THREE DISCONTINUOUS FRAGMENTS OF THE BOKE OF MARCHALSI IN A PRIVATE COLLECTION

THE Boke of Marchalsi (Manual X, 3907 [443])¹ is the most comprehensive Middle English treatise on hippology, including the care and management of horses, and the identification and treatment of equine ailments and diseases. The work gets its title from the word marshalsy (ME marchalsi(e < OF mareschaucie),² the now obsolete term for farriery—understood in the sense of caring for horses, especially in a veterinary manner—and survives whole or in fragmentary form in ten manuscripts, mostly of the fifteenth century, some of which also embellish it with a verse prologue describing its contents.³

The treatise, which has the form of a question-and-answer dialogue between master and pupil, is in two main parts: the first deals with the care, feeding, and management of horses of different ages; and the second with equine maladies and diseases, together with appropriate remedies for treating them. Unlike certain other popular medieval works on horses, such as the gnomic ‘Properties of a Good Horse’, whose contents are in large part amusingly whimsical,⁴ The Boke of Marchalsi contains observations and advice that can be considered practical and informative; it is also considerably broader in scope than any other medieval English treatise on horses. In the opinion of George Keiser, it is ‘the work of an author who obviously has an impressive knowledge of equine pathology’ and one that ‘offers useful and valuable information concerning the training and care of the horse’.⁵

Given the potential importance of a work such as The Boke of Marchalsi within a culture heavily dependent on horses in myriad ways, the lack of a comprehensive modern scholarly edition is difficult to understand; it is also a cause of frustration for anyone wishing to investigate medieval views on the topics covered by the treatise. To date, only one scholarly edition has been undertaken, by Bengt Odenstedt, in the form of a PhD thesis published in 1973.⁶ But that study has several limitations. At the time of writing it, Odenstedt was aware of only seven manuscripts (of the ten that are now known to exist), from which he chose British Library, MS Harley 6398 (fols 1–58) as his base manuscript. Furthermore, of the text preserved in MS Harley 6398, Odenstedt transcribed and edited only the shorter first part of the treatise (found in fols 1r–16r), together with selections from the second part (fols 16r–58r), interspersed with headings alluding to material he chose to omit. By Odenstedt’s own estimation, his study ‘comprises about two-fifths of the [entire] treatise’,⁷ which means that the only modern edition of The Boke of Marchalsi is very incomplete. It would also not be unfair to say that Odenstedt’s notes leave many pressing questions unanswered.

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² See MED, s.v. marchalsi(e, n. 2, OED, s.vv. marshalec, n. 3; farriery, n. The attribution of the text to John Marshall, vicar of St Michael, Appleby, in Wellcome Library, MS 5650, fol. 28v, recognizes Marshall as copyist, not author. The apparent correspondence between Marshall’s name and the work’s title is coincidental.

³ See Manual X, 3907–8 [444].
One of the manuscripts that was unknown to Odenstedt is a codex from the third quarter of the fifteenth century that was, until recently, in the library of HRH the Duke of Gloucester at Kensington Palace. It bore no identifying mark at Kensington Palace, but was known by the shelf-mark 45 when in its former location in the ducal library at York House; before that it belonged in the collection of the bibliophile Richard Schwerdt. This manuscript (hereafter MS G, after its most recent known owner, the Duke of Gloucester), was sold by Christie’s of London on 26 January 2006 to an anonymous private buyer, and has since disappeared from public view. By the generosity of its new owner, however, a microfilm of the manuscript was made available so that I might continue my investigations into its contents, and it is from that microfilm that the present article has arisen.

MS G may be characterized, very briefly, as a parchment codex of 142 leaves measuring 240 × 175 mm, and containing a diverse collection of texts pertaining to sporting and rural matters. Its contents include, inter alia, the hunting treatise The Master of Game by Edward, Second Duke of York (d. 1415), information about hawks and their diseases, manuals on forest law in English, French, and Latin, Godfrey of Franconia’s Super Palladium in English, Pe Tretice of Nicholas Bollard on the grafting and planting of trees, and Prince Edward’s Book of Hawking. The manuscript also contains, on pp. 197–221, a small collection of texts relating to equine matters. They are: (1) The Properties and Beauties of a Good Horse, introduced by a four-line flourished initial (p. 197); (2) Medicines for Horses (Manual X, 3906 [441]), also introduced by a four-line flourished initial (p. 198); and (3) three short extracts from The Boke of Marchalsi, which lack an initial and any introductory formula and are separated from the preceding text by a simple one-line space (p. 219). Together, these three texts—which are all written in the same professional scrbal hand—constitute a distinct, planned section within the codex. Items 1 and 2 will not be discussed further here as they are extraneous to Item 3, and are intended to be dealt with in detail elsewhere.

Turning to the text of The Boke of Marchalsi (Item 3), modern descriptions of MS G have hitherto given the impression that this consists of a single continuous extract. Closer examination reveals, however, that there are in fact three discontinuous but otherwise complete fragments, which discuss in turn: (a) the condition of pursiness (short-windedness) with appropriate cures; (b) the condition of ‘enchafing of the neck’ (a type of mange) with suitable cures; and (c) a solitary recipe for a poultice for the hoof of a horse suffering from lameness. The disconnectedness of these three fragments is clear from their contents, and is also indicated by the scribe’s presentation of them, as the end of each is marked by line-filler followed by a one-line break before the next fragment begins. Only the text of the first fragment (from MS Harley 6398) has appeared in print before, in Odenstedt’s edition (pp. 29–31), where some notable differences with MS G are apparent. Some of these variations, as I observe in the glossarial notes below, appear to confirm that this part of the text in MS G is corrupt, which is likely to be
significant when plotting familial relationships between the different manuscripts.

In terms of what they have to say, it must be admitted that these three fragments will not alter our understanding of medieval hippology to any great extent, but they are important nonetheless in that they are essential for anyone wishing to undertake a fully collated scholarly edition of *The Boke of Marchalsi*. Such a project is in many ways a pressing desideratum, for *The Boke of Marchalsi* is a work that deserves to be better known to scholars interested in medieval horses.16 Not only does it contain a great deal of valuable information pertaining to the treatment—physical and medicinal—of medieval horses, it is also a tantalizing source of many lexical items that are not yet attested or adequately treated by the *MED*. The *MED*, it is true, includes quotations from *The Boke of Marchalsi* under the stencil *Bk.Marchalsi*, but it relies on a very limited number of sources, including Odenstedt’s partial edition, in doing so. As will be seen from my comments on these fragments below, there is still a great deal to be learned about Middle English equine terminology and the practices to which it refers.

For all the above reasons, and because the three fragments published below are found in a manuscript that has vanished into a closed collection, it was thought desirable to publish a semi-diplomatic transcription of their contents: a transcription that could be used by anyone undertaking a complete scholarly edition of *The Boke of Marchalsi*. With such a project in mind, the edited text printed here is conservative in that it has been prepared with a minimum of intervention. The scirial bevigraph for *and* is represented by the ampersand, but all other abbreviations, including contractions and suspensions, have been expanded and signalled by italic type. These require little explanation, except for the mark normally used for *-ur*, which has been expanded as *-owre* to match the scribe’s orthography elsewhere in this part of the manuscript. Raised letters have been silently lowered, and words where initial *a* is detached (as in *a bove*, *a bate*) have been silently amended, but all other divided words have been retained and signalled by means of a hyphen. Capitals, punctuation, and paragraphing are editorial; the large erasure in the colophon is indicated by an ellipsis within angled brackets, thus {...}.17

[p. 219]

[Fragment A]

‘Maister, where-of comyth pursynes?’

‘Hit comyth of grete hete, of good flessche & of good blode. Whan þe hors is in good poynyte, he coueuytith to ete mekill & to drynke mekill, & þan he can not for-bere ne to mesure hym-selfe. & perforhe when he hape etyn & dronke mekill, þan lieth þe panche of þe wombe on þe mydriß, & zif þat he be þan enchawfyd or traueldyd to mekill, þen woll þe mydriß distroyn þe longes, & þen þei may not meyen hem to blowe kyndelyche as thei schulde done. And þat is þe cause wherefore þei haue no wynde for to done as þei schulde do, for þat his wynde is distroyed oper-wise þan hit schulde be. And perforhe whilys þat maledy is in þe be-gynnynge þer is a good amendement.

‘A medycyn for þe same maledy. Lete do megre him owte of his grees þat he be not fatte, for euer þe fatter þat he is, þe more encresith his maledy. & geve him his hey moisted with watir for to aswage his drynkyng, for he coueytith to drynke mekill for þe hete of his blode; & loke algatis þat he be trauvelyd afterwarte. And [p. 220] when þat he is well amegred owte of his grees, take xx. eggis & pulle hem owte of þe schellys & ley hem in venegir or in stronge eysell iij. daies, & geve him þo xx. eggis in x. daies. And lete a man holde vp his hede with a corde, & do him swalow in as well as he may. & afterwarte geve him to drynke a potell of cowes mylke, & also þat his hotis & his heý be allwey moysted with water to abate his drynkyng. Ôn þis maner þu muste kepe þyne hors from pursynes þat þere & euer-more

16 *The Boke of Marchalsi* is overlooked, for example, in the list of ‘Textes hippiaiètriques’ provided by Brigitte Prévot and Bernard Ribémont, *Le Cheval en France au moyen âge* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994), 504–5.

17 My thanks to Ms Kelly Gilbertson for assisting me with a draft transcription of this section of the manuscript.
after, 3if þat þow wolte done þis medycyn at þe be-gynnyng of Maye.

‘And after þe tassse of Seynt Hillary, or after þe xv. day, 3if þe hors be takyn with þe maledy so mekill þat he blowe, than se 3if þe wynde come owte bope behynde & bi
dore. & when he cowȝt, holde vp his crowpe riȝt above his hanchis, and 3if þer bene ij. small pittis of þe largynesse of þe palme of pyne honde þat betyn vpwarde & downewarde as hit were small bellys: the hors þat haþ þat signe ne take hym not on honde, for he may not be holpyn with no medycyne. But who-so will holde him, lete geþe hym his mete moysted, & he schall dure þe lengir. And also lete him go to grasse as long as þu maister, for he schall drinke þe lasse. & 3if so be þat he ete not his mete moysted with watir, he schulde drinke so mekill þat he schulde dye. And þat schulde be for he is not colde of blode, & eke lackith myȝt of his lyuer where he schulde haue socowre of wynde, & 3if hit were oþerwise, he schulde not be pursike.’

[Fragment B]

‘Maister, where-ðf comyth enchawfynge of þe neck?’

‘There comyth enchawfenche in þe necke & comynly in þe here, & þat comyth of þe hete of þe blode aftir a grete trauayle, & namely hit wull come in somer-tyme when þat he haþe traueylid, & þan wull risyn a munge in þe necke with clawynge of his fete or with rubbynge of þryȝnge aȝens a tree. And as sone as þu seest þat maledy, lete him blode on þe necke & peraunet ysch he schall be hole. & 3if so be þat he haue rubbyd him so mekill [p. 221] þat þe humowrs be-gynne to brestyn, þan wull þer be-gynne to be a fowle mangle.

‘A medycyne for þe enchawphere. Take a porcyon of vnslecyyd lyme & a porcyon of bene hullys & do hit to-gedirs. & aftir þat do gedir pisse of a cowe, two galons or iij. after þu haste to-done þer-with, & do hit in a vessell. & þan take & do þer-to þe lyme & bene hullys, & medell hem well to-gedirs with a staffe, & lete hit stonde still all a nyȝt, & þen hit wolde wexen all clere. & aftir þat, take vp þe clere with a vessell as þu haste mystir þer-to, & enchaufe hit well hote to þe boylainge. & do tye þe hors hede lowe so þat þe licowre may well entir bitwene þe chenes, 3if þat þe chenes be in þe here, or where-so hit be. And basse him well twyes every day, & so he schall be helyd.

‘A medycyne for þe same maledy þat wull not faile. Take an erbe þat men call downe, & wrynge owte þe iusse till þu haue a potell, & take þer-of a litill quantite, & do hit in a posnette, & make hit playande hote. And take a stikke & cleue hit, & do þer-in raggys & wete hit in þe iuse as hote as hit is, & basse þer-with þe sore þat is on þe hors twyes on þe day, & þe nedith not to passe v. dayes. And in whate seson þu fyndiste þe erbe grene hit is good, & he wexith comynly in mareis. & enchaufe no more at one tyme in quantite þan þu wolt vsen. & when þe iuse is hote, do a litill grees þer-to as mekill as a walnot. & þis medycyne is very trewe with-owte eny failynge, for hit haþe bene ofte prevyd.’

[Fragment C]

‘How men schall make entrete to an hors fote. Take a libra of rosyn, & a libra of harde pesyn, & halfe a libra of frankensesse, & halfe a libra of virgyne wex, & halfe a libra of schepis talowe, & a libra & a quaretoner of olde grees, þe eldir þe bettir hit is. And dewe þe gommes & þe wex in venegyr or in wyne, & do þe talowȝ & þe smere, & tempir all hem to-gedir. & þen take & clense hit thorowȝe a cloþ of þikke canvas. And þen ley þe trete on the hors fote as hit is afore seyde.’ Quod

Explicit. Quod ‹...›

Glossarial Notes

The following notes are intended to clarify obscure words and phrases, while also commenting on any important features of the manuscript and text generally.

In addition to the list of abbreviations supplied at the start of this article, the following abbreviations for primary sources are used in this section:

H = London, British Library, MS Harley 6398, fols. 1r–58r (partially transcribed by Odenstedt)

Downloaded from http://nq.oxfordjournals.org/ by guest on January 26, 2016
H2 = London, British Library, MS Harley 5086, fols. 99r–128v
W = Wynken de Worde, Propytees & medicynes of hors (c. 1497–98), STC 20439.5

Fragment A
The first fragment deals with the malady of ‘pursiness’, or short-windedness, which Gervase Markham describes as follows:

The signs of this Disease are continual panting and heavings of his Body without any Coughing, great heat of Breath at his Nostrils, and a squeezing or drawing in of his Nose when he breatheth; besides a coveting to hold out his Head whilst he fetcheth his Wind.¹⁹

A shorter discussion of this condition and its treatment occurs in Medicines for Horses (the text that precedes the Marchalsi fragments in MS G); see, for example, W, sig. C3r.

A1 pursynes ‘pursiness, short-windedness’. MED, s.v. pursines n., has only one citation for this word, from the Catholicon Anglicum. The condition is, however, more commonly referred to by the words pursifnesse, pursifhed (q.vv. in MED), which themselves derive from the same root, the adjective pursif, ‘asthmatic, short-winded’.

The formulation pursyknesse (W), in which pursifnesse appears to have been re-analysed with siknesse, is not attested by the MED, although the related adjective pursike is.

A6 to mesure hym-selfe ‘to exercise restraint on himself’.
A7–8 þan lieth þe panche of þe wombe on þe mydriiff ‘then the stomach within the abdominal cavity presses against the diaphragm’.
A8–9 & þif þat he be þan enchawfyd ‘and if he is then hot’.
A9 traualyd ‘worked’, ‘exercised’.
A19–20 Lete do megre him owte of his gres ‘Let him be thinned of his fat’. MED records megre as an adjective, meaning ‘Of a person, a body: thin or enfeebled by hunger, wasted away’, but does not record the verb, which is presumably a loan from Anglo-Norman; see AND, s.v. megrir, megrier, v.a. ‘to make thin’.²⁰

Fragment B
The second fragment deals with enchawfyng [‘heating’] of þe neck, a condition that gives rise to mange, which is in turn exacerbated by the horse’s scratching of the affected area. MED recognizes the verb enchaufen (q.v.), but does not include the verbal noun found in this text. Odenstedt’s edition does not include this part of the treatise, but appears to refer to it by means of the heading ‘Description of and remedies for “eschawfing [sic] of þe nekke”’ (p. 39). The condition is not discussed in Medicines for Horses.

B7 traueylid ‘worked hard’, ‘exerted (itself)’.
B8 clawynge ‘scratching’.
B26 mystir ‘need’.
B26 enchaufe ‘to heat’, ‘make hot’.
B29 chenes ‘cracks’, ‘lesions’.

¹⁸ This work is dated c. 1525 in the STC; for its antedating to 1497–98, see Margaret Lane Ford, ‘A New Addition to the Corpus of English Incunable: Wynkyn de Worde’s Propytees & Medicynes of Hors (c. 1497–98)’, The Library, ns ii (2001), 3–9.

¹⁹ Gervase Markham, Markham’s Maister-Peece (London, 1610); repr. as Markham’s Master-piece (London, 1717), 66.

²⁰ AND = Anglo-Norman Dictionary, consulted online at <www.anglo-norman.net>.
B30 *basse* ‘wet’, ‘wash’. This word, which occurs also in H2, fol. 118v, is not attested by either MED or OED. It appears to be a direct loan from French *basser*, which DMF (s.v. *basser*) defines as ‘mouiller, enduire de qcc.’.\(^{21}\)

B33 *an erbe þat men call downe* The plant referred to here is obscure; no such herb name is recorded by the MED, or by Tony Hunt, *Plant Names of Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1989). The term used in H2, fol. 119r, is *down* or *donn*, which is no more revealing. Once a full collation has been made of all manuscripts, other forms of the word may emerge that throw light on the matter.

B36 *posnette* ‘a cooking pot’.

B36 *playande hote* ‘boiling hot’; attested in MED s.v. *pleien* v.(1) 9.

B42 *mareis* ‘marshland’.

**Fragment C**

The third fragment advises on how to prepare an *entrete* (‘a medicinal plaster, a poultice’) for a horse’s hoof when that organ is the cause of limping or lameness. Once again, this section of the treatise is not transcribed by Odenstedt, but appears to be referred to by him by means of the heading ‘Different kinds of lameness in horses and various remedies for them’ (p. 39).

The etymon of *entrete* is well established in Anglo-Norman (see AND, s.vv. *entrait, entrete*, ‘ointment, salve’). MED does not record the ME loanword in this form, but has a number of citations for the aphetic *trete*, which it derives from OF *trait*, *tret*, AF *tret(e* n.(1) (a)).

C2 *rosyn* ‘resin’ (non-specific) secreted by certain plants.

C7 *gommes* ‘gums’, i.e. the unspecified resin referred to earlier together with the frankincense.

C8 *smere* ‘animal fat’, i.e. the *olde grees* referred to earlier; *tempir* ‘blend’.

C11 *Quod* Written in isolation between two sets of line-filler.

C12 Colophon. This is written within flourished brackets, and was originally completed by a word or name that has been thoroughly effaced, probably by scraping. It is impossible to determine from the microfilm what was once written here, and no less difficult to be certain whether this colophon was intended to mark the end of the fragments of the *Boke of Marchalsi* (pp. 219–21) or the entire section on horses (pp. 197–221).

**David Scott-MacNab**

University of Johannesburg

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**HENRY VIII DECAPITATING ECCLESIASTICS ON STAGE?**

VIENNA, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Chapuys MS., fol. 39r–v contains a letter written by Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador to King Henry VIII, on 30 June 1535, addressed to Nicolas de Perrenot, seigneur de Granvelle.\(^1\) In this letter, Chapuys reports a dramatic performance which had been attended by the king, presenting a chapter of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelations) in which the heads of members of the clergy were cut off. Chapuys documents that the king found this highly amusing, and that he recommended to Anne Boleyn the repeat-performance that was to be staged five days later. The event has been noted by scholars, who have used it to illustrate King Henry VIII’s spectatorship,\(^2\) his patronage of political drama or at least his authorization of propaganda through drama,\(^3\) and his agreement to be represented on stage if this contributed to putting forward Reformist

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\(^{21}\) DMF = *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330–1500)*, consulted online at <www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

1 Chapuys MS., fol. 39r–v, Manuscript dispatches from Eustace Chapuys to Nicolas de Granvelle, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Staatenabteilungen, England, Berichte, Karton 7, 1535. I am thankful to Thomas Just for making this letter available to me. I am also grateful to Yvonne Vermijn and John J. McGavin for their kind advice.
