

PREFACE

The Dialoges of Creatures Moralyssed is unlikely to be known by more than a few students of late medieval and early Tudor prose, just as the early fourteenth-century Latin work from which it has been translated, the *Dialogus creaturarum moralizatus*, is unlikely to be known by anyone who has not undertaken a specialized study of the sermon exemplum. Outside the bibliographical accounts of it in standard reference works such as the Short Title Catalogue and the *Nederlandische Bibliographie*, *The Dialoges of Creatures Moralyssed* (hereafter abbreviated as *DCM*) is likely to be mentioned only as one of a list of exemplum books in English, in the company of works such as the translated *Gesta romanorum* and the *Alphabet of Tales*. More interesting than the similarities between the *DCM* and other exemplum books, however, are the differences, in terms of structure and the extent of naturalistic detail in the handling of narrative and dialogue. Like so much other early sixteenth-century prose which can be broadly categorized as fictional, the *DCM* deserves to be more widely known.

One of the reasons for the neglect of the *DCM* by modern critics and commentators is its strongly medieval flavour. The *DCM* (or, as it is known in some manuscripts, the *Liber contentus sublimitatis et liber de animalibus*) had been written over two hundred years before the translation into English was made, and in any case the character of English literary prose had altered very little since the time of Chaucer and Gower. The inclination of literary historians is to dismiss a book such as the *DCM* as an anachronism, a very late and perhaps fortuitous survival of a well-worn tradition. But the early sixteenth century in Britain offers many warnings against over-hasty classification and periodization of literary texts. Much of the poetry that was being written at this time, for example, shows in its subject matter and metre the persistence of Lydgate's influence. The dominant impulses in the verse of Hawes, Barclay, and others are unrepentantly medieval, even if C. S. Lewis's strictures are sometimes rather harsh. 'Medieval' need not connote the dull and narrowly derivative, as one can see by turning to the work of early sixteenth-century Scots poets, who were capable of fresh and imaginative interpretation of generations-old themes, conventions, and forms. Although in France there were new editions of the Greek and Latin classics, the tastes of English bookbuyers, reflected in the early printers' choices of both

Latin and vernacular titles, were for the favoured books of an earlier age. The late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century fondness for medieval books is clearly demonstrated by the output of Caxton and his successor Wynkyn de Worde: as well as the predictable service books, devotional works and school texts, there are many allegories, romances, and other kinds of narrative in prose and verse. Twentieth-century readers are apt to think of the medievalism of this period in terms of the recognition given by the early English printers to Chaucer's poetry, but their apparent discrimination and good taste must be seen from the perspective of the other titles they chose to print in response to their assessment of readers' tastes. Wynkyn de Worde, for example, printed one edition each of *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *The Parliament of Fowls*; from his press also came a string of undistinguished romances, including two editions each of *Ipomydon* and *Isumbras* about 1530 (the approximate date of the DCM), several Lydgatian works, and no fewer than seven editions of *The Golden Legend* in the years between 1493 and 1527. The life-span of medieval books was considerably longer than most of us tend to recognize, and there can be little doubt that the advent of printing was a very important factor, not only in keeping 'old bookes' before the attention of readers, but also in extending and diversifying the reading public. E. Ph. Goldschmidt, who has explored the history in print of well-known medieval works such as the *Gesta romanorum* and the *De proprietatibus rerum*, comments thus on the medievalism of literary taste in the renaissance:

An analysis of the published output of the printers, whom we must assume knew something of the demands of the reading public, clearly demonstrates that a great proportion of the surviving writings of the Middle Ages were not only known but in current use and circulation continuously till about 1600... The full eclipse and total oblivion of the 'monkish' literature of the 'Dark Ages' does not set in till the seventeenth century and the 'Age of Reason'. It is because *we* view the Middle Ages from the other side of that 'Ice Age' that we look upon these writings as texts to be brought forth from oblivion.

Goldschmidt notes further that 'on the whole the most potent factor making for the survival of a text through centuries is its continued

practical utility, rather than its literary and aesthetic value'.¹ Works which modern readers are prone to find unutterably tedious were among the best-sellers of the early sixteenth century.

Goldschmidt's comments are highly relevant to the continued popularity of the *DCM*. Including the English translation which is the subject of the present edition, there are no fewer than seventeen incunabula and post-incunabula. About two-thirds are Latin editions, the remainder translations into Dutch, French, and English. The first edition came from the press of Gheraert Leeu at Gouda in 1480, and the English translation, printed some fifty years later at Antwerp, is almost certainly the last. Although there are fewer manuscripts and prints of the *Dialogus*, and although it had no discernible influence upon other writings, the history of the work is comparable with that of the *Gesta romanorum*. Both were written in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries, and the printing press brought to both a new and extended readership. Both works were in all probability written to be used by preachers in search of edifying exempla. (There is ample evidence in sermon texts that the *Gesta romanorum* was used in this way by generations of clerics, even after the Reformation,² and an assiduous search through unpublished Latin and English sermons might well reveal that the *Dialogus* was similarly used.) Leeu, whose enterprise in bringing out the *Dialogus* was soon to be copied by other printers, was also one of the early printers of the *Gesta romanorum*; his Latin edition follows the first printing of the *Dialogus* by a matter of weeks, and within a year he had issued Dutch translations of both. Printing brought the *Dialogus* and the *Gesta romanorum* to an audience of private, secular readers, although in the case of the former it is clear from the preface that a market among preachers was also envisaged.

Although the *Dialogus* is not known to have been printed in either Latin or a vernacular language after 1530—no doubt because of changes in religious observance—the book continued to be read. The printed copies of both Latin and English texts frequently contain sixteenth-century signatures and marginalia, and of those we have

¹ *Medieval Texts and their First Appearance in Print* (The Bibliographical Society, London, 1943), pp. 23-24. See also Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, translated by David Gerard (London, 1976), pp. 249 ff.

² J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 210, 216-17.

seen none are more interesting than the marginalia in the Australian copy of the *DCM*. This book, which is in the Main Library of the University of Queensland, carries Gabriel Harvey's distinctive signature, the motto 'Arte, non Marte', and the date March, 1577. It is fascinating to find that this homely vernacular book once belonged in the library of the distinguished Cambridge scholar and controversialist, who aspired to nothing less than the mastery of all knowledge, from the most ancient to the most recent. (In his copy of Domenichi's *Facetie, motti, et burle*, Harvey observes of his persona Eudromus that life is 'multitechnical and multipragmatic', and that some books must be disdained as being 'matters of grammar, philology, imaginary and superfluous things'. Eudromus must 'care only for energetic, distinguished matters of superior forcefulness... the pure choice of the greatest'.³) The book was probably already several decades old when Harvey acquired it, and it had been annotated by at least one previous owner.⁴ Harvey considered himself, with some justification, to be one of the 'new men', and his comments on Chaucer, Sidney, Euripedes, Ariosto, Rabelais and others show him to have been a critic of some discernment. The obvious interest which Harvey took in the *DCM*—as in other English books, such as Baldwin's *A Myrroure for Magistrates* and Heywood's *Woorkes*—provides support for C. S. Lewis's contention that in the sixteenth century 'northern humanism still carried with it few or no implications about a man's taste in vernacular verse... Men who were Ciceronian in Latin might still be almost wholly medieval when they wrote or read poetry in their mother tongue'.⁵ In Harvey's case, as in More's, the comment applies equally well to the taste for vernacular prose. It would probably be wrong to assume that Harvey set much store by the *DCM* as a model of literary excellence; his marginalia suggest strongly that his interest in the book was utilitarian, that he valued it as a repository of practical wisdom for the conduct of a virtuous civic life. Since his symbol for eloquence appears several times in the margin, it also seems likely that he took a grammarian's interest in the book as well (Harvey and his contem-

³ Virginia Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford, 1979).

⁴ See G. C. Kratzmann, 'An addition to the library of Gabriel Harvey: *The Dialogues of Creatures Morallysed*', *Notes and Queries*, 29 (October, 1982), 413-15.

⁵ *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford, 1954), p. 125.

poraries, like their medieval predecessors, would have seen no disjunction between ethics and rhetoric).

A new edition of the *DCM* should make this very distinctive and highly enjoyable collection of fables and other kinds of exemplary discourse accessible to students of late medieval and early renaissance literature and thought. The Latin printed text of the *Dialogus* is accessible in a modern reprint of J. G. Th. Graesse's *Die beiden ältesten lateinischen Fabelbücher des Mittelalters* (Tübingen, 1880; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), although there is certainly a need for a new scholarly edition of the text as both print and manuscript. Graesse's editorial procedures are as difficult to comprehend as the title of his edition (neither the *Dialogus* nor the *Speculum sapientiae* of Bishop Cyrillus can claim to be the oldest fable collection of the Middle Ages, and Graesse was quite rightly taken to task by V. Pio Rajna in a series of long articles published over several years.⁶) Our own interest is in the English version of the *Dialogus*, which is a faithful translation of the printed Latin text. There are at least eight surviving copies of the unique English book, which was almost certainly printed in Antwerp. There was no subsequent edition of the complete text until nearly three hundred years later, when in 1816 John Haslewood edited it for Robert Triphook. Haslewood gave the *DCM* a subtitle which echoes and expands the title page of the sixteenth-century print (*The Dialoges of Creatures Moralysed. Applyably and edificatyfly to euery mery and iocounde mater/of late translated out of latyn into our Englysshe tonge right profitable to the gouernaunce of man*): 'Curious to the philologer, interesting to the lover of natural history, and amusing to the moralist'. Haslewood's edition has a helpful Introduction, although its value is impeded by his belief that no perfect copy of the book existed. The text itself contains some startling errors (for example, 'Crameron' for 'Exameron'). Inexplicably, the edition contains not the lively naturalistic woodcuts which illustrate the English version, but rather copies of the series which appeared in all of Leeu's prints of the *Dialogus*. Haslewood's antiquarian industry was almost in vain; only 98 copies were printed, and since all but 42 were destroyed in a fire, copies of the early nineteenth-century edition are almost as rare as the sixteenth-century print. Brief mention should also be made of another rather idiosyncratic edition of the *DCM*, a modern deluxe

⁶ 'Intorno al cosiddetto Dialogus Creaturarum ed al suo autore', in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, vols 3, 4, 10, 11 (1883-8).

hand-printed edition from the Allen Press in California, edited by Cott Hobart (1967). Unfortunately it is of no value to scholars, as it consists of a partially modernized text based on Haslewood's edition.

The Introduction which follows is divided into three parts. Section I is concerned with the place of the *Dialogus* in the tradition of the sermon exemplum handbook. Section II is more directly concerned with the English translation, as an attempt is made to illustrate its dominant thematic, structural, and stylistic features. Some degree of overlap between these sections has been inevitable, as most of our comments about the Latin text apply equally to the English translation of it. However, as this edition is intended for the use of students of English medieval and Tudor literature, we have considered it advisable to quote from the English text. Section III is an account of the work as a printed book. In transcribing the text for this edition, we have used light modern punctuation in the interests of fluency and readability. The punctuation of the original is haphazard, and there are sections of the text which Harvey or some other early annotator has emended for the sake of clarity. Some emendations to the present text have been indicated in footnotes, but others which are obvious typesetter's errors have been silently corrected. The sixteenth-century proof-reader has been careful, however, and the text is remarkably free from error. Standard contractions have been silently expanded, and the original spelling has been followed throughout. Where there is doubt about the division of words, we have used our own discretion. Capitalization is modern, and has been kept to a minimum. Throughout, the Roman numeral *iiii* has been replaced by *iv*. Where the University of Queensland copy is defective, missing sections have been supplied by transcriptions from copies in the British Library. The form of the index, which follows the prologue, has been altered slightly, so that the numbering, which has been modernized, precedes the titles. For reasons of economy, we have decided not to include a full Glossary, though the decision has been made with some reluctance.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1. Dialogue 15. Of the saphyre and of the goldsmith (E1r).



Fig. 2. Dialogue 18. Of a precyows stone callyd achate and a serpent callyd cerastes (F3r).

FIGURES

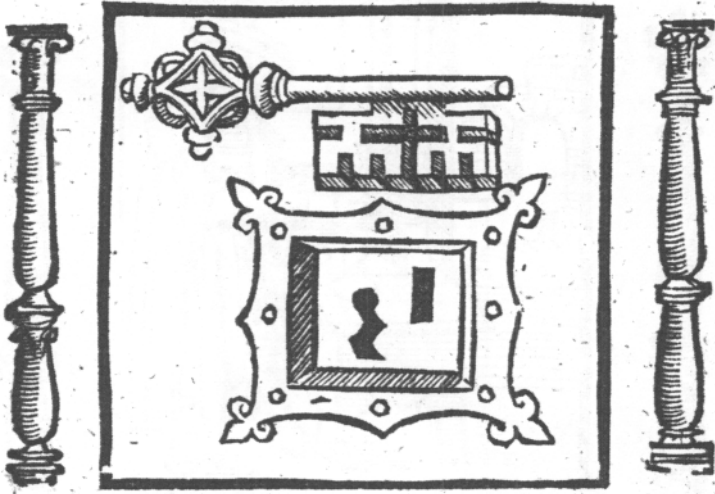


Fig. 3. Dialogue 23. Of the locke and the kaye (G4r).



Fig. 4. Dialogue 31. Of a frute callyd mandragora and of the desyrous woman (K2r).

FIGURES



Fig. 5. Dialogue 45. Of a scalyc fysshe callyd regyna and a watyrsarpent callyd idrus (O3v).



Fig. 6. Dialogue 67. Of a byrde callyd ciconia and the swalowe (X2r).

FIGURES



Fig. 7. Dialogue 84. Of the chorle and the beys (EE4r).



Fig. 8. Dialogue 112. Of the asse and the oxe (PP3r).

FIGURES



Fig. 9. Of lyfe and deth. *Memento mori* following the direction 'As this figure shewith' in Dialogue 122 (TT3r).

FIGURES



Fig. 10. Dialogue 107. Of the wolf and the asse (NN3r and TT4r).

FIGURES



Fig. 11. TT4v (repeats the cuts for Dialogues 97 and 102).