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## HOW TO PRONOUNCE BERWICK: A CURIOUS PARADIGM OF CHAUCER'S BISHOP BRADWARDINE<sup>1</sup>

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In the *Middle English Dictionary*, Berwick-on-Tweed, the famous town on the border of England and Scotland, is Ber(e)wick: "a place where barley is grown."<sup>2</sup> In the two copies of Thomas Bradwardine's treatise on Artificial Memory, the reference to Berwick ignores the etymology and provides instead animal figures so bizarre that they call for an explanation. While, like others before me, I make the humble disclaimer that "I am nat textueel,"<sup>3</sup> I hope to offer a solution by adopting the method that Chaucer attributed to Bradwardine, namely, to "bult it to the bren" (*NPT* 4430).

The passage under scrutiny is Bradwardine's instruction for remembering the conquest of Berwick-on-Tweed by Edward III in 1333. In the shorter of the two manuscripts, MS. Sloane 3744, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>, in the British Library, the sentence to be memorized reads: "Benedictus Dominus, qui Berewicum regi Anglie subiugavit"<sup>4</sup> (Blessed be the Lord who subjugated Berwick for the King of England). In the other manuscript, MS. McClean 169, fol. 256<sup>r</sup>, in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, the sentence reads: "Benedictus Dominus, qui pro rege Anglie Berwicum fortissimum et totam Scociam subiugavit" (Blessed be the Lord who for the King of England subjugated strongest Berwick and the whole of Scotland).<sup>5</sup>

Although both manuscripts attribute the work to Bradwardine, his authorship has been questioned. Brian Fleming (1964) had reservations as did

J.A. Weisheipl (1969), and the latter did not list the treatise among Bradwardine's writings in his article in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (1983). On the other hand, Mary Carruthers (1990) maintained that internal evidence not only pointed to Bradwardine as the author but also indicated that he wrote it just after Edward III's victory at Berwick on July 20, 1333.<sup>6</sup> Such evidence may be unimportant: if Bradwardine used the technique that he described, he might have recalled the event some years after its occurrence. However, for practical purposes, I, like the scribes, attribute the treatise to Bradwardine, and suggest that these copies both belong to the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Bradwardine's intention is to demonstrate how to remember things heard (*memoria auditorum*). The procedure is the same as that for *memoria verborum*. Whereas *memoria rerum* requires one to remember only the main words or the gist of any material, *memoria verborum* or *auditorium* demands word-for-word memorization, with each word representing a picture that can be placed in its appropriate *locus*. Bradwardine appears to be familiar with an example set out in *Ad Herennium*, III.xxi.34, and he uses similar practices to create a strong visual impact through the employment of people and animals in grotesque action, ingenious word-play and colourful description.

The figure representing Berwick is not the same in both manuscripts. Although each of them is an *imago agens*, in the shorter manuscript the town is represented by a cow embraced by a bear, while in the longer manuscript a bear is held up by its tail or foot and is accompanied by the curious statement that this figure represents the first two syllables and *per consequens* the whole word.

The relevant passage in the shorter manuscript is as follows:

Ut hec oratio memorie commendetur, pone in principio primi loci sanctum benedictum, poneque a dextris eius aliquem vocatum Dominum, qui teneat alicuius vacce corium. Per vaccam illam notabitur hec diccio "qui" secundum pronunciationem borialium. Vacca amplexetur ab urso pro berewico. A sinistris sancti benedicti ponatur rex coronatus tenens anguillam;

[To commit this prayer to memory, put at the beginning of the first place St Benedict and place on his right someone called Lord, holding a cow's hide. For by that cow this word "qui" is signified according to the pronunciation in the north. For "Berwick," the cow may be embraced by a bear. On the left side of St Benedict let a crowned king be placed holding an eel.]

The king is to impose a yoke (on the vanquished).

In contrast, the instructions in the longer manuscript are complex:

Pro prima ergo dictione, si noveris aliquem benedictum nomine vel etiam sanctum Benedictum abbatem, pone in principio primi loci, et si habueris aliquem dominum tibi notum qui absoluto nomine dominus appelletur, pone eum vulneratum in facie, tractum per capillos, laceratum vel aliter conrectatum per dexteram Benedicti, vel ponas ibi sanctum Dominicum vel Domitianum (MS. "domicianum") imperatorem, vel alium tibi notum tali nomine vocitatum.

[For the first phrase, if you know anyone named Benedict, put him or St Benedict, the holy abbot, at the beginning of the first place, and if there is any lord known to you who may in actual name be called Dominus, put him wounded about the face, pulled by the hair, scratched or otherwise molested (*conrectatum*)<sup>7</sup> by the right (*dexteram*) hand of Benedict, or, if you prefer, you may put there St Dominic or the Emperor Domitian or another known to you who is called by a similar name.]

Here the images of violent action are expansions of *blessé* (wounded), a pun on "blessed." These are followed by word-play on *Dominus*.

The prescription for remembering the monosyllables "pro qui" is even more intricate, and contains some puzzling features:

Pone vaccam albissimam, cum uberibus maximis valde rubeis, erectam super pedes posteriores cuius anteriorem pedem dexterum sinistra sua tripudians teneat Benedictus; vacca vero vocatur "qui" in anglico boreali; vacca ergo in pede anteriori sinistro perdicem teneat miro modo, que hanc dictione per memorie tue dabit.

[Put a very white cow, with huge udders, extremely red, standing on its hind feet, whose right forefoot Benedict holds by his left hand and dances, for the cow is in fact called "qui" in northern England. The cow consequently may, in a wonderful way, hold a partridge in its left forefoot, which will give this word "per" to your memory.]

Bradwardine was Archbishop of Lincoln in northeast England before he became Archbishop of Canterbury and might be expected to have acquired some knowledge of the local dialect. *The Middle English Dictionary* gives "kie" only as a plural form of "cou," a fact that leads Carruthers to state that Bradwardine, being a southerner, made a mistake here in thinking the form was singular. She also maintains that Bradwardine evidently pronounced the Latin "qui" as the French *qui*, that is, as [ki] (p. 135). There is, however, another possibility. Also current in northern England was "quie," also "que," plural "quies," "quise." This word meant "a young cow" and appears to have had wider currency than "kie," one of the plural forms of "cou." *The Catholicon Anglicum*, 138b, gives "whi": *bucula, juuvenca*, but

whether Bradwardine, not being a farmer, would have known the difference between a "vacca" and a "iuvenca" is open to question. The distinction in pronunciation is made clear in a bequest dated 1462: "It is my will yat [sic] my sister have ij kye, j qwye."<sup>8</sup> The plural is pronounced [ki], the singular [kwi].

Another perplexing feature that occurs in the longer of the two manuscripts is the word "perdicem" cited above. While scribes were sometimes careless in their use of "pro" and "per," the manuscript undoubtedly reads "pro rege" and "per" in the places cited. One scholar renders "perdicem" as "predictionem" and translates it as "word-scroll" or "placard," thereby reading "per" as "pre," making an expansion, and obviating the pun.<sup>9</sup>

The partridge ("perdix") was not unfamiliar in Memory Alphabets. Here the word is used in the accusative case to make a pun on "diccionem per memorie." It also serves as a reminder of the guile which Minot and others attributed to the Scots, for the partridge was a well-known symbol of treachery.

All these images have to be crammed into the first *locus*. Next comes a king in the second *locus*:

. . . Corona ceteris magestatis regie insigniis refulgentem, vel si bene noveris ullum regem, aut aliquem vocitatum vel cognominatum regem, vel qui in aliquo ludo fuerit rex, ponas eum ibi, et teneat in dextera sua manu anguillam se plurimum agitantem, que angliam tibi dabit; sinistra vero teneat ursum per caudam vel pedem, qui in anglico duas primas sillabas huius dictionis Berwycum significet et per consequens totum nomen; ex altera parte ursi veniat Sampson fortissimus vel leo et percuciat illum ursum. Sic que fortissimum tibi figurabit.

[. . . resplendent with crown and other insignia of royalty, or if you know well any king or anyone called or surnamed "king" or who was a king in any play, you may put him there and let him hold in his right hand an eel writhing violently which will give you England, and in his left hand let him hold a bear by the tail or leg which in English signifies the first two syllables of this word Berwick, and consequently the whole name. On the other side of the bear comes mighty Samson or a lion and strikes that bear and so signifies to you "very strong."]

The rest of the sentence is reserved for the third place and is memorized by further play on words in an *imago agens* which underlines the defeat of the Scots:

. . . ibi aliquem vocatum Thomam dextera sua manu incurvantem ut bestiam vel aliquem stotum, vel aliquem sic vocatum aut cognominatum, vel aliquem

quem nosti in Scocia se strenue habuisse; sinistra vero sua iugum mirabile ponendo.

{[Put] there someone called Thomas, bending down with his right hand so that he can restrain some stot or other animal, or someone who is surnamed or named "Scot," or someone whom you know to have been active in Scotland, so that he can in truth impose on him a marvellous yoke with his left hand.]

The verbal play on "Thomam/totam" and "stotum/scotum" is obvious, and its significance would have been easily perceived by Bradwardine's readers. In northern England "stot" was a name for a horse. "Scot" was both a name of a beast of Scottish breed in northern dialect and the nickname for a horse. The entire phrase aptly expresses the complete, humiliating *subjugation* of the Scots.

Less apparent is the meaning of Bradwardine's statement in the MS. McClean 169, fol. 256<sup>r</sup> regarding the figure of the bear. Gillmeister (p. 114) thinks that the first element of the name "bere" (-wicum) "is expressly said to be disyllabic," and considers that Bradwardine is relating an important fact "for establishing the chronology of the loss of the final *e* in Middle English." Carruthers also appears to hold the view that, according to Bradwardine, "bere" is disyllabic. Neither explains why this bear is to be held by its tail or foot or why this figure not only represents the first two syllables but "per consequens totum nomen."

Yet the answer is not far to seek. The town Berwick in Middle English commonly had two syllables:

Skottes out of Berwik and of Abirdene  
Att þe Bannok burn war ze to kene,<sup>10</sup>

declares Laurence Minot in the opening lines of "Halidon Hill" (1333), and he concludes triumphantly:

He [Edward III] had his will at Berwik wele wurth þe while  
Skottes broght him þe kayes bot get for þaire gile!<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, in *The Bruce*, which John Barbour completed in 1375, Berwick, spelled Berwik or Berwyk, has two syllables, and also in *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*:

But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware  
He was ther swich another pardoner. (1.792-93)

In the longer version of Bradwardine's *Ars Memorativa* Berwick is represented by a bear held up by the end or tail (*cauda*) or the lower half or foot (*pes*).<sup>12</sup> The inference is, I believe, that "bere," pronounced without the final

“-e” is the first syllable and “-wick”, the end or tail to which it is attached, is the second. These two are the first and only syllables, and as a result they constitute the whole word.

While the evidence thus points to Berwick being pronounced as two syllables and not three, can we suggest when the medial “w” was lost and the current pronunciation of Berwick replaced [ˈbɛ:rwɪk]? It is a common principle that in a compound, when a loss of stress on the final syllable occurs, phonetic change may also take place, hence Keswick, pronounced [ˈkɛzɪk], with the primary stress on the first syllable, total loss of the medial “w,” and a very weak stress on the second syllable. Today the place-names Warwick, Keswick, Norwich, Greenwich, Dulwich, Chiswick, Woolwich, and Southwark are pronounced without the medial “w”; Saltwich, Sandwich, Droitwich, Prestwick, Gatwick, Alnwick, Hardwick, and Nantwich retain it. In most of the names in the second group the medial “w” follows a voiced or voiceless dental stop. Clearly Berwick belongs to the first group.

How Chaucer pronounced Berwick we do not know. Southwark in *The General Prologue*, 1.20, is commonly pronounced without the medial “w” by present-day Chaucerians; Kōkertiz gives [ˈsuðɔrk] accompanied by the note “perhaps still [ˈsu:θwɔrk].” (However, one might argue that this example is irrelevant since the second syllable is derived from “works” or fortifications.) In the Prologue to *The Reeve’s Tale*, 1.3907, the “w” in Greenwich appears to have been retained: (“Lo, Grenewich ther many a shrewe is inne.”).

A possible clue to the pronunciation of Berwick may exist in the animal figure in the shorter version of Bradwardine’s treatise. Here Berwick is represented by a cow embraced by a bear. No explanation is given and the mnemonic concludes in the next sentence with the familiar pun on *anguilla* and Anglia. The cow appears earlier in the text and, as in the other manuscript, the northern English form of *vacca* is said to be *qui* (see *MED* sv. *quie*, n.), presumably pronounced [kwɪ] or [kɪ]. Also worth noting is the difference in the Latin spelling of Berwick. Whereas the other scribe omits the medial “e”, this scribe gives *Berewycum*, possibly indicating an awareness of the difference between the written and oral form. In colloquial language, words in the fourteenth and fifteenth century began to show the modern tendency to reduce unstressed vowels to [ə] or [ɪ]. In the change, the final syllable would receive a very weak stress. This scribe’s use of an unusually contracted animal figure and his adherence to the northern form (originally a pun on the third word of the prayer), may point to a further change in the pronunciation of Berwick. The “w” was lost: there is no figure for it in the text. The reader is asked to remember “ber(e)” and “qui” only.

With the final unstressed vowel inevitably absorbed into the explosive articulation of the previous voiceless stop, the modern pronunciation of Berwick emerges: ['berik] or ['berək].

While Bradwardine's instructions for remembering a sentence follow the guidelines provided by the author of *Ad Herennium*, the results show that representing every kind of word by an image can be a difficult task. The earlier writer maintained that "memoria verborum" was nevertheless essential:

Nec nos hanc verborum memoriam inducimus ut versus meminisse possimus, sed ut hac exercitatione illa rerum memoria quae pertinet ad utilitatem confirmetur, ut ab hac difficili consuetudine sine labore ad illam facultatem transire possimus.

[Nor have I included memorization of words to enable us to get verse by rote, but rather as an exercise whereby to strengthen that other kind of memory, the memory of things, which is of practical use. Thus we may without effort pass from this difficult training to ease in that other memory.]<sup>13</sup>

Whether we now feel our memories sharpened by Bradwardine's demonstration is debatable, but we have witnessed a phenomenon only too familiar to most Chaucerians. Indeed, it may have just been repeated. For while Bradwardine's zeal in providing exact word-for-word memorization contributes a variety of information, it also serves as an example of scholarly enthusiasm so maniacal that it overrides all practical considerations.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Professor Margaret Jennings for her generous advice and unfailing interest with regard to my work on Bishop Bradwardine's "De Memoria Artificiali."

<sup>2</sup> *MED.*, ed. Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kühn (Ann Arbor, Mich.: 1952-) s.v. ber(e)wik n. Eilert Ekwall, *Old English -wic in Place-names*, rpt. (Uppsala: Lundequistna, 1964); *The Concise Dictionary to English Place-Names*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> *The Parson's Tale*, CT X, 57; Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> See also Heiner Gillmeister, "An Intriguing Fourteenth Century Document," *Archiv* 220 (1983): 111-14. A second "r" in "Berewycum" is expunged.

<sup>5</sup> The transcription and translation (with a few amendments) are from my two previous publications: "Bishop Bradwardine, the Artificial Memory, and *The House of Fame*," in *Chaucer at Albany*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Franklin, 1975), pp. 55-62 (appendixed to an article suggesting that Chaucer demonstrated the art in

*The House of Fame*); "Bishop Bradwardine on the Artificial Memory," *JWCI* 41 (1978): 307-12. Mary Carruthers (at n. 3), 281-88, publishes a translation of the same MS.

<sup>6</sup> Fleming, *Thomas de Bradwardine* [sic] (Louvain, 1964) II, 112; Weisheipl, "Reperitorium Mertonense," *MS* 31 (1969): 182; *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer et al (New York: Scribner, 1983) II, 357-59; Carruthers (at n. 3) 350.

<sup>7</sup> Carruthers (at n. 3) 287, translates *contrectatum* as "caressed." In context, the image is one of violence.

<sup>8</sup> *MED*. s.v. quie n.; *The Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, ed. Sir William A. Craigie et al. (London: Oxford UP, 1990) VII. s.v. quy, quey (with variants); *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, ed. John Jamieson (1870) rpt. (New York: AMS Press, 1966) IV iii. s.v. quey . . . whye. The *MED* cites examples from Lincolnshire and York.

<sup>9</sup> Carruthers (at n. 3) 287, 137.

<sup>10</sup> British Library MS (ca. 1400-25), Cotton Galba E ix, fol. 52<sup>v</sup>, left-hand col.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. W.W. Skeat, *EETS*, e.s., 11, 55, 21, 29, 4 vols. 1870-89. Eg. *Berwik* xv. 325, 332, 343; xvii. 909; xix. 39; xx. 114, 318; *Berwyk* xv. 402, 435, xx. 60, 83 etc.

<sup>12</sup> D. Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (1610-88), new ed. (1883-87) II; *A Revised Medieval Latin Word-list*, prep. R.E. Latham (London: Oxford UP, 1965), s.v. *cauda*, *pes*.

<sup>13</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium, libri IV*, ed. and trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1954) III, xxiv. That Bradwardine should not have read this work is most unlikely. The numerous manuscripts ascribed this work to 'Tullius' and it was commonly associated with Cicero's *De inventione*.