

# EARLY ENGLISH CAROLS AND THE MACARONIC HYMN

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The mediaeval English carol is preeminently a gift of the fifteenth century. Indeed, as Carleton Brown suggested in his edition, *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, very few carols are preserved to us from even the fourteenth century, while more than five hundred fifteenth-century texts survive.<sup>1</sup> Of these, nearly a quarter, or 119 carols, are in a single manuscript of 166 lyrics attributed to James Ryman, a Franciscan friar of Canterbury.<sup>2</sup> The character of Ryman's carols and the extent of his experimentation in vernacular hymnody suggest that increased acceptability of the popular carol form and its adaptability to the elaborate or "decorated" style of the macaronic hymn have combined to create in the fifteenth-century carol a significant evolution from the more "meditative" earlier English religious lyrics.<sup>3</sup>

There has been some question as to whether Ryman was the composer or merely the collector of the verse in MS Cambridge Library Ee. I.12, and it is perhaps difficult to decide this matter definitively, even by an appeal to the stylistic similarity of many of the pieces in the later portion of the book with those of the former. Certain points, however, may be observed. First, at the conclusion of the song No. 110, "O Quene of pitee, moder of grace" -- a carol with rhyme-royal stanzas -- occurs the following inscription:

Explicit liber ymynorum et canticorum, quem composuit  
 frater Iacobus Ryman ordinis Minorum ad laudem omnipotentis  
 dei et sanctissime matris eius Marie omniumque sanctorum anno  
 domini millesimo cccc.<sup>mo</sup> lxxxxiij.<sup>o</sup> 4

In the same hand as the verse, this may be either signature to a holograph MS, or a scribal witness: in either case it seems to ascribe composition of the first 110 "hymns" and "songs" to Ryman, but does not address the question of the fifty-six additional lyrics. Zupitza believed that the new hand which commenced at song No. 112 and continued to the end was that of the poet himself, since it was the same hand which made corrections throughout the MS. This seems a plausible view, and though it still does not entirely prove the poems to be Ryman's own composition, together with the rubric at carol No. 110 and the stylistic similarities which do persist, it argues for Ryman as composer at least as strongly as for Ryman as collector. In any case, the form of the collection suggests that the first 110 pieces represent a *compilatio* of sorts, more than a mere *collectio*, since the lyrics, translated hymns, and carols are largely organized by theme and liturgical occasion or calendar, concentrating especially on the seasons Advent, Nativity, Epiphany. In this light it might seem that the remaining poems, in the looser form of *collectio*, are additional to the matter of the first part, and that they could have been added on by Ryman, number by number, some time after the initial *explicit* was written. It is interesting that the first section ends with what is probably Ryman's most elegant address to the Virgin -- an appropriate conclusion for a mediaeval Franciscan *compilatio*.

The first additional song is an early version of the song of the thieving fox (which still survives as a popular children's song). In this version it should be considered a representative of anti-fraternal satire:

The fals fox came to oure halle dore  
 And shrove our gese there in the flore  
 With how, fox, et cetera . . .

The fals fox came into oure halle  
 And assoyled our gese both grete and small.  
 With how, fox, et cetera . . . .

Beginning at stanza sixteen (though Zupitza's divisions make this hard to

discern) is another version of the song, in which there is conversation between the fox and the goose. This version is left unfinished: the notation seems to be simply a *memento*. That anti-fraternal satire should be collected by a friar is not surprising -- there are other examples.<sup>5</sup> What is curious about this "fox" song is that it is the first additional lyric, the only "secular" song to be included in the collection, and the *alma redemptoris mater* which follows does not by its form suggest that the song was included to index a tune to be associated with the subsequent lyric.

There are a variety of ways to characterize the content of the entire collection. One of these is to respect the address or function of the songs. The largest group -- more than fifty numbers -- concern themselves with the Virgin or are addressed to her as a sung prayer. A slightly smaller number -- about thirty-five numbers -- have Christ as their focus, either by way of sung prayers or in dramatic dialogue poems in which Christ speaks from the cross or converses, sometimes as a child, with his mother. More than a dozen poems concern themselves with the Trinity -- an unusual feature of this collection. But a fairly large number of songs are specifically catechal (35) or liturgical (10). What all of this suggests is that the *explicit*, "*liber ymporum et canticorum*," ought perhaps to be taken quite literally in the modern sense of the terms, and Ryman's work seen as a deliberate contribution to vernacular hymnody, the book as a whole being a kind of forerunner of the modern hymn-book -- as opposed to a mediaeval psalter or even an earlier mediaeval "song book."<sup>6</sup>

We might come to this point in another way. Despite the eleven direct translations of traditional Latin hymns and thirty-odd religious lyrics of other forms which inhabit these pages, the volume is dominated by carols. The carol, as Greene and others have made clear, is an old pagan and popular form associated specifically with the ring-dance in its origins.<sup>7</sup> Yet it was possible even for such a stringent moralist as Wyclif to approve of Christianized carolling, including the dance, as a festive recreation for "3onge wymmen."<sup>8</sup> What in the late fourteenth century was inevitably conjoined -- the song and the dance -- may have begun to separate somewhat in the late fifteenth. While "carol" maintains its association with the dance in Ryman's time, later it clearly becomes possible to imagine settings for the carol in which the dance is not a part of their performance.<sup>9</sup> With Ryman the carol as a song form was in any case acquiring another -- and distinctly more modern -- association.

A cursory examination of Ryman's carols will show that far the greater proportion concern themselves with the Annunciation, Nativity, and Epiphany. That is, most of them are already "Christmas carols," associated with that season to which we now automatically direct the term (albeit often in misappropriation). Ryman devotes more space to "Christmas" season carols than is the overall pattern for his contemporaries in the genre, and he heralds, accordingly, the future of the carol. In Ryman's signal anticipation of a trend we may fairly see the intimate association of the whole genre with what Greene calls "Franciscanism," which he feels virtually invites specialization of the carol as a Christmas song.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, we should expect Ryman to reflect especially Franciscan concerns and interests at least as much as his thirteenth- and fourteenth-century confrères. Yet their own concern for the Christmas events did not express itself notably in the carol, but most often in other verse and song forms. We would not normally think of these as hymns, in fact, but rather as poems of meditation or, at the most, songs in aid of popular mendicant homiletics.<sup>11</sup> There is another interesting point here, I think, and it bears particularly on a significant departure in Ryman from the actual poetics of his forebearers.

The macaronic hymn tradition enjoyed a particular vigour in the fifteenth century. William O. Wehrle has shown that in England it became then "a vogue as definite as the vogue of the sonnet among the Renaissance Italians."<sup>12</sup> While often macaronic lines were employed in the systematic translation of the Latin hymns, they could also be used as the basis for creating new hymns. Wehrle makes it clear that the composition of macaronic hymns was a literate and especially clerical vocation:

The skill of interlacing a definite Latin line into a poem so as to make it fit into the meter and often into the rhyme of the English poem required great skill in handling both languages, besides a thorough knowledge of both the liturgy and the hymnody of the Church.<sup>13</sup>

It has already been pointed out by Karl Hammerle that Ryman is an outstanding figure in the macaronic hymn tradition.<sup>14</sup> Further, Wehrle's study reveals that the predominant themes of the macaronic hymn, from its inception, are the Nativity, followed by poems on the Blessed Virgin, then the saints whose feasts fall in the Christmas season.<sup>15</sup> That is, the Christmas season is the central subject matter for macaronic hymns. These facts, and one further

consideration, suggest that Ryman was explicitly about the business of hymnody, as opposed to the collection or creation of meditative poetry or traditional Franciscan "gospel song."

In Ryman's macaronic lyrics, apart from the Latin tags and "connective phrases composed for a particular carol, most of the remaining lines come from the liturgy itself, especially its metrical portions. As Greene has shown, the hymn is nearest in likeness to the carol, both in its division into stanzas and its being sung to a "repetition of the same musical setting."<sup>16</sup> With the exception of his "Te Deum" translations and adaptations (Nos. 71-76) which show influence of the subject and not the metrical form of their source, Ryman is typical in that the direct contribution of the subject matter of the Latin to his English carols is, if anything, less evident than his retention of their four-stress line and four-stress stanza of the Latin hymns in many numbers. This suggests that familiar hymn tunes accompanied the vernacular composition, and not popular tunes a religious song or translated hymn.<sup>17</sup> The use of four-stress line and stanza in each of the other carols which are not translations as such (e.g. No. 83) suggests that these songs too were probably entuned to the setting of familiar hymns or Latin carols.<sup>18</sup> That this choice indicates Ryman's specific interest in hymnody seems to be already clear. That it represents a different address to vernacular lyric poetry than was customary in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, even among Franciscans, may be made equally evident.

I have written elsewhere of the tendency of mendicants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to write vernacular lyrics as preaching aids, sometimes setting these to music as a kind of baptized popular song.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, this pattern, along with the creation of a specifically meditational poetry for lay-readers, seems to have characterized the bulk of religious lyric-making in those centuries. On the other hand, where the audience for poetry was chiefly clerical in that period, it seems that much of the poetry remained traditional and latinate. It is interesting to consider the case of another Franciscan friar from Canterbury, Richard Ledrede, a fourteenth-century compiler of lyrics. While he was Bishop of Ossory he wrote and collected songs for the use of vicars, priests and clerks -- not laymen -- to be sung in festive seasons.<sup>20</sup> These songs from their rubrics with scraps of English and French secular songs were to be allowed popular tunes, not sung to hymn tunes. But the lyrics themselves are in Latin. That is, for a clerical audience the "baptism" was also a conversion of secular to religious

language. The results are not, strictly speaking, hymns, but, rather, spiritual songs for the recreation of the clergy. In Ryman's collection it is often just the other way around: the Latin is at least partially construed in simple vernacular, it is often a hymn which is directly translated or artfully adapted, and the resulting songs and carols are -- at least some of the time -- hymns as well as religious song. Who, one wonders, did Ryman intend to do the singing?

Almost everyone agrees that Ryman intended his poems to be sung. Beyond that, there has been less assurance. For Helmut Gneuss, "ob sie jemals gesungen wurden, ist eine andere Frage."<sup>21</sup> For Rossell Hope Robbins, in his edition of *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, the carols are a kind of "closet hymn."<sup>22</sup> But the fact is that the MS itself contains musical notation, albeit faded, for several songs, and one of these is recognizable as a version of the Sarum hymn, *Salvator mundi*.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, two carols are based on the Latin carol *Ecce quod natura / mutat sua jura* (see No. 83), which is the only carol in English or Latin to survive with music in three separate manuscripts. And in the mid-sixteenth century, both in carols discovered transcribed among the papers of Henry Bradshaw<sup>24</sup> and in the carol-book anthology printed by Richard Kele in 1550,<sup>25</sup> some of Ryman's work continued to find audience. That many of the carols were sung by some persons or other seems then most probable. Were they, as in the case of the fourteenth-century collection by Ledrede, entuned by clerics? Or as in the case of some other religious songs of the earlier period, by groups of lay-persons?<sup>26</sup> The evidence of Ryman's manuscript argues, I think, for both kinds of singers and customs of use for his hymns and carols.

It is evident from their predominant form that Ryman's lyrics were not intended for meditative, reflective use, as in books of hours or other meditational guides. This fact alone will account for the sometimes "lacklustre," "unoriginal," "uninspired" criticism that has often been levelled against a majority of poems in the collection. Indeed, if they were intended as religious poetry in the manner of MS Harley 2253, the commonplace book of Franciscan Friar John Grimestone or the collection of Friar William Heribert, largely speaking they would deserve the unenthusiastic comments so far received. On the other hand, if the expectations which more properly accord to hymnody are introduced, our response ought to be somewhat different. For example, while in the former poetry attributes of the litany are tedious, in hymnody they may be essential to good effects. The same might be said for other kinds of

repetitiveness, such as the burden or refrain of the carol, or the simple four-stress metre and line which predominates in these pieces so evidently intended to be sung heartily by groups, rather than mused over quietly by reflective individual readers.

Some of Ryman's songs require, none the less, a somewhat greater sophistication, and give evidence of more verbal complexity than we would expect from the popular carol. In Ryman's experimentation, these numbers often stand out, such as is the case of No. 16, *Rarissima in delicijs / Iam veni: coronaberis*, in which the dominant imagery involves conceit and jargon of a clerical kind:

Come, my myelde dove, into thy cage,  
With ioye and blis replete which is;  
For why it is thyne heritage.  
*Iam veni: coronaberis.*

Thy stature is assymylate  
To a palm tree, and thy bristis  
To grapes, spowse immaculate.  
*Iam veni: coronaberis.*

In other cases the clue may be in verse form itself. A pair of lyrics, Nos. 84 and 85, clearly derive from a popular song, rather than from a hymn. That is, they resemble the earlier pattern of Richard Ledrede's Red Book of Ossory. In No. 84 it is specific to the first stanza, perhaps almost in unaltered form:

Atte sumtyme mery, at sume tyme sadde;  
At symtyme wele, at symtyme woo;  
At symtyme sory, at symtyme gladde;  
At symtyme frende, at symtyme foo;  
At symtyme richness *and* welthe is hadde,  
At symtyme it is gone vs froo;  
Truly, he is not wyse, but madde,  
That aftur worldly welthe will goo.

The simple verse *abababab* is maintained throughout the balance of an eight-stanza, homiletical lyric. The verse is unaffected and graceful with the rhetoric of good preaching. It continues:

As medowe floures of swete odoures  
 Vadeth to erthe by theire nature,  
 Likewise richness *and* grete honoures  
 Shall vade fro euery creature;  
 Therefore to suffre grete doloures  
 I holde it best to do oure cure  
 And to forsake castillis *and* toures,  
 So that of blisse we may be sure.

*In Genesi and Iob* we fynde  
*Et in Ecclesiastico,*  
 Though art but erthe, man, by thy kynde  
 And into erthe ayene shalt goo.  
 On erthely good sette not thy mynde,  
 For erthely good shall passe the fro;  
 Naked thou camest, though man so blynde,  
 And into erthe naked shalte goo.

. . .

Crist seith hym self in the gossell:  
 "What preuayleth it a man vntill,  
 Yf that his sowle in daungere dwell,  
 Thow be alle this worlde haue at wille."  
 Therefore do by goostely counsell,  
 For worldely welthe thy soule not spille;  
 For, yf it come but ones in helle,  
 Truly, it shall dwell therein still.

. . .

Fro endeles deth god vs defende  
 And graunt vs alle by his grete grace,  
 Out of this worlde when we shall wende,  
 In heuen blisse to haue a place  
 Therin to dwelle *withouten* ende  
 And hym to see there face to face,  
 Whoes ioye no tunge can comprehende,  
 That ay shall be, is, *and* ay wace.

We feel this poem is a traditional meditative exercise, or perhaps a song with an application to the enterprise of a mendicant preacher. That is, we

can at least *imagine* it being sung to a popular audience, if not likely by them. The lyric with which it is paired is a different proposition. It begins:

Rembembre well, thou man mortall,  
 And pryente wele in thy myende  
 This worlde is mutabilite,  
 That transitorious is.  
 Beholde wele thy begynnnyng  
 And ondre wele thy kyende;  
 Then calle to thy remembraunce  
 Eternal ioye and blis.

. . .

Truly, the orient Phebus  
 And the tenebrat nyght  
 In nature be full different:  
 So by mekenesse *and* pryde;  
 Sorowe forto compare, truely,  
*With* ioye it is no right;  
 This lyfe vnto celestially  
 Is but a mynute tyde.

The lyric continues for twice the length as the first, concluding in two stanzas that make clear both the connection with the tune of No. 84 and the predominant address to friars or other clerics themselves, as *exhortatio*:

At sumtyme for thy synnes wepe,  
 Moore *and* make lamentacion;  
 At sytyme rede, at sytyme syng  
 To avoide vice and synne;  
 At sytyme pray vpon thy knee  
 For goostely inspiracion:  
 And so gostely the victorie  
 Of thy foo though shalt wyne.

By nyght *and* day, yf that thou may,  
 Vse deuoute meditacion;  
 Pray for thy frende, pray for thy foo  
 And pray for alle thy kynne;

Also, I rede, for the more mede,  
 Vse goostely contemplacion:  
 And than to blisse, that endeles is,  
 Thy soule shalle entre in.

We see that while the tune may have been popular and easily recalled, Ryman makes no comparable effort in No. 85 for the lyric itself. The rhyme scheme, if it can be called that, is experimental and difficult: *abcdebfd*. The language is learned and latinate, and the form of the whole poem is as an examination of conscience.

But these poems are in fact the smallest part of Ryman's collection. By far the largest number are carols, and most of these specifically "Christmas carols" whose form and metre immediately suggest group singing which would be highly accessible even to the laity. The first song in the manuscript is, in this respect, I think, exemplary of Ryman's primary intention. It is taken from the Hymn "Alma redemptoris mater," one of the best known of Latin hymns, and the rhyme scheme is the simple, easily teachable *aaab / bb*. Thus:

The aungell seyde, of high degree:  
 "Haile, full of grace: god is with the;  
 Of alle women blessed thou bee,  
*Alma redemptoris mater!*"

with the refrain:

*Alma redemptoris mater,  
 Quem de celis misit pater.*

The metre is natural and yet hymnic, the rhythm jolly, almost boisterous, and the simple narrative of the Annunciation story has the magic of the well-known story of repentance simply told. The same lilt and cheer attach to No. 2 and No. 3, another pair in which the first has the simple refrain *inquit Marie Gabriell / "concupies Emanuel"*, and the second suggests a group of brothers singing the stanzas, perhaps, with all present joining in on an extended burden or *ripresa*:

Nowel, nowel, nowel, nowel,  
 Nowel, nowel, nowel, nowel!

*Inquit Marie Gabriel:*

*"Concipies Emanuel."*

In addition to the translated hymns, there are liturgical adaptations of Sarum use (No. 77, "Pater Noster," "Magnificat") and hymns for which one can only imagine a connection with the mass or other divine service. No. 56, a carol in form, is a hymn on the sacrament with the refrain:

Ete ye this brede, ete ye this brede  
And ete it so, ye be not dede.

This brede geveth eternall lyfe  
Bothe vnto man, to chielde *and* wyfe;  
It yeldeth grace *and* bateth stryfe:  
Ete ye it so, ye be not ded.

It semeth white, yet it is rede,  
And it is quik and semeth dede,  
For it is god in fourme of brede:  
Ete ye it so, ye be not ded.

This blessed brede is aungellis foode,  
Mannes also perfecte and goode;  
Therefore ete ye it *with* myelde moode:  
Ete ye it so, ye be not dede.

This brede fro heven did descende  
Vs fro alle ille for to defende  
And to geve vs lyfe *without*e ende:  
Ete ye it so, ye be *not dede*.

In virgyne Mary this brede was bake,  
Whenne Criste of her manhoode did take  
Fre of alle synne mankyende to make:  
Ete ye it so, ye be *not dede*.

Ete ye this brede *without*en synne,  
Eternall blis thanne shall ye wyne.  
God Graunte vs grace to dwell therin.  
Ete ye it so, ye be not dede.

Such hymns and songs we can imagine being sung by friars as a means of making divine service itself more accessible to the laity, an increasingly important concern of the friars and others in the fifteenth century. But for simple, expository carols such as Nos. 38, "Be we mery now in this fest," 40, "To Criste singe we, singe we, singe we / In clennes and in charite," 41, "A meyden myelde a chielde hath bore / Mankyende to blis forto restore," it is difficult to imagine that Ryman did not intend the carols for general festive singing by laity themselves as well as the brothers. No. 42, in simple *abab* stanza, with refrain for a chorus, simplifies its narrative and catechal content, and is like the songs which immediately precede it, short (seven stanzas) and teachable:

And in a stalle this chielde was born  
 Bitwene bothe oxe and asse  
 To save, for synne that was forlorn,  
 Mankyende, as his wille wasse.

. . .

The prophecy of Isay  
 And prophetes alle *and* sume  
 Now ended is thus finally,  
 For god is man become.<sup>27</sup>

These carols are an entirely different enterprise than the rhyme-royal ode to Henry VI (No. 96) or the elegant and sophisticated "Wisdom" poem which immediately follows it. These sorts of poems, a minority in the volume, seem to be squarely within established traditions of religious lyric poetry. Ryman's use of the carol, on the other hand, should be evaluated as an explicit innovation in hymnody, vernacular, largely directed toward the Christmas season, and hence toward a wider participation and community of song.

What of the quality of Ryman's *Liber Ympnorum et Canticorum*? At their worst, it must be admitted, Ryman's carols can embody the garishness and maudlin extremes of late fifteenth-century spirituality. One winces a little in respect of the oft used double-entendre in *yerde*, for example, at constructions such as the one Ryman offers in No. 20, "There sprung a yerde of Iesse moore":

As Aaron yerde withoute moistoure  
 Hath florissshed and borne a floure,

So hath she borne oure savyoure  
 Withouten touche of dishonoure  
 Of mannes sede;  
 For god his self in her did brede.

King Assuere was wrote, i-wis,  
 When quene Vasty had done amys,  
 And of her crowne priuat she is;  
 But, when Hester his yerde did kis,  
 By hir mekenes  
 She chaunged his moode into softnes. <sup>28</sup>

But it can hardly be charged fairly, once we see the bulk of this work as a hymn-book, that his songs are merely boring. At their best Ryman's carols, with respect to their lyrics, are a blend of simplicity and unstudied elegance; with respect to meter and measure they are often "catchy" and eminently entunable; their spirit, unlike that of much earlier Franciscan or other religious poetry, is almost entirely joyous and celebratory even when a carol may move on from the season of Christ's nativity to anticipate the Cross:

A Roose hath borne a lilly white,  
 That whiche floure is moost pure *and* bright.

To this roose aungell Gabriell  
 Seide: "Thou shalt bere Amanuell,  
 Both god *and* man *with* vs to dwell;"  
 The which floure is most pure *and* bright.

This roose, the prophete Ysaye  
 Seyde, shulde conceyve *and* bere Messy  
 Withouten synne or velonye;  
 The which flour is moost pure *and* bright.

As the sonne beame goth thurgh the glas,  
 Thurgh this roose that lilly did pas  
 To save mankynde, as his wille was;  
 The which floure is *moost pure and* bright.

This roose so myelde aye vndefielde  
 Hath borne a childe for man so wilde

By fraude begiled, from blis exiled;  
The whiche flour is moost pure *and* bright.

This roose so good at the cros stode  
With wofull moode, when Crist, oure foode,  
Shed his hert bloode for man so woode;  
The which flour is moost pure *and* bright.

This swete roose pray bothe nyght *and* day,  
Withoute deny that we come maye  
To blis for ay the redy waye;  
The which flour is moost pure *and* bright.

It has been argued that there is a general tendency in the fifteenth-century lyric to etherealize, and to lose the sight of and touch of human reality.<sup>29</sup> If the argument is to be sustained it will not be, I think, by an appeal to the example of James Ryman. In his poetry and hymnody there is a definite rootedness of divine mystery and beauty in the beauty and touchability of Christ's and the Virgin's humanity, in which we all join, singing not only with the angels but also with the magi and the shepherds. It is as if the traditional message of the Franciscans -- that Christ's humble incarnation elevates and glorifies creation and our common humanity -- has applied itself again in a marriage of music and verse forms. The humble and earthy ring-dance song of carollers combines, sometimes in lines alternately with that of Latin hymns, to sing the "new song" of Christmas, hymns and anthems to the "chielde borne to be kynge" and to "mary myelde," his mother. The macaronic hymn tradition, dedicated to making the hymnody of Christmas especially accessible to unlatinate laymen, by happy accidents of metrics and measure becomes, as we see in Ryman, a chief force in the specialization of the carol to the season with which we now associate it.

Ryman offers in one of his poems a kind of accidental *apologia* for the work that he has been doing, by way of encouraging others to participate in its larger intention. Here his choice of matter for "translation" and composition is not a traditional hymn of the Church, but the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs. In this chapter the voice of Wisdom speaks, identifying herself with the Spirit of the Lord which was with God from the beginning, "set up from everlasting before ever the earth was," present at the creation of the universe, the delight of the Lord of creation, "daily his delight and

playing (*ludens*) always before him" (v. 30). This *hokma*, or *sapientia*, is made to be the "voice" of Ryman's poem, with several actual verses of the chapter woven into her address (vv. 2-4, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 34-36, etc.). At the outset Ryman has her say:

'For cause alle men shall vnderstonde  
 My lordes preceptes iuste and right,  
 He hath me made to euery londe  
 In theire owne speche them to endite  
 And in this fourme them for to wright.  
 Therfore take hede bothe sume *and* alle  
 To his preceptis, bothe grete *and* small.

Later in the poem the audience he has in mind for Wisdom's general precepts in this matter of "translation" is clearly specified:

Nowe, dene of chapell *and* of quere,  
 Deuoutely do youre diligence,  
 Chaunters also *and* chapeleyns dere,  
 So in you be no negligence.

Also youre scilence, loke, ye kepe.  
 Wake not to late, rise not to sone.  
 When ye wolde laugh, lest that ye wepe,  
 Serue god *and* pley, when ye haue done.

The last injunction, not from the Scripture itself but Ryman's own, is to stewards of divine service, both to serve God, and in an allusion to verses not quoted, perhaps, vv. 30-31 to "pley." Ryman's *Liber Ympnorum et Cantorum* offers the opportunity for exercise in both service and play, by just such folk, and for the sake of "translation." The collection is a major document in the history of the fifteenth-century lyric, but more than that, a signal contribution to the development in England of an accessible vernacular hymnody.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> (Oxford 1939; repr. 1952) xix; but cf. David L. Jeffrey, *The English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln, Nebr. 1975) 242-44, 255-56.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. J. Zupitza, "Die Gedichte des Franziskaners Jacob Ryman," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen* 89 (1892) 167-338, from MS Ee.I.12 of the Cambridge University Library. Cf. Richard Leighton Greene, in his landmark edition, recently revised and updated, *The Early English Carols* (Oxford 1977) clv. Ryman was ordained as an acolyte in 1476, so that one assumes him to be doing most of his composing or collecting during his twenties and early thirties. See A.G. Little, "James Ryman: A Forgotten Kentish Poet," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 54 (1941) 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Greene (at n. 2) xlix. The term "meditation" is, of course, Rosemary Woolf's, from her excellent survey, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1968).

<sup>4</sup> After No. 110, at f. 79 (Zupitza, 284).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. MS Harley 913, the "Kildare Book." See the edition by W. Heuser, "Die Kildare Gedichte," *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik* 14 (1904) 128-29.

<sup>6</sup> In *Hymnar und Hymnen in englischen Mittelalter* (Tübingen 1968), Helmut Gneuss makes the point that English, unlike German, does not distinguish between "Hymne and Kirchenlied," thus making it difficult for modern hymnologists to keep fresh the distinction which ought to pertain between "die Dichtungen des Ambrosius and Prudentius ebenso bezeichnet wie die Lieder Martin Luthers und Charles Wesleys" (207). Without reference to his specific examples, I should like to acknowledge that the linguistic problem he identifies affects my own discussion here to the degree that not all carols of Ryman are hymns, in the strict sense, nor all hymns carols, of course. But some of Ryman's hymns are not direct translations of preexisting Latin hymns either, and some of his macaronic "translations" of hymns grow so expansive or adopt forms diverse enough from their original that the English song is more properly *Kirchenlied* than *Hymn*. Mostly I must call this latter type "songs," in an effort to preserve the distinction I take to pertain to Ryman's *canticorum*.

<sup>7</sup> See Greene's ch. 1 (at n.2), "The Carol as a Genre," for a

definitive discussion. Breughel's painting *Elde danse*, or "Village Dancers," approximates the popular performance of a carol. Greene's frontispiece, from a fifteenth-century MS, affords an earlier illustration.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Greene (at n.2) clviii.

<sup>9</sup> See Eric Routley, *The English Carol* (New York 1957).

<sup>10</sup> Greene (at n.2) clviii. Cf. *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (at n.1) 255-56.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Early English Lyric* (at n.1) chs. 4-5; and Rosemary Woolf (at n.3).

<sup>12</sup> William Otto Wehrle, *The Macaronic Hymn Tradition in Medieval English Literature* (Ph.D. Diss., Catholic Univ. of America, 1933) 167.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Karl Hammerle, "Die mittelenglische Hymnodie," *Anglia* 55 (1937) 419.

<sup>15</sup> Wehrle (at n.12) 171. Ryman is the first of the macaronic hymn writers to add a saint from a feast out of the Christmas season, namely St. Francis, for whom he has four songs. It is noteworthy that Ryman, despite his Canterbury address, did not compose a carol for Thomas à Becket, whose feast day is December 29th and for whom several other carols are extant. (Some of these are published in Greene.)

<sup>16</sup> Greene (at n.2) lxxxv.

<sup>17</sup> Besides the *Te Deum* sequence, *Conditor alme siderum* (No. 22); *Verbum supernum prodiens* (No. 23); *Vox clara, ecce, intonat* (No. 24); *A solis ortus cardine* (Nos. 25 and 26); *A Patre Unigenitus* (No. 28); *Christe, qui lux es et dies* (No. 29); *Salvator mundi, Domine* (No. 30); *Hostis Herodes impie* (No. 58); *Christe, redemptor omnium* (No. 27).

<sup>18</sup> See John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (London 1961) 48-49.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. n.1.

<sup>20</sup> The Latin note at the bottom of the first page of Ledrede's collection reads: "Be advised, reader, that the Bishop of Ossory has made these songs for the vicars of the cathedral church, for the priests and for his clerks, to be sung on the important holidays and at celebrations, in order that their throats and mouths, consecrated to God, may not be polluted by songs which are lewd, secular, and associated with revelry, and since they are trained singers, let them provide themselves with suitable tunes according to what these sets of words require." Editions of Ledrede's poems may be had in Greene's monograph in the *Medium Aevum*, N.S. No. 5 (Oxford 1974),

and Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., *The Latin Poems of Richard Ledrede, O.F.M.*, (Mediaeval Studies and Texts Series 30, Toronto 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Gneuss (at n.6) 218.

<sup>22</sup> Rossell Hope Robbins, *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford 1955) xxi.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Stevens (at n.18) 56, 48.

<sup>24</sup> R.H. Robbins, "The Bradshaw Carols," *PMLA* 81 (1966) 308-10.

<sup>25</sup> Greene (at n.2) clv.

<sup>26</sup> Greene (at n.2, clviii) seems to wish to hold out for both possibilities, in general practice, while seeing the carol as squarely within the Franciscan tradition, which he feels Ryman exemplifies.

<sup>27</sup> The reference to ox and ass in connection with messianic prophecy is neither, as has sometimes been thought, a misreading of Jeremiah 11.19 ("I was brought as a lamb or an ox to the slaughter") nor simply, as Greene suggests, evidence of "the love of dumb creatures [to] which Francis preached and for which he is particularly remembered" (at n.2, clviii). St. Francis was not unique, in his Christmas pageant, in using the *bovi et asino*. Here, as in mediaeval visual representations of the nativity, the animals are an exegesis of Isaiah 1.3 "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib."

<sup>28</sup> One can imagine thus how reflexive could be early sixteenth-century satire on this aspect of Franciscan carollry: Robbins (at n.24) prints an irreverent rejoinder to one of Ryman's carols which describes a Grey Friar who "offered the Nunne to lerne her to syngre . . ." and concludes:

Thus the fryer lyke a prety man

*inducas*

Ofte rokkyed the Nunnys Quoniam

*in temptacionibus*

ffinis short and swete.

But Ryman, for all the vulnerability of some of his confrères, is not nearly so given to ambiguous imagery as many of them.

<sup>29</sup> Brown (at n.1) xx.