

# Texts and Documents

## SIDRAK ON REPRODUCTION AND SEXUAL LOVE

by

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### I

A NUMBER OF EXTRACTS from the medieval didactic dialogue of *Sidrak and Bokkus*, on the subject of reproduction, appeared in these pages in 1967.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript from which the extracts were taken (British Museum MS. Lansdowne 793) is the fullest known English version of this work, but it contains some anomalies which, in places, obscure the meaning. In such cases it is helpful to compare the wording with that of the other English manuscripts (which date from the early fifteenth century to the early sixteenth)<sup>2</sup> and with that of the French manuscripts, on which the English versions are thought to be based.<sup>3</sup>

In the question concerning the number of children a woman can carry in her womb at any one time, for example, there are twenty-four lines missing from Lansdowne (L). Their absence is not immediately obvious, since the lines that remain appear to make sense as they stand; only after comparison with the other manuscripts is it clear that L is at fault. The question (I, liij) appeared in *Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11:

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<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Nichols, Jr., 'Procreation, pregnancy, and parturition: extracts from a Middle English metrical encyclopedia', *Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 175–181.

<sup>2</sup> The other English manuscripts, with their dates (so far as can be determined) and sigla are:

c.1400	Brudenell (Deene) l.v.101 (fragment)	(D)
c.1450	Bodleian S.C. 1222 (Laud Misc. 559)	(B)
c.1450–1475	British Museum Harley 4294	(H)
c.1472–1500	Trinity College, Cambridge 1287 (0.5.6.)	(T)
c.1500	Society of Antiquaries of London 252	(A)
1502	British Museum Sloane 2232	(S)

I have not been able to trace the present whereabouts of the only other known English manuscript (*olim* Wrest Park MS. 5, *olim* Meyerstein). The date of S is fixed by a colophon in the scribe's handwriting at the end of the manuscript; the others are all dated approximately, on palaeographical grounds. L is contemporary with H, or perhaps marginally earlier. The printed edition of Thomas Godfray (G), to which I also refer, was formerly thought to have appeared about 1510 but is now normally put at about 1530, since the earliest book issued by Godfray to which a definite date can be assigned is his complete edition of Chaucer's works, published in 1532 (see F. S. Isaac, *English and Scottish printing types 1501–35, 1508–41*, London, Oxford University Press [Facsimiles and illustrations issued by the Bibliographical Society, no. 2], 1930, fig. 79b and notes introducing figs. 77–80).

<sup>3</sup> BTG tell us that the book was "brought" into "English rhyme" by one Hugh of Campdene (variously spelt)—presumably from French prose, in which the work is generally agreed to have been first written (in spite of the preface found in most of the French manuscripts, which claims descent, via Arabic, Latin and Greek, from the Hebrew of its hero, Sidrak [or Sydrac], a supposed descendant of Noah). Numerous French manuscripts survive, most differing in some respects, but it is not known from which of these (if any) the English version was translated. I have consulted only those in the British Museum, taking most of the quotations from MS. Harley 4486 (of which there is a microfilm in my possession), without wishing to imply that this particular manuscript is more closely related to the English versions than are any of the others.

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179–180; the missing lines should be inserted between the twelfth and thirteenth lines on p. 180. Without the missing lines, the passage (in the modernized language used by Nichols) reads as follows:

For if a man a lecher be (p. 180, l. 11)  
 And haunt many, as men may see,  
 The child shall be sometime blithe  
 And sometime great fellness kithe

(i.e., the child of a lecherous and dissolute father will sometimes be happy and at other times will show great fierceness, violence or guilefulness). I give below the equivalent passage from H, with marginal glosses, and with significant variants from the other English versions which contain this question (in this and all other passages given below I have supplied punctuation and capital letters in accordance with modern practice; I have not, however, altered the spelling except to the extent of replacing the letter thorn by *th* and the letter yogh by *y* or by *gh*, as appropriate; of separating *u* from *v* and *i* from *j*, as in modern usage; and of hyphenating words which are written as two words in the original but of which the modern equivalent is one word, and vice-versa);

	For if a man a lechoure be		
	And haunte many, as men may se,		
	The seede of hym is of no myght		
	For febilnes of <i>folowind</i> right;		[following/pursuit]
5	And if a man with-holde hym long		
	That he nat to woman <i>gang</i> ,		[go]
	And do <i>sithen</i> as ye <i>woote</i> ,		[then; know]
	The seede of hym than is so hote		
	Than, whan it is to <i>his</i> chambre brought,		[its] <span style="float: right;">heat]</span>
10	It <i>brenneth</i> and wastith all to nought;		[burns/is consumed with
	And if the man be of a <i>tempre</i>		[well-balanced/temperate]
	And the woman nat so be,		
	But brennyng hote of grete <i>wille</i> ,		[sexual desire]
	Yet schal the seede in hir <i>spille</i> ;		[be destroyed]
15	And if thei be bothe of <i>tempure</i> ,		[temperate]
	<i>Here</i> seede scahl in <i>his</i> chambre <i>dure</i>		[their; its; survive]
	And fasten ther-in and <i>wex</i> fast		[grow]
	And come to man at last;		
	And if thei <i>to-gidre</i> at the bygynnyng		[together]
20	Be <i>lithe</i> and glade in all thing,		[mild]
	Of glade <i>semblant</i> the childe schal be		[appearance/demeanour]
	As thei were bothe at the <i>semble</i> . <sup>4</sup>		[sexual intercourse]

<sup>4</sup> For further comment on this word see my 'Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century antedatings, post-datings and additions to *O.E.D.*, *M.E.D.* and *D.O.S.T.* from "Sidrak and Bokkus"', *Notes and Queries*, 1973, 218: 369–375 (for *semble* see under *sembly*, p. 374). The dictionaries referred to here, and frequently below, are: *The Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D.)*; Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1954 (*M.E.D.*); W. A. Craigie and A. J. Aitken (eds.), *A dictionary of the older Scottish tongue from the twelfth century to the end of the seventeenth*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1937 (*D.O.S.T.*).

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- |    |  |                            |
|----|--|----------------------------|
|    | And if thei <i>assemble hem wrothely</i> ,                     | [have intercourse angrily] |
|    | The childe schal be such <i>sikerly</i> ;                      | [certainly]                |
| 25 | And if <i>that oon</i> ben glad and that other <i>nought</i> , | [one of them; not at all]  |
|    | And a childe bitwene hem <i>wrought</i> ,                      | [engendred]                |
|    | The childe schal be some tyme <i>blithe</i>                    | [happy]                    |
|    | And some tyme gret <i>felnesse kithe</i> .                     | [fierceness; show]         |
- [Significant variants: line 4 *folowind*: B *foulyng*, G *fowlynge*, i.e., “debauchery”; 8 *hote*: B *koet* (? error for *hote*, or ? for *kete* “fierce, violent, strong”<sup>5</sup>); 11 *of a tempre*: B *a tempre*, G *of tempre*; 13 *grete*: G *good*; 15 *of tempure*: B *of oon tempure*; 17 *wex*: B *norisshen*, T *fostrun* (both=“be nourished”), G *ground* “become established”; 19 (whole line): B *And yif at here geder comyng*, G *And yf theyr together comyng*, T *And if thei twoo to-gether comyng*; 20 *lithe*: BT *blithe*, G *mery*; 23 *wrothely*: T *worthili*; 24 (whole line): B *Wrothly shal-be the childe sothely*, T *Worthi shall the childe be for-thi* (“therefore”), G *Tother shal-be the chyld truly*.]

It is clear from this that there is no connexion intended between the lecherous man and the moody child. On the contrary, the claim is that a lascivious man is unlikely to have children at all, since his semen is never given time to acquire any potency;<sup>6</sup> whilst a child given to sudden changes of mood from happiness to ferocity is simply reflecting the different moods of his parents at the time of his engendering, or their different temperaments. The phrases *of a tempre* (line 11) and *of tempure* (line 15) refer to the temperament of the man or woman as determined by the mixture of the four primary qualities of ancient physiology (hot, cold, moist and dry), which is linked with the relative proportions in the body of the four cardinal humours (blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy). Both are equivalent to the phrase *in temper*, i.e., having “a due or proportionate mixture or combination of elements or qualities”,<sup>7</sup> or to the adjective *atempre*, literally, “having the proper blend of ‘qualities’, well-balanced”, hence “observing proper measure, temperate, moderate”.<sup>8</sup> The B reading in line 11, *a tempre*, is presumably intended for the adjective, with the initial *a* (as frequently happens in manuscripts of the period) written separately; that in line 15, *of oon tempure*, would mean “of one (i.e., the same or a similar) constitution or disposition”.

Earlier in the same question it is remarked that a woman who has intercourse several times within twenty-four hours may conceive up to seven children, one for each of the (supposed) seven chambers of her womb (*Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 179). Of the birth of these children L states, with evident admiration:

<sup>5</sup> S.v. *ket(e)* adj. in *M.E.D.*

<sup>6</sup> This idea has been confirmed by recent research—which is not, however, concerned with the moral issue of the number of partners involved—into the effect of frequent sexual intercourse on the male sperm count; see Runi Eliasson, ‘Analysis of semen’, *Progress in Infertility*, ed. S. J. Behrman and R. W. Kistner, London, J. & A. Churchill, 1974, vol. 2: “Semen volume and sperm density decrease when the frequency of ejaculation exceeds that of one every third day”. Similar remarks were made by Dr. William Masters in his address to the annual convention of the Planned Parenthood Federation, St. Louis, 19 October 1974.

<sup>7</sup> S.v. *temper*, sb., 1 in *O.E.D.* For a succinct history of the doctrines of the four qualities, the four elements and the four humours, and of their effect on the temperament, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and melancholy*, London, Thomas Nelson, 1964, pp. 3–15 and 97–123.

<sup>8</sup> S.v. *at(t)empre* adj., 1 and 2 in *M.E.D.*

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And so longe thei shullen be unbore  
As the seed of other weren sowe bifore  
As thei were geten wonderly . . .

(i.e., the children will be born in the order in which they were conceived, in accordance with their wonderful conception). That *wonderly* (“wonderfully”) is an error, however, is shown by the variants for it in the other versions containing this question, HG *sonderly*, B *sunderly* (“separately”); readings which replace the amazement of L with the logic of the statement that the order in which children are born at a multiple birth corresponds to the order in which they were *separately* conceived. The readings in BHG are confirmed by those in the French manuscripts in the British Museum, e.g., this, from MS. Harley 4486 (question 64):

*com passe le temps del engendrure lun apres lautre si serra al nestre—taunt lun apres lautre.*

There is another oddity in the question asking how a child is born (*Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 178). The question in L (I, lij) reads:

Hou may the child that ful of love is  
Come out of the modres wombe, telle me this.

Why love should be mentioned is not apparent, unless it is the mother’s love for the child, which helps her to bear the pain of childbirth—yet the wording clearly indicates that it is the child who is “full of love”. This question appears in only two of the other English versions (B and G), but both, surprisingly enough, agree with L on this wording. A comparison with the French versions confirms, however, that the English versions are here in error: the wording in the earliest of the French printed editions in the British Museum (question 91) is: *Comment peult yssir lenfant de la femme quant il est plain de os*,<sup>9</sup> i.e., “How may a child come out of a woman when it is full of bone” (this avoids the possible ambiguity of some of the French manuscripts, e.g., Harley 4486: *Coment puet lenfaunt issir la ventre de la femme qi est plein de os*, in which the order of the words suggests that it is the mother who is “full of bone”, although the lack of feminine *-e* on *plein* makes this doubtful). It appears that the word *love* in the extant English versions is a scribal error for *bone*, and that this error occurred early enough in the transmission of the English manuscripts to be reproduced in both the verbose school of LH and the more succinct school of BTASG. It is an error that would easily have been made, considering that in the manuscripts of the period there was a strong similarity between *b* and *l*, and that *n* and *u* (as the medial *v* was usually written) were indistinguishable. At all events, it is evident from what follows concerning the hardening of the child’s bones after birth (in both the French and the English versions) that *bone* is the correct reading.

Moreover, on comparing the answer to this question in the English and French versions, one sees that the answer, in the English versions, has come down to us in almost as poor a state as the question. I give here the full text of the question and answer as it appears in B, with significant variants from G and from L (for the full text of the latter see *Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 178–179), followed by the text of the same question and answer in MS. Harley 4486:

<sup>9</sup> S.v. *Sydrach* in the *British Museum general catalogue of printed books: La fontaine de toutes sciences du philozophe Sydrach*, Paris, 1496[?] (shelf number IB.41192).

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B (QUESTION 58)

“How may the chylde that full of love is  
Come oute of the moderes wombe, telle me this.”

“God that all hathe made of nought

- Moo* wondres hathe He wrought; [more]  
5 And also He hathe *power* therto [power]  
That *oon* body in that other to *do*, [one; put]  
As hathe He might hit oute to brynge,  
For at his will is all thyng.  
Whenne tyme comes that woman shall  
10 Be delyvered of that she gothe withall,  
All the *joyntes* of here body [parts]  
Open and enlarges them *kyndely*, [naturally]  
All save oon the chine before;  
And in that tyme the childe is bore,  
15 As a lykenesse of dethe that ware;  
But soone so that body bare  
The ayre hathe *savoured* that is here, [felt]  
The bones that febely may *stere* [move]  
Begynne for-to drye a-non  
20 And waxes harde and *falles to bon*; [become]  
And all the *liththes* that were *upon* [parts; open]  
In the woman agayn are *cropen*. [closed<sup>10</sup>]  
Herkyn I shall telle the hough:  
Yif a man his fynger drowe,  
25 The joynt wolde opyn and undo  
And *sethen crepe* ayen unto; [then close<sup>10</sup>]  
So fares woman after childyng  
Thorow the grace of heven kynge.”

[Significant variants: line 4 *Moo*: L *And manye*; 13 (whole line): L *Echone saf the the chin bi-fore*, G *All one save the chyn before*; 15 *lykenesse*: L *sykenesse* (error); 20 *and falles*: G *growyng*.]

MS. HARLEY 4486 (QUESTION 63)

“Coment puet lenfaunt issir la ventre de la femme qi est plein de os?”

“Dieu est de mout grant poer et depuis qil puet mettre le corps lenfaunt deinz le corps la femme, dont puet il fere issir lun corps de lautre ou vif ou mort. La femme qant ele enfaunte toutes ses joyntes se largent sans la mentoun, par la grace Dieu; et lenfaunt ist, par la grace Dieu, com une tendre figure de past. Et si tost com il flert leir du siecle, le os lui endurissent, et la femme se reclost sanz nule blessure; auxi com hom meist soun doi en meel: devaunt le doi le meel se oevre et deriere se reclost com rien ne fuist touche.”

[“How can the child, which is full of bone, come out of the woman’s womb?”] (For the slight possibility that “full of bone” may refer to the woman

<sup>10</sup> For this sense of the verb *creep*, not recorded in *O.E.D.* or *M.E.D.*, s.v. *crepe*, *creip*, v., 2.b. in *D.O.S.T.*

rather than the child, see above.) Answer: ‘ “God is very powerful, and just as He is able to put the child’s body inside the woman’s body, so He is able to make the one body come out of the other, alive or dead. When the woman gives birth, all the parts of her body, except the chin, expand by the grace of God; and the child comes out, by the grace of God, like a soft lump of dough. And as soon as it feels the air of this world, its bones harden, and the woman closes again with no wound left; just as when a man puts his finger in honey: the honey gives way in front of his finger, and closes again behind it as if nothing had been touched.” ’]

Several of the obscurities in the English versions are clarified by comparing them with the French: (1) the unintelligible line *All save oon the chine before* (which, as can be seen from the variants supplied, is equally unintelligible in L and G) is apparently a roundabout translation of *toutes ses ioyntes . . . sans la mentoun* (“all the parts of her body . . . except the chin”); (2) there is no mention of death in the French (cf. line 15 of the English): if this line has any origin in the French, it would appear to be the comparison of the new-born baby with a lump of dough (the placing of *lenfaunt ist . . . com une tendre figure de past* coincides with that of the English *as a lykenesse of dethe*—following the reference to the chin—and both are concerned with likenesses); (3) there appears to be a couplet missing in the English following *drowe* (line 24): the line makes barely any sense as it stands; there is no warrant for Nichols’s translation of *drowe* (L *drowh*) as “cut”; it is clear from the French that the sense should be, “if a man drew his finger *through honey*” (or “through a bowl of honey”, cf. the earliest French printed edition in the British Museum, *come se ung home tyroit son doy parmy une escuelle plaine de miel*<sup>11</sup>), “the honey would open in front of the finger and close behind it”; it is not easy to see by what process the English could have come to read (line 25) “the *joint* would open”.

In a few other places the transcriptions or translations offered by Nichols are misleading. In the question, whether a man can beget a child every time he has intercourse with his wife (L III, xv; *Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 175–176), lines 5–8 of the answer read (in L):

Ne so ofte may no womman  
Conseyve of the seed of man  
A childe forthe for-to bringe  
As he might gete it in pleienge . . .

i.e., a woman cannot conceive and give birth to a child as often as a man can produce semen in amorous disport.<sup>12</sup> Nichols transcribes *pleienge* as *plyng* (i.e., “working hard”), which puts the emphasis on the man’s industry rather than on his pleasure; but the sense of “playing” is confirmed by the readings in all the other English versions which have this question: H *playeng*, B *playynge*, G *pleyeng*. There is no equivalent for the phrase in the French versions in the British Museum.

A few lines further on in the same answer Sidrak explains that when a man is lecherous and over-indulges in sexual intercourse,

<sup>11</sup> See note 9 above.

<sup>12</sup> For this sense of *pleienge*, i.e., “playing”, s.v. *play*, v., 10.c. in *O.E.D.*: “to sport amorously”, euphemism for “to have sexual intercourse.”



Of his reynes he lesith the might;  
 Than is the seed feble and veyne  
 And to engendre hath no mayne . . .

i.e., his loins lose their potency; his semen becomes weak and has no power to beget offspring (cf. I, liij, above). Nichols translates *reynes* as “kidneys”, the first of the meanings recorded in O.E.D.; clearly, however, the context requires the second meaning, “the region of the kidneys; *the loins*” (my italics).

In III, liij (*Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 177–178), concerning the nourishment of the foetus in the womb, Sidrak explains that the child is supplied with pre-digested food:

For if the fode of suche thing wore  
 That it were not *deyved* ther bifore, [digested]  
 Thanne bihoved the child *nedly* [of necessity]  
 Make digestioun in hir body;  
 But that blood that it lyveth by  
 Is *defied* bifore redy . . . [digested]

*Deyved* (MS. *deuyed*) and *defied* are two forms of the same word (not related to modern English *defy*), with voiced and voiceless fricative respectively (though no forms with *v* for *f* have been previously recorded). Nichols transcribes MS. *deuyed* as *denied*, taking the two minims of the third letter as *n* rather than as *u*: this, of course, is perfectly possible; but the word *denied* cannot mean “digested”, and with this reading the passage cannot make sense. Variants of *deuyed* in the other manuscripts containing this question are: H *defied*, A *degestid*, B *disgised* (the last makes no sense and is presumably an error for *disgested*, which is a possible form of *digested*).

The reasons for stillbirth are discussed in II, lxxvij (*Med. Hist.*, 1967, 11: 180–181), the third reason beginning as follows:

Feblenese of reines is the thridde:  
 As whan a woman is so bitidde,  
 Some womman with childe may be  
 And feble of reynes eke may be she,  
 That she is not of the might  
 The peine of childinge to suffre right . . .

*Reines/reynes* must here mean “loins” (as in III, xv, above), and the general sense of the passage is that some children are born dead because their mothers are too weak in the loins to suffer the pains of childbirth. The second line of the passage, however, is difficult: Nichols transcribes *bitidde* as *betide*, translating “betimes”; but this makes little sense. I would suggest that *bitidde* is the past participle of the verb *bitiden* in the sense “befall, afflict”;<sup>13</sup> the passage could then be translated: “Weakness of the loins is the third [reason for stillbirth]: when a woman is afflicted in this way, she may be pregnant, but may also be weak in the loins, so that she does not have the strength to bear the pain of childbirth” (though this does not account for the rather awkward repetition *a woman . . . some womman* in lines two and three). In BTG the second line reads (T spelling): *Als [BG As] in womman is betidde*; here the meaning is apparently “as it happens/has happened in woman”;<sup>14</sup> the last line reads (T spel-

<sup>13</sup> S.v. *bitiden* v., 2.(a) in *M.E.D.*

<sup>14</sup> S.v. *bitiden* v., 1.(a) in *M.E.D.*

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ling): *Of the childe to holde* [B *sofere*, G *suffer*] *the weight*—i.e., the child is born dead because the mother is too weak in the loins to carry its weight—a reading which is supported by the French manuscripts, e.g., MS. Harley 4486, question 191: . . . *par les fiebles riens de la femme qi ne puet sustenir la charge del enfaunt* (“ . . . because of the weak loins of the woman, who cannot bear the weight of the child”). There is no equivalent for *bitidde* in the French manuscripts.

II

There are several other questions, besides those published by Nichols, concerned with reproduction or sexual love. I record these below, in the order in which they occur, giving the text from L with variants from the other versions where there are significant differences, or where these help to illuminate the meaning. Where several variants are given under one spelling, the spelling is that of the first manuscript named, unless otherwise stated.

LOVE (OR DESIRE) AT FIRST SIGHT

(III, vii)

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| “Hou may a man love a womman right,<br>Or she him, <i>to-fore</i> the sight?” | [because of] (see below) |
| “Somtyme <i>falleth</i> a man to mete   | [happens]                |
| A faire womman in the strete:   |                          |
| 5 On hire his <i>eighen</i> he wole caste                                     | [eyes]                   |
| And biholdeth hir <i>ful faste</i> ;  | [very steadfastly]       |
| And the eyghen present <i>anoon right</i>                                     | [immediately]            |
| To the [ <i>hernis</i> ] that same sight;                                     | [brains]                 |
| The [ <i>hernis</i> ] sendith it the herte to,                                |                          |
| 10 And in delite he falleth so;   |                          |
| And thanne contynueth that delite,  |                          |
| And he bigynneth to love <i>as tite</i> .                                     | [immediately]            |
| The [ <i>hernis</i> ] sendith to the eighen ayein                             |                          |
| That of that sighte thei ben <i>ful fein</i>                                  | [very glad]              |
| 15 And deliteth hem to biholde wel more,                                      |                          |
| And so that the herte anoon therfore  |                          |
| Falleth in-to <i>foule likyng</i> ,   | [sinful desire]          |
| And so bygynneth the love to spring.  |                          |
| But <i>and</i> the herte were strong of might                                 | [if]                     |
| 20 To withsonde that tempting sight,  |                          |
| To seie, ‘Lord, I thanke thee,  |                          |
| The sighte that I yonder see,   |                          |
| That thou woldest formen thi figure   |                          |
| To make so faire a creature,’   |                          |
| 25 Temptacioun shulde he <i>noon</i> be ynne,                                 | [none]                   |
| Ne falle in no delite of synne,   |                          |



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- |    |  |               |
|----|--|---------------|
|    | Ne his herte shulde have no <i>meving</i>    | [inclination] |
|    | Another time after suche thing;              |               |
|    | No more shulde womman in hir syde            |               |
| 30 | Desire man <i>in ony tide</i> .              | [at any time] |
|    | Therefore I <i>rede</i> bothe man and womman | [advise]      |
|    | In the best manere that thei <i>can</i>      | [know how]    |
|    | To preie to God with al <i>her</i> herte     | [their]       |
|    | To kepe hem bothe sounde and <i>querte</i>   | [healthy]     |
| 35 | From al manere <i>yvel</i> of synne,         | [evil]        |
|    | That thei be nevere founde ther-ynne;        |               |
|    | And that thei may hem so governe,            |               |
|    | Come to that joye that is eterne."           |               |

[Significant variants: line 2 *to-fore*: GBTS *for*; 8 and 9 *hernis*: MS. *eeris*, H *eeres*, T *harnys*, B *brayn*, SG *braynes*; 9 *the herte to*: MS. *to the herte to*; 12 *And he bigynneth*: B *Hym behoveth*; 13 *hernis*: MS. *eeris*, H *eeres*, T *harnys*, B *brayn*, G *brayne*, S *braynes*; 17 *lykyng*: B *lokyng*; 19–20: BTSG *But the herte that were of might* (G *But and the herte were of might*)/*Stronge to holde hym in that sight*; 30 (whole line): B *For why she thanke God eche a tyde*, T *For whi she thanke God ilke a tyde*, S *For why she thanke God that tyde*, G *If she dyd thanke God every tyde*; 31–38: these lines omitted in BTSG.]

There are several points worthy of comment here. *To-fore* (line 2) may be simply an error for *for* (as in BTSG); on the other hand it may be intended in the sense “in the presence of; in the sight or cognizance of”,<sup>15</sup> hence “because of”. In lines 8, 9 and 13 I have substituted *hernis* “brains” for MS. *eeris* “ears”. This emendation is supported by the T reading (*harnys*), by the sense of the readings in BSG (*brayn/es*) and in the French manuscripts (e.g., MS. Harley 1121, question 221: . . . *et lur queors rendent celes folies a la cervele, et la cervele respont as oilz de richief et folement les fet garder a cele creature . . .* [“. . . their hearts convey this folly to the brain, and the brain replies to the eyes in return and makes them foolishly take notice of this creature . . .”]), and by plain common sense: the eyes do not present sights to the ears, but they could be said to do so to the brain. The transition from *hernis* to *eeris* in copying (presumably via *heris*) is easily understood, since *n* was frequently abbreviated to a stroke above the adjacent letter (easily omitted by a copyist), and *ear* was sometimes spelt with an initial *h*. The last eight moralizing lines, which have no equivalent in the French manuscripts and which do not appear in BTSG, are apparently an addition of the LH school.

THE BEST WOMEN FOR SEXUAL PLEASURE

(III, xxxii)

“Whiche bi the wymmen of moost profite  
To man, to have with his delite?”  
“To the soule profiteth noon  
But a manis wyf aloon;

<sup>15</sup> S.v. *tofore*, 1.b. in *O.E.D.*

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- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 5  | But for the body, I <i>the seie</i> ,<br>In the yeere ben sesouns <i>twe</i><br>Aftir whiche a man loke shal<br>What womman he shal <i>dele with-al</i> .<br>In the winter whan the <i>eyr</i> is colde | [say to you]<br>[two]<br><br>[have sexual intercourse<br>[air] with]                                 |
| 10 | And his colde yildeth many folde,<br>A yonge womman and broun also<br>Profiteth thanne man unto;<br>For broun womman is of hote <i>oonde</i><br>And hote guttes hath, to understonde,                   | [breath]   |
| 15 | And hir hete hetith man also,<br>And greet profite dooth him to.<br>In <i>somer</i> whan the <i>eyr</i> is hote<br>And heteth bothe drie and <i>woote</i> ,<br>Thanne is a yonge white womman           | [summer]<br>[wet]  |
| 20 | Best to the profite of a man;<br>For she is colde <i>of kinde</i> to fele<br>And of grete hete she may <i>kele</i><br>A man that is of grete <i>corage</i><br>And <i>of nature</i> have outrage.        | [by nature]<br>[cool]<br>[sexual desire]<br>[has excessive sexual needs/<br>impulses <sup>16</sup> ] |
| 25 | But olde womman doth no profite<br>To man, <i>nother</i> broun ne white,<br>For <i>greet oonde</i> aboute she bereth<br>And moiste guttes, that <i>gretly dereth</i> ;<br>She maketh a man pure hevvy   | [neither]<br>[strong breath]<br>[cause great harm]   |
| 30 | And greetly <i>greveth</i> al his body<br>And maketh him chaunge his fair colour,<br>Therefore in hir is no socour."  | [harms]  |

[Significant variants: line 5 *I the*; BTAG *if thou*; 10 (whole line): B *To his bed-clothes behove many folde*; 13–14: A *For broune women be hote we ffynde/And hote guttes they have off kynde* (“through nature”); 22 *of*: BTG *man of*, A *A man off*; 23–24: these lines omitted in BTAG; 25 *doth*: repeated in MS. in error; 27 *greet oonde*: B *stynkyng breth*, G *yl onde*; 28 *gretly*: B *grefly* (“grievously”).]

In this question and the next quoted (III, liij) there is much reference to the four primary qualities of ancient physiology. Dryness (1. 18) and moistness (11. 18, 28) appear briefly, above; cold (11. 10, 21–22 above; 7–8, 21 below) and especially heat (11. 13–15, 17–18, 22 above; 6, 9, 11, 15, 17, 21, 23, 25 below) appear frequently in both passages. The ancient belief that the relative proportions of the four bodily humours changed according to the seasons<sup>17</sup> is reflected in the advice (above) that in

<sup>16</sup> This specific sense of *nature* (“sexual need”) is not recorded in *O.E.D.*, but cf. *nature*, sense 3, in *D.O.S.T.*: “The bodily constitution or requirements of a person or animal; one’s physical constitution, ability, needs or desires”, b. “with specific reference to the natural excretory or sexual functions, needs or desires of humans or animals”. One of the illustrative quotations, from Dunbar’s *Tretis of the tua mariit wemen and the wedo* (line 174), provides a close parallel to the use of the word here: “He has beene lychour so lang quhill lost is his natur”.

<sup>17</sup> “Now the quantity of phlegm in the body increases in winter because it is that bodily substance

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winter, when the quality of cold in a man's body increases (through the seasonal predominance of phlegm) he should take a woman of a hot constitution (i.e., in whom the quality of heat predominates), since, through contact with her, the increasing coldness of his body will be offset (11. 9–16); similarly that in summer, when the quality of heat in his body increases (through the seasonal predominance of choler), he should take a woman who is of a cold constitution (*colde of kinde*), through contact with whom he may offset his increasing heat (11. 17–25). The suggestion that a man should avoid contact with an old woman because of her "moiste guttes" reflects the belief that the relative proportions of the four humours changed also according to one's age, with phlegm, which is cold and moist, predominating in old age.<sup>18</sup> It is noticeable that there is no distinction made in this passage between the different types of men (as there is between the different types of women). No attempt is made to pair off opposites, e.g., a "choleric" man with a "phlegmatic" woman, or a "sanguine" man with a "melancholic" woman (though this would be the logical conclusion of the argument): the advice given is apparently intended to apply to all men, irrespective of their constitution, temperament or age.

It is not entirely clear whether, in the passage above, the adjectives *hot* and *cold* are used purely to describe the constitution of the man or woman, as determined by the predominance of the qualities of heat or coldness in the body, or whether the words have also their sexual connotations of (respectively) "passionate, lustful" and "lacking in passion". The wording of the question, which includes "delight" as well as "profit", suggests that these sexual connotations are intended; yet the answer deals exclusively with man's "profit" (i.e., with what is good for him), whilst "delight" is ignored. A connexion between heat and sexual desire is certainly implied in 11. 22–25 where excessive sexual desire in man is associated with great bodily heat; but it is not made clear whether the coldness of the woman who is said to be able to cool this heat is confined to her bodily constitution, or whether it includes sexual coldness. In the passage below, however, there is no such uncertainty: the relationship between bodily heat and sexual excitability becomes perfectly plain.

#### MAN'S AND WOMAN'S SEXUAL CAPACITY COMPARED

##### (III, liij)

"Whether of leccherie may more  
Man or womman, and wherfore?"

"Womman may more of that play

Than any man hir *fynde* may,

[provide with]

5 And I shal telle the now why:

The *hattest* womman, *sikerly*,

[hottest] [assuredly]

---

most in keeping with the winter, seeing that it is the coldest . . . During the summer, the blood is still strong but the bile gradually increases . . .", see John Chadwick and W. N. Mann, *The medical works of Hippocrates*, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1950, pp. 206–207 (*The nature of man*, chapter 7). For further references see Klibansky, *op. cit.*, note 7 above, pp. 9–10.

<sup>18</sup> For this and other theories as to which humour predominated in old age, see Klibansky, *op. cit.*, note 7 above, pp. 10–11.

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	Is wel colder yit <i>of kynde</i>	[by nature]
	Than the coldest man that men may finde;	
	And for the grete hete of man	
10	Wommen hath ofte wille to <i>ham</i> ,	[them]
	For of the mannes hete cometh her appetite	
	And maketh wymmen in greet delite.	
	But whanne he hath done as he hath ment	
	And his <i>kinde</i> be from him went,	[semen]
15	His hete <i>slaketh</i> and goth away,	[abates]
	And at that tyme no more he may.	
	Wymmen ben not so <i>sone hote</i>	[soon aroused]
	Whanne thei come to that <i>note</i> :	[business]
	Whanne he hath <i>wroght that he wole do</i> .	[done what he wanted to do]
20	Thanne cometh delite hir unto;	
	And as with colde is <i>slekned</i> hete	[cooled]
	<i>Of</i> watir that men therto may gete,	[by/with]
	So is mannes hete <i>nede</i>	[necessarily]
	<i>Slakinge</i> whanne he hath done his dede.	[abating]
25	Womman so <i>sone enchaufed</i> is noight	[warmed (aroused)]
	Whanne a man hath with hir wroght	
	Ne hir <i>kynde</i> passith not as <i>tite</i> ;	[sexual fluid; quickly]
	Therefore the <i>lenger</i> is hir delite,	[longer]
	And therefore is she of more might	
30	Than man that <i>slaketh amoon right</i> .”	[subsides immediately]

[Significant variants: line 6 *hattest*: B *hastiest*; 10 (whole line): BA *Hathe he* (A *He hath*) *ofte wille to womman*, T *Hath he grete will to womman*; 11–12: BTA *For of hete cometh the appetite/And bringeth* (A *encresith*, T *cacches*) *hym unto delite*.]

There is an important difference between the two schools of manuscripts here in the wording of lines 10–12: men’s “heat”, in BTA, causes them to desire women; in LH it incites the women to desire the men. There is no precise equivalent for these lines in the French manuscripts; indeed, the differences between the French and English versions of this whole question and answer are quite marked: the question, in MS. Harley 4486 (no. 275), asks, “*Qi se puet plus souffrir de luxurie, lomme ou la femme?*” (“Who is better able to abstain from lechery, man or woman?” [my italics]) and the answer explains that, though woman’s desire burns more fiercely and lasts longer than man’s once she is aroused, she is less easily corrupted than man, since her desire is not so easily provoked in the first instance. Thus, whereas the English (particularly of LH) is phrased more or less as an attack on women for their lechery, the French offers a more balanced account of the comparative corruptibility of men and women. The anti-feminist view of LH is certainly not without parallel in medieval literature: a very similar sentiment is expressed in the popular Latin bestiaries, as in the following passage, translated from Cambridge University Library MS. Ii.4.26 by T. H. White:

‘*Femina*’, a woman, comes from ‘*femur*’ the upper part of the thigh, where the appearance of sex is different from man’s. Others, by using a Greek derivation say that it is because of the

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fiery force with which a woman vehemently lusts, and that females are more longing than males, both in humans and in animals.<sup>19</sup>

In this question the words *hot* and *cold* are used to describe two different, though related, conditions. The first is (as before) the constitution of the man or woman, which is more or less constant (apart from variations brought about by the seasons or by advancing age, or those associated with illness): in this context the words will mean simply “filled with or dominated by the quality of heat or the quality of cold”—as in lines 6–8. The second is the much more transitory condition of sexual arousal, as in *Wymmen ben not so sone hote* (17) and *Womman so sone enchaufed is nocht* (25), where *hote* and *enchaufed* clearly mean “sexually excited” rather than “filled with the quality of heat”, and where the transitoriness of the condition is emphasized by the word *sone* “quickly”. Though these two meanings for *hot* (and their opposites for *cold*) are both present, they are not, in fact, as distinctly separable as this analysis suggests, since there is an evident assumption that speed and slowness in sexual arousal are in direct proportion to the dominance of heat or cold in the body. Indeed, it was the very taking-for-granted of this relationship which allowed the word *hot* to develop the specialized senses of “full of physical desires; inflamed with sexual desire, lustful; lascivious”;<sup>20</sup> and, as the remainder of the answer shows, these senses are obviously understood in the word *hattest* (line 6), even though, ostensibly, it describes merely the physical constitution of the woman. Naturally, there was a parallel development for the word *cold*, to give it the specialized meaning “void of sensual passion”;<sup>21</sup> hence the use of “frigid” to denote the extreme of sexual unresponsiveness.

The notion that a woman’s constitution is colder than a man’s is of some antiquity. It is found (as well as the contrary opinion) in the Hippocratic collection,<sup>22</sup> and Galen remarks that “the female body as a whole is colder than the male”,<sup>23</sup> also that “the female sperm is more moist and cool, the male sperm warmer and dryer”.<sup>24</sup> Aristotle’s belief (which was the basis for this last comment) that the male’s heat enables him to produce semen, whilst the female’s coldness allow her to produce only catamenia,<sup>25</sup> is echoed in the introduction to a Middle English treatise on the diseases of women in Bodleian MS. Douce 37:

Ure Lorde God whan He stored the worlde of all creaturs He made manne and woman and resonabull creaturs and badde hem wexe and multiply and ordende that of hem ij shulde cume the thurde and that of the man that is made of hote and drye mature [matter] shulde come the

<sup>19</sup> T. H. White, *The book of beasts*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1954 (reissued 1969), p. 223.

<sup>20</sup> S.v. *hot* adj., 3.(b) in *M.E.D.*

<sup>21</sup> S.v. *cold*, a., 7.c. in *O.E.D.* The earliest example in this sense is dated 1597, though the more general sense of “void of ardour, warmth, or intensity of feeling” is recorded as early as c.1175 (the same quotation is dated a1225 in *M.E.D.*). *M.E.D.* does not have a separate entry for sexual coldness (as it does for sexual heat), but in some of the quotations under *cold* adj., 4, “lacking warmth of feeling, devotion, desire, etc.”, this sense is implied—as in the passages from the *Bestiary* and from *Genesis and Exodus* quoted below (see notes 29 and 32).

<sup>22</sup> For references see Margaret Tallmidge May, *Galen on the usefulness of the parts of the body*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1968, vol. 1, p. 382, note 78; also Klibansky, op. cit., note 7 above, p. 105, note 122.

<sup>23</sup> See May, op. cit., note 22 above.

<sup>24</sup> See Rudolph E. Siegel, *Galen’s system of physiology and medicine*, Basle, S. Karger, 1968, p. 230.

<sup>25</sup> For references see May, op. cit., note 22 above.

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sede and the woman that is made of cold matyr [matter], and moyste, shulde receyve the sede so that the tempure [temper] of hote and colde moyste and dry the cchylde shulde be engendyrde.<sup>26</sup>

William of Conches, to whose *De philosophia mundi* the author of *Sidrak* is indebted for the substance of several questions and answers,<sup>27</sup> expresses the comparative heat of man and woman in words of which lines 6–8 above are an almost verbatim translation: “*Calidissima (mulier) frigidior est frigidissimo viro*”.<sup>28</sup>

Much evidence may be found in Middle English writings of the assumed connexion between bodily heat and sexual desire, particularly in writings about animals. The elephant’s alleged reluctance to mate is attributed, in the *Bestiary*, to the coldness of its nature:

. . . He arn so kolde of kinde  
That no golsipe is hem minde,  
Til he noten of a gres  
The name is mandragores<sup>29</sup>

(“. . . they are so cold-natured that they have no thought of lasciviousness till they make use of a plant called mandrake”). The phrase *kolde of kinde* may be compared with *colde of kinde* and *colder of kynde*, lines 21 and 7 respectively in the two questions above. Bartholomew Anglicus remarks, of the lustfulness of the ass, that it is out of keeping with the coldness of its nature:

The asse . . . is a malencolik beste, that is colde and druye . . . and thoughh the asse be ful cold and druye, yit he is ful lecherous.<sup>30</sup>

The emphatic use of *thoughh . . . yit* is a measure of the author’s surprise at finding lechery in a creature of a cold and dry constitution.<sup>31</sup> In *Sidrak* itself the reason offered for the tight conjunction of dogs when mating is their exceptional heat:

“Whi ben houndes fastned *that doth her kynde* [when mating]  
More than other bestis that men fynde?”  
“Of alle bestes that I *woot* [know]  
Of nature there is noon so hoot

<sup>26</sup> See Charles Singer, ‘Thirteenth century miniatures illustrating medical practice’, *Proc. R. Soc. Med.*, 1916, 9: part 2, section of the history of medicine, p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> See George L. Hamilton in *The Romanic Review*, 1912, 3: 317.

<sup>28</sup> See J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1895, vol. 172, column 56A (*De philosophia mundi*, Bk. 1, ch. 23); cited by Klibnasky, op. cit., note 7 above, p. 105, note 122 and p. 405.

<sup>29</sup> See Joseph Hall (ed.), *Selections from early Middle English, 1130–1250*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1920, vol. 1 (texts), p. 191, 11. 486–489; cited under *cold* adj., 4, in *M.E.D.*

<sup>30</sup> S.v. *cold* adj., 7.(d) in *M.E.D.*; quoted from John de Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomew de Glanville’s *De proprietatibus rerum*, Add. MS. 27944 (Br. Mus.), f.265v, column 2.

<sup>31</sup> The opposite viewpoint, namely, that “most melancholy persons are lustful”, is expressed in Problem XXX, 1 of the “Problems” attributed to Aristotle. This view is explained by the statement, in the same Problem, that black bile (the humour “melancholy”) “can . . . become both very hot and very cold”; that it determines the character in accordance as it is hot or cold, “for heat and cold are the factors in our bodies most important for determining our character”; and that it is when it is hot that the person in whom it predominates becomes “erotic”. (For a full text and translation of this Problem see Klibnasky, op. cit., note 7 above, pp. 18–29, whence the quotations here are taken.) It appears, however, that by the Middle Ages the capacity of black bile to change its temperature had been forgotten and that it had become “fixed” as the cold, dry humour. Hence Bartholomew’s surprise that a “melancholic” creature should be lecherous.



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- 5 As is an hounde in his nature;  
 And whanne he shal *make engendrure*, [mate]  
 Of *her* hete the grete glowing [their]  
 Maketh hem *to-gidre* fastnyng [together]  
 As two peces of *yren* doth fare [iron]
- 10 In the fire whanne thei *welling* are: [heating (till soft)]  
*Leie that oone* that other upon [Lay one of them]  
 And *yeve* hem a *strook* anoon, [give; stroke (blow)]  
 Thorgh hete thei *to-gidre* bynde—  
 And so fareth houndes *in her kynde*.” [through their nature]  
 (Lansdowne I, xcv. There are no significant differences in the other manuscripts.)

As for humans, Joseph’s ability to withstand Potiphar’s advances is attributed, in *Genesis and Exodus*, to God’s granting him an *ad hoc* coldness in nature:

Putifar was wol riche man,  
 And he bogte Joseph al forthan  
 He wulde don is lechur-hed  
 With Joseph, for his faire-hed,  
 Oc he wurth tho so kinde cold,  
 To don swilc dede adde he no wold;  
 Swilc selthe cam him fro a-buven,  
 God dede it al for Joseph lufe[n].<sup>32</sup>

(“Potiphar was a very rich man, and he bought Joseph solely because he wanted to perform his lechery with him, because of his [Joseph’s] beauty; but Joseph became so cold-natured that he had no power to do such a deed: such good fortune came to him from above—God did it all for the love of Joseph.” With *kinde cold* cf. *kolde of kinde* above.) Guy de Chauliac cites an “evil cold complexion” (i.e., constitution or temperament) as one of the causes of impotence in men:

It [lecherie] is forsothe fordone in men for evel colde complexioun the whiche taketh away the stonyng or st[ra]cchyng and for evel complexioun that cometh of rewme fordoynge the yerde and the prive stones.<sup>33</sup>

(“Lechery, indeed, is prevented in men because of an evil cold constitution which prevents standing or stretching [i.e., erection of the penis], and because of an evil constitution which results from rheum and renders useless the penis and the testicles”). Rheum (mucus) is akin to, and perhaps here used synonymously with, the cold moist humour, phlegm. Chaucer’s Summoner, finally, with his “fyr-reed cherubynnes face” and his sinister power over the “yonge girles of the diocise” (which is generally taken as including young people of both sexes), is a fine example of a man with a constitution dominated by heat and a character given over to lust,

<sup>32</sup> See Richard Morris (ed.), *The story of Genesis and Exodus*, London, Trübner, 1865, Early English Text Society, Original Series, no. 7, 11. 1995–2002.

<sup>33</sup> See Margaret S. Ogden (ed.), *The cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, Early English Text Society, no. 265, vol 1 (text), p. 527, 11. 2–5.

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and of the capacity of the word *hot* to convey both these senses at the same time: “As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe”.<sup>34</sup>

HOW THE SOUL OF AN UNBORN CHILD ESCAPES FROM THE WOMB OF ITS DEAD MOTHER

(III, lxxxij)

- “A wif with childe that deth gooth to,  
And the childe deie in hir also [if]  
And out of hir noght ne may,  
Where gooth the childes soule away?”  
5 “If a wyf with childe to deie biginne beforehand]  
And the child deieth hir withynne, [breath; at the front/  
The wyfes *onde* gooth out *bifore* [there/then, afterwards]  
And the childes gooth out right *thore*; [breath; known]  
For the *onde* of man as wel is *couth*  
10 Gooth out of the man at his mouth. [prove; justly/safely]  
This maist thou *preve faire* and wel (uncertain: see below)  
By a woman that the deth *it tel*: [to cool]  
Firste hir feete bigynneth *kele* (see below)  
And aftir her legges *faire and wele*  
15 And *sithen* also above the knees; [then]  
And evere, as a soule up flees, [breast]  
Thenne draweth it to the *breest*, [next]  
And to the throte it gooth *neest*;  
And whan it to the mouth is broght,  
20 It *wendith* forth and dwelleth noght. [goes]  
And whan her soule is her gon fro, [soon]  
The childes *sone* after bygynneth to goo,  
And at her mouth it gooth out also—  
Other weie is ther *noon therto*.” [none; for that purpose]

[Significant variants: lines 11–12: BDA *This preve thou nought* (D *nought alone*) by *sawes* (“old sayings”)/*But by a wyf that to deth drawes*; 13–14: B *Firste thenne here fete do kele*/And the legges after by *skele* (“in accordance with reason”), A *First than kele off hir the ffete*/And the legges also *tite* (“as quickly”), D *Ferst thanne kele here the fet*/And the *shankes* after *sket* (“and afterwards quickly the legs”); 22 *sone*: MS. *sone* altered to *soule* (I have restored *sone* in accordance with HBDA *soone*); 24 *weie*: BDA *issu* (“way out”).]

The phrase *it tel* (line 12) makes no apparent sense and there is no equivalent for it in the French. I would propose, tentatively, that *tel* (H *tell*) may be a form of *till*, preposition, “to” (forms with *e* for *i* are recorded in O.E.D.),<sup>35</sup> and *it* an error for *is*.

<sup>34</sup> See F. N. Robinson (ed.), *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1957: *The general prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, 11. 624, 664 and 626. For other references to the traditional lecherousness of the sparrow see Robinson’s note to l. 626 (p. 666).

<sup>35</sup> S.v. *till*, prep., conj., adv. in O.E.D.

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A word-for-word translation of the line would then be, "By a woman that the death is to", i.e., "a woman whom death is upon/who has begun to die", which gives the same sense as BDA *a wyf that to deeth drawes*. Problems are raised also by *faire and wele* (line 14). Several senses of the adverb *faire* would fit the context, e.g., "slowly", "completely", "plainly",<sup>36</sup> but the approbation normally implied by words such as *fair* and *well* seems out of place in a description of dying, and the presence of the same phrase in the same (rhyming) position three lines earlier (line 11) is suspicious, suggesting that this second occurrence may be a scribal error through dittography. Again, there is no direct equivalent in the French manuscripts, and the unusual profusion of variant readings for the couplet (13–14) in the English manuscripts makes any judgement as to the best reading very difficult.

The emphasis on the progress of death in the mother, in the answer to a question ostensibly concerned only with the escape of the soul of the unborn child, is indicative of the widespread medieval interest in death and the stages of its conquest of the body.<sup>37</sup> The progressive cooling of the body, from the feet upwards, will be familiar to many people, not otherwise interested in such physiological details, from Mistress Quickly's renowned description of the death of Falstaff in *Henry V* (2.iii.18ff.):

"How now, Sir John!" quoth I: "what man! be of good cheer." So a' cried out "God, God, God!" three or four times: now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God, I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. So a' bade me lay more clothes on his feet: I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone; then I felt to his knees, and so upward, and upward, and all was as cold as any stone.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> S.v. *fair(e)* adv. 6.(a), 7.(b) and 7.(c) in *M.E.D.*

<sup>37</sup> For other descriptions of the onset of death in Middle English writings, most of which are indebted ultimately to the Hippocratic *Prognostikon*, ch. 2 (see Chadwick and Mann, *op. cit.*, note 17 above, pp. 112–113), s.v. *Death—signs of* in the indexes to Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *The index of Middle English verse*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1943, and Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, *Supplement to the index of Middle English verse*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1965; also R. H. Robbins, 'Signs of death in Middle English', *Mediaeval Studies*, 1970, 32: 282–298.

<sup>38</sup> See W. J. Craig (ed.), *The complete works of William Shakespeare*, London, Oxford University Press, 1905 (repr. 1962).