The Romances of British Library, Cotton Vitellius D.III

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Although severely damaged in the infamous Cotton Library fire at Ashburnham House,[1] Vitellius D.III still presents a telling witness to its compilation and use. On the basis of its twenty-six extant folia and the catalogues made of Sir Robert Cotton's collection before the fire, valuable information may be gleaned about this important thirteenth-century miscellany and its Latin, French, and English contents. Amongst the over 150 extant manuscripts containing Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances,[2] Cotton Vitellius D.III is the only one known to have contained an English and a French romance within the same codex, namely the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* and the Anglo-Norman *Amis et Amiloun*. The occurrence of these two texts in the same manuscript raises interesting questions about early practices of vernacular manuscript production and about the degree of interplay between England's two vernaculars during this transitional period, but this miscellany is not all that it seems. I will argue that the contents and arrangement of this presumed medieval miscellany do adhere to a schema of organization, but that it is in fact the product of Sir Robert Cotton's program of purposeful dismemberment and rearrangement of the manuscripts he received into his collection. Vitellius D.III does preserve some elements of an actual medieval miscellany, but its later history is equally revealing

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1 For an account of the Cotton Library fire, see *A Report from the Committee Appointed to View the Cottonian Library, And Such of the Publick Records of this Kingdom as they think proper, and to Report to the House the Condition thereof, together with what they shall judge fit to be done for the better Reception, Preservation, and more convenient Use of the same* (London, 1732).

2 Ruth J. Dean lists at least fifty manuscripts containing Anglo-Norman romances in her *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts* (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1999). Gisela Guddat-Figge lists nearly one hundred manuscripts containing Middle English romances in her *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976).

about post-medieval uses of miscellanies and the problems inherent in (mis)reading them.

Although several catalogues of the Cottonian collection were made in the years before the fire, the 1696 print catalogue published by Thomas Smith, the librarian to Sir John Cotton, grandson of the library's founder Sir Robert, provides an especially complete picture of the collection.[3] The entry for Vitellius D.III lists ten items, encompassing a wide variety of texts.

1. *De fundatione Abbatiæ de Fiscamps in Normannia, h.e., Fiscanensis, de trunco sanguinis Christi ibidem invento, et de portione ejusdem sanguinis, per Episcopum Norwicensem advecta.* 1r.
2. *Liber de via bona; sive de bello sacro cruce signatorum. Initium: 'Cum jam appropinquasset ille terminus, quem Dominus quotidie suis demonstrat fidelibus, atque spiritualiter in Ecclesia dicens, si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me, facta est motio valida in universis Galliarum regionibus, ut,' etc.* 7v.
3. *Versus de historiis sacris veteris et novi Testamenti, veteri lingua Gallicana.* 49r.
4. *Versus de amoribus Florisii juvenis et Blanchefloræ puellæ, lingua veteri Anglicana.* 60r.
5. *Gesta Amysii et Amylonis, versibus Gallicanis.* 78r.
6. *Meditationes piæ et preces de Jesu et Maria; ejus passione, aliisque, versibus Gallicanis.* 85r.
7. *Expositio Kalendarii, sive de ratione dierum, mensium, et anni, de festis diebus, aliisque ad computum Ecclesiasticum spectantibus, per Randulphum de Lynham, anno 1256, ut patet ex p. 56 b. rhythmis Gallicanis.* 90v.[4]
8. *Versus Gallicani de upupa, pelecano, aliisque.* 96v.
9. *Expositiones quædam sive commentaria in Macrobii Saturnalia.* 98r.
10. *Liber pentachronon; i.e. quinque temporum futurorum; compilatus de prophetiis B. Hildegardis Virginis, quæ cæperunt anno D. 1100, cum epistola et etiam prologo Gebenonis, Prioris Cistrensis, ad Reymundum Scholasticum et Reynerum, Canonicos S. Stephani in Maguntia de vita et libris illius Virginis.* 197r.

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3 Thomas Smith, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, 1696 (Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Cottoniae)*, ed. Colin G.C. Tite (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984). This catalogue was supplemented by Smith's successor, David Casley, who provided the folia on which the items began for publication in the 1732 report presented to Parliament about the library fire. I have given the contents of Vitellius D.III as listed in Smith's catalogue, along with the folio numbers listed by Casley.

4 If Casley's folia numbers are right, Smith's statement about Rauf de Linham being identified as the author of item 7 and 1256 as the year in which it was written must be incorrect.

The first item presents a Latin account of the foundation of Fécamp Abbey in Normandy, focusing especially on the origins of a relic of Christ's blood at the abbey. Following in a similarly religious strain, the next item may, on the basis of the provided incipit, be identified as Petrus Tudebodus' account of the First Crusade, the *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*.[5] The third item consists of French verse retellings of stories from the Bible. The fourth and fifth items are, respectively, the romances *Floris and Blancheflour* in Middle English and *Amis et Amiloun* in French. The sixth item is a collection of French meditations and prayers to Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The seventh item is the French *computus* text in verse by Rauf de Linham. This item also provides a *terminus post quem* for Vitellius D.III since the poem gives its date of composition as 1256. The eighth item appears to comprise selections from a French verse bestiary, including entries about the hoopoe and pelican. The ninth item and the longest by far is a Latin commentary on Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. The final item is Prior Gebeno of Eberbach's *Pentachronon*, a work based on selections from Hildegard von Bingen's prophetic writings. Of these ten items, only three items have survived and none in its entirety: (a) five folia of item 3, the French versified biblical stories; (b) three folia from item 4, *Floris and Blancheflour*; and (c) eighteen folia from item 9, the commentaries on Macrobius' *Saturnalia*.

Aided by Smith's catalogue and these extant fragments, previous scholarship on Vitellius D.III has recognized the manuscript as a potential missing link in our understanding of insular literature, multilingualism, and book production. In his edition of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*, Emil Hausknecht concludes that the manuscript may be dated to the latter half of the thirteenth century on the basis of available evidence, which makes it one of the earliest extant manuscripts containing a Middle English romance.[6] Gisela Guddat-Figge fine-tunes this date further, suggesting 1275 for the manuscript's composition in her *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*. She is also the first to draw attention to the uniqueness of its contents: "flanked by

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5 Paul Meyer, "Fragments d'une ancienne histoire de Marie et de Jésus en laisses monorimes (Musée Brit. Cott. Vit. D.III)," *Romania* 16 (1887): 250.

6 Emil Hausknecht, ed., *Floris and Blauncheflur: Mittelenglisches Gedicht aus dem 13. Jahrhundert nebst litterarischer Untersuchung und einem Abriss über die Verbreitung der Sage in der europäischen Litteratur* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885), 94–95.

Bible stories and pious meditations appear *Floris and Blaunchefluر* (in English) and *Amis and Amiloun* (French). This is the only case I know of where a French and an English romance occur in one and the same MS."[7] Drawing upon Guddat-Figge's research, Andrew Taylor points to this juxtaposition of a French and an English romance as an indication not only of the pivotal role the manuscript plays in our knowledge of the linguistic transition from French to English as the vernacular language of choice, as evidenced by *Floris and Blancheflour*'s near word-for-word translation of its Anglo-Norman forbear, but also of the "transition from commercial copying of Anglo-Norman to commercial copying of Middle English."[8] In terms of its dimensions, he notes, Vitellius D.III is larger than many Anglo-Norman miscellanies and resembles the larger miscellanies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 19.2.1). The manuscript, as such, provides a unique witness to the production of multilingual miscellanies during the thirteenth century.

There can be no question about the identification of Vitellius D.III as a miscellany: its assemblage of diverse texts speaks to that. After all, here one finds within a single codex: a monastic chronicle, an account of the First Crusade, vernacular retellings of the Bible, two romances, devotional prayers, a calendar, selections from a bestiary, commentaries on a classical text, and a prophetic work concerned with the end of the world. What is more, the texts do not even share a common language, most of them being written in either Latin (four texts) or French (five texts) with the sole exception of the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour*. This mix is not unusual, though. England's unique linguistic patchwork may easily account for such a linguistically diverse assemblage of texts. This same linguistic and generic diversity is evident in other multilingual English

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7 Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 180. However, this is not to say that it is the only manuscript that contains a French and an English romance. Bodleian Library, Bodley 264, for example, contains a copy of the French *Roman d'Alexandre*, an extract from version B of the Middle English *Alexander*, and Marco Polo's *Livres du Graunt Caan*, but it is a composite manuscript. The *Roman d'Alexandre*, was copied and illuminated in Flanders in 1338 and later brought to England, where the two remaining texts were added around 1400 (Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 252–55). Vitellius D.III's distinction lies in the fact that its romances appear to have been bound together from its inception.

8 Andrew Taylor, "Manual to Miscellany: Stages in the Commercial Copying of Vernacular Literature in England," *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 16.

miscellanies. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 86; Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.39; and London, British Library, Arundel 292 all contain Latin, French, and English items and date from around the last quarter of the thirteenth century, making them contemporaneous with Vitellius D.III.[9] When viewed alongside these other late thirteenth-century multilingual miscellanies, Vitellius D.III looks very much the part of the medieval miscellany on the basis of its linguistic and generic make-up.

The unity in variety displayed by the manuscript's linguistic and generic contents is also mirrored in its thematic unity, for Vitellius D.III has an overarching religious tone both in its individual parts and as a whole.[10] Though I would hesitate to argue that the manuscript's items follow a narrative flow, there does appear to be some effort to group the texts according to a chronological framework which echoes the trajectory of Christian salvation history. The first three items—the story of the foundation of the abbey at Fécamp, the Crusades narrative, and the French renderings of stories from the Old and New Testaments—look to times in the past when God's hand has evidenced itself in human history. Although it is difficult to know for certain what biblical stories item 3 included,[11] the remaining fragments relate an apocryphal story about the wood used for Christ's cross, the Nativity, and prophecies concerning the Messiah's advent and the births of St. Anne and the Virgin Mary. The common thread linking these events is their ultimate fruition in Christ's crucifixion. The Fécamp chronicle describes in particular the discovery of a phial of Christ's blood, a Norman variation on the legend of the Holy Grail that developed surrounding Joseph of Arimathea and Glastonbury

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9 For a discussion of how language is used to structure these early English miscellanies, see John Scahill, "Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature," *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 18–32.

10 On the miscellaneity of English miscellanies, see Ralph R. Hanna, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 37–51; and Derek Pearsall, "The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters," in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 17–29.

11 In his article, Meyer argues that the Vitellius D. III text for item 3 must have been incomplete since the folia it would have occupied (supplied by Casley) would not have sufficed for a complete spiritual history drawing upon the Old and New Testaments. However, it is also possible that the text was much more limited in scope and only included selections from this material.

Abbey. For its part, Petrus Tudebodus' *Historia* describes the First Crusade in which Jerusalem was captured, supplying not only a martial victory for the Crusaders, but also a spiritual one in which the city, a relic in its own right as the site of the events which allowed for the redemption of humanity, was regained.

The pious thread binding the codex together continues with items 4 through 9, but the temporal focus shifts from the historical past and centers instead upon the present, a time for instructing the laity with models of exemplary behavior and other didactic texts. The no-longer extant meditations and prayers about Mary and Jesus urge on the daily devotion of the faithful. They stand out as the most explicitly religious of these items, but even the romances included in this volume possess a pious cast. *Floris and Blancheflour* tells the story of a pagan prince and a Christian girl who fall in love with one another, while the testing of male friendship in *Amis et Amiloun* comes to a crux with the murder of Amis' children to cure Amiloun's leprosy, a story of sacrifice reminiscent of Abraham and Isaac. It is unclear whether the selections from the bestiary noted by Smith in his catalogue come from any of the extant French bestiaries, like that of Philippe de Thaün, but the nature of the bestiary format entails that the behaviors of the hoopoe and the pelican, mentioned explicitly by Smith, present exempla for instruction and moralization. In the bestiary tradition, the hoopoe's concern for its parents offers a model for the care of the elderly, while the sacrifice of the pelican for its young recalls Jesus' crucifixion and his redemption of humanity's sins. Rauf de Linham's *Kalender*, item 7, joins itself to the pious thread as an instructional text for determining the date of Easter, a means of dividing sacred and profane time. The commentaries on Macrobius' *Saturnalia* also speak to this section's didactic purpose since Macrobius was often cited during the Middle Ages as an *auctoritas* and his *Saturnalia* may be seen as an encyclopedia of knowledge about ancient Roman culture.[12]

The last item, the *Liber Pentachronon*, forms the final section of the manuscript. In its prophecies about the end times, it looks ahead to the future and adds an eschatological element to the codex. Hildegard von Bingen's prophecies about the Antichrist, filtered through the compiler Prior Gebeno, complement the manuscript's first item, the story of Fécamp and the discovery of a phial of Christ's blood there. The manu-

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[12] Douglas Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting, and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 13-15.

script juxtaposes the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross, through which humanity was redeemed, with the advent of the Antichrist, whose arrival will signal the Apocalypse and the final chapter in salvation history. The placement of these items, in effect, codicologically pits Jesus against his final adversary and emphasizes the salvific trajectory of the manuscript as a whole. Despite their diverse subjects and genres, each text can be linked together in a chain which ultimately finds its beginning in Christ.

It is tempting to read Vitellius D.III in this way, to see its contents as interconnected, organized, and linked by a common narrative that speaks to its identification as a unified thirteenth-century miscellany. But for all of the unity this narrative brings to the diverse linguistic and generic elements of this manuscript and its potential significance, the object physically binding these items does not ultimately support such a claim, as closer inspection of the manuscript itself makes clear. Other scholars working on this manuscript have hinted at the possibility that its contents may not have always been bound together. Paul Meyer concludes "certainement" that Vitellius D.III had consisted of formerly independent items that were later bound together.[13] Disagreeing with an earlier editor's suggestion that the French biblical verses and *Floris and Blancheflour* are written in the same hand,[14] Meyer contends that the three extant items are actually written in three distinct hands datable to three different periods. In this same vein, Guddat-Figge proposes that Vitellius D.III is the only manuscript in which a French and an English romance occur together "with due caution" and raises the possibility that "various MSS. may have been bound together."[15] Meyer and Guddat-Figge are right to suggest that Vitellius D.III may be a composite manuscript, a possibility that must always already be considered when discussing medieval miscellanies. The miscellany is an ever-mutable object—made up of booklets sewn together, other booklets may easily be added to it or removed from it.[16] This possibility of growth and change is part of what makes miscellanies so miscellaneous and why we must be

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13 Meyer, "Fragments," 251.

14 G.H. McKnight, ed., *King Horn, Floriz and Blauncheflur, The Assumption of Our Lady*, Early English Text Society o.s. 14 (London: Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1901), xliii.

15 Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 180.

16 Booklets may be added or removed as long as the manuscript has been softbound or its binding has been removed and rebound.

all the more careful about misreading them by failing to be alert to evidence of change. Confirming the doubts raised by Meyer and Guddat-Figge, my reexamination of the extant codicological and paleographical evidence brings to light the guiding hand of Cotton Vitellius D.III's early modern compiler: Sir Robert Cotton.

Admittedly, the evidence the fire left behind is not much to go on. The smoke blackened the pages and the heat of the fire caused the vellum to contract and the fat within the pages to bubble out, thereby rendering the leaves which remained from Vitellius D.III distorted and very difficult to read.[17] Any binding that survived the fire would have been removed when the manuscript's leaves were individually mounted in the paper frames they are in today. As noted above, remnants of three items (3, 4, and 9) have survived. Given the effects of the fire, it is difficult to determine how large the manuscript's pages may have once been or even the original size of the script. In their present shrunken state, most of the leaves are hardly larger than one's hand. The biblical verses and *Floris and Blancheflour* maintain a common two-column layout, with the first letter of each line separated by a small space from the rest of the line and touched with red ink for added emphasis, while the prose commentaries on the *Saturnalia* are written in a single column, with some glossing in the margins. Red two-line initials can be found throughout all three items. As noted by Meyer, each of the preserved texts also has a different scribe. The French biblical verses are copied in a late thirteenth-century Gothic (rotunda) hand with Anglicana features.[18] The script used to copy *Floris and Blancheflour* is thinner than that used in the biblical text, but maintains many of the same blended Gothic and Anglicana features.[19] While the hands of the two previous scribes possess transitional features, the hand of the third scribe may be more correctly identified as early fourteenth century Anglicana.[20]

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17 Andrew Prescott, "'Their present miserable state of cremation': The Restoration of the Cotton Library," in *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and his Legacy*, ed. C. J. Wright (London: British Library, 1997), 391–454.

18 Its features include the two-compartment *a* whose upper bowl extends above most of the other letters and the two-compartment, 8-shaped *g*.

19 The Gothic features of this hand are the short-stemmed *r*, and *f* and long *s* do not descend below the baseline. Its Anglicana features are the two-compartment *a* and *g*.

20 The features of this hand are the two-compartment *a*, uncial *d* with looped ascender, long-stemmed *r*, and sigma-shaped *s*.

The remnants of Vitellius D.III present us with three different texts, in three different languages, and in three distinct hands, at least one of which may be dated, on the basis of paleographical evidence, to a later period. The presence of a later item need not rule out the possibility that the items were intended to be joined together. The very nature of the medieval miscellany as a process of compilation and as the end-product of such a process of compilation provides for the occurrence of things which we, looking back at these manuscripts hundreds of years later, might perceive as aberrations from an expected form. Vitellius D.III is clearly a product of accretion, but it is hard to say whether its constituent pieces were specifically copied into a manuscript over the course of time to create a single whole or the individual items were all brought together randomly at a later date. The evidence that the bindings and quires might have provided—such as whether multiple items were copied in a single quire, how they were arranged, or what scripts the manuscript's other items were written in—all of which would give some indication of how the manuscript came together, has been lost to the fire.

In the absence of such information, Vitellius D.III does nevertheless retain clear indications of its status as a non-medieval miscellany compiled by Sir Robert Cotton, the seventeenth-century statesman and book collector who will always remain notorious in the opinion of some scholars for his dismemberment of the medieval manuscripts that entered his collection.[21] He, or persons working under his orders, often removed their bindings, dispersed their contents, and created new manuscripts organized according to frameworks altogether different from the ones that had earlier housed them.[22] Close inspection of Vitellius D.III's remaining leaves reveals a series of majuscule letters which point to Cotton's handiwork. At the bottom of folia 9r, 15r, and 26r, the letters *Q*, *R*, and *W*, respectively, may be found. The letters are in a decidedly non-medieval hand, and the *R*, in its rightwards-slant; the extension of the stem above the rest of the letter; the hooked extension of the top of the

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[21] James P. Carley and Colin G. C. Tite, "Sir Robert Cotton as Collector of Manuscripts and the Question of Dismemberment: British Library MSS Royal 13 D.I and Cotton Otho D.VIII," *The Library* 14, no. 2 (1992): 94–99.

[22] For a discussion of how Cotton reordered the manuscripts that entered his collection, see Colin G. C. Tite, *The Manuscript Library of Sir Robert Cotton* (London: British Library, 1994), 45-47, and Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 68-70.

upper bowl beyond the stem; and the addition of a foot at the bottom of the stem, bears an incredible likeness to Robert Cotton's own hand.[23] Letters like these have been found in other manuscripts in Cotton's collection—he added them to the first leaf of each quire as an aid to his binders so that they could assemble the folia in the proper order.[24] The presence of these letters in Vitellius D.III lends credence to prior misgivings about its possibly composite nature: Cotton has undeniably had a hand in compiling this manuscript.

But this need not mean that it has been cobbled together haphazardly; if anything the presence of Cotton's own handwriting in this manuscript suggests the great care he took in assembling it. It has been estimated that "barely half" of the books in Cotton's library remained in the states in which they had entered his collection, a fact which speaks to the extent of his efforts as a compiler.[25] Although there does not always appear to be a clear rhyme or reason governing these re-fashioned compilations, Jennifer Summit has shown how Cotton appropriated the *compilatio* techniques used in the manuscripts of medieval chronicles and saints' lives in his collection to create codices which situated the material from these Catholic texts within a narrative history of the Protestant Reformation and Britain.[26] She points in particular to his use of chronology as the primary means by which he organized these manuscripts.[27] Although Summit speaks here especially with regard to Cotton's use of historical and semi-historical chronicles and hagiographies, these same means of imposing order upon diverse materials may be seen at work in Vitellius D.III. The miscellany Cotton has crafted follows a roughly chronological framework, its selection of texts codicologically mapping out the history of salvation I charted in the first half of this paper. Cotton uses these medieval, Catholic, and insular texts to narrate a British story of Christian salvation which is acutely aware of the French, English, and Latin stories that have contributed to its telling. Moreover, the contents of Vitellius D.III and their arrangement also illustrate Cotton's knowledge of an insular codicological institution: the multilingual miscellany. He

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23 For examples of Sir Robert Cotton's signature, see Tite, *Manuscript Library*, 8–9.

24 Ibid., 46. See figure 15 (ibid.) for an example of one of Cotton's binding letters in Caligula A.VII.

25 Ibid., 45.

26 Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 136–96.

27 Ibid., 148.

brought together these disparate texts, crafting from them a trilingual miscellany that, for all intents and purposes, resembled actual trilingual miscellanies, in language distribution and contents, produced in England during the latter half of the thirteenth century. To turn a phrase, it is the very model of a medieval insular miscellany. But we need not think of Robert Cotton as an early modern Dr. Frankenstein, destroying medieval manuscripts and stitching them together in a haphazard manner to create abominations against bibliographical norms. Though we may balk at his method, he, like ourselves, is a post-medieval reader of these texts, and the arrangement and contents of Vitellius D.III stand as testaments to how he read these items, to the value he placed in them, and to his own interpretation of the medieval miscellany as a way of organizing information.

We may lament the loss of the thirteenth-century miscellany that might have been, but all is not lost when it comes to Vitellius D.III's juxtaposition of an English and a French romance. It does preserve some elements of a real medieval miscellany. From extant catalogues and records of acquisitions for Cotton's collection, we can determine that items 4, 5, and 6—that is, *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Amis et Amiloun*, and the French prayers and meditations to Jesus and the Virgin Mary—were formerly bound together and in the same order, no less, in a manuscript belonging to Henry Savile of Banke, a Yorkshire manuscript collector (1568–1617).[28] Cotton purchased this manuscript, along with about eighty or so others, from Savile's estate sometime after Savile's death and before 1621, since it appears in an early catalogue of Cotton's collection compiled in that year.[29]

The manuscript (number 118 in the catalogue of Savile's collection preserved in British Library, Additional 35213), like Vitellius D.III, was a trilingual miscellany and contained items of a religious disposition.[30] The texts bound in Vitellius D.III formed the last three items of Savile's manuscript. The first three items were: a religious text, in Latin, concerning

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28 See Colin G. C. Tite, *The Early Records of Sir Robert Cotton's Library: Formation, Cataloguing, Use* (London: British Library, 2003), 165 and the entry for Manuscript 118 in Andrew G. Watson, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile of Banke* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1969), 41–42.

29 London, British Library, Harley 6018, fol. 56.

30 Watson estimates that the Additional catalogue dates from before 1612 (*Manuscripts*, 13).

the accusation made before Pilate against Jesus;[31] Pseudo-Methodius' apocalyptically-minded history of the world, also in Latin; and a French verse version of the *Letter of Prester John*.[32] An earlier catalogue of Savile's collection (London, British Library, Harley 1879, fol. 1r–10v) lists as its first item "Galfredus Monumentis," ostensibly referring to an unnamed work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, suggesting the possibility that Savile, like Cotton, may have tried his hand at rearranging the manuscripts in his collection.[33] This, however, could be a mistake[34] and the practice of dismembering manuscripts has never been connected with Savile, about whom very little is known.[35] At the very least, regardless of what the first item in Savile's Manuscript 118 may have been, it still preserves the unique pairing of an English and a French romance, as well as the French prayers and meditations. Though Cotton and Savile, if he also rearranged his manuscripts, as avid collectors may have recognized the uniqueness of this juxtaposition and actively made an effort to preserve it, it is also possible and seems more likely that these three items survived one or possibly two re-compilations because they formed a booklet unit. Unfortunately, the current state of Vitellius D.III prevents the verification of this, but it would account for the continued concurrence of these three items during three centuries' of reassembling and rebinding.

Through all of these tumults, the juxtaposition of an English and a French romance remains to problematize our understanding of the genre of romance and the audience(s) of these texts. The word *romance* began as a term denoting difference—something written "en romanz"

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31 I have not been able to identify this more precisely. It could be a mystery play.

32 Martin Gosman, ed., *La Lettre du Prêtre Jean: Les versions en ancient français et en ancient Occitan* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1982). There are two extant copies of the *Letter of Prester John* in French verse, but the great majority of its French versions are in prose, of which there are twenty-three copies.

33 Watson estimates that the Harley catalogue was compiled before 1607 (*Manuscripts*, 14). The list, compiled by Savile, fell into the hands of Cotton who seems to have used it as a wish list, putting marks next to the texts he wanted to acquire.

34 In his edition of the Additional catalogue, J.P. Gilson notes the "imperfect descriptions" of the two Savile catalogues: "The Library of Henry Savile, of Banke," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* (1906–08): 132.

35 Watson writes: "[S]o little is known about Henry Savile that he remains hardly more than a name whereby to distinguish his collection from that of other men" (*Manuscripts*, 1). Those of Savile's manuscripts which have been tracked down show little evidence of having been used by him (Ibid., 9).

was written in the vernacular, specifically in French, not in Latin. This connotation of linguistic difference necessarily carried with it a sense of social difference, initially distinguishing the learned clergy from the laity, and later becoming associated with France and courtly culture. *Romance* was also a term used to express generic difference: a romance was a poem in the vernacular enjoyed by the laity, filled with courageous knights, lascivious ladies, and daring deeds.[36] But the miscellany setting of these romances challenges the inherent alterity of romance, stressing instead the sameness between seemingly disparate categories. Placed amongst religious works, the pious elements of *Floris and Blancheflour* and *Amis et Amiloun* shine forth more brightly and highlight the ambiguous genre tendencies of both texts. Their miscellany setting also suggests that the people who read these poems in this context were not two distinct audiences, but one audience, reflecting the ability amongst some segments of the population to fluidly alternate between the vernaculars spoken and read in England during this period.[37] At the same time, we must be cautious about what general conclusions we draw from this juxtaposition—Savile's Manuscript 118/Cotton's Vitellius D.III is the *only* medieval insular manuscript that contained romances in England's two primary vernaculars. Although we cannot account for the other manuscripts like it that may have been lost, it is also among the very few insular French and English miscellany manuscripts containing romances which include items in the other vernacular, which is to say that there are not many French romance manuscripts that contain English items, nor many English romance manuscripts that contain French items.[38]

The insights these romances provide into genre categorization and insular multilingualism are only part of the story Vitellius D.III can tell us. Although I have shown that this manuscript is not the thirteenth-

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36 On the range of meanings associated with the word *romance*, see N.E. Griffin, "The Definition of Romance," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 38 (1923): 55–56; and Paul Strohm, "The Origin and Meaning of Middle English *Romaunce*," *Genre* 10, no. 1 (1977): 1–7.

37 On multilingualism in medieval England, see, for example, Ian Short, "On Bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England," *Romance Philology* 33, no. 4 (1980): 467–79.

38 Other romance manuscripts containing French and English materials include: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 264; London, British Library, Harley 2253; London, British Library, Royal 12 C. XII; and Longleat House, 55 ("The Red Book of Bath").

century miscellany previous scholars have presumed it to be, it is no less valuable for this revelation. The part Sir Robert Cotton had in arranging the contents of Vitellius D.III, the possible role that Henry Savile may have played in manipulating his Manuscript 118, and the post-medieval fates of *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Amis et Amiloun*, and the French versified biblical stories present us with a cautionary tale and alert us to the many critical problems which must be dealt with when studying medieval miscellanies and their miscellaneity. What so often begins as the study of one miscellany is very likely to become that of multiple miscellanies.

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies:
Composition, Authorship, Use

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SONDERBAND XXXI

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies: Composition, Authorship, Use

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