

THE AVOWING OF KING ARTHUR

Roger Dahood

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Volume 4

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Roger Dahood



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Abbreviations

a.	adjective	nr.	number
adv.	adverb	OE	Old English
AF	Anglo French	<i>OED</i>	Murray, ed. <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
aph.	aphetic	OF	Old French
aux.	auxiliary	OI	Old Icelandic
conj.	conjunction	ON	Old Norse
dat.	dative	ONF	Old Northern French
gen.	genitive		
ger.	gerund	pa.	past
Gmc.	Germanic	part.	participle
inf.	infinitive	pl.	plural
imper.	imperative	poss.	possessive
infl.	influenced	prec.	preceding
L	Latin	prep.	preposition
LOE	Late Old English	pres.	present
MDu.	Middle Dutch	prob.	probably
ME	Middle English	Pr. OE	Primitive Old English
<i>MED</i>	Kurath and Kuhn, eds., <i>Middle English Dictionary</i>	pron.	pronoun
MHG	Middle High German	Prov.	Provençal
ML	Medieval Latin	refl.	reflexive
MLG	Middle Low German	Rem.	Remark
ModE	Modern English	sg.	singular
n.	note, noun	subj.	subjunctive
Nhb.	Northumbrian	s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i>
nom.	nominative	vb.	verb
		WS	West Saxon

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Introduction

The Manuscript

The Ireland Blackburne MS takes its name from its nineteenth-century owner, J. Ireland Blackburne of Hale Hall, Lancashire. Nothing is known of the early history of the manuscript, but internal evidence discussed below suggests that from at least as early as the sixteenth century it was at Hale. In 1945 it was sold through Sotheby's to Martin Bodmer of Geneva (Doyle, p. 69), in whose library it remained until 1971, when it was acquired by the booksellers H. Kraus, New York. It is now in the Robert H. Taylor Collection, Princeton, New Jersey. Nancy N. Coffin, curator of the Taylor Collection, has informed me that the manuscript was acquired from Kraus on September 24, 1973.

The manuscript, of membrane, measuring approximately 27.5 by 19 cm, is a composite. At the front are the stubs of a now missing gathering. The surviving gatherings fall into two groups, originally separate. The first group, containing three Middle English romances (*Awntyrs of Arthur*, *Sir Amadace*, and *The Avowing of Arthur*), consists of five gatherings, each of six bifolia, for a total of sixty leaves. Folio 16, containing the opening of *Amadace*, has been cut from the manuscript; a note in the hand of James A. H. Murray, calling attention to the lacuna, has been inserted into the manuscript between fols. 15 and 17. The outer margins of fols. 20, 34, and 39 have been cropped without damage to the text. The outside top corner of fol. 59 has been torn away and the lower outer margin sliced away without damage to the text. Folio 60 has a ragged tear along its top. The bottom margins of fols. 12, 13, 31, 32, 33, and 38 have been cropped to the extent that the tips of descenders in the bottom lines of text are missing. In addition, when the cropper cut away the bottoms of fols. 31 and 38, his knife

penetrated fols. 25-30 and 35-37 but without damaging the text. Knife cuts are also visible on fol. 59, but again the text is undamaged. On many folios a later hand has penciled in crosses at the beginnings or ends of lines of verse (e.g., fols. 36^r13, 18; 36^v7, 8, 11, 22). In the outer margin of fol. 39^r in a large, cursive script much later than the main hand is written *Anno D*, offset on fol. 38^v. Additional letters of the marginal inscription have been cropped and cannot be confidently identified, but vestiges remain both on fol. 39^r and in the offset. The offsets appear to have been made when the ink was fresh, for many of the strokes on fol. 39^r, especially of the *D*, are blurred. The offset of *Anno*, furthermore, must have been made separately from that of *D*, etc., for the offsets cannot be lined up simultaneously with both originals. The writer appears to have written *Anno*, pressed it against fol. 38^v, which he used in the manner of a blotter pad, then written *D*, etc., and pressed only the *D*, etc., against fol. 38^v, presumably to avoid smudging the previously written *Anno*. In the outer margin of fol. 53^r a hand not the main scribe's wrote the alphabet in capitals made with broad strokes, but some of the letters were lost when the folio was cropped.

The first gathering has no signature. Each of the middle gatherings has a signature at the beginning and at the end. The last gathering has a signature only at the beginning. Beginning signatures appear in the top left margins, end signatures in the bottom right, as follows:

Gathering	Beginning Signature	End Signature
2	B (fol. 13 ^r)	C (fol. 24 ^v)
3	D (fol. 25 ^r)	E (fol. 36 ^v)
4	F (fol. 37 ^r)	G (fol. 48 ^v)
5	h (fol. 49 ^r)	

If a signature "A" formerly stood at the bottom of fol. 12^v (the last folio of the first gathering), it was lost when the folio was cropped. The first group of gatherings, as Dickins observed, antedates the present binding. The signature "h" is so placed in the inner margin of fol. 49^r that it must have been written before the manuscript was bound. Furthermore, fols. 1 and 60, the outermost leaves of the group, are worn, suggesting that the five gatherings existed for some time unprotected by covers. The romances, however, may have been previously bound. A needle hole visible through the center

of each of the first five gatherings only (toward the lower end of the third stitch of the present sewing) suggests an earlier sewing, no other trace of which remains.

The group shows care in its design. Where flesh and hair sides can be distinguished, the bifolia are bound hair side to hair side, flesh to flesh, except that the third and fourth bifolia of the second and third gatherings (fols. 15, 21-22; 27-28, 33-34), the first and second bifolia of the fourth gathering (fols. 37-38, 47-48), and the fifth and sixth bifolia of the fifth gathering (fols. 53-54, 55-56) alternate flesh and hair sides. The folios are pricked and lined for single-column pages. Apart from fol. 59^r (containing only the last thirteen lines of *The Avowing*) and the blank fol. 60, folios have from 21 to 26 lines of script per side, most having from 22 to 25. Except for misdivisions of verses in *The Awntyrs* (Gates, ed., p. 13), the manuscript has one line of verse per line of script and no space between stanzas. A space of one line divides poems, fitts, and passus. At the beginning of each poem except the acephalous *Amadace*, and at the beginning of each fitt and passus, there is a rectangular space and guide letter for an ornamental initial, but there is no evidence that ornamentation was ever undertaken. Measured inward from the left margin, the spaces for initials are .7 to about 1.1 cm wide. Spaces at the beginnings of poems displace three verses to the right, whereas spaces at internal divisions displace only two. The romances are unpunctuated.

The Awntyrs, untitled in the manuscript, begins on fol. 1^r and ends at the bottom of fol. 15^v. At the top of fol. 17^r *Amadace* is already in progress. If, as seems likely, the text of *Amadace* began at the top of the missing fol. 16^r, and if the quantity of verse on fol. 16 was comparable to that on the extant folios, then four twelve-line stanzas are wanting. *Amadace* concludes four lines from the top of fol. 34^v. *The Avowing*, untitled in the manuscript, begins below *Amadace* on fol. 34^v and concludes on fol. 59^r. The romances are written in one hand. Malcolm Parkes has advised me privately that working from photographs he has dated the hand to the third quarter of the fifteenth century or perhaps slightly later. The hand is of mixed character, showing the influence of Secretary and Anglicana Formata upon a basic Anglicana model. Phillipa Hardman, also privately, has pointed out that in respect of the mixed influence and of the impression of irregularity conveyed by the non-vertical descenders and ascenders, the hand compares with that of MS Digby