

## The Origin of New College MS 144: Some Text-Critical Observations

New College, Oxford, MS 144 is of unknown provenance, and apparently the curators are unsure of how or when it came into the collection. At first sight, this nicely executed manuscript appears to come from far-away Italy, adding a further element of mystery to the question of its origins. While consulting New College MS 144 to gather textual information on one of the works contained there, I noticed some details that may help solve this question.

The entire volume is dedicated to works by Hugh of Saint-Victor or, in some cases, Pseudo-Hugh. The text considered here is found at fol. 73r–88r, entitled *Tractatus de consciencia secundum Hugonem de sancto Victore*. Because the edition of this text in Migne’s *Patrologia Latina* has become the *textus receptus*, this little work is more commonly known as the Pseudo-Bernard *De interiori domo* (PL 184:507–552). Along with the Pseudo-Bernardine *Meditationes piissimae*, with which it is often associated in the manuscript tradition, it was one of the most-read spiritual texts of the medieval period. A recent study by Cédric Giraud has underscored the significance of these and similar works for the history of spirituality.<sup>1</sup> In what follows, to avoid the confusion of different titles, the text of this *de consciencia* treatise will be referred by its incipit, *Domus hec* (DH). Also, for ease of reference, the chapter and paragraph numbers of the PL 184 edition will be used.

This treatise was composed in the late twelfth century by an anonymous author, certainly a monk and likely a Cistercian. The oldest manuscript witnesses are from northern France, which is probably where the work originated. Of the nearly 300 manuscript witnesses of DH, some 20 are of English origin. To judge from the extant manuscripts, the text seems to have crossed the channel at a late date, the earliest copies being from the fourteenth century.

Over time, DH took on a variety of textual forms. For instance, the expanded 41-chapter version edited in PL 184 is a late compilation developed in Italy. Conversely, drastically abridged versions of the text circulated widely in Germany and Eastern Europe. Predictably, the versions of DH that occur in English manuscripts are the ones most often found in northern France and the Low Countries. About half of the English copies contain one of the earliest and best attested forms of the text, namely chapters 1–28 followed by chapters 38–41, this latter section (incipit *O anima mea*) also circulating independently as a short work often called *Liber de dulci admonitione animae* and usually ascribed to Saint Augustine.

However, several manuscripts of this latter group present the work in an unusual way that occurs only in texts produced in England. This subgroup of manuscripts consists of the following:<sup>2</sup>

- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 137, fol. 132vb–139ra, XIVth c.
- Cambridge, Peterhouse MS 219, fol. 71rb–87rb, XIVth c.
- Cambridge, University Library MS Ii. vi. 39, fol. 134r–157r, XIVth c.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 2049, fol. 173r–180r, XIV/XVth c.
- Oxford, Merton College MS 49, fol. 33v–43v, XVth c.
- Oxford, New College MS 144, 73r–88r, XVth c.

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<sup>1</sup> Cédric Giraud, *Spiritualité et histoire des textes entre Moyen Âge et époque moderne: Genèse et fortune d'un corpus pseudépigraphique de méditations*, Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes 52 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Probably to be added to this group is Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 281, (fol. 95r–109r), a fifteenth-century manuscript originally from the Charterhouse of Sheen, which I have not yet been able to inspect.

## THE TEXTUAL FEATURES OF THESE ENGLISH COPIES OF DH

The most obvious feature common to all these witnesses are two lengthy omissions in the text: paragraphs 20–23 (corresponding to chapters 12–14) and paragraphs 48–57 (corresponding to chapters 23–27). In all but New College MS 144, a shorter omission also occurs in chapter 20 from the words *Turbavit me ira . . .* to the end of the chapter (paragraphs 37–41). Several textual variants are unique to this group of manuscripts. For instance, the following lessons occur in all these manuscripts without exception:

In paragraph 3:

elige tibi socium illum qui cum subtracta tibi fuerint haec omnia] socium illum quere(re) qui cum omnia subtracta fuerint

In paragraph 4:

praepara] para  
sit in ore sit in corde: semper tecum eat, tecum redeat] om.  
nunquam solus esse poteris] non eris solus

In paragraph 9:

Intendere] mercedere (or mercedem)

In paragraph 15:

Denique] Deinde

In paragraph 17:

reverendam] reuerenciam

In paragraph 18:

templum Salomonis] tipus saluacionis

In paragraph 28:

Saepissime] Sepe

In paragraph 29:

Guttur] autem add.

In paragraph 33:

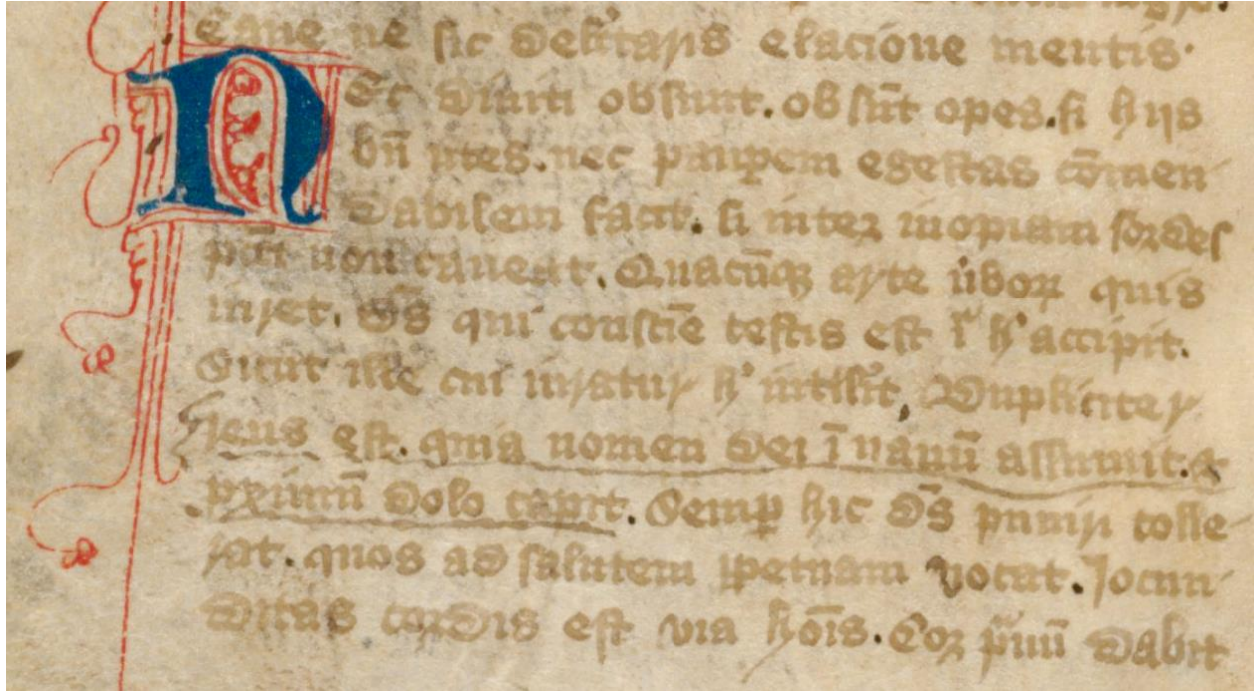
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## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THIS ENGLISH SUB-FAMILY

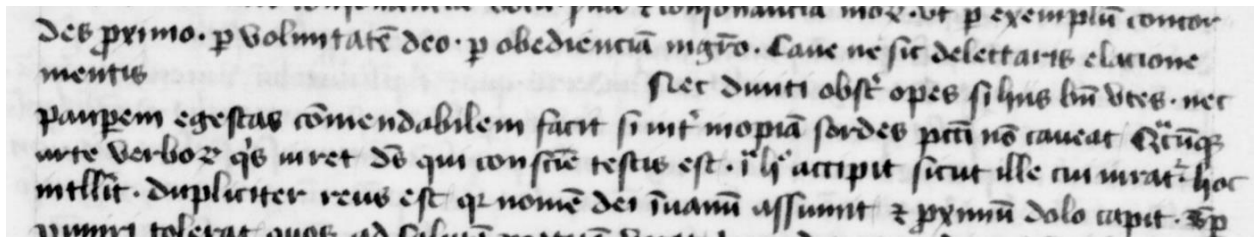
The only clear case of dependence within this group is between Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 137 and Paris, BNF, lat. 2049. The Paris manuscript was produced in England for Charles d'Orléans during his imprisonment there from 1415–44.<sup>3</sup> Judging from textual evidence, it must have been copied from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 137, not only because the Paris manuscript carries the same variants as its exemplar, but also because it leaves a blank space on fol. 178v to account for an anomaly in the Cambridge manuscript. There, on fol. 137va, a large initial signals the beginning of the sentence 'Nec diviti obsunt opes . . .', a place where no other manuscript witness places a division. Moreover, apart from its incipit (initial D at fol. 132vb), Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 137 contains no other initial or major division in the text. This anomalous N initial, in fact, gives the impression that a new work is beginning. The scribe of Paris, BNF, lat. 2049 did not reproduce an initial at this point, but, as if undecided about how best to proceed, left a blank space for a rubricated sub-title in the event that some indication of a division in the text proved necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Gilbert Ouy, 'Charles d'Orléans and His Brother Jean d'Angoulême in England: What their Manuscripts Have to Tell', in *Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415–1440*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 47–60.



Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 137, f. 137va<sup>4</sup>



Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, lat. 2049, f. 178v<sup>5</sup>

The oldest and best witness of the group seems to be the fourteenth-century Cambridge, UL Ii. vi. 39, which carries fewer errors than the other witnesses of this group. There are some convergences between the fifteenth-century Oxford, Merton College MS 49 and the earlier Cambridge, Peterhouse MS 219. These two manuscripts may share a common parentage. As for New College MS 144, it cannot have been copied from any of the extant manuscripts studied here, since it contains a short section of the text (paragraphs 37–41) omitted by the other witnesses, as mentioned above.

<sup>4</sup> Image from 'Parker Library on the Web': <<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/nv561vc7640>> (Accessed: 29 March 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Image from 'BnF Gallica': <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10038379d/f185.item>> (Accessed: 29 March 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Although the Pseudo-Hugh *Tractatus de consciencia* as found in New College MS 144 does not depend directly on any surviving manuscript, its version of the text follows the same pattern as the other five English witnesses listed here. As a group, these English witnesses stand apart from the rest of the extensive manuscript tradition of this work. The text as copied in New College MS 144 can come only from an exemplar of this sub-family and therefore must be of English origin.

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