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ANNOTATIONS ON *SIR CLEGES*, A MIDDLE ENGLISH METRICAL ROMANCE

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Introduction

Sir Cleges is an anonymous tail-rime romance composed in the North Midland dialect of the late fourteenth century. The tail-rime is one of the most popular styles of versification in ME, each stanza normally riming aabccbdddbeeb. This romance is extant in two manuscripts: MS. Advocates 19.1.11 (the Edinburgh MS.), 530 lines, 1450–1500 and MS. Ashmole 61 (the Oxford MS.), 570 lines (6 lost), 1475–1500.¹ McKnight assumes that the two MSS., the differences of which seem to originate in oral transmission, go back to a non-extant common original.² The Edinburgh MS., generally conceived to be the better one, lacks two stanzas and a half at the end. Annotated here is the edition of French & Hale (1930) based on the Edinburgh MS. and partially supplied from the Oxford MS. But for the concluding stanzas, the annotator has had to turn to Treichel's parallel edition.

McKnight, judging from the style and content, hazards the speculation that the author is a minstrel, whereas Weston assumes that the romance is the work of an ecclesiastic gifted with a sense of humor.³ *Sir Cleges* is often looked upon as a curious mixture of a moral tale or saint's legend and a fabliau. The first half is devoted to the anecdote of a cherry tree springing into unseasonable blossom. This theme of Christmas-day miracle was very popular in medieval Europe. But the second theme of blows shared that is developed in the latter half was even more widespread. McKnight says that variants of this humorous theme are found in Arabia and Africa as well as in virtually every part of Europe.⁴

The annotator had a chance to talk with Dr. Derek S. Brewer of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who described *Sir Cleges* as “not very important but quite

*entertaining.*⁵ With its uniquely laughable elements, this story may not deserve the name of “romance” in the strict sense of the word. And yet it remains one of the most charming and delightful narratives composed in Middle English.

This annotation serves as a sort of preliminary memorandum for an attempt at a Japanese translation of *Sir Cleges* to be included in *Chusei Eikoku Romansu-shu (A Collection of Medieval English Romances)* III currently in preparation.

Notes to Introduction

1. Severs (1967), p. 170.
2. McKnight (1913), p.lxxiv.
3. *Ibid.*, pp.lxii—lxiii; Weston (1912), pp. vii—viii.
4. *Op. cit.*, pp.lxxi—lxxii. Variants of this theme are exhaustively covered and analyzed in Reinhard (1923).
5. At a lecture meeting in Kyoto held on April 11, 1987.

Annotations on *Sir Cleges*

Abbreviations

adj.	adjective	O.	the Oxford MS.
adv.	adverb	OE	Old English
cit.	cited	<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
conj.	conjunction		
ME	Middle English	pl.	plural
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>	ppl.	participle
<i>MES</i>	<i>Middle English Syntax</i>	prep.	preposition
MS.	manuscript	sb.	substantive
n.	noun	v.	verb

Stanzas are numbered in Roman numerals. Arabic numerals in boldface indicate lines. Where the definition and/or explanation of a word or phrase are taken from a certain reference, mostly *OED* and *MED*, the name of the

reference is given in brackets with the headword. In the case of *OED* and *MED*, the paragraph and sub-paragraph where the definition is given are also specified. No specification of parts of speech is given, except when deemed necessary (e.g., when the word in question has its homonym(s)). “Cit.” in brackets shows that the passage containing the word in question is cited in the dictionary. When there is a noticeable discrepancy between the two manuscripts, the counterpart in O. (Treichel’s edition) is given in italics. But this does not apply when the discrepancy is simply that of spelling or is due to differences in sentence structures.

I.

1. Will ye lystyn, and ye schyll here: A typical conventional address to the audience. This alone, however, does not necessarily attest to the minstrel origin of the romance. O.: *Lystyns, lordynges, and ȝe schall here*. **2. eldyrs:** ‘an ancestor or forefather’ [*MED*, eldre, 1a]. O.: *ansystores*. **3. hardy:** ‘strong in battle, fearless of danger’ [*MED*, hardi, 1a(a)]. **3. wyȝt:** ‘strong and courageous, especially in warfare’ [*OED*, wight, 1]. ‘Hardy and wyȝt’ is a stereotyped epithet for a knight in ME romances. cf. McKnight, p. 71. **4. Vtere:** Uther Pendragon is Arthur’s father in *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth. “*Uthr* in Welsh means ‘terrible, awe-inspiring’. The connection with Arthur could perhaps be a mere mistake, since the poetic phrase ‘Arthur the terrible’ might have been misconstrued as ‘Arthur son of Uthr’.” [*The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, Uther Pendragon, p. 591]. O.: *Vter and Pendragoun*. McKnight says, “In the romances of Merlin Vther is represented as being the younger brother of Pendragon.” p. 72 **5. kynge Arthyr:** It was a common tactic in ME romances to connect the hero or heroine with Arthurian legends. **6. siȝt:** ‘appearance, look’ [*OED*, sight, sb.¹, 3]. The alliterative phrase ‘a semely man in siȝt’ is another typical epithet for a noble personage in romances. **7. hight:** ‘be named’ [*MED*, hoten, v.(1), 2a]. **7. Sir Cleges:** According to McKnight, “The name is not a common one. It is used a few times in Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur*. The name Syr Clegius (Schir Clegis) also appears in the *Awnturs of Arthur*, 96.” p. 72. cf. Weston, p. 71. **9. the Rovnd Tabull:** “King Arthur’s celebrated Round Table is first mentioned by

Wace in 1115 in his *Roman de Brut*. In lines 8747–58, he ascribes the origin of the table to Arthur's desire to prevent quarrels of precedence among his barons and to promote a sense of equality." [The Arthurian Encyclopedia, Round Table, p. 463]. Note that in this romance the Round Table is located in the court of Uther Pendragon. cf. McKnight, p. 72. **10. hight:** 'tall' [MED, height, (b), cit.]. O.: *hy*.

II.

14. lond: 'a country, a kingdom' [MED, lond, 1(a)]. But possibly 'the world' [MED, 3(a)]. O.: *werld*. Weston's translation: 'the realm'. p. 3 **15. fre:** 'noble in character, gracious' [MED, fre, 2a(a)]. Dürmüller points out that in this stanza all of the four tail-lines are used to praise Sir Cleges' knightly virtues. He also notes that unlike many other tail-rime romances the tail-lines in this romance are very often allotted for descriptions essential to the development of the story and that true tags are relatively rare. p. 191. **16. traveld:** 'to journey' [OED, travel, 2, cit.]. French & Hale, however, interpret this verb as 'to suffer'. p. 878. **17. bare:** 'destitute, poor' [MED, bar, 9]. **18. ffee:** 'riches' 'gold and fe' = 'gold and moveable property other than gold' [MED, fe, n.(1), 2]. **20. greve:** 'to injure, harass, oppress' [MED, greven, 1(a)]. O.: *buske ne bete*. **21. Meke:** 'benevolent, kind' [MED, mek, 1(b)]. **22. mete:** 'food' [MED, mete, 1a(a)]. **24. plenté:** 'generosity, bounty' [MED, plente, 1(i), cit.].

III.

26. bere life: 'to be alive' [MED, lif, 1b(b)]. O.: *be of lyfe*. **27. mery:** 'fair, comely' [MED, mirie, 6(a), cit.]. O.: *Ne non semblyere*. **29. sekyrly:** 'without doubt, certainly' [OED, sickerly, 2]. O.: *treuly*. **30. gladsum:** 'joyful, cheerful, happy' [MED, gladsom, (a), cit.]. O.: *Glad chere*. **33. wiȝt:** 'a human being, person' [OED, wight, 2]. **34. dere:** 'intent to harm' [MED, dere, n(1), (e), cit.]. O.: *Fore pem had no man ouȝht lore*. **35. Rech ar pore wethyr they were:** 'whether they were rich or poor'. Roscow, who names this construction 'displacement', says that it "is common in the romances and is found at least as late as Spenser." p. 19. The same construction appears in

ll.286–87.

IV.

37. Sir Cleges: Dürmüller says, “Several of the stanzas are introduced by a stating of the name of the person under focus at the beginning of the first line.” p. 190. The other stanzas of this type he lists (p. 194) are: II, III, V, X, XV, XXII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XLI, XLIII, XLIV, XLV, XLVI. **39. In worschepe of:** ‘in honour of’ [OED, worship, 7b]. **41. As:** ‘as if, as though’ [MED, as, 2(a)]. In O., ll.40–42 are lacking. **42. as i you saye:** One of the commonest tags that appear in tail-lines. “For sothe, as y say þe.” (Emaré, 96). **45. There wold no man say nay:** To whom no man would say nay is a question. Weston’s translation is: ‘throughout all the land was there no man, rich or poor, who would say nay when bidden thereto.’ p. 4. But in this context it seems equally possible to interpret this sentence as, ‘nobody was denied admittance.’ **46. behynde:** ‘to be at a disadvantageous state or in inferior state’ [MED, bihind, 4a(a), cit.]. **47. myrthis:** ‘festivity, feasting’ [MED, 3(a), mirthe, cit.].

V.

49ff. Schelp assumes that this stanza is indicative of the minstrel origin of the romance. “Der Dichter ist wohl ein Minstrel, denn aus der Sicht eines solchen wird Cleges dargestellt, wenn es in der fünften Strophe heißt...” p. 95. He further characterizes the poet as a minstrel, “der die seinem Stand angenehme Freigebigkeit des Ritters und ihre Belohnung beispielhaft in unterhaltsamer Form zum Ausdruck bringen möchte.” p. 96. **50. yeftis:** ‘gifts’. **51. And at bothe rech and good:** Roscow remarks that this kind of ‘and’ followed by the demonstrative pronoun ‘that’ is used to introduce an amplificatory phrase. p. 55. According to MES, ‘and that + amplificatory phrase’ is very frequent in Chaucer. p. 171. “Shal renne to the town, and that ful swithe,” (*Pardoners Tale*, 796). **52. robis:** ‘a robe or suit of clothing given in lieu of monetary payment, a fee, etc.’ [MED, robe, 1(c), cit.]. **54. To mend wyth her modde:** ‘To mend her modde whth’. ‘menden mod’=‘to raise

(somebody's) spirits' [MED, menden, 2(c)]. **57. þat dyed on the rode:** a common epithetic tag for Jesus Christ. 'Rode' (=rood, 'cross') is interchangeable with 'tre' (=tree, 'cross'). **58. Be that:** 'at or by that time' [MED, bi, prep., 4(e)]. O.: *Be than*. **58. good:** 'property, wealth' [MED, god, n.(2), 11(a)]. **58. slake:** 'to become or grow less in number, quantity, or volume' [OED, slake, 5].

VI.

61. lett: 'cease (to do something)' [MED, letteren, 11(e)]. **62. maners:** 'a manorial estate, consisting of a manor house, service buildings, lands, etc.' [MED, maner, n.(1), 1(a), cit.]. **62. wede:** 'a pledge' [OED, wed, 1]. **63. quyztt out:** 'repay (a debt) in full' [MED, quiten, 1(b)]. O.: *hym-selue oute to quytle*. In O., the verb is reflexive. **69. but lyȝt:** 'but little, only a little bit' [MED, lite, n.(3), 1(c), cit.]. **70. nerhand:** 'nearly' [MED, ner-honde, 2]. O.: *ne-hond*. **72. hopyd in:** 'trust in (God)' [MED, hopen, 3(a)]. O.: *He hopyd, god wold hym quytle*. **72. ryght:** 'piously' [MED, righte, 9(a)].

VII.

73. rialté: 'luxury, extravagance' [MED, realte, 2(b), cit.]. French & Hale: 'magnificence'. p. 880. **79. mekyll of pride:** 'highly esteemed' [MED, muchel, adj., 5c(b)]. **80. Gan:** <ginnen 'begin'. Here and elsewhere, this verb is used as a past tense marker. **80. slake:** 'to fall away from one, to depart' [OED, slake, 1d, cit.]. O.: *Wente a-wey*. **84. mone** 'moan'.

VIII.

85. on Crestemas evyn: Dürmüller remarks that, besides a stating of the name of the person under focus, an indication of time is another element which frequently occupies the first line of a stanza. This, he says, is specially characteristic of narrative in tail-rime stanzas. p. 190. **86. evyn:** As an emphatic, 'in fact, indeed' [MED, even, 9]. MED cites *Towneley Play*, 170/130, where, as in this romance, 'even' is preceded by 'full'. French & Hale: 'pondered deeply'. **87. Kardyfe:** Cardiff is a seaport in South Wales. But, as McKnight says, "Carleon, near Cardiff, is the more usual center in Arthurian

story." p. 73. **87. syde:** 'a region, district' [*OED*, side, 15b, cit.]. French & Hale: 'near Cardiff'. p. 880. **87. He:** 'knyȝt' in 1.86 emended by French & Hale is 'kynge' in MS. Without this emendation, this 'He' obviously refers to King Uther, which makes the narrative somewhat awkward. In Weston's translation published before French & Hale's edition, the following italicized passage is inserted between 1.87 and 1.88 in order to avoid the abruptness: 'the king...ordained a great feast for all in his hall; *but Sir Cleges (whose manor lay hard by the borders of Kardyf) was not bidden thereto, for 'twas many a year since the king had heard speech of him, and he deemed well that he was already dead.'*' p. 5. **89. svounnyng:** As McKnight puts it, swooning is "not unusual for heroes of medieval romance." p. 73. "þe King into his chaumber is go/ And oft swoned opon þe ston." (*Sir Orfeo*, 194–95). **90. on:** 'of'. **93. renttis:** 'a source of revenue or income, property yielding revenue—usually in plural' [*MED*, rente, 1(b), cit.]. O.: *Tenandrys and landes*. **93. wyde:** This adjective is used because 'renttis' is a landed estate. French & Hale: 'large income'. p. 880. **94. sorowe:** 'lamentation, mourning' [*OED*, sorrow, 4]. **95. wrong his handis:** 'Wring one's hands' is a stereotyped expression of grief in romances. "Hys hondys he gan wrynge/ So greet sorowe hym was vpan." (*Sir Launfal*, 822–23). **96. ffellyd:** 'to cast down, destroy, suppress (pride, power, etc.)' [*MED*, fallen, 6(a), cit.].

IX.

98. sovne: 'sound'. **99. mynstrelsé:** Collectively, 'musical instruments' [*MED*, minstrelsie, 2(a), cit.]. **100. trompus:** 'trumpets'. O.: *trumpers*. **100. pypus:** 'pipe, flute' [*MED*, pipe, 3, cit.]. O.: *pypers*. **100. claraneris:** 'clarion' [*MED*, clariouner, (b), cit.]. French & Hale: 'trumpeters'. p. 880. Weston: 'clarinet'. p. 6. Since both 'trompus' and 'pypus' are obviously instruments, one is tempted to interpret 'claraneris' as instruments rather than as players. So does *MED*. *MED*, however, admits that this signification is more or less questionable. O.: *nakerners*. Note that in O. the three elements in 1.100 are all replaced by performers. **101. getarnys:** 'a guitar-like instrument, usually having four strings, a gittern' [*MED*, giterne, cit.]. **102. sitole:** 'a stringed instrument, plucked with fingers (related to the dulcimer or

zither)' [MED, citole, (a), cit.]. **102. sawtré:** 'a stringed musical instrument, psaltery' [MED, sautrie, (a)]. **103. carellys:** 'a kind of round dance accompanied by singing' [MED, carole, 1(a)]. Carol was very popular in medieval England. There is a famous exemplum in *Handlyng Synne* by Robert Manning of Brunne, which condemns indulgence in caroling. ll.8987ff. **103. gret:** 'energetic, busy, very much of (the acting named)' [MED, gret, 7(b)]. **108. petusly:** 'pitifully, sorrowfully' [MED, pitousli, (b), cit.].

X.

111. of: 'for'. **111. sond:** '(God's) dispensation or ordinance' [OED, sand, 1]. **114. fre and bond:** 'freeman and bondman, all classes of society, everyone' [MED, bond, 1(a), cit.]. **116. Wantyd:** 'lacked'. **116. wyld:** 'wild animals collectively, beasts' [OED, wild, sb., 1]. **119. be the rode:** 'by the cross'. An asseveration. **120. For coste...lend:** 'spare for any expense' [MED, lenden, 3(d), cit.]. O.: *Off cost I wold not wonde.*

XI.

123. in hyr armys...hent: 'to embrace' [MED, henten, 1(b)]. **124. chere:** 'facial expression, mien' [MED, chere, 2(a)]. **125ff.:** Dürmüller points out that the abundant use of direct speeches (217 lines out of 552) is a peculiar feature of this romance. p. 191. **125. trewe fere:** 'faithful husband' [MED, fere, 3(a)]. **126. ment:** 'to complain about (something)' [MED, menen, v.(2), 1(a)]. But possibly 'to say' [MED, menen, v.(1), 3(a)]. McKnight, in the glossary, adopts the former reading, p. 127., while Weston's translation of 'what ye ment' is 'your speech'. p. 6 **129. stynte:** 'to cease action' [OED, stint, 1]. **131. lone:** 'God's help or grace' [MED, lone, 2, cit.]. Lacking in O.

XII.

133-34. blyne of: 'to desist from' [MED, blinnen, 1(b)]. **138. you:** Dative. 'to you'. **139. Go we:** 'let us go'. In the following line, 'let vs' construction is used. **139. mete:** 'lunch, midday dinner' [MED, mete, 3(b)]. **140. make vs blyth:** 'make merry, rejoice' [MED, blithe, 1(c)]. **144. to**

youre paye: 'to your satisfaction' [*MED*, paie, 1(a)].

XIII.

150. stere: 'to drive, impel' [*OED*, stir, 1e, cit.]. **153. lyre:** 'the cheek; in pl. the face' [*MED*, ler, 1, cit.]. **154. wasschyd and went to mete:** As McKnight points out, equivalent expressions are very frequent in romance. p. 75. In the Middle Ages, people ate foods with their fingers. Therefore, it was also necessary to wash hands after a meal. "Then þe lordes þat were grete/Whesshen aȝeyn aftyr mete." (*Emaré*, 889–90). **156. in fere:** 'together' [*MED*, fere, 2(a)]. O.: *made mery chere*.

XIV.

158. droffe: 'to pass or spend (the time); especially, in a pleasant or leisurely way' [*MED*, driven, 10(b), cit.]. **160. ded:** 'did'. **162. tyme:** 'a fitting point of time for doing something' [*OED*, time, 15]. **164. for to werch:** 'For' before a *to*-infinitive is optional, often conditioned by the requirements of metrics. But it tends to co-occur often with infinitives expressing purpose. **164. werch:** 'to perform (a ceremony, etc.)' [*OED*, work, 1c]. **165. reson:** 'an action agreeable to reason' [*MED*, resoun, 2(a)]. O.: *skyll and ryght*. **166-68:** These lines, lacking in MS., are supplied from O. **168: redy dyȝht:** 'prepared' [*MED*, redi, adj. (3), 1c(b)].

XV.

169—80.: This is a matchlessly beautiful and heartwarming scene of conjugal love. **171. Becavse of:** 'for the sake (of)' [*MED*, bi cause, (b)]. O.: *Be chesyn of*. **174. stryffe:** 'trouble, pain, distress' [*OED*, strife, 1e]. **175. ayen:** 'in return' [*MED*, ayen, 7(a)]. **176. peyne:** 'misfortune, adversity, hardship' [*MED*, peine, 6(a)]. **177. In euerlastyng lyf:** Weston's translation: 'God should...bring him to life everlasting.' p. 8. **179. with god entent:** 'in good faith, faithfully' [*MED*, entente, 3(b)]. O.: *god omnipotent*. **180. penciffe:** 'care, sorrow' [*MED*, pensif, (d), cit.].

XVI.

181. place: 'a house, manor house' [MED, place, 6(a)]. O.: *pals*. **182. care:** 'sorrow, grief' [MED, care, 1(a)]. O.: *sorow*. **184. afore:** 'ahead of' [MED, afore, prep., 1(a), cit.]. **186. Hymselfe:** The reflexive pronoun is used independently as subject. **188. in þat tyde:** A rime tag. **189. veramend:** 'truly, verily' [OED, veriment]. **191. dysese:** 'tribulation, misfortune' [MED, diseise, 1a]. O.: *Of all desesyd in pouerte*. **192: sent:** 'to ordain as a blessing or a punishment' [OED, send, 7].

XVII.

196. rawȝt: 'reached'. **197. in that stede:** A common rime tag. **201. beryse:** 'berries'. As we saw in the introduction, the theme of an unseasonably blossoming cherry tree is widespread. Carr suggests an intriguing hypothesis concerning the dissemination of this theme in medieval English popular literature. "...the Nativity cherry tree, while it derives from a similar well-known tree in the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, was first connected with the Nativity in the *Ludus Coventriæ*, and...from that source grew independently its two popular manifestations in "The Cherry-Tree Carol" and *Sir Cleges*." p. 135. **202. Dere:** Of God, 'noble, honored' [MED, dere, 1(a)]. **203. manere:** 'a kind, sort' [MED, manere, 1a(a)].

XVIII.

205. sey: 'saw'. **209. on:** 'one'. **210. spare wold he nat:** The construction with 'spare+negative' is a frequent rime tag. "The Kyng of Fraunce spared none." (Emaré, 493). **211. After:** 'like' [MED, after, prep., 10(b)]. **211. reles:** 'taste' [MED, reles, (a), cit.]. O.: *After a chery it relesyd clene*. **212. in place:** 'there, right there' an emphatic phrase used as a rime tag [MED, place, 8(c)]. **214. of-slyve:** 'to cut off' [MED, ofsliven, cit.].

XIX.

217. newelté: 'something unusual, an unusual event' [MED, novelte, 2(a), cit.]. **218. of a chery-tre:** This is probably construed with 'I fond yt' in the following line. O.: *vpon a tre*. **220. aferd:** 'fearful that...' [MED, afered, 1(f)]. **220. tokynnyng:** 'betokening, presaging' [OED, tokening, 1, cit.].

221. harme: 'misfortune' [*MED*, harm, 1(a)]. **222. thynkkyth:** Impersonal verb. OE 'yncan'. **223—25.:** These lines are supplied from O. **225. plenté:** 'prosperity, wealth' [*MED*, plente, 1(a)]. **226. les or more:** 'anything at all' [*MED*, lesse, 2a(b)]. O.: *Have we les our haue we mour.*

XX.

229. good chere: 'good spirit, cheerfulness' [*MED*, chere, 5(a)]. **230. panyer:** 'a basket, a hamper' [*MED*, paniere, (a)]. **231. Of:** OE genitive. **232. day:** 'daybreak, dawn' [*MED*, dai, 3(b)]. **232. spryng:** Of morning, dawn, etc. 'to come above the horizon' [*OED*, spring, 7]. **233. schill to:** 'shall go to'. Non-expression of a verb of motion is not unusual in the position after an auxiliary. cf. *MES*, p. 510. **234. yeve to present:** 'give (something) as a gift' [*MED*, presente, (d)]. **237. I tell you, werament:** Dürmüller singles out this line as one of rare tail-lines constitutive of a true tag. Other such lines he points out are 258 and 420. **238. gravntyd thereto:** 'to consent to (something)' [*MED*, graunten, 2(c), cit.]. **238. sone:** 'forthwith, straightway' [*OED*, soon, 1]. **240. entent:** 'a plan or design' [*MED*, entente, 2].

XXI.

241. whan yt was lyȝt: A cliché expressing daybreak in romances. O.: *when it was dey lyght*. **244. goodly:** 'gladly, willingly' [*MED*, godli, adv. (2), 2(b), cit.]. Weston: 'Take up this goodly basket.' p. 210. O.: *gladly*. **248. boke:** 'a book as an authoritative source' [*MED*, bok, 2a(a)]. 'So seyth þe boke' is a common tag. We cannot necessarily assume the existence of a literary original. cf. "In romaunce as we rede." (*Sir Launfal*, 741). **250. stede:** 'a high-mettled horse used on state occasions, in war, or in the lists; a great horse, as distinguished from a palfrey' [*OED*, steed, 1b]. **250. palfray:** 'a riding horse (as opposed to a war horse); a fine riding horse' [*MED*, palefrei, (a)]. **251. hakenay:** 'a hackney horse' here, figuratively [*MED*, hakeneie, 1(b), cit.]. This word, according to Onions, originates from Hackney in Middlesex, where horses were raised, and taken to Smithfield market through Mare Street [Onions, *hackney*].

XXII.

253. gent: 'of noble birth, of noble character' [MED, gent, 1(a), cit.]. **254. right waye:** 'direct way, nearest way' [MED, right, 1(b)]. **255. Vpon Cristemas daye:** McKnight says, "The chronology in this story offers difficulty... The day of the journey to Cardiff should be the day after Christmas." p. 76. **256. right:** 'at once, immediately' [MED, righte, 4(b)]. Weston: 'in safety'. p. 10. **257. mete:** 'a feast, banquet' [MED, mete, 3(c)]. **262. portere:** McKnight remarks, "There seems to be personal animus in the way the porter is represented. The minstrel was well accustomed to ill treatment from the porters, and the surly porter appears frequently in minstrel story." p. 77. He seems to consider that the poet's experiences as a minstrel are reflected in this anecdote. p.1xxiii. **263. Thou:** McKnight notes that the porter uses the contemptuous singular while Cleges addresses him politely using the respectful plural. p. 77. **264. rede:** 'advise' [MED, reden, v.(1), 8a(a)].

XXIII.

265. be God and Seint Mari: McKnight calls attention to the fact that the porter and the other servants make so many blasphemous oaths. p. 77. **266. on high:** 'at once, very soon' [MED, hie, n.(2), (b)]. O.: *smertly*. **267. beggeris rowȝt:** 'the assembled beggars' [MED, beggere, 1(b), cit.]. Those beggars were given leftovers. **268. inward:** 'to or toward the inside of a building' [MED, inward, 1a(a), cit.]. **269. It schall þe rewȝt:** Impersonal construction. 'You shall feel regret' [MED, reuen, v.(1), 1(e), cit.]. O.: *Thow schall rewȝt after-werd.* **270. clowȝt:** 'to beat or strike' [MED, clouten, v.(2), cit.]. **273. Nowe, without dowȝt:** In spite of Treichel's and French & Hale's punctuation, this tail-line seems to be semantically better construed with the lines that follow. O.: *Thys is with-outen doute:*

XXIV.

278. hentt vppe: 'pick up' [MED, henten, 2(b)]. **280. Will:** 'well'. **280. wyst:** The object is the clause in 1.282. **283. bowȝt:** 'to redeem or save

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(mankind, etc.)' [*MED*, bien, 6(a)]. O.: *dere bouȝht*. 'That me (man) bowȝt (dere)' is a common epithet for Christ, alongside of 'that dyed on the rode' and 'that made all thynge of nowȝt'. **285. man of mold:** 'man in the world, mortal man' [*MED*, molde, n.(1), 3(b)]. 'As i am man of mold' is a kind of asseveration. O.: *Be hym pat made pis mold*.

XXV.

291. Wythout more lettyng: 'without further delay' [*MED*, lettinge, 5(b), cit.]. **292. a gret pace:** 'at great speed, swiftly' [*MED*, pase, n.(1), 2(c)]. **293. vsschere:** French& Hale remark, "Ushers were attendants at the doors who kept the rabble from annoying guests at a feast." p. 887. **295. In poynte:** 'just about (to do something), ready' [*MED*, pointe, n.(1), 5(b), cit.]. **296. tyȝt:** 'quickly, soon' [*OED*, tite, cit.]. O.: *out of my syght*. **297. teryyng:** 'tarrying'. O.: *lettyng*. **298. bette:** 'beat'. **298. leth:** 'a bodily member, limb' [*MED*, lith, n.(1), (b), cit.]. **299. wythout greth:** 'mercilessly' [*MED*, grith, 5(a), cit.]. **300. make pressyng:** 'to importune' [*MED*, pressinge, (c), cit.].

XXVI.

307. Thys nyȝt: Another corruption in the chronology. This should be 'last night'.

XXVII.

315. sekyrly: 'positively' [*OED*, sickerly, 2b]. **316. without lesyng:** 'in truth, truly' often as a rime tag [*MED*, lesinge, 1(b)]. O.: *with-out wernyng*. **317. wynnyngh:** 'that which is won' [*OED*, winning, sb.¹, 3]. **318. Wan:** 'when'. **318. comste ayen:** 'return' [*MED*, ayen, 2(a)]. **319. sey:** 'saw'. **319. von:** 'choice of alternative, resource, expedient' often in phrase 'to have, know, see, etc. no other (better) wone' [*OED*, wone, sb.³, 1, cit.]. **320. sone anon:** 'immediately, forthwith' [*MED*, an-on, 1(b)]. O.: *a-non*.

XXVIII.

327. rech: 'richly dressed' [*MED*, riche, 1(f), cit.]. **327. wede:** 'clothing,

raiment, dress' In the expletive phrase 'in weed' or 'under weed', usually appended to an adj. as 'worth(ily)', 'wight', 'wise' [OED, weed, sb.², 2b]. O.: *That weryd ryche wede.* 328. **boldly**: 'arrogantly, insolently' or possibly 'without hesitation or delay, immediately' [MED, boldeliche, 3(b); 5]. 329. **hardi**: 'audacious, foolhardy' [MED, hardi, 2(a), cit.]. 331. **to**: 'too'. 331. **bold**: 'presumptuous, impudent' [MED, bold, 4(a)]. 335. **dere bowȝt**: 'to pay dearly for...' usually figuratively, 'to suffer (to redeem somebody)' [MED, dere, adv., 1(b)]. 336. **blede**: 'to bleed to death, die of wounds, die' [MED, bleden, 2].

XXIX.

338. **pyne**: 'a part of a lock or latch' [MED, pin, 4(a), cit.]. O.: *And plukyd vp pe lyde a-non.* 34. **But yf**: 'unless, if...not' [MED, but, conj., 4(b)]. 344. **graunt askyng**: 'grant a request' [MED, askinge, 2(a)]. 347. **threfte**: 'prosperity, fortune (good or bad)' [OED, thrift, sb.¹, 1]. 'Be my threfte' is another common asseverative rime tag. 348. **Ar**: 'or'. 348. **forthere**: 'further'.

XXX.

349. **hym**: Reflexive. 350. **lest**: 'lost'. 353. **melys mete**: 'food for one meal, a daily meal' [MED, mel, n.(2), 3(b), cit.]. 354. **syynge**: 'sighing'. 355. **Harlot**: As a term of abuse, 'knave, rogue, base fellow' [MED, harlot, 1(b)]. 358. **wake**: ?'to beat, drub (a person)' [OED, walk, v.², 2]. The earliest citation, however, is dated a.1530. Weston: 'wake'. p. 13. O.: *twake*. 359. **toquake**: 'to quake violently' [OED, to-quake, cit.]. French & Hale: 'that your ribs shall be shattered'. O.: *And bete pi ragges to pi bake.* 360. **put**: 'to expel, drive out, banish' [MED, putten, 4a(b)]. O.: *schofe pe out*. 360. **hedlynge**: 'headforemost, headlong (forward)' [MED, hedlinge, (b), cit.].

XXXI.

361. **bote**: 'a way out of difficulty, a remedy' [MED, bote, n.(1), 2(c)]. 367—69.: Supplied from O. 368. **acorde**: 'to come to agreement' [MED, accorden, 1(a)]. 369. **And seyd**: The subject of 'seyd' is 'the steward'.

370. desse: 'the dais at a feast or meal' [MED, deis, 2(a)]. O.: *Up to pe kyng.*

XXXII.

374. clere: beautiful, excellent' [MED, cler, 3(a), cit.]. **376ff.:** McKnight says, "The pious tone here and elsewhere is hardly in keeping with the nature of the anecdote." p. 78. The annotator, however, does not find any incongruity in the tone. **379. newe:** 'fresh, not stale or aged' [MED, neue, 1(b), cit.]. O.: *fressch and new.* **381. neweynge:** 'a new thing, a novelty' [MED, neuinge, (c), cit.]. Weston: 'a fair gift for a New Year'. p. 13. **382. commaunndyd to mete:** 'to invite (somebody) to dinner' [MED, commaunden, 3, cit.]. **384. Wythout any faylynge:** 'in fact, surely' a rime tag [MED, failinge, 6., cit.].

XXXIII.

386—87. a lady gent/ Was born in Cornewayle: "He (Uther Pendragon) holds court in London and is smitten with desire for Ygerna, the wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall. Observing his advance, Gorlois leaves without permission and immures his wife in Tintagel Castle, approachable only by a narrow isthmus, easily guarded. Taking his conduct as an insult, Uther leads an army to ravage the ducal lands. Merlin magically turns him into a replica of Gorlois, enabling him to enter Tintagel and reach Ygerna, who supposes him to be her husband. Thus, Arthur is begotten. Since the real Gorlois has fallen in battle, Uther can resume his true shape and marry the lady." [The Arthurian Encyclopedia, Uther Pendragon, pp. 590—91]. **387. Was born:** This is a non-introduced relative clause. **388. bryght:** 'having a fresh or rosy complexion, fair' [MED, bright, 2(c)]. **388. schene:** 'beautiful' [OED, sheen, 1]. **389. will besene:** 'good looking, beautiful' [MED, bisen, 5b.Ppl.(b), cit.]. French & Hale: 'circumspect'. p. 890. Weston: 'and withal of good repute'. p. 14. **390. Wythout any fayle** 'certainly, surely, truly' a common rime tag [MED, faile, 2]. **392. ryall:** 'royal'. **393. be²:** 'by'. **395. content:** 'to compensate or pay (somebody)' [MED, contenten, 2a(a), cit.]. O.: *I schall make hym so content.*

XXXIV.

402. skorn: 'a taunt, an insult' [OED, scorn, 2, cit.]. **406. stylle:** 'in a low voice, softly' [OED, still, 1]. O.: *with wordes felle*. **408. fre-born:** 'of gentle or noble birth' [MED, fre-boren, cit.].

XXXV.

410. presentyng: 'presenting a gift or an offering' [MED, presentinge, (c), cit.]. O. *Off pi grete presentyng*. **412. fest:** 'a festive company' [MED, feste, 3(b), cit.]. **413. most and lest:** 'the greatest and the humblest persons, high and low' [MED, leste, 2b]. **416. so God me sauе:** An asseverative rime tag. **417. standyth to:** 'to be inclined to, hanker after' [OED, stand, 76.1, cit.]. **418—20.** Supplied from O. **418. our:** 'or'. **418. lond our lede:** 'landed property' [MED, lede, n(2), 3, cit.]. **419. spedē:** 'to cause to succeed or prosper' [OED, speed, 6c]. 'So God me spedē' is another common adjuratory phrase. **420. How-pat-euer:** 'howsoever, no matter how' [MED, hou, 3(f), cit.].

XXXVI.

421. Gramarcy: An expression of gratitude, 'thanks, many thanks' [MED, gramarci, (a)]. O.: *Gare mersy*. **422. comfortyng:** 'consolation, comfort' [MED, comfortinge, 1(b), cit.]. O.: *a hye thing*. **426. to mech:** 'too much'. **429. dele:** 'to deliver (a blow, blows)' [MED, delen, 3(c)]. **429. were:** 'where'. **429. lykyth me:** 'I choose, I wish' impersonal construction [MED, liken, 1b(b)]. **430. pay:** 'pay (somebody a blow)' [MED, paien, 6(b)]. **432. For Send Charyté:** 'for the sake of charity' often simply as an intensive; common in entreaties and requests [MED, charite, 4, O. is cited.]. Here, as McKnight says, charity is personified. p. 78. cf. "By gis and by Saint Charitie" (*Hamlet*, IV, 5).

XXXVII.

436. so mott i thee: 'so may I thrive, as I may prosper, as sure as I hope to prosper' [MED, moten, v.(2), 11(a)]. An asseveration very common in romances. O.: *Be hym pat made me and the*. **437. be better:** 'he were better' = 'he would be better off' [MED, bettre, 1b(b)]. **438. hade nede**

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thereto: 'to need (something)' [MED, nede, 1(d), cit.]. **439. with awaunt:** 'proudly' [MED, avaunt, 2, cit.]. O.: *with-outen warryng*. **440. graunte:** 'a favor, an allowance' [MED, graunt, 2(a), cit.]. O.: *graunteyng*.

XXXVIII.

447. Without any more: 'immediately, unhesitatingly' [MED, more, n.(3), 4(d)]. **449. reward:** 'just deserts, retribution' [MED, reward, 1(c), cit.]. **450. grevyd:** 'harass, oppress' [MED, greven, 1(a)]. **452. bloke:** 'a block' also figuratively [MED, blokke, 1(a), cit.]. **455. for thy corteci:** 'kindly, if you please' [MED, courteisie, 3(b)].

XXXIX.

459. Wythout any lett: 'without any delay' [MED, lette, (b), cit.]. **460. in a breyde:** 'in a moment, forthwith' [MED, breid, 4(a)]. **463. many a daye:** 'for many days, for a long time' [MED, dai, 12b(e), cit.]. **464. warn:** 'to refuse, deny (entry, way, etc.)' [OED, warn, v.², 3]. **464. waye:** 'opportunity for passage or advance' [OED, way, sb.¹, 6]. **465. grett:** 'to attack, strike' [MED, greten, v.(2), 2(b), cit.]. **468. behight:** 'to promise' [MED, bihoten, 1b(a)]. O.: *hyȝht*.

XL.

474. to ryde nere goo: 'gon or riden' = 'walk or ride on horseback' [MED, gon, 1a(a)]. A common expression in ME. **476. in to:** 'in two'. O.: *a-two*. **477. on:** 'one'. **480. comnaunnte:** 'an agreement between parties binding them to certain provisions' [MED, covenant, 1a]. Treichel: 'couenaunnte'.

XLI.

481. parlore: 'a room off a main hall affording some privacy, separate chamber or apartment' [MED, parlour, 1(a), cit.]. **482. solas:** 'enjoyment, amusement' [OED, solace, sb.¹, 2.]. O.: *Myrth and reuell forto here*. **482. onor:** 'happiness' [MED, honour, 3(c), cit.]. **482. gest:** 'a poem or song about heroic deeds, a chivalric romance' [MED, geste, n.(1), 1(a), cit.]. **484. be mowth:** 'by word of mouth, orally' [MED, mouth, 2c(b)]. O.: *had a geyst i-seyd*. **485. be sowth:** 'in truth, truly' [OED, sooth, 3]. **486. Hymselfe:**

Weston's interpretation is that this pronoun refers to the minstrel. '...minstrel sang before the king the gest of a knight, even of himself.' p. 16. It seems more probable, however, that this emphatic reflexive is identical with "a knyȝt" in the previous line and refers to Sir Cleges. Hilligoss argues that the gest the minstrel sings is a convenient device to remind the king of Cleges as a respected retainer. She goes so far as to say, "In a sense, the 'geste' sung or recited by the king's minstrel is the romance the audience has just heard, with Cleges as its loyal and liberal hero." p. 306. **488ff.**: The conversation between the king and the minstrel is markedly different in O. The king tries to find who the poor man is by asking the minstrel. The minstrel answers, "Somtyme men callyd hym Cleges." (l.494) But the king, who thinks the knight has been long dead, does not believe this, until Sir Cleges himself discloses his identity in XLV. **488. here**: 'at this time, now' [MED, her, 4(a)]. O.: *here* (verb). **489. iwent**: 'to travel' [MED, gon, 2a(a)]. O.: *ferre wente*. **492. Yee, iwyssse**: 'Yes certainly' [MED, iwis, 1(b), cit.].

XLII.

495. comly: 'of noble bearing' [MED, comli, 2(a)]. **495: gesture**: 'deportment, bearing' [MED, gesture, (a), cit.]. **498. stature**: 'bodily form, build' [OED, stature, 2]. O.: *A man of hye stature*. **499. Be myn hede**: 'by my head'. A common expletive. O.: *This is not he in dede*. **501. lovyd paramore**: 'love fervently or passionately' [MED, par amoure, (b), cit.]. **503. hade...levere than....**: 'would consider (somebody) more desirable than (somebody else)' [MED, lef, 5a(c), cit.]. **503. othyr v**: O.: *knyghtes thre*. **504. stowre**: 'an armed combat or conflict, especially a contest in battle' [OED, stour, sb.¹, 1.1.b]. 'Strong (stiff, stith) in stour' is an alliterative phrase often used as an epithet for a knight or a warrior. O.: *styff in stoure*.

XLIII.

512. euerych: 'each one' [MED, everi, 6(b)]. O.: *iche of pem*. **513. þat**: 'that which'. **515. Wereför**: 'wherfore'.

XLIV.

517. lowe: 'laughed'. **519. inowe:** 'very much, a great deal' [*MED*, inough, (a)]. **520—21.:** 'Sitte' in 1.520 is supplied from O. by Treichel. But Weston's translation, based on Weber's edition (1810), goes, 'The king might scarce stay his mirth.' p. 17. **521. noble:** Of jests 'amusing, entertaining' [*MED*, noble, 5(h), O. is cited.]. **521. wyȝt:** According to French & Hale, this is a variant form of 'wit' (=jest). p. 894. But Weston takes this word as 'wight' (=man). Therefore his translation is, 'This is a doughty fellow.' p. 17. McKnight, too, interprets the word as 'wight' (=man) in the glossary, though his edition is O., where the form of the word is the less problematic 'wytte'. The interpretation of *MED*, as we saw, is at variance with McKnight's. **523. sent after:** 'summon' [*MED*, after, 6(a)]. **525. ys to lowe:** 'to be praised, be praiseworthy' [*MED*, loven, v.(2), 1(b)]. **527.:** Supplied from O. **527. ado:** 'dealings, intercourse' [*MED*, ado, 1(a)]. **528. lowe:** 'a fire, a conflagration' [*MED*, loue, n.(2), 2(a), cit.]. O.: *I wold I had neuer hym knew.*

XLV.

531. anon ryght: Also, 'right anon' 'immediately, forthwith' [*MED*, an-on, 1(b)]. **532. soo haue i blysse:** 'may I have eternal joy!, by heaven' [*MED*, blisse, 3(b)]. **539. vesyte:** Of the deity 'to come to (persons) in order to comfort or benefit' [*OED*, visit, 1]. Weston seems to think that 1.539, combined with 1.540, should be construed with the preceding line. Thus his translation of ll.538–40 is, 'Yea, my lord, that man was I, till that God in heaven visited me with sore poverty.' **540. dyȝt:** 'to deal with (somebody), treat (somebody in a certain way)' [*MED*, dighten, 7(a), cit.].

XLVI.

542. longed to: 'be fitting for' [*MED*, longen, v.(3), 1(a), cit.]. O.: *longes to*. **543. rech:** 'enrich, reward, endow' [*MED*, richen, v.(2), cit.]. O.: *a-ray*. **545ff.:** The rest of this stanza and XLVII and XLVIII lacking in MS. are supplied from O. **545. pourtenans:** 'property, right, or privilege incidental or adjunct to a principal one' [*MED*, purtenaunce, (b), cit.]. **546. pes and grythe:** 'peace and concord' [*MED*, grith, 2(a)]. **549. frythe:** 'a royal forest,

a game preserve' [*MED*, frith, n.(2), 1(a), cit.]. **550. blythe:** 'gladly, willingly' [*MED*, blithe, (a)].

XLVII. (O.)

554. colere: 'a (gold) chain worn about the neck as a badge of office or honor' [*MED*, coler, 2, cit.]. **555. rente:** 'revenue from property, income' [*MED*, rente, 1(a)]. **556. in þis manere:** 'in this way, thus' [*MED*, manere, 3b(f)]. **559. of:** ?'in'. **561. to þer entente:** 'to entente'='to (a certrain) end' [*MED*, entente, 1(c)]. **562. hyght:** 'to promise' [*MED*, hoten, 4a(b)]. **564. content:** 'to pay off (a debt)' also with 'to' phrase of the recipient. [*MED*, contenten, 2b(a)].

XLVIII.(O.)

567. wer: 'where'. **568. fell:** 'to be allotted, to pass or come as a possession (to a person)' [*MED*, fallen, 35(a)]. **569. vansyd:** 'to help, assist' [*MED*, avauncen, 2(a)]. **570. hend:** 'noble, courtly' [*MED*, hende, 1(a)]. **574. godnes:** 'good deeds collectively, a virtuous way of life' [*MED*, godnesse, 3(b)]. **574. here:** 'in this life, here on earth' [*MED*, her, 3(a)].

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