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A Previously Unrecorded Fragment of the
Middle English Short Metrical Chronicle
in Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica
M199

by Peter Grund

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A PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED FRAGMENT OF THE MIDDLE ENGLISH *SHORT*

METRICAL CHRONICLE IN BIBLIOTHECA PHILOSOPHICA HERMETICA M199¹

This article presents an edition of a fragment of the Middle English *Short Metrical Chronicle*² found in Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, MS M199 (henceforth BPH M199).³ BPH M199 is an alchemical miscellany probably compiled in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. It mainly contains alchemical prose and verse tracts in English and Latin, but it also includes treatises on magic, a condensed and reworked version of the verse dialogue *Sidrak and Bokkus* and the fragment of the *Short Metrical Chronicle* (henceforth *Chronicle*). To my knowledge, this is a previously unrecorded fragment of the *Chronicle*. Since the *Chronicle* has received a great deal of attention in previous scholarship, it is important to make the version of BPH M199 available to scholars interested in the *Chronicle*.⁴ BPH M199 demonstrates that the *Chronicle* continued to be copied in the early Modern period, and the manuscript provides insights into the reception and interpretation of the text in this period. I will contextualize the BPH M199 fragment by discussing the characteristics of the manuscript, by considering the possible reasons for the appearance of the *Chronicle* in BPH M199, and by collating the fragment with the other known versions of the *Chronicle*.

The manuscript

The only manuscript description available for BPH M199 is from Christie's auction catalogue from 26 June, 1991.⁵ In my discussion of the manuscript, I will rely on this description and my own investigation of the manuscript.⁶ BPH M199 measures 350x200mm,⁷ covering 399 paper leaves. It is written in a number of late 16th and early 17th-century hands. The names of most of

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the copyists are not recorded in the volume and they are not identifiable on other grounds. There may be one exception, however. On fol. 41v, before a text written in one of the most common hands in the manuscript, the following heading appears: "A notable [^]{Abstracte, and} knowlege, of philosophy: of y^e saynges of Aristotle, Raymond, and hermes Drawene owt by me E Dekyngstone: A Dicile of *philosophie*".⁸ Part of the heading ("Abstracte, and" and notably "Drawene owt by me E Dekyngstone: A Dicile of *philosophie*") is written in a darker ink. Furthermore, this hand uses italic letter forms as well as some secretary letter forms, while the rest of the heading and the text that follows are written in a secretary hand. In addition, on fol. 109r, the name "Edward Deke" has been added in what appears to be the same hand as the one writing the additional phrases in darker ink in fol. 41v, and the name on fol. 109r appears written on top of a heading and before a text written in the same secretary hand as on fol. 41v. (This secretary hand is also the same hand that copied out the *Chronicle*.) Despite the differences, it seems likely that the secondary hand (with mixed secretary and italic features) is the same as the main secretary hand. There are other places in BPH M199 where the two types of handwriting that are evidenced in fols. 41v and 109r cooccur, notably in the text following the heading in fol. 109r, and in the unidentified alchemical text preceding the *Chronicle* in fol. 391r. It is a known fact that many people in the late 16th and early 17th century used a mix of italic and secretary letter forms, or that they wrote in two different hands.⁹

Irrespective of whether the two hands are in fact the same, the question remains whether the notes in fol. 41v and fol. 109r (and possibly many of the texts) were in fact written by a man called Edward Dekyngstone. Edward Dekyngstone's name is found in a number of other manuscripts, which all primarily contain alchemical texts. These manuscripts include British Library MSS Sloane 2170, 3180, 3630, 3684; and Glasgow University Library, MS Ferguson 205.¹⁰ However, very little seems to be known about him. The index of the Sloane

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collection refers to Dekyngstone as a London-based alchemist and gives the date 1582–1583.¹¹

This information appears to be based on two writer colophons found in MSS Sloane 3180 and 3684 (the former is also found in MS Sloane 3630):

The *which* said litle booke or work I, Edward Dekingston, copied out verbatim as above written with the hand of Mr Morryse; *which* said work was bound in with the litle booke of mr Guyllyam de Cenes that he sent to the Reverend Father the Archbishop of Raynes, & was brought vnto me to coppie by Mr Anthony Brighame. [MS Sloane 3684, fol. 41r; cf. MS Sloane 3180, fol. 13r]¹²

The *which* essencial & accidental questions was copied out by me, Edward Dekyngstone, forth of an olde booke, written with the hand of one John Norryse, a practicioner, that dwelt by St Joneses the 8th of March 1582, & was brought vnto me by one Anthony Brygeham, from whome I had this same aforesaid coppie, & also of his aforesaid essential & accidental questions, *which* I also in like manner copied out verbatim, so near as I could. [MS Sloane 3684, fol. 46v; cf. MS Sloane 3180, fol. 14v]¹³

It is unclear whether the date given in the extract should be taken to indicate when Dekyngstone was active in London. The date seems rather to refer to when the practitioner John Morris or Norris (mentioned in the extracts) either lived or copied the book that Dekyngstone in turn has copied out.

I have not been able to find any additional information on Dekyngstone in standard reference works.¹⁴ As far as I have been able to ascertain, the hand or hands of BPH M199 do not resemble those in any of the other manuscripts listed above.¹⁵ The fact that some colophons mentioning Dekyngstone appear in multiple manuscripts (i.e. MSS Sloane 3180, 3630 and 3684) also demonstrates that writer comments could be copied together with the texts, and do not necessarily have to represent the copyist's annotation. It is thus difficult to determine Edward Dekyngstone's connection with BPH M199 with certainty, but he may have been the owner of the volume and he may even have copied out some texts.¹⁶

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The date of the volume is difficult to pin down. The entry in Christie's catalogue suggests 1550–1580, citing watermark evidence pointing to 1548 and 1558–1569. On fol. 395v in the manuscript, there is also a note stating "Xmo maii 1568" 'the tenth of May 1568', but it is unclear whether this note should be taken as an indication of when the note was added. Furthermore, on fol. 393r, there is a much later date (written in a different hand from most of the volume): "out of Rob: Dollens manuscript 1647". It thus seems that the compilation of BPH M199 might have begun in the latter half of the 16th century but that the volume was expanded during a long period of time, by a number of different copyists. Alternatively, it may not have been put together in its present form until after 1647. Its history between this date and the acquisition of it in 1991 by the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, the J. R. Ritman Library, is unknown.

The content of BPH M199 is primarily alchemical. It contains a number of alchemical treatises ascribed to famous medieval scholars, such as the *Compound of Alchemy* (fols. 170r–196v) by the English alchemist George Ripley (1415?–1490?), *Perfectum Magisterium* (fols. 49r–57v) by Arnold of Villanova (1243–1311), *Testamentum* (fols. 332r–335r) by Raymund Lull (1232/3–1315/6), and *Speculum Alchemiae* (fols. 11r–17v) by Roger Bacon (1214?–1294?). Apart from the texts attributed to specific authors, there are also a number of anonymous tracts, recipes and notes. The texts are written in prose as well as verse, in Latin as well as English.¹⁷ The content of BPH M199 is thus fairly typical of an alchemical miscellany of the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁸ The non-alchemical material primarily consists of some medical recipes and a few magical texts, for instance, a treatise on twelve rings (fols. 295v–305r) and a recipe on how to change the color of a dog, horse or any other animal (fol. 125v). Again, texts of this kind are often found in alchemical manuscript books. As mentioned earlier, however, BPH

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M199 also contains two less typical texts: a version of the Middle English text *Sidrak and Bokkus* and the fragment of the *Chronicle*.¹⁹

BPH M199 preserves 73 lines of the *Chronicle*.²⁰ Most of the fragment (lines 1–46) is taken up by the story of Bladud, the legendary king who allegedly created hot baths in Bath. The fragment then mentions in rapid succession Col (lines 47–50), Leir (lines 51–54), Gonnehold²¹ (lines 55–59), Merlin (lines 60–61), and the brothers Belin and Bren (lines 62–73). The manuscript must have been wrongly bound at some point since lines 68–73 appear on fol. 391r, lines 35–67 on fol. 391v and lines 1–34 on fol. 392v (fol. 392r is blank). The *Chronicle* is written in one of the most common hands of the manuscript (possibly that of Edward Dekyngstone, as we have seen earlier). On fol. 391r, there are also some notes on alchemy in the same hand, and on fol. 393r (following the *Chronicle*) there are some extracts from "Rob: Dollens manuscript" in a different hand.

Reasons for inclusion of the Chronicle in BPH M199

It is of course difficult to determine for certain why the *Chronicle* appears in a manuscript primarily devoted to alchemy. However, the content of the account of Bladud's reign suggests that the passage may have been included because of an alchemical interpretation of the text. At the beginning of the account of Bladud's reign, there is a description of how to make hot baths. This process involves a large number of chemicals, including "quick brymstone", "salt gemme", "salt petre", "sal armoniak", "sal arebruz", "salt alkelyn", "salt gemme" (again), "salt comon", and "salt niter". The text claims that the tubs that contain the mixture of the chemicals will heat up the water in the springs, which will result in what is called the "kinges bathe". There are two related, though slightly different, ways of interpreting this passage from an alchemical

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perspective. First, the nature and quality of the fire or heat that was employed in alchemical procedures was of utmost importance to an alchemist. Many of the most popular texts on alchemy, such as (Pseudo-) Albertus Magnus's *Semita Recta* and (Pseudo-) Roger Bacon's *Speculum Alchemiae*, include elaborate descriptions of furnaces and sources of heat.²² Some texts also mention explicitly the importance of the fire. In his *Medulla Alkemiae*, the 15th-century English alchemist George Ripley relates the following story:

...inveni scriptum, quod conveniebat magna philosophorum societas, inter quos oriebatur quaestio de secreto illorum lapide, deque ejus administrationis ordine. Ad quam quidem quaestionem solvendam cum multi suas rationes in medium produxissent, tandem unus illorum, caeteris aetate & eruditione inferior, cum ab aliis, quidnam sentiret, interrogaretur, & quid se scire arbitraretur, respondit se scire ignium regimina. Quod cum caeteri audivissent, quasi paulatim stupefacti sunt, & unus illorum in hunc modum tandem respondit: Si verum est quod dicis, tu certe magister es omnium nostrorum, atque ita honorem ei attribuerunt, quia dignus eo videbatur. Ex quibus verbis quid aliud colligere possumus, nisi quod bona pars secreti nostri est in igne.

[...I have found it written that a large congregation of alchemists came together, among whom a question arose about the secret of their stone [i.e. the philosophers' stone that allegedly turned base metals into silver or gold] and about the order of its preparation. When many people had put forth their opinions to answer this question, one of them, who was inferior in age and learning, when he was asked by others what his opinion was and what he thought he knew, eventually answered that he knew that it was the controlling of the fires. When the others had heard this, they stood as if dumbfounded for a while, and eventually one of them answered in this way: If this is true what you say, you are indeed the master of us all, and they gave him honor, since he seemed worthy of it. What else can we gather from these words but that a good part of our secret is in the fire.]²³

The conclusion of Ripley's story is also succinctly echoed in an alchemical treatise written by Humfrey Lock, a 16th-century English alchemist: "knowe that all the regimente & gouernance of

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our stone [i.e. the philosophers' stone] is only in y^e fier and in the dyuersities of his degres".²⁴

This demonstrates that alchemists were acutely aware of the importance of the fire. More specifically, for many procedures that required heat, the alchemists used a hot bath which is commonly referred to as the *balneum*. They placed the receptacle containing the matter that was to be heated in this bath and applied a moderate heat.²⁵ Perhaps it was this similarity in particular that appealed to the copyist.

Although this is a plausible reason for the inclusion of the *Chronicle* fragment in BPH M199, it is also possible that an alchemist may have interpreted the passage slightly differently. In particular, the term "the King's bath" has alchemical connotations. In alchemical terminology, "the King" can have several meanings, but most often it signifies one of three things: the primary material used as a basis for the philosophers' stone, the philosophers' stone itself or, perhaps most commonly, the metal gold.²⁶ In connection with *bath*, the first and third meanings, that of primary material and gold, are probably the most likely. Alchemical texts often give the advice to dissolve the primary material in a bath, where it will be cleansed and ready to be turned into the philosophers' stone or gold.²⁷ Similarly, alchemical texts often give instructions on how to dissolve gold, usually by the help of *aqua regia* (i.e. a concentrated mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acid).²⁸ It is thus possible that an alchemist might have thought that the bath referred to a solvent of some sort that would dissolve or cleanse the primary material or gold.

It is difficult to determine which of the interpretations presented above is the more likely (if indeed either of them is the underlying reason for the inclusion of the *Chronicle* in BPH M199). If we try to interpret the *Chronicle* procedure in terms of modern chemistry to see what the mixture of chemicals might have produced, we encounter several problems. The most fundamental problem is to identify the substances referred to. In some cases, two or more names

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appear to refer to the same substance. For example, both "salt petre" and "salt niter" (both listed in the *Chronicle*) often refer to potassium nitrate.²⁹ Furthermore, several terms have multiple meanings. "Quick brymstone", for instance, could signify natural sulfur, but for an alchemist it could also mean sophic sulfur. Sophic sulfur was considered a primary constituent of all metals and minerals, and was not directly related to what we understand by sulfur today.³⁰ With these caveats in mind, if we interpret the substances involved in modern terms, they may be the following: quick brymstone = natural sulfur, salt gemme = probably rock salt (NaCl?), salt petre = potassium nitrate (KNO₃), sal armoniak = ammonium chloride (NH₄Cl), sal arebru[⊙] = probably *sal alembroth*: double chloride of mercury and ammonium (Hg₂[NH₄]₂Cl₄H₂O), Salt alkelyn = soda or potash, salt common = ordinary salt (NaCl), salt niter = sodium carbonate (Na₂CO₃) or potassium nitrate (KNO₃).³¹ I have consulted Theresa Kückmann of the Institute for Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry, J. W. Goethe University, Frankfurt (Germany), regarding the mixture of these chemicals. She informs me that the mixture would not have produced a solvent. It is possible that the chemicals mixed together might have produced heat, but it is difficult to account for the inclusion of some of the substances.³² Naturally, this does not necessarily mean that the copyist of BPH M199 could not have copied out the fragment of the *Chronicle* in the belief that it described a solvent: it simply means that he would have been disappointed after trying it out. Irrespective of what the end result might have been, the promise of a reliable source of heat or of a solvent might have been enough to attract an alchemist's attention.

The theory that some sort of alchemical interpretation of the *Chronicle* lies behind its inclusion in BPH M199 is also supported by evidence from outside the immediate context of the BPH M199 *Chronicle*. As mentioned above, BPH M199 also contains a reorganized and abbreviated version of *Sidrak and Bokkus*. This dialogue in verse between King Bokkus, a

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heathen king, and Sidrak, a Christian prophet or philosopher, deals with a number of topics, from the nature of God and the creation of humankind to the origin of hail and pearls.³³ The version in BPH M199 contains a large number of comments in the margin of the text that indicate how the text was interpreted by at least one reader.³⁴ At a few instances, it seems that passages that deal with non-alchemical topics have been reinterpreted alchemically. For example, Bokkus questions Sidrak about what the fattest thing in the world is. Sidrak answers that earth is the fattest thing in the world and trees and plants spring from the fatness of the earth. In BPH M199 (fol. 310v), *earth* has been glossed twice as "sulphure" above the line and the verse "Of y^e fatnesse, of earthe, comyth, all..." is accompanied by the marginal comment: "y^e fatnes of the earthe: Is sulphur". This marginal comment repeats one of the most common dictums in alchemy, namely that sulfur is the fatness of the earth, thickened and hardened by temperate heat.³⁵ Similarly, in the question "Why are some Men Blacke, in towne: And some Men, white: and some Men. Browne?", the verses "The Colder, lande: y^e whiter, aye: for their y^e, Skyne; Is not Brent all Daye" (fol. 323r–v) are accompanied by the marginal comment: "& therefore is <silver> & Albus [sic] plumbum [i.e. white lead] whiter; then coper; for his face. vel os. is not Burnte, with y^e Sone by Daye: neither yet y^e <Moon> by night:". ³⁶ It is clear from this comment that the reader interpreted the lines as accounting for why different metals or minerals have different appearances. These passages, which originally did not have alchemical or metallurgical significance, make clear that at least one reader was reading a non-alchemical text through an alchemical lens. Furthermore, as G. Roberts shows, this is not an uncommon phenomenon. Even literary works such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Bible were expropriated and reinterpreted as describing alchemical processes.³⁷ All these aspects of alchemical reinterpretation of non-alchemical texts strongly suggest that the inclusion of the *Chronicle* in BPH M199 was due to an alchemical interest in its content.³⁸

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Collation

Since the *Chronicle* survives in a number of manuscripts besides BPH M199, it is of great interest to investigate whether the BPH M199 fragment might have been copied from one of these extant copies or whether BPH M199, although it is short, can shed any light on the relationships between the copies. The *Chronicle* survives in seven Middle English copies and one Anglo-Norman copy (the sigla usually attributed to the manuscripts are given first):³⁹

A = Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19. 2. 1 (the Auchinleck Manuscript), fols. 304r–317r

B = BL, MS Additional 19677, fols. 92v–100r

C = BL, MS Cotton Caligula A xi, fol. 14r

D = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd. 14. 2, fols. 260r–290r

F = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 5. 48, fols. 95r–112r

H = Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet 145, fols. 6r–7v, 11r–11v, 12r

R = BL, MS Royal 12 C. xii, fols. 62r–68v

G = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg. 1. 1, fols. 484v–489v (Anglo-Norman version)

In order to chart BPH M199's relationship with the other extant manuscripts, I will briefly outline the similarities and differences between them.⁴⁰ I will not discuss H since it does not contain the passage found in the BPH M199 fragment.

BPH M199 exhibits varying affinities with the other manuscripts of the *Chronicle* and cannot have been copied from any one of them exclusively. Furthermore, BPH M199

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contains readings not attested in any of the other manuscripts. However, BPH M199 is closer to some manuscripts than others. It does not share any unique readings with B, C or R.⁴¹ B also lacks a passage (lines 33–42) that is found in BPH M199 and the other manuscripts (albeit in different versions). R contains many readings and passages that are not found in any of the other manuscripts including BPH M199.⁴²

BPH shows some unique correspondences with A, which is a considerably longer version of the *Chronicle* than found in the other copies. It agrees with A (and with the Anglo-Norman G) in using "manner salts" in line 13, where the other manuscripts omit "manner". Likewise, in line 52 both BPH M199 and A have "his sonne" instead of "ys ounne sone" (RFD) or "his owene" (B) found in the other English manuscripts (C does not contain this passage). A and BPH M199 also use similar names for *Ickniel'd way* (line 72): "ikelingstrete" (A) and "ekeling streate" (BPH M199). The other manuscripts have "Ikenydstret" or similar readings.⁴³ Importantly, however, BPH M199 does not contain a number of passages that are only found in A, including a passage on Bladud's dealings with the devil.⁴⁴

BPH M199 also shares some unique readings with D. In line 9, both BPH M199 and D read "the rightfull soothe ywis" (though D has "pat" instead of "the"), whereas the other manuscripts have similar but not identical readings; and in line 12, they both use "been made" instead of "ymade" in the other manuscripts. Again, as in the case of A, the correspondences are not striking and D contains a number of passages that are not found in BPH M199 or that differ substantially from those of BPH M199.

There is a crucial correspondence between F and G and BPH M199. In lines 60–61, BPH M199 mentions Merlin, who also appears at this point in F and G, but is not found in any of the other manuscripts. However, whereas F presents a six-line version, BPH M199 and G are identical in containing only a two-line account of Merlin.⁴⁵ The reading in BPH M199 (and

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possibly G) probably originated in a reading similar to F's. This is indicated by the fact that lines 60 and 61 do not rhyme in BPH M199, which suggests the loss of some lines at some stage of the transmission. However, in F, the wording of these two lines, which are not consecutive in the manuscript, is slightly different than in BPH M199 and G.

The fact that BPH M199 and G are close in this reading is highly interesting, however, since it may have some bearing on the vexed issue of the origin of G and its relationship to the other manuscripts. Zettl states that "G is a translation into Anglo-Norman prose of an English metrical version".⁴⁶ This view was challenged by M. D. Legge, who proposed that the Anglo-Norman version and the English *Chronicle* derive independently from a French metrical version.⁴⁷ T. Turville-Petre in turn dismisses Legge's criticism as being "without substance".⁴⁸ Revisiting the issue, U. O'Farrell-Tate thinks that there is strong support for a French metrical source in the fact that the *Brut* chronicles originated in a French tradition and that so many more French verse texts are extant than English texts.⁴⁹ Naturally, BPH M199 cannot provide a definitive solution to this issue. However, the two-line account of Merlin (found in both BPH M199 and G) provides another example of the closeness between the English versions and G. It highlights that some of the readings that have been thought of as peculiarities of G may in fact have existed in English as well, and hence that G may be even closer to the English versions than has previously been thought. In addition to this, even Legge, who criticizes Zettl's conclusion, points out that G uses English forms of place names and contains "a high proportion of English word-order".⁵⁰ Of course, it cannot be ruled out that the English versions and G derive independently from a French metrical version, though there is no trace of this hypothetical text. However, with the evidence we have at hand, it seems more plausible to hypothesize that G, though it would be an unusual case, was translated from English into Anglo-Norman.

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As far as the relationship between BPH M199 and F or G is concerned, it is clear, despite the correspondence discussed earlier, that neither F nor G can have been the exemplar of BPH M199. For obvious reasons, it is unfeasible (if not impossible) that G was the exemplar. If that were true it would mean that the Anglo-Norman version of G has been translated into English and the translator ended up with very much the same readings as found in the English versions. Furthermore, G shows many dissimilarities with BPH M199, not least because the material is substantially rearranged in G. For example, the description of how Bladud flies to London to acquire materials for his baths precedes the actual description of the baths; and the passage covering lines 25–32 in BPH M199 is missing in G but is present in the other full copies. F is also an unlikely candidate as an exemplar for BPH M199. Like F (and R), BPH M199 does not include the account of Vortigern's reign, which appears after Bladud's reign in A, B and D. However, whereas BPH M199 includes Col in its list of kings (lines 47–50), Col is not found in F (or R). Moreover, there are a number of other passages where BPH M199 agrees with or is closer to the other manuscripts.

In addition to these correspondences with various manuscripts, BPH M199 also contains a number of unique readings that are not found in any of the other versions. Many of the unique readings seem to stem from linguistic updating, such as "listenithe" in line 38 for "herkneþ" (or a similar spelling), or "calld" in line 69 for "icluped" (or a similar spelling). However, if modernization of the language is behind some of these readings, it has certainly not been carried out systematically, since many forms and words that must have been obsolete in the late 16th century still remain in BPH M199. Here follows a short list of unique readings found in BPH M199.⁵¹

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Line	BPH M199	Other Manuscripts
10	bathes	Baþ
11–12	glasse...brasse	bras...glas
Between lines 22 and 23	<i>absent</i> ⁵²	Al þes beþ <i>in</i> þe tonnen idon & oþer þynges many on
25	y ^e twoo nere	þe tonnes
26	also	As (BCDR), So (AF)
27	and y ^e watre	þe water
29	feyer	ifere
30	at	Ac (ABCFR), As (D)
33	this	thilke (ADFR), þe riche (C), <i>absent</i> (B)
35	tho he made y ^{is} bathes hot	þo he hadde þis baþe ywrouzt (A), zwan he maked þat baþ hot (C), þo hem made boþe hote (D), þo he made þe bathe hote (F), þo he þis ilke baþe made (R), <i>absent</i> (B)
37	y ^t y ^t	þynges þat (AR), þat (CDF), <i>absent</i> (B)
38	listenithe	herkneþ (ACDFR), <i>absent</i> (B)
39	y ^e bathe	Bathe (ACDFR), <i>absent</i> (B)
40	y ^t same daie	þat day (A), þilke dai self (CR), þat dai self (D), þilke selfe dai (F), <i>absent</i> (B)

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40	ther be	teo (CFR), to be (D), comen (<i>different word order</i> A), absent (B)
43	his	þis (BDFR), þe (C), & when þat Bladud was ded (<i>different construction</i> , A)
44	yeade	wende
45	was	nas (ABDFR), ne was (C)
56	gonnehold	Denewold
62	had he	he hadde
63	y ^e ...y ^e	þat...þat (BDFR), þat...& (A)
Between lines 63 and 64	<i>absent</i>	þat weren men of gret maistrie þei wonne France & Normandje & al þe lond swiþe sone Fram France to þe court of Rome
64	this...y ^{is}	þilke...þilke (ABDF), þilke... <i>absent</i> (R)
67	through	þoruout
69	calld	icluped
71	lastyth	gop
73	sottis diche	fosse dike (A), Feddis diche (BD), fosse diche (F), offedich (R)

It is clear from the earlier discussion that BPH M199 cannot derive from any one of the extant manuscripts exclusively. It might have been conflated from a number of manuscripts but there is no evidence of such a process and it must hence be considered unlikely. Possibly, the

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exemplar of BPH M199 was *x* or *w*, the hypothetical ancestors of F and G respectively that Zetl suggested in his stemma, or a manuscript copied from *x* or *w*. But this is far from certain.⁵³

The BPH M199 text of the Chronicle

In presenting the text of BPH M199, the main guiding principle has been to represent the manuscript as faithfully as possible. I have followed the following specific editorial principles. The lineation of the manuscript has been retained, but the addition of line and folio number is editorial. I have preserved the original capitalization and punctuation. Abbreviations with superscript letters have been retained, such as *y^e* (=the), *y^t* (=that), *y^{er}* (=there), *y^{eis}* (=these), *y^{is}* (=this or these), *yo^u* (=you), *wth* (=with), and once *m^r* (=master). Other types of abbreviations have been expanded and the added letters have been supplied in italics (except "Ihu" for *Jesus*, which has been retained). Curly brackets indicate that the item has been added above the line in the manuscript. The edition is followed by some textual notes.

After {the} king Lud.

[fol. 392v]

reigned his sonne bladud.

he was a clerk of nigromancy.

y^t is an art of great maistrye /.

he made a wondre thing *ywis*

5

that hot bathes cleped is /.

herken all *y^t* bene hende.

and I will tell *yo^u* worded and ende

the rightfull soothe *ywis*/

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howe hot bathes makyd is/ 10

ij tonnen y^{er} bene of glasse.

and other ij bene made of brasse

vij manner saltēs y^{er} bene in

and other thing made wth gynne

quick brymstone and other also. 15

wth wild fyer made therto.

Salt gemme and salt petre

sal armoniak ther is eke.

Sal arebruȝ and salt alkelyn

salt gemme ymeynt wth him 20

salt comon, and salt niter bright

y^t brennith bothe daie and night.

y^t brennyth night and daie

y^t neu^{er} quenchen it ne maye

in iiij well springes y^e twoo nere liggithe 25

also y^{eis} *philosophers* Iseggythe.

y^e heate wthin and y^e watre wthout.

makyth it hot all about

the ij springes ronnithe feyer

at y^e other to be more clere. 30

thereof is makyd full ywis

y^t kinges bathe clepyd is.

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This king bladud.

y^t was y^e kinges sonne Lud.

tho he made y^{is} bathes hot [fol. 391v]

if him fayled ought 36

of y^t y^t shold therto,

listenithe howe he wold doo.

fro y^e bathe to london he wold flee.

and y^t same daie againe ther be 40

and feche y^t therto befell

for he was quick and syth snell

tho his m^r were dede

his sowle yeade to y^e quede

for Ihu was not yet ibore 45

ne ded ne sufferyd him not for /

after him regnyd his derling

his sonne y^t hight colking.

he made colchestre wth game

and gave it his owne name 50

After him regnyd his heyer

his sonne y^t hight leyer

he made lirestr wth game

and gave yt his owne name

Sithin regnyd a king bold 55

he was hoote gonnehold

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he made malmesburye

locock and tetisburye

and y^e vices also.

Merlin made stonehing 60

and other wondres mo /

Tweye sonnes had he then

y^e one hight belyne, y^e other bren

this belin and y^{is} brenne

made iiij waies then, 65

by myght and strength of hir hond

y^t gone through ingland

that one to this daie yet: [fol. 391r]

is calld watling stret /.

y^t other is yclepyd fosse /. 70

y^t lastyth from Cornewall into scosse /.

y^e thyrd ekeling streate is /

y^e iiijth sottis dicke ywis /. etc. /.

Textual notes

1 After the king Lud: *In MS* After ~~king~~ {the} king Lud.

8 wored and ende: i.e. 'from beginning to end' (*MED* s.v. *ord*)

14 wth gynne: 'with skill', 'with ingenuity' (*MED* s.v. *ginne*)

15–22 quick brymstone...salt niter: For the identification of these substances, see the introductory discussion.

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26 Iseggythe: 'say', 'declare' (*MED* s.v. *iseien*).

29 feyer: 'pleasantly' or 'gently' (*MED* s.v. *faire*)(?). The other manuscripts use a form of *ifere* 'together' (*MED* s.v. *ifere*).

30 at y^e other to be more clere: *at* is probably a misreading of *ac* 'but' found in the other manuscripts. The phrase "to be" can be interpreted either as an infinitive verb phrase or as a numeral + verb: 'two [springs] be'. The latter reading is found in the other manuscripts. However, the spelling of *two* in BPH M199 seems to be "twoo", as in line 25. It is perhaps more likely that the copyist of BPH M199 saw it as an infinitive.

35 tho he made: *In MS* tho he h made.

39 y^e bathe: BPH M199 seems to intend the actual salt bath, while the other manuscripts mention the city of Bath.

43 his m^r: "his" probably refer to "sowle" in line 44. The other manuscripts use *this*, *the* or use a different construction (see the table of variants presented earlier).

44 yeade to y^e quede: i.e. 'went to the devil' (*MED* s.v. *yede*; s.v. *quede*).

46 ne ded ne sufferyd him not for: "ded" is either a variant spelling of *death* (which is found in the other manuscripts) or the adjective *dead*; see *MED* s.v. *deth*, *OED* s.v. *death*. A noun seems more suitable in the context: 'and did not suffer death for/before him'(?).

48 colking: The words *col* and *king* have been run together and the copyist might have seen "colking" as his name.

49, 53 wth game: i.e. 'with pleasure', 'with delight' (*MED* s.v. *game*).

51 heyer: i.e. 'heir'.

53 lirestr: i.e. 'Leicester'.

57–59 malmesburye...locock...tetisburye...y^e vices: i.e. 'Malmesbury', 'Laycock' (in Wiltshire), 'Tetbury' (in Gloucestershire), and 'Devizes' (in Wiltshire).⁵⁴

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60–61 Merlin made stonehing | and other wondres mo: For these lines, see the introductory discussion about manuscript relationships, especially F and G.

62 Tweye sonnes had he then: As it stands, *he* seems to refer to Merlin. However, as the other manuscripts show, Belyn and Bren were the sons of Gonnehold (or Denewold). The F and G manuscripts that contain a passage similar to lines 60–61 in BPH M199 add linking passages which clarify that they are Denewold's sons. Cf. F "þilke Kyngē Denewold | þat ich haue of itolde" and G "Celuy Dunwolde out adunc .ij. fiȝ".⁵⁵

71 scosse: i.e. 'Scotland' (cf. *MED* s.v. *Scot*).

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¹ I am grateful to Professor Linda E. Voigts for drawing my attention to Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS M199; and to Dr. Theodor Harmsen of Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, the J. R. Ritman Library, for providing me with material and information about this manuscript; to Theresa Kückmann of the Institute for Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry, J. W. Goethe University, Frankfurt (Germany), for help in identifying chemicals and interpreting the mixture of chemicals found in the text; and to Molly Zahn for reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this article. Naturally, any mistakes are entirely my own.

² Various titles (none of them historical) have been attributed to this verse chronicle, including *The Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle of England*, *The Anonymous Riming Chronicle*, and *The Abridged English Metrical Brut*. For these titles, see *IMEV/S* no. 1105; *An Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, ed. E. Zettl, EETS OS 196 (London, 1935); M. C. Carroll and R. Tuve, 'Two Manuscripts of the Middle English *Anonymous Riming Chronicle*', *PMLA* 46/1 (1931), 115–54; *The Abridged English Metrical Brut: Edited from London British Library MS Royal 12 C. XII*, ed. U. O'Farrell-Tate (Heidelberg, 2002). In calling it the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, I follow E. D. Kennedy, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500. Volume 8: Chronicles and Other Historical Writing* (New Haven, CT, 1989), p. 2622.

³ For the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, the J. R. Ritman Library, in Amsterdam, see the homepage of the library at <http://www.ritmanlibrary.nl/>.

⁴ For an overview of *Chronicle* scholarship, see E. D. Kennedy *A Manual*, pp. 2807–9.

⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Theodor Harmsen for providing me with a copy of this description.

⁶ Unfortunately, I have only been able to study a microfilm copy of the manuscript.

⁷ I owe this information to Dr. Theodor Harmsen.

⁸ In my transcription of examples, I have followed these principles: I have retained the capitalization and punctuation of the manuscript. Abbreviations have been expanded and put in italics. Curly brackets signal that the material enclosed appears above the line in the manuscript.

⁹ See e.g. G. E. Dawson and L. Kennedy-Skipton, *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500–1650: A Manual* (New York, 1966), p. 12; A. G. Petti, *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), p. 20; J. F. Preston and L. Yeandle, *English Handwriting 1400–1650: An Introductory Manual* (Binghamton, 1992), p. viii.

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¹⁰ For a discussion of these manuscript and their relationship, see my "Misticall Wordes and Names Infinite": An Edition of Humfrey Lock's Treatise on Alchemy (Uppsala University: Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 2004) pp. 85–6.

¹¹ E. J. L. Scott, *Index to the Sloane Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1904), p. 138.

¹² Cited from P. Grund "Mysticall Wordes", p. 85.

¹³ Cited from *ibid.*

¹⁴ In the provisional online catalogue of the Ferguson collection at Glasgow University Library, it is suggested that Edward Dekyngstone is the same as Edmund Dickinson, the alchemist and physician of Charles II, who lived between 1624 and 1707. However, as I have shown, this attribution cannot be correct; P. Grund "Misticall Wordes", p. 86.

¹⁵ I have not been able to inspect MS Ferguson 205 in person, and unfortunately, the photocopies that I have consulted do not allow firm conclusions about the handwriting of the note mentioning Dekyngstone. For the note, see also N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* (Oxford, 1977), II, 895; M. A. Halversen, 'The Consideration of Quintessence: An Edition of a Middle English Translation of John of Rupescissa's *Liber de Consideratione de Quintae Essentiae Omnium Rerum* with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: Michigan State University, 1998), p. 73. Similarly, I have not been able to inspect the whole of MS Sloane 2170. MSS Sloane 3684 and 3630 are written partly in the same hand, and these two manuscripts share certain contents with MS Sloane 3180, as I have shown; P. Grund "Misticall Wordes", p. 85.

¹⁶ The compiler of the entry in Christie's catalogue (p. 47) states that the volume is a "commonplace book of Edward Dekyngston, a sixteenth-century alchemist". This statement seems solely to rely on the assumption that the note in fol. 41v (which is mentioned in the catalogue entry) was added by Dekyngstone himself. Furthermore, in the entry, MS Sloane 3684 is said to be "signed by 'Dekyngstone' on p. [sic.] 46v, and by the scribe John Norryse, dated 1582". This information probably derives from the first of the extracts from MS Sloane 3684 cited above. Since BPH M199 and MS Sloane 3684 are not written in the same hand, both of these manuscripts cannot have been signed by Dekyngstone. The second note cited above from MS Sloane 3684 seems to have been ignored in the catalogue entry, as has the fact that the same two notes appear in MS Sloane 3180. However, for MS Sloane 3180, the following comment is made: "...copied from a Dekyngstone manuscript by Anthony Brighame, 16th century". Unless this

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information derives from an external source, it seems to represent a misunderstanding of the notes in MS Sloane 3180 (see above).

¹⁷ For a listing of the texts in English, see L. E. Voigts and P. D. Kurtz, *Scientific and Medical Writings in Old and Middle English: An Electronic Reference*. CD-ROM (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000). BPH M199 is listed as "Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica 'Dekyngstone'".

¹⁸ Cf. C. Webster, 'Alchemical and Paracelsian Medicine', in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. C. Webster (Cambridge, 1979), p. 311.

¹⁹ For *Sidrak and Bokkus*, see F. L. Utley, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500. Vol. 3: Dialogues, Debates, and Catechisms* (New Haven, CT, 1972), pp. 744–5. I am currently working on an article on the version found in BPH M199.

²⁰ It covers most of lines 151–224 in E. Zettl's critical EETS edition (*Short Metrical Chronicle*), with some omissions and some additions. For a detailed discussion, see the collation further below.

²¹ This king is named Denewold in the other manuscripts; see E. Zettl *Short Metrical Chronicle*, p. 157.

²² *B. Alberti Magni, Ratisbonensis Episcopi, Ordinis Praedicatorum, Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris, 1898), XXXVII, 550–551; *The Mirror of Alchimy Composed by the Thrice-Famous and Learned Fryer, Roger Bachon*, ed. S. J. Linden, *English Renaissance Hermeticism* 4 (New York and London, 1992), pp. 9–12.

²³ G. Ripley, *Opera Omnia Chemica, quotquot hactenus visa sunt* (Kassell, 1649), p. 135. The translation is mine.

²⁴ P. Grund "Mysticall Wordes", p. 201.

²⁵ L. Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge, 1998), s.v. *bain-marie*; G. Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy: Alchemical Ideas and Images in Manuscripts and Books from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1994), p. 101.

²⁶ see L. Abraham *A Dictionary*, s.v. *king*.

²⁷ *ibid.*, s.v. *king* and *bath*.

²⁸ *ibid.*, s.v. *king*, *bath* and *aqua regia*.

²⁹ Cf. *MED* s.v. *salt-petre* and *salt* (*Middle English Compendium*, <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/m/mec/>, as accessed in 2004–2005); *OED* s.v. *saltpetre*, *sal-nitre* and *nitre* (*OED* = *The Oxford English Dictionary*, at www.dictionary.oed.com as accessed in 2004–2005).

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³⁰ Cf. *MED* s.v. *brim-ston* and *sulphur-vive*; *OED* s.v. *brimstone*; see also F. S. Taylor, *The Alchemists: Founders of Modern Chemistry* (New York, 1949), pp. 81–2; G. Roberts *The Mirror*, pp. 50–1.

³¹ In my identification, I have relied on the *MED*, *OED* and additional lists of (al)chemical terms found at <http://www.3rd1000.com/alchemy/alchemyterms.htm> and <http://dbhs.wvusd.k12.ca.us/webdocs/Chem-History/Obsolete-Chem-TermsTOC.html>.

³² Personal communication September 3, 2004.

³³ See *Sidrak and Bokkus, A Parallel-Text Edition from Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 559 and British Library, MS Lansdowne 793*, ed. T. L. Burton, EETS OS 311–312 (Oxford, 1998–1999).

³⁴ It is unclear at this point if the person who copied out *Sidrak and Bokkus* is the same as the person who copied out the *Chronicle*. *Sidrak and Bokkus* is copied in a mixed secretary and italic hand, which may be the same as the one attested in, for example, fols. 41v and 109r. The marginal comments in *Sidrak and Bokkus* may have been added by a number of readers. However, many of the comments were certainly added by the original copyist, perhaps at several different times. I will explore these issues further in a forthcoming article.

³⁵ See e.g. (Pseudo-) Albertus Magnus's *Semita Recta* (A. Borgnet *B. Alberti Magni*, p. 553): "Sulphur vero pinguedo terrae est in minera terrae per temperatam decoctionem inspissata, quousque induretur, et fiat spissa: et cum indurata fuerit, vocatur *sulphur*" 'Sulfur is the fatness of the earth made thick in the ore of the earth through temperate decoction, until it is hardened and made thick, and when it is hardened, it is called sulfur' (my translation). See also similar statements made by (Pseudo-) Roger Bacon and (Pseudo-) Geber; S. J. Linden *The Mirror of Alchemy*, pp. 9–10, and W. Newman, 'The Genesis of the *Summa Perfectionis*', *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences* 35 (1985), p. 251.

³⁶ The words within angular brackets are represented in the manuscript by alchemical sigils.

³⁷ G. Roberts *The Mirror*, pp. 74–8. See also R. Patai. *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton, 1994), esp. pp. 18–9.

³⁸ Though it seems clear that the section on Bladud was included because of an alchemical interpretation, it is less clear why, in addition to the account of Bladud's reign, the copyist copied another 27 lines of the *Chronicle*, which cannot be interpreted alchemically with any stretch of the imagination. We can only speculate as to the reasons for this. Perhaps the *Chronicle* story fascinated the copyist once he had started copying out the passage on the bath, which made him copy out a longer passage. Of course, if this is the case, it could just as well be argued that he

copied out the whole passage out of sheer interest. Ultimately, it is not possible to decide for certain why the *Chronicle* extract was included, but the alchemical interpretation of the account of Bladud's reign may at least point to a possible and plausible reason and the initial attraction of the text.

³⁹ For more detailed information on these manuscripts, see E. Zetzl *Short Metrical Chronicle*, pp. xi–xxxiv, and U. O'Farrell-Tate *The Abridged*, pp. 18–20.

⁴⁰ I have not been able to consult all the manuscripts in person. I have relied on the available editions and on the critical apparatus of B (and G in an appendix) provided in E. Zetzl *Short Metrical Chronicle*. Zetzl's apparatus is extensive but not comprehensive or flawless. The other editions that I have consulted are U. O'Farrell-Tate *The Abridged* (R), M. C. Carroll and R. Tuve 'Two Manuscripts' (A and H).

⁴¹ C in fact only covers the story of Bladud.

⁴² For a detailed study of R, see U. O'Farrell-Tate *The Abridged*.

⁴³ E. Zetzl *Short Metrical Chronicle*, pp. 10 and 159.

⁴⁴ See M. C. Carroll and R. Tuve 'Two Manuscripts', p. 124 (lines 581–588).

⁴⁵ E. Zetzl *Short Metrical Chronicle*, pp. xlv and 58.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, xliii.

⁴⁷ M. D. Legge, 'The Brut Abridged, A Query', *Medium Aevum* 16 (1947), pp. 32–3. U. O'Farrell-Tate also shows that Legge repeated her criticism in a 1963 monograph in much the same words; U. O'Farrell-Tate *The Abridged*, p. 45.

⁴⁸ T. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), p. 180 *fn.* 76.

⁴⁹ U. O'Farrell-Tate *The Abridged*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ M. D. Legge 'The Brut', p. 32. She reaches the conclusion, however, that "these are not proofs".

⁵¹ If not otherwise stated the reading of the other manuscripts comes from E. Zetzl's *Short Metrical Chronicle* edition (i.e. B or R). Zetzl does not always record morphological variation in his critical apparatus. Consequently, although A has "went" in the passage corresponding to line 44 in BPH M199, this is not recorded as a variant by Zetzl. Since it has been outside the scope of this study to consult all the manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, I only record the variation evident from Zetzl's apparatus. I have not included G among the variants cited, unless it is mentioned specifically.

⁵² This passage is not found in G either, but G abbreviates a longer passage.

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⁵³ E. Zetl *Short Metrical Chronicle*, p. xlv.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 160, 162, 157.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 58, 95.