

Chapter 2

SELLING MIDDLE ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS TO NORTH AMERICA UP TO 1945

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I HAVE A simple theme: Middle English manuscripts have generally had an unrewarding commercial history in North America. Evidence for this claim can begin with the earliest complete Middle English manuscript to arrive there as a consequence of commercial purchase.¹ Henry Tuke Parker, a Harvard alumnus, bought a copy of the *Prick of Conscience* at Sotheby's on July 28, 1863, lot 187, for seven guineas and promptly gave it to his alma mater.² Over eighty years later, in October 1945, another manuscript of this work that reached America was sold at Sotheby's for £20.³

The first American with any claim to be a collector of Middle English manuscripts is William G. Medlicott (1816–1883).⁴ The manuscript that is now Houghton Library, MS Eng. 530, is a collection of fifteenth-century verse and prose works, which was acquired by Harvard after his death for \$45.00.⁵ He also had a copy of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, possibly that which is now in the Newberry Library,⁶ as well as a Middle

1 There are other manuscripts that arrived earlier in North America for which no record of purchase survives. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 766, a manuscript of Robert Fabyan's *Chronicle*, was probably in North America by the seventeenth century; described in Linda E. Voigts, "A Handlist of Middle English in Harvard Manuscripts," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 33 (1985): 5–96 at 32–38, with no information about provenance. On Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society MS 1, Henry Daniel, *Liber Uricrismarum*, and on Ithaca, Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 4600 Bd. Ms. 14 +, a fragment of Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, see Scott Gwara, "Collections, Compilations, and Convolutes of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Fragments in North America before ca. 1900," *Fragmentology* 3 (2020): 73–139 at 132, n. 168.

2 It is now Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 515; for a brief description see Voigts, "Handlist," 17, where its provenance is not noted.

3 It was bought by E. P. Goldschmidt at the Harmsworth sale, October 15–16, 1945, lot 2087 and is now PML, B.13.

4 On Medlicott see the excellent study by J. R. Hall, "William G. Medlicott (1816–1883): An American Book Collector and His Collection," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 1 (1990): 13–46.

5 Described (inaccurately) in Voigts, "Handlist," 17–22; it was no. 2714 in the *Catalogue of the Collection of Books formed by William Medlicott* (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1878).

6 Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5; no. 2715 in the *Medlicott Catalogue*; sold for \$125 (see Hall, "William G. Medlicott," 30, n. 58); for description see Paul Saenger, *A Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Western Manuscripts in the Newberry Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 60–61, where the possible Medlicott provenance is not noted.

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English *Brut* and what is described as “Wiclif,” actually extracts from the *Pore Caitif*, both of which are untraced.⁷ And in an untypical example of transatlantic reversal, a copy of Nicholas Love’s *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ* once in his possession found its way back to England and is now in the John Rylands Library.⁸ Medicott’s collecting of Middle English manuscripts was one aspect of a larger interest in manuscripts, both medieval and later.⁹ But it is sufficiently extensive to warrant notice.

The only other indication of any form of systematic Middle English manuscript collecting in America in the late nineteenth century was more focused. In the early 1870s James Lenox, in separate transactions, bought three manuscripts of the Wycliffe Bible, all now in the New York Public Library.¹⁰ But otherwise there are very few indications of interest in buying Middle English in North America in this period. This may have simply been part of a wider lack of appeal for text manuscripts in general and English ones in particular. For example, when the Grolier Club in 1892 held an *Exhibition of Illuminated and Painted Manuscripts*, it displayed a hundred western manuscripts. These were overwhelmingly Books of Hours or service books; only one secular manuscript was displayed, a Petrarch (no. 92); only one English manuscript was included (no. 51), a sumptuously illustrated Book of Hours.¹¹

Such major late nineteenth-century English dispersals as those of the Philipps manuscripts and of the Ashburnham Appendix in 1899 found little response across the Atlantic. Two Middle English manuscripts did come to Harvard from the Ashburnham sale, a copy of Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, now Houghton Library, MS Eng. 752, and a *Brut*, MS Eng. 587; both made very modest prices.¹² Harvard’s early collecting in this field was not sustained, nor was it paralleled by acquisitions by other university or public libraries. For institutional collecting in this field was overshadowed from the

7 Nos 2688 and 2738 respectively in the *Catalogue of the Collection Books formed by William Medicott*.

8 It was no. 2863 in the *Catalogue of the Collection Books formed by William Medicott*; it is now Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Eng. 94; for description see Neil R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries III: Lampeter-Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 415, where the Medicott provenance is not noted.

9 The *Catalogue of the Collection Books formed by William Medicott* records seventy manuscripts (nos. 2672–741), a number of them post-medieval, including some later transcripts of medieval works.

10 For descriptions and discussions of these manuscripts, now New York Public Library, MSS MA 64, MA 65, MA 66, see Jonathan J. G. Alexander, James H. Marrow, Lucy Freeman Sandler, *The Splendor of the Word: Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts at the New York Public Library* (New York: Harvey Miller, 2005), 77–85. It is reported there (85) that MA 66 was bought for £241 in 1874. MA 65 was purchased for £188 6s by Henry Stevens in 1859; see his *Recollections of Mr James Lenox of New York and the Formation of his Library* (London: Stevens, 1886), 108.

11 *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Illuminated and Painted Manuscripts* (New York: Grolier Club, 1892).

12 These were lots 6 in the Sotheby’s sale on May 1, 1899 (to J. & J. Leighton for £3 10s) and 59 (to Maggs for £7 10s) respectively. They are described in Voigts, “Handlist,” 31–32 and 22–24; in neither instance are details of provenance given.

beginning of the twentieth century by the emergence of formidable private collectors, first Pierpont Morgan and in the following decade Henry Huntington. They became the major forces in America for Middle English as well for other medieval manuscripts, English and otherwise.

Among Morgan's earliest purchases was the first work of Chaucer to arrive in North America. This was a single lyric "To his Purse," included in a manuscript of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* that is now Morgan M.4. This was acquired in 1900, as part of his *en bloc* acquisition of the Theodore Irwin (1827–1902) library, for which Morgan paid \$200,000. Irwin had owned the manuscript since at least 1887 when it appeared in his published catalogue and he may have acquired it directly from its sale at Sotheby's in July 1865, when it made £28 9s.¹³ A little later Morgan also bought the first complete manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* to reach North America when he got one of the four in the Lawrence Hodson sale at Sotheby's in 1906. It was bought there by Quaritch for £145 and sold to Morgan in February of the following year; it became his M.249.¹⁴

A decade later, in 1917, Huntington signalled his presence as a collector of medieval manuscripts when he bought the Bridgewater Library for a million dollars. He thereby acquired the sumptuous Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales* (MS EL 26 C 9) as well as other Middle English manuscripts, some mentioned below.

Other copies, sold separately, were less successful. In 1923 A. S. W. Rosenbach bought by private treaty from Thomas Fitzroy Fenwick, then guardian of the Phillipps manuscripts, four containing Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in part or whole and a number of other Middle English manuscripts, twenty in all, for £11,500.¹⁵ One of these, containing the Clerk's Tale together with a couple of his short poems, went immediately to Huntington (his MS HM 140). Eighteen years later, in 1941, the other three, one of which was a fragment, were still on his shelves, as was another important fragment that he had bought elsewhere. These were all included in his catalogue, *English Poetry to 1700*.¹⁶ One of the Phillipps manuscripts (*olim* Phillipps MS 8136; no. 156), the most expensive, did leave his hands at around this time, going to Martin Bodmer, in Switzerland, who paid \$48,000 against an asking price of \$85,000 (now Cologne, Fondation Martin Bodmer Cod. Bodmer 48). Another (no. 159), the former Phillipps fragment (Phillipps MS 6570), was sold at some point after 1945 to the Chicago collector, Louis H. Silver.¹⁷ The other fragment, of considerably more significance (no. 158), one of the few to include illustra-

13 *Catalogue of the Library and a Brief List of the Engravings and Etchings Belonging to Theodore Irwin, Oswego, N. Y.* (New York: Little & Co., 1887), 287, no. 1829.

14 See further A. S. G. Edwards, "What's It Worth? Selling Chaucer in the Twentieth Century," *The Chaucer Review* 48 (2014): 239–50.

15 For some discussion of Rosenbach's Middle English manuscript purchases from the Phillipps collection (on which this paragraph draws) see A. S. G. Edwards, "A State of Absolute Rarity: The Market for Middle English Manuscripts in the Twentieth Century," *The Book Collector* 65 (2016): 433–44.

16 Parenthetical numbers in the text are to items in this catalogue.

17 It is now Austin, University of Texas, Harry Ransom Center, HRC MS 46. It was sold from the Silver collection at Sotheby's, November 9, 1965, to Lew David Feldman for £2,000.

tions and the other complete manuscript (*olim* Phillipps MS 8137; no. 157) did not sell. They are now part of the Rosenbach Museum and Library.¹⁸

The failure of American markets to be attracted to Rosenbach's Chaucer manuscripts invites some reflection. At one level it is puzzling. The Depression was over, and the wartime economy was booming. And in general, book collecting was a quite buoyant market. But there were few obvious American outlets for Middle English manuscripts. The Huntington was buying little then; university libraries were mostly getting them through donation: the only other *Canterbury Tales* to reach North America before 1945 was the one which was given to the University of Chicago in 1931 by an alumnus.¹⁹ J. P. Morgan Jr. died in 1943; his long-standing librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, was in poor health and drawing to the end of her life. Morgan did make one final Chaucer purchase, acquiring the Campsall manuscript of *Troilus & Criseyde* (now PML M.817) for £2,250 in 1942.²⁰ It was only the second copy of Chaucer's poem to reach North America.²¹ And it is an important one of Chaucer's work; it had been owned by Henry V, a fact that might have boosted its commercial appeal. But the selling price in wartime London was much less than those asked for any of Rosenbach's Chaucer manuscripts in his previous year's catalogue. Together with the general failure of Rosenbach's attempts to sell top end manuscripts of this kind it suggests a lack of enthusiasm for manuscripts of the poet's works, however significant. It was only after 1945, with the emergence of new markets in American university libraries, that there was any keener interest in acquiring the few manuscripts by the father of English poetry that became available.²²

The lack of appeal that Chaucer's manuscripts had in the marketplace was matched by that for the massive Middle English poem by his contemporary and friend John Gower, the *Confessio Amantis*. The first manuscript of this to reach North America was the Fountaine family copy which was sold at Sotheby's, June 11–14, 1902, lot 378, and was purchased by Quaritch for £1,550, a high figure justified by the fact that it has over a hundred miniatures. Quaritch catalogued it at £2,200, a markup of close to forty percent. There were no takers and later in the year he sold it to Morgan for £1,727, roughly cost plus ten percent. It became Morgan Library M.126.²³

¹⁸ Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum and Library, MSS f. 1084/1 and f. 1084/2.

¹⁹ See J. M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 8 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 1:356–60; information about the donor is at 360. The university got another Middle English manuscript, of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*, from an anonymous donor in the same year; see Christopher de Hamel, "Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts from the Library of Sir Sydney Cockerell (1867–1962)," *British Library Journal* 13 (1987): 186–210 at 199.

²⁰ It was sold at Sotheby's, August 11, 1942, lot 4.

²¹ The first is Huntington Library, MS HM 114, part of the Rosenbach bulk purchase from Fenwick in 1923 (*olim* Phillipps MS 8252).

²² See further, Edwards, "What's It Worth?"

²³ For details of this sale see A. S. G. Edwards, "Buying Gower in Modern Times," in *John Gower in England and Iberia: Manuscripts, Influences, Reception*, ed. R. F. Yeager and Ana Hidalgo (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2014), 279–90, especially 282, 288.

But this was the commercial high point for the Gower market. Morgan acquired two more manuscripts of the *Confessio*. The first, now PML M.125, had a sale history that began in the mid-nineteenth century, when it left the library of John, Earl of Loudun and Marquis of Hastings. In 1869, F. S. Ellis offered it for £150. It passed, probably directly, shortly after this, into the possession of the notable collector, William Bragge, and it was sold again, in his sale, Sotheby's, June 7, 1876, lot 176, where it was bought by Quaritch for £175. It was to appear subsequently in a series of further Quaritch catalogues until 1900, when Morgan bought it for £270. When inflation is taken into account over the twenty-four years that Quaritch had it in stock, this cannot be regarded as one of his most commercially successful sales.²⁴

The third Gower Morgan acquired, now PML M.690, was bought from Maggs in 1924, who had got it from the Earl of Ravensworth's library. It was offered for £680 and seems to have been swiftly purchased. The price in real terms is probably not much of an advance on the £270 Morgan had paid a quarter of a century earlier for PML M.125. Both manuscripts are broadly comparable in overall quality.

The lack of market buoyancy for Gower was something that Maggs was to feel again. They bought another manuscript in 1936, which they sold for £175 and another in the following year, which they bought for £160, and which did rather better, selling for £350. Neither of these went to America. The first went to Switzerland, to the Bodmer collection; the second to the Lyell collection, now in the Bodleian Library.

Two copies of Gower were sold as part of wholesale collection purchases: as already noted, the so-called Stafford Gower went to Huntington with the Ellesmere manuscripts (now MS EL 26 A 17); and the copy now in the Folger Library, Washington, DC, MS SM 1, came with the W. T. Smedley collection in 1924. Other manuscripts, like the copies in the Newberry, Beinecke and the Princeton Taylor collections were only acquired after the war.²⁵ This last does warrant some consideration in the present context. What is now Princeton University Taylor MS 5 first appeared on the market in 1803 when Richard Heber bought it for £3 4s. In Heber's own sale in 1836 it advanced to £31, when it was acquired by Sir Thomas Phillipps. It was liberated from Thirlestaine House in 1923 by Rosenbach, in the bulk acquisition of Middle English manuscripts that I have already mentioned. He still had it in 1941, when he included it his *English Poetry* catalogue (no. 369) for a fairly modest \$2,350. It did not sell, and it only found a buyer thirty-three years after Rosenbach has bought it, in 1956, after John Fleming took over Rosenbach's stock and sold it to Robert Taylor.²⁶

The history of the other Gower manuscript at Princeton, Garrett MS 136, is only slightly less melancholy. This first came on the market in 1816 when it was in Liver-

²⁴ See further, A. S. G. Edwards, "The Ownership and Sale of Manuscripts of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Library* 23 (2022): 180–91.

²⁵ Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.5; New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS Osborn fa.2.

²⁶ For description and provenance, which the above supplements in a few respects, see Don C. Skemer, *Medieval & Renaissance Manuscripts in the Princeton University Library*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1:411–13.

pool from the library of the distinguished collector, William Roscoe. It was bought by the London dealers Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown for £6 10s. It then appeared in their *Catalogue of Old Books, in the Ancient and Modern Languages and Various Classes of Literature* (London, 1817), for twelve guineas. Its next recorded owner was again Philipps. It became his MS 2298, apparently acquired from Thomas Thorpe, but I cannot establish the price. The low Philipps number suggests that he acquired it probably at some point in the mid-1820s, but firm evidence is lacking. It appeared in the sale of Philipps manuscripts at Sotheby's on June 8, 1899, lot 638, where it was bought by Quaritch for £60. Quaritch included it in several catalogues between 1899 and 1903. In the last catalogue in which it appears it was on offer for £120. It was sold in October 1905 to Robert M. Garrett.²⁷

It took only six years for Quaritch to move this Gower, much better going than Rosenbach's thirty-three for the Taylor copy or the twenty-four years that Quaritch held PML M.125. But over ninety years its price had advanced from twelve guineas to £120 (if Garrett paid the asking price; since he was a regular Quaritch customer he may not have), an advance that again does not, allowing for inflation, seem to indicate a significant advance in market value.²⁸

Finally, it is worth returning for a moment to Rosenbach's 1941 *English Poetry to 1700* catalogue. This included another, far more elaborate copy of Gower, with miniatures and fine illumination, which he offered for a hefty \$16,500 (no. 368). In spite of its quality, it never sold, and it remains with the Rosenbach Museum and Library, MS f. 1083/29.²⁹

The third major canonical Middle English work, William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, is associated pre-1945 with a single American collector, Huntington, who owned four manuscripts of it. Two of these, MSS HM 114 and 137 came from Rosenbach's block purchase of Middle English manuscripts from the Philipps collection in 1923. Earlier, in 1918, Huntington had got MS HM 128, formerly in the Ashburnham Appendix and sold in 1899 to Quaritch for £41.³⁰ It had passed to the American collector Ross C. Winans and was acquired as part of another block purchase by George D. Smith for Huntington. Rosenbach also bought in 1924 for £700 what is now MS HM 143.³¹

²⁷ For description and provenance, which the above supplements, see Skemer, *Medieval & Renaissance*, 1:313–15.

²⁸ Quaritch's unfortunate history with *Confessio* manuscripts is further emphasized by the copy that became New York, Columbia University, Plimpton MS 265. He included it in his Catalogue 344 (1916), no. 16 at £500. He did not sell it to Plimpton until 1924. The account in Derek Pearsall and Linne Mooney, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the English Manuscripts of John Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2021), 290 is incorrect.

²⁹ See further, Edwards, "Buying Gower," 289.

³⁰ He offered it in his Catalogue 193 (1899), no. 54 for £152.

³¹ It was sold at Sotheby's, July 24, 1924, lot 129. For discussion of the sale of *Piers Plowman* manuscripts see A. S. G. Edwards, "The Selling of *Piers Plowman* Manuscripts in the Twentieth Century," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 27 (2013): 103–11.

The price may have been boosted by the fact that it contained a fragment of Chaucer's *Troilus & Criseyde*.³²

Overall, in commercial terms the history of the sale of Middle English manuscripts to North America before 1945 is a depressing one. Only very rarely is there a significant correlation between significance, rarity, and price. A couple of manuscripts stand apart from the trends that I have noted. The first is Huntington Library, MS HM 1, the unique exemplar of the Wakefield or Towneley plays (see Figure 3.1). The history of this manuscript has been largely told by Martin Stevens and I will not recount it now.³³ Suffice to note that it was bought by Rosenbach in 1922 at Sotheby's for £3,400, seemingly on commission for Huntington who paid £3,740 for it: that is, cost plus ten percent.³⁴

This high price is a rare moment in the commercial history of selling Middle English manuscripts to North America. It was surpassed later in the same decade, on April 23–24, 1928, when Sotheby's sold books and manuscripts from the library of Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland. Lot 76 was a manuscript of the Middle English *Pilgrimage of the Soul*, in verse and prose and attributed incorrectly to Lydgate. It was bought by the American dealer, Gabriel Wells, for £5,800, on behalf of the New York Public Library, where it is now Spencer Collection MS 19.³⁵ The price is in every respect startling. One factor in its price was probably the twenty-four high-quality miniatures that it contained. More broadly, it may be a symptom of the fevered bibliomania that manifested itself immediately before the 1929 stock market crash, often symptomatized by the Kern sale in early 1929 in New York. But whatever the factors it remains an unprecedented price for a Middle English work in the first half of the twentieth century.

As will be apparent the story of Middle English manuscripts in America in the first half of the twentieth century is largely the story of two collections, those formed by Morgan, père et fils and by Huntington, and of two dealers, Quaritch and Rosenbach. The Morgans and Huntington were the collectors who made the American market in the early decades of the twentieth century. Their Middle English acquisitions were not limited to the poetic triumvirate of Chaucer, Gower, and Langland. By the early 1920s Huntington had, in addition to the Chaucer and Gower acquired with the Ellesmere manuscripts, several others from that source: one of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* (MS EL 26 A 13) and prose works by John Fortescue (MS EL 34 C 18) and Edward

32 When I sought individual purchase records for these manuscripts when at the Huntington in 2016 I was told that none could be found.

33 Martin Stevens, "The Manuscript of the *Towneley Plays*: Its History and Editions," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 67 (1973): 231–44.

34 I am indebted to Stephen Tabor of the Huntington Library for a copy of Rosenbach's invoice. The account of the sale of this manuscript in Edwin Wolf II and John F. Fleming, *Rosenbach: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 155, seems open to doubt.

35 For description see Victor Hugo Paltsits, "The Petworth Manuscript of 'Grace Dieu' or 'The Pilgrimage of the Soul' an English Illuminated Manuscript of the Fifteenth Century," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 32 (1928): 175–20; and Rosemarie Potz McGerr, ed., *The Pilgrimage of the Soul: A Critical Edition of the Middle English Dream Vision, Vol. 1* (New York: Garland, 1990), lxxx–lxxxiv, neither of which mentions the price.

Plantagenet (MS EL 35 B 63). He bought extensively from Rosenbach's 1923 Philipps purchase, including three manuscripts of the prose *Brut* (MSS HM 113, 131, 136), two of the *Prick of Conscience* (MSS HM 130, 139), a holograph manuscript of Hoccleve's verse (MS HM 111) and a further copy of his *Regiment of Princes* (MS HM 135), Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and the *Northern Homily Cycle* (MS HM 129). Elsewhere he got another *Brut* (MS HM 133), and two other manuscripts of the *Prick of Conscience* (MSS HM 125, 128), and another Hoccleve holograph (MS HM 744). He also had several works of Lydgate, including an elaborately illustrated copy of his *Fall of Princes* (now MS HM 264) bought by Rosenbach in 1924 for £1,100 and a copy of his *Life of Our Lady* bought by Smith for \$1,025 in the Hoe sale of 1912, where it was the only Middle English manuscript (now MS HM 115).³⁶ Until recently no American library held more Middle English.³⁷

The Morgan Library was more selective in its acquisitions. Pierpont Morgan bought the first of their two copies of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Life of Christ* (M.226) in 1905 for \$2,000, "much the highest price paid up until then for a manuscript [of it]."³⁸ The second (M.648), was bought by in 1920. It included sixteen miniatures, one of only two of the fifty odd manuscripts to include any. He got it for £350, considerably less than the earlier, much less elaborate copy. He also bought a couple of Wycliffe Bibles and a manuscript of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*.³⁹ The only other comparable collectors in this field were George Plimpton, who made several important purchases, but on a smaller scale, and Garrett, who collected Middle English as part of a larger strategy of manuscript acquisition. They each owned about a dozen relevant manuscripts. Both collectors were connected with institutional libraries, Columbia and Princeton respectively, to which their collections passed. And both had largely completed their libraries before the slump in the 1930s. There were few others prepared to enter this field. Occasionally institutions seized an opportunity to acquire works that were generally the most common of those that survive, where supply usually exceeded demand in that period and hence were among the cheapest: two manuscripts of the *Prick of Conscience* reached North America and several of the prose *Brut*.⁴⁰

³⁶ For MS HM 264 see A. S. G. Edwards, "Selling Lydgate Manuscripts in the Twentieth Century," in *New Directions in Manuscript Studies and Reading Practices: Studies in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and John Thompson (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 207–19 at 210–11; for HM 115 see Mary Wellesley and A. S. G. Edwards, "Broken Up: The History of a Middle English Manuscript," *The Book Collector* 69.4 (2020): 643–51.

³⁷ The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library through its recent acquisition of the Takamiya manuscripts now has the greatest number.

³⁸ On the Morgan's acquisitions of these manuscripts see Christopher de Hamel, "The Selling and Collecting of Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ* since the Middle Ages," in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, ed. Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle, and Michael Sargent (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), 87–97 at 94–95.

³⁹ The Bibles are PML, M.362 (bought by Quaritch at Sotheby's, March 27, 1909, lot 896, Lord Amherst of Hackney sale) and M.400 (bought in 1910); the *Fall of Princes* is M.124, bought for £375 in April 1903; see further Edwards, "Selling Lydgate," 209.

⁴⁰ Wellesley College MS 8, sold at Sotheby's, November 13, 1922, lot 376 and University of Pennsylvania Libraries, MS Codex 218 (formerly MS Eng. 8) (bought from Maggs, Catalogue 689

The only private American collector active in acquiring Middle English manuscripts on any scale by the late 1920s was Boies Penrose, who in a brief period bought a Wycliffe Bible at the Leconfield sale, Sotheby's, April 23–24, 1928, lot 107 (£590 to Goldschmidt), and at the Delamere sale (Sotheby's, July 16–18, 1928, lot 558) an unusual manuscript that contained Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, a rare manuscript conjunction, together with other works (£980 to "Garstin"). Penrose subsequently acquired it in 1929, but when, under what circumstances, or for what price I have not been able to determine.⁴¹ At the same sale he bought a copy of John Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* (lot 557; £410 to Goldschmidt).⁴² Later in that year he bought a manuscript of Chaucer's *Astrolabe*.⁴³ But subsequently his focus was firmly on travel and exploration.⁴⁴ The only later Middle English manuscript that he bought was a copy of Mandeville's *Travels* in 1937.⁴⁵

As to the dealers: Quaritch was an early cultivator of the American market, but often found himself confronting the resistance of collectors particularly for manuscripts. He sent his son Alfred to America for the first time in 1890 together with a selection of manuscripts, including a copy of Gower's *Confessio*. Alfred reported glumly to his father, Bernard: "The MSS the people don't understand or can't afford."⁴⁶ Few, including the Gower, sold. Alfred made annual trips over the next eighteen years, but they do not seem to have much discernible effect on the sale of Middle English works. In the United States Rosenbach, as we have seen, had limited success in selling works of this kind after Huntington's death, soon after which he seems to have lost the appetite for acquisition. After 1930 he did not visit England and found himself encumbered (like Quaritch) with stock he could not move, or only shift at a loss. Middle English manuscripts seem to have remained a largely commercially unrewarding market in North America during this period.

(1940), no. 170), offered for £150; for details of *Brut* manuscripts see A. S. G. Edwards, "Bruts for Sale," in *The Prose Brut and other Late Medieval Chronicles*, ed. Jaclyn Rajsic, Eric Kooper, and Dominique Roche (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 218–31.

41 It was subsequently sold by Penrose at auction: *Sixteen Highly Important Manuscripts and Early Printed Books: to be Sold at Auction in Basel 27 September 1978* (Basel: Haus der Bücher, 1978), lot 2 for 195,000 Swiss francs and was acquired by Toshiyuki Takamiya; it is now New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS Takamiya 32.

42 Now owned by Senshu University, Japan, MS 1.

43 Acquired after its sale at Sotheby's, November 12, 1928, lot 72; it was sold from Penrose's collection at Sotheby's, November 9, 1971, lot 286 and is now Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS Takamiya 9.

44 For some account of his library see Boies Penrose, "Contemporary Collectors XXVIII: The Library at Barbados Hill, Devon, Pennsylvania," *The Book Collector* 10.3 (1961): 301–10. It does not mention most of the manuscripts noted here.

45 This is now Princeton University Library, Taylor MS 10.

46 Quoted in Leslie A. Morris, "Bernard Alfred Quaritch in America," in *The Book Collector: A Special Number* (1997): 180–97 at 190.

