emmanuel Poulle, "Le traité d'astrolabe de Raymond de Marseille," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 5 (1964): 866–900.

vividly conceived, they articulate the spiritual ideals of a well bred but sceptical aristocrat. There are, then, strong reasons for thinking that “the remark” might be authentic in so far as it refers to the latter two poems—that one of the Norman earls of Leicester did indeed memorise them. It is difficult, on the other hand, to imagine one of them memorising Sygerius’s verses promoting the enclosure of religious women, not just because of their subject matter, but also because of their technical complexity and length.

The significance of this material should not be underestimated. Effective evidence for the intellectual interests of English and Norman magnates is scarce before the fourteenth century.⁹⁴ Only a few of their letters survive, the most notable being that which Brian fitz Count, lord of Wallingford (d. c.1150), wrote to Henry of Blois in support of the Empress Matilda.⁹⁵ A much cited passage by Hue de Rotelande shows that *some* lords collected books,⁹⁶ but the contents and intellectual level of these libraries remain unknown.⁹⁷ It is true that some of the most demanding compositions of the period were addressed to members of the secular aristocracy. William of Malmesbury, for example, addressed the first version of *Gesta regum Anglorum* to the Empress Matilda (1102–67) and her brother, David, king of Scotland (1124–53) and holder of the honour of Huntingdon.⁹⁸ He addressed the final version to Robert, earl of Gloucester (1121–47).⁹⁹

⁹⁴ The present discussion of the wider context for aristocratic cultural agency is confined to examples that have a direct bearing on the present argument. For a more rounded of the evidence, see the author’s *Power, Rhetoric and Historical Practice in Twelfth-Century England: From William of Malmesbury to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (forthcoming), chp. 6, and the works cited there.

⁹⁵ H. W. C. Davis, “Henry of Blois and Brian fitz Count,” *English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 297–303 (esp. 301–3). See also Adrian Morey and Christopher N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and his Letters*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 11 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 105–8; Edmund King, “The Memory of Brian fitz Count,” *Haskins Society Journal* 13 (2004): 75–98.

⁹⁶ Hue says that his patron Gilbert fitz Baderon, lord of Monmouth (1176/7–90/1), had many books in his castle *e de latyn e de romaunz*, “in both Latin and French”: *Protheselaus*, lines 12707–11, ed. Anthony J. Holden, Anglo-Norman Texts 47–49, 3 vols. (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1991–93), 2:174. See also Mary D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 85–86, 95.

⁹⁷ On the private libraries in England and France and the difficulties involved in reconstructing their contents, see Jenny Stratford and Teresa Webber, “Bishops and Kings: Private Book Collections in Medieval England,” Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (eds), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 1, *To 1640* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1:178–217 (esp. 178–83 and 197–9); Patricia Danz Stirnemann, “Les bibliothèques princières et privées aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles,” in André Vernet, Claude Jolly and Martine Poulain (eds), *Histoire des Bibliothèques françaises*, 4 vols. (Paris: Promodis, 1989–92), 1:173–91. For an energetic survey of the evidence, *such as it is*, for the book collecting of English kings, one which ranges over a longer timespan than its *termini* indicate, see also Nicholas Vincent, “The Great Lost Library of England’s Medieval Kings? Royal Use and Ownership of Books, 1066–1272,” in Kathleen Doyle and Scot McKendrick (eds), *1000 Years of Royal Books and Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 2013), 73–112.

⁹⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ep.i and ep.ii (pp. 2–8). For the re-discovery of these letters, see Ewald Könsgen, “Zwei unbekannte Briefe zu den *Gesta regum Anglorum* des Wilhelm von Malmesbury,” *Deutsches Archiv* 31 (1975): 204–14.

Geoffrey of Monmouth dedicated his *Gesta Britonum* to the same earl and also to Waleran, count of Meulan (1120–66) and earl of Worcester (1138–66).¹⁰⁰ Both writers praise these men for their devotion to letters and reading,¹⁰¹ but dedications and comments of this kind do not suffice to demonstrate an active interest in sophisticated literature. Writers had many reasons to fashion the powerful as patrons of the arts, not the least being their need for protection and sustenance. Hence, prefatory praise of literate lords may represent, as Rollo puts it, nothing more than “a polite fiction designed to transform a hope for patronage into a remunerative reality”.¹⁰² In practice many may have relied on chaplains and clerks to read out the texts that were sent to them, a process which may well have involved translation into the vernacular and much explanation.¹⁰³ That clerks were sometimes involved in the explication of texts is implied by the preface to Hugh of Fleury’s *De regia potestate et sacerdotali dignitate*. Addressing his text to King Henry I in the hope that he would support its circulation to a wider audience, Hugh suggests that the king should both read the text on his own and discuss it with his advisors:

Hence, O Lord King, for this reason I have decided to address and dedicate this work to you that it might be confirmed and strengthened by the privilege of your authority, and dispersed through many places, or destroyed if it is useless. In this matter furthermore, I follow in the footsteps of ancient men who used to place their studies before kings imbued with the study of letters. I call, finally, upon your highness’s excellence that you might revise and examine it diligently and apply yourself to discovering anything it which seems to require refutation, both separately *and with the wise men who are with you*.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ep.iii (pp. 10–12). Robert subsequently asked William to write a history of recent events: William of Malmesbury, *Historia nouella*, pref., ed. Edmund King and trs. K. R. Potter, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *De gestis Britonum*, §§ 3–4, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trs. Neil Wright, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey, *ibid.*, § 3 (p. 5), describes Robert of Gloucester as one “whom philosophy has nurtured in the liberal arts”; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, v.447 (p. 798), casts him as a lover of books and literature.

¹⁰² David Rollo, *Glamorous Sorcery: Magic and Literacy in the High Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures 25 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xi. Cf. Franz H. Bäuml, “Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy,” *Speculum* 55 (1980): 237–65, at 240 and esp. n. 6.

¹⁰³ Cf. Duby, “Culture of the Knightly Class,” esp. 259–60.

¹⁰⁴ Hugh of Fleury, *Tractatus de regia potestate et sacerdotali dignitate*, pref., ed. Ernest Sackur, MGH Libelli de Lite 2 (Hannover: MGH, 1892), 465–94, at 466–7: “Proinde, domine rex, idcirco uobis opus hoc assignare uel dedicare decreui, ut auctoritatis uestrae priuilegio confirmetur et corroboretur, et per loca plurima dispergatur, uel si fuerit inutile, disrumpatur. In hac etiam re sequor antiquorum uirorum uestigia, qui sua studia olim regibus imbutis litterarum studiis praesentabant. Precor denique excellentiam celsitudinis uestrae, ut illud et seorsum et cum uiris sapientibus, qui uobiscum sunt, retractetis et diligenter examinatis, et ut quaecunque in eo confutanda uideritis, detegere a satagatis.” I am grateful to Tom O’Donnell for drawing this passage to my attention.

Considerations of this sort and the possibility that prestigious texts were sometimes addressed to magnates in the hope of obtaining an *extra* reward out of the labour involved in producing them has allowed many scholars to assume they typically produced, not for the lay princes to whom they were sometimes addressed, but for clerical and especially monastic readers—or for the sake of “self-expression”.¹⁰⁵ But this is to argue from an absence—and from an absence which is not as complete as is often assumed. The evidence of Burney 357 suggests that *some* lay magnates, far from being a passive audience for what ambitious religious put before them, were actively interested in sophisticated texts. The comment appended to the *Epitaphium Senecae* is one of a few, precious, items which suggest that they were, not only more than capable of reading erudite Latin literature, but also genuinely interested in what they read.

To date, the charters and seals that bear witness to the re-use of cameos or gems engraved with scenes from classical mythology have provided the strongest evidence for an interest in classical culture among the secular aristocracy of Norman England.¹⁰⁶ Mounted on rings, these gemstones would be used to supplement the main image on a seal with a smaller image on its reverse side. A practice that added a quasi-Roman flavour to the action of validating a charter, it is widely attested in England from the 1140s onwards. Nigel, bishop of Ely (1133–69), took up the fashion between 1146 and 1165, opting for a gem showing a satyr leaning against a column.¹⁰⁷ William, earl of Gloucester (1147–93), seems to have embraced it at the outset of his reign, using a seal showing the head of the god Sarapis being crowned by two figures above an eagle between two standards.¹⁰⁸ Ranulf II, earl of Chester (1129–53), took the fashion up at some point before 1147.¹⁰⁹ Though the chronological data suggests that secular magnates took up the

¹⁰⁵ E.g. Rodney M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (2nd edn, Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 12, who inclines to the view that William was writing chiefly to express his own feelings and ideas: “William’s readers, the monks of Malmesbury and nearby houses, were of humbler rank and attainments, and even the noble patrons of some of his works were not necessarily learned.” See also *ibid.*, 36–39.

¹⁰⁶ See Martin Henig, “The Re-Use and Copying of Ancient Intaglios Set in Medieval Personal Seals, Mainly Found in England: An Aspect of the Renaissance of the 12th Century,” in Noël Adams, John Cherry and James Robinson (eds), *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, British Museum Research Publications, 168 (London: British Museum, 2007), 25–34.

¹⁰⁷ *English Episcopal Acta*, vol. 31, *Ely 1109–1197*, ed. Nicholas Karn (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2005), cxlvi–cxlvii and pl. IV.

¹⁰⁸ *Earldom of Gloucester Charters: The Charters and Scribes of the Earls and Countesses of Gloucester to A.D. 1227*, ed. Robert B. Patterson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 24, pl. XXXIb, and nos. 77, 122, 137, 172.

¹⁰⁹ *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester, c.1071–1237*, ed. Geoffrey Barraclough, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 126 (Chester, 1988), nos. 22, 45 and 67. Barraclough dates the three charters to 1130×1150, 1138×1147 and “probably” 1143 or 1144. T. A. Heslop, “The Seals of the Twelfth-Century Earls of Chester,” *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 71 (1991): 179–97, at 183, suggests that the ‘drawings’

practice at the same time as their ecclesiastical counterparts, the former have often been seen as emulating the latter in this activity.¹¹⁰ But the pagan content of many engravings suggests otherwise, and there are signs that the more emphatic styles of lordship which emerged in the twelfth century were having a tremendous impact on social norms. That is, there are good grounds for thinking that secular lords were at the forefront of changes in personal presentation and that their ecclesiastical counterparts were striving to keep up. Consider, for example, the way in which ecclesiastical writers began to style abbots as *domnus abbas*, as “lord-abbot”, a development reflected in Latin chronicles from the mid twelfth-century onwards.¹¹¹

Earl Robert II of Leicester may, moreover, have been one of the first lords in England to use an engraved gem as a counter-seal. Granted, the charter whose seal reveals that he had taken up this fashion—London, British Library, Harley Ch 84.H.19—was issued at a late point in his career,¹¹² but its date can only provide a *terminus ante quem* for his decision to do so. Since no earlier seal survives to show otherwise, it is possible that he adopted the fashion at the outset of his reign. Certainly, the matrix used to make the primary face of the seal attached to Harley Ch 84.H.19 has been reckoned an “early” type—an equestrian design inherited perhaps from Robert I or chosen when his son came of age in 1120.¹¹³

which bear witness to the counterseals of nos. 22 and 67 derive, not from alternative gems as previously thought, but from “the same gem which has been variously interpreted”.

¹¹⁰ E.g. Crouch, *Beaumont Twins*, pp. 210–11. Note also P. D. A. Harvey and Andrew McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (London: British Library and the Public Record Office, 1996), p. 70, who identifies Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester (1129–71), and Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury (1139–62), as earlier adopters of the practice; and for further examples of bishops using antique gems as their counter-seals, see Christopher R. Cheney, *English Bishops Chanceries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1950), 50–51.

¹¹¹ Compare the Winchcombe Chronicle as far as 1122, a chronicle produced in the 1140s (ed. Paul Antony Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles: Hitherto Unnoticed Witnesses to the Work of John of Worcester*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 373, 2 vols. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 2:356–520) with the Gloucester-sourced continuation that was added in the 1180s (*ibid.*, ii, 520–42). In the continuation abbots are routinely styled *domnus* (e.g. s.a. 1130.2, 1130.4, 1131.2, and so on), whereas none is so styled in the original chronicle.

¹¹² Crouch, *Beaumont Twins*, 210–11, dates Harley Ch 84.H.19 to 1147×1153. Having examined the seal for myself, I can testify that the inscription which surrounds the gem remains distinct: +*SECRETUM ROBERTI CŌITIS LEIRC[EST]RIE*. But that left by the gem itself—a female figure looking to her right—is quite obscure. For two attempts to identify its contents, see Walter de Gray Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 6 vols. (London: British Museum, 1887–1900), no. 5669; Crouch, *Beaumont Twins*, 210–11. Another example was known to the antiquarian Thomas Madox (1666–1727), who cites a writ issued by Robert II as royal justiciar whose seal showed “a Knight mounted, in warlike Equipage, his Face to the left Hand; on the Reverse, a small round Counterseal” (Thomas Madox, *The History and Antiquities of the Exchequer of the Kings of England*, 2 vols. (2nd edn, London: William Owen and Benjamin White, 1769), 1:34, n. w), but, as can be seen from Wilfred L. Warren, *Henry II* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), pl. 19, the seal is no longer attached to the original document (Westminster Abbey Muniments, no. 1886).

¹¹³ See further T. A. Heslop’s commentary in George Zarnecki, Janet Holt and Tristram Holland (eds), *English*

Early adoption of the fashion for Roman gemstones would be in keeping, furthermore, with William of Malmesbury's account of the Beaumonts, with its suggestion that Robert I was at the forefront of cultural life. The earl had, William alleges, "such immense influence in England that by his example he inverted a long-established mode of dressing and eating".¹¹⁴ William then goes on to say that the new fashion in banqueting promoted by the earl was that "of banqueting once [a day]", a custom adopted "in the courts of all the best people" (*in omnium optimatum curiis*).¹¹⁵ That this practice was indeed the norm in William's time is seemingly confirmed by Henry of Huntingdon, who writes that the custom in his time was "for *principes* to place food before their followers once a day, because of either avarice or, as they themselves say, disdain [for food]".¹¹⁶ Given the frequency with which he lambasts Norman lords for their greed and mismanagement of food resources, William's attribution of this practice to Robert I's influence should probably be read as criticism rather than as praise;¹¹⁷ but whatever the exact point he was trying to make, the passage chimes with the evidence for the Beaumonts' interest in classical culture and learning provided by Burney 357 and Robert II's use of a quasi-Roman counter-seal. Taken together, these items suggest that this family helped to set many of the fashions that prevailed in their time, including perhaps the period's fascination with Seneca and his moral theories—a suggestion that challenges many entrenched assumptions about the forces driving intellectual life in the twelfth century.

Of course, as with all historical data, that provided by Burney 357 has ambiguities that invite doubt. It is impossible to identify the count of Leicester to whom the remark below the epitaph refers, or to say who added this "comment". (Certainly, it would be unwise to infer from the thirteenth-century *ex libris* of Burney 357 that a monk of Thame was responsible, because the "booklet" in which the gloss occurs appears to pre-date the foundation of this abbey. Since this section seems to have been manufactured elsewhere, it follows that the poems and remark may

Romanesque Art, 1066–1200: Hayward Gallery, London 5 April–8 July 1984 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), no. 371. The writ cited by Madox, *History and Antiquities*, 1:34, was issued in about 1162.

¹¹⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, v.407 (p. 736): "Ingentis in Anglia momenti, ut inueteratum uestiendi uel comedendi exemplo suo inueteret morem."

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, vi.20 (p. 370).

¹¹⁷ This material follows the equally tendentious statement that Robert I used his powers of persuasion to advance the cause of peace: he was "an advocate of friendship, an opponent of discord" (*suasor concordie, dissuasor discordie*)! On William's methods, see Paul Antony Hayward, "The Importance of Being Ambiguous: Innuendo and Legerdemain in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum* and *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 33 (2011): 75–102; and *idem*, *Power, Rhetoric and Historical Practice*, chp. 3.

well have been added to its contents before it arrived there.)¹¹⁸ One might also ask whether the comment was the invention of an idle reader; but even if we were to read it that way, it remains significant that a contemporary could imagine an earl of Leicester taking an interest in poetry of this kind. Even if none of the earls memorised the *Epitaphium Senecae*, the note's presence in the inner margins of Burney 357 implies that someone found the idea that one of them might well have done so credible. Thus, whatever the story's exact origins and no matter which Robert of Leicester it concerns, it helps to show that certain Norman magnates were interested in classical life and thought—that these men and women might well have constituted an enthusiastic audience for William of Malmesbury's attempts to “season” English history “with Roman salt”.¹¹⁹

Appendix

Two Poems by Sygerius Lucanus

VERSUS SYGERII LUCANI IN SANCTORUM LAUDEM MONACHORUM

- 1) O quam magna Dei miseratio, qui sua nobis
 Maxima pro minimis nostris largitur, et offert
 Omnibus assidue, qui si delinquimus illi,
 Nos uocat, et multis hortatibus ammonet, ut nos,
 Secura spe, mente bona, redeamus ad ipsum. 5
 Qui sic culparum scelerumque pericula delet,
 Vt non impediunt operum ornamenta bonorum.¹²⁰
 Nam minimum est quicquid facimus uel possumus, ad tam
 Ardua sancta fides qua prædicat, et tenet omnis
 Religio, quamuis non possit dicere, quanta 10
 Sint ea lingua hominis uel cor meditarier umquam.

¹¹⁸ It is worth noting also that there are no documents in the early thirteenth-century *Thame Cartulary*, ed. Herbert E. Salter, Oxfordshire Record Society 25–26, 2 vols. (Oxford: Issued for the Society, 1947–8), to show that the Beaumonts were significant benefactors of the abbey.

¹¹⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, i.pref.4 (p. 14): “temporum seriem... Romano sale condire”.

¹²⁰ *Operum ornamenta bonorum* seems to have been a common phrase: e.g. Lanfranc, *Letters*, no. 9, ed. Helen Clover and Margaret Gibson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 68.

Gratia nos igitur saluat, quam nemo meretur,
 Si sub uirtutum nitidis non dimicet armis.
 Hec est pugna potens et delectabilis,^a in quam
 Dux Deus est,¹²¹ qui legitime certantibus astans, 15
 Immarcessibiles parat imponitque coronas.¹²²
 Tam bene tam magna contendunt uincere^b causa,
 Sancti qui mundi uarios calcare tumultus.
 Exultant monachi, nam mundi cetera turba
 Non tam deuoto uolat ad cęlestia cursu. 20
 Hi sunt qui partem discreta mente sinistram
 Contempnant dampnantque simul. Christumque secuntur,
 Eius habendo crucem, sanctoque in amore ferendo.
 Quicquid uult lasciuia caro nisi ut ipsa regatur,
 Viuat et ex modico reprimant, et spirituali 25
 Cum uirtute domant; euangeliique rigorem
 Obseruant, nam preceptum Christi esse tenendum
 Tota mente sciunt,¹²³ et mundo corde fatentur.
 Angelicis gens mixta choris, qui corpore in isto
 Contemplantur eum, seiuncti^c corpore ab isto 30
 Quem semper domino illos conseruante uidebat.
 Ista MARIE est pars, que non tolletur ab illis.¹²⁴
 f.12v <Hinc est sp----- sanctorum more qu-- ---->^d
 Quam carnale uident, et multa futura reuelant.
 Ha quotiens illos inmundus uertere temptans, 35
 Et de sublimi subducere culmine frustra,
 Spiritus aggreditur. Nam quo plus scandere celsa¹²⁵

¹²¹ Cf. 2 Paraliponemon 13.12.

¹²² Cf. 1 Peter 5.4.

¹²³ Cf. Matthew 22:36–39; John 15:12, 17.

¹²⁴ Cf. Luke 10.42.

¹²⁵ Cf. Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, line 290, ed. Maurice P. Cunningham, *Prudentii Carmina*, CCSL 126 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966), 149–81, at 160.

Mortales quandoque uidet, plus inuidet, et plus
 Insidiatur eis, illo quo subdidit Adam,
 Contendens odio, quod semper ad omnia contra 40
 Humanum fert ipse genus. Sed habere repulsam,
 Se dolet a dominis, quos sanctus spiritus armat,
 Militibus Christi monachis, patientia quorum
 Iob sequitur, nec deliciis nec uicta ruinis.

- 2) Nec de uirginibus sacris quę sunt in eodem
 Viuentes deuoto habitu est omnino silendum.
 Heę fragiles animo sexuque et corpore lenes,
 Se superant, et quinque suos cum^e lumine sensus
 Perpetuo humectant oleo, ne deficiat lux 5
 Lampadibus delata suis, ut ad hostia quando
 Prudentes uenient, fatuis remanentibus intrent.
 He uultus etiam fugiunt et uerba uirorum,
 Ne per eas ipsi per eos peccare, uel ipse
 Conspiciendo queant, nam mens humana per istas 10
 Corpora non modice solet infestare fenestras.¹²⁶
 Has sibi desponsat Deus, et per signa subarrat
 Aurea, ne quis eas uexare uel audeat ullo
 Attractare modo. Sub uirginitatis honore est
 Omnis spirituum chorus in cęlestibus, omnis 15
 Virtus namque Dei matrem cęlestis honorat.
 Preęcipue nobis ueneranda monastica uita est,
 Quę cęlos aperit sibi, quę celestia nobis
 Preparat, assiduis pro nobis fletibus orat.

VERSES OF SYGERIUS LUCANUS IN PRAISE OF HOLY MONKS

- 1) O how great is the mercy of the Lord. He bestows his greatest on us in return for our

¹²⁶ For the dependence of these lines on Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, 150, see above.

worst, and offers it continually to all. If we sin against him, he summons and admonishes us with many exhortations that we might come back to Him with steadfast hope—with good intent. He so obliterates the hazards of our faults and enormities that they do not prevent the adornment of good works. For, as the holy faith proclaims and all religion holds—though the tongue of man cannot say how great these things are, nor can the heart ever comprehend them—before such difficulty whatever we do or can do is the very least. Thus, the grace which no one deserves—if he does not strive under the glittering weapons of virtue—saves us. This is the mighty and delightful battle in which God is the general. Rightfully standing forth with the combatants, he prepares and bestows unfading crowns. The saints, who crush the various tumults of the world, strive to be victorious in so good and great a cause. The monks rejoice, for the other masses of the world do not soar to the heavens by so devout a course. They are those who with an astute mind simultaneously despise and damn the left-hand side and follow Christ, holding his cross and bearing it with saintly love. The lascivious flesh wants anything except that it might itself be ruled, that it might live, and that they might confine it modestly and master it with spiritual virtue; and they observe the rigour of the Gospels, for they know that Christ's command needs to be kept with the entire mind, and they confess with a pure heart. Mixed with the angelic choirs (who, severed from this body, gaze upon him in this body), this people looks on Him—the Lord preserving them always. This is the part of Mary that will not be taken away from them. Hence, it is in the manner of the holy -----
?----- which they see in the flesh, and they reveal much yet to come. Ha! How often the impure spirit approaches, tempting them to turn and descend in error from the sublime summit. For whenever he sees more mortals ascend the heavens through Him, he looks more in envy, and lays more traps for them, on behalf of him to whom Adam yielded, contending with the hatred which his race always carries for everything—against what is human. But he grieves that he is held in check by lords whom the Holy Spirit arms with Christ's soldier-monks, whose patience emulates Job's, undefeated by either delights or disasters.

- 2) Nor must there be any silence about the sacred virgins who are living in the same devout habit. Fragile in soul and gentle in sex and body, they conquer themselves, and they fuel

their five senses with their light—with everlasting oil—lest, their lamps having been brought [with them], the light should run out—so that the prudent [virgins] may enter when they come to the doors, the foolish ones being left behind. They also shun the features and words of men, lest because of the women, because of their own features [?], the men themselves should sin, or lest the women themselves should be capable of being seen, for through these windows the human mind is used to being severely injured with bodily things. God has engaged and betrothed them to himself with golden signs, lest someone should dare to harass them or drag them away in any way. Under the honour of virginity the choir of all the spirits resides in the heavens, for all virtue honours the mother of the celestial God. The monastic life is to be venerated especially by us: it discloses the heavens in itself; it prepares celestial things for us; it pleads for us with constant tears.

{Textual Notes}

^a MS *delectabilis*.

^b MS *uinc*⁷*æ* with *æ* underscored for deletion.

^c This word is also followed by an erasure of one, perhaps two, letters—possibly *ei*.

^d The upper two thirds of the letters having been lost, this line is guesswork based on what remains.

^e MS *certi* (?). See n. 26 above.