

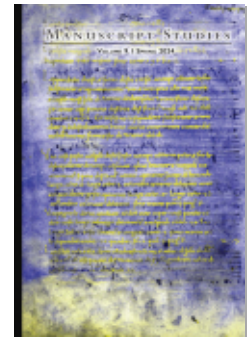


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Omar Khalaf

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The *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 265

OMAR KHALAF
Università di Padova

THE *DICTS AND SAYINGS of the Philosophers* is the modern English title of a work of wisdom literature comprising a collection of maxims and proverbs attributed to philosophers, sages, and various other characters of the past, both historic and fictitious, including Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, Alexander the Great, Homer, Saint Gregory, and Hermes. Originally composed in Arabic by the Syrian-born emir of the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik in the eleventh century under the title *Mukbtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim* (Book of the choicest maxims and best sayings), the collection was soon imported in western Europe through an anonymous Castilian translation known as the *Bocados de oro*. This translation served as the source of John of Procida's *Liber philosophorum moralium antiquorum*, which was in turn translated into French by Guillaume de Tignonville and titled *Ditz moraulx des philosophes*. Four different versions of this work appeared in England between the second half and the third quarter of the fifteenth century;¹ Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers (ca. 1440–83),

1 An overview of the tradition of the *Dicts* in Britain is offered in Omar Khalaf, *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, ed. Siân Echard and Robert Rouse (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 667–69.

authored the latest and, despite the general neglect of scholars and editors, the most successful. Printed by Caxton in 1477 (*Short Title Catalogue* 6826), 1480 (*STC* 6828), and 1489 (*STC* 6829), and by Wynkyn de Worde in 1528 (*STC* 6830), it also survives in several manuscript copies; among them, the most famous is London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 265, which, as testified by the illustration on folio 4v, the author himself presented to King Edward IV and the royal family on Christmas Eve 1477.²

Brother-in-law of the King, Rivers was appointed tutor and supervisor of Prince Edward and was expected to instill in the young prince firm moral and religious principles.³ His *Dicts* was meant to serve this purpose,

2 The manuscript is on parchment, vi + 110 fols., 24 lines to a page, carefully written in a single column in secretary hand, and containing elaborate initials in blue, red, and green ink. For a full description, see M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace: The Mediaeval Manuscripts*, rev. Richard Palmer (1932; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 412–14; and Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390—1490: A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, vol. 6 (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), no. 125. The other manuscripts containing the earl's translation of the *Dicts* are Chicago, Newberry Library, Vault folio Case, MS 36 (*olim* MS f.36 Ry 20), fols. 208r–241r; New York, Columbia University Library, MS Plimpton 259; Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 213, fols. 70v–72r; New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS B.11. See Norman Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 295–96. Reproductions of the illustration can be seen in Dhira Mahoney, “From Print to Script: The Luxury Metatext of Lambeth Palace Library, MS 265,” in *The Social Life of Illumination: Manuscripts, Images and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Joyce Coleman, Mark Cruse, and Kathryn A. Smith (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 43–72, 440. Anthony Ian Doyle provides a convincing argument for the lavishness of the manuscript: “When manuscripts were specially made for presentation to someone of eminence, by authors wanting rewards or others after favours, the standards of execution were likely to be as high as the donor could afford and procure.” See his “English Books in and out of Court,” in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (London: Duckworth, 1983), 163–81, at 181. Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, “Richard III’s Books: Mistaken Attributions,” *Ricardian* 9 (1992): 303–10, raised doubts about Rivers’s actual involvement in the production of the manuscript since the leaf containing the illustration is separate from the first quire; as they argue, “because Rivers was the translator of the text he need not *also* have been the donor of this manuscript: he could and would be included in the opening miniature anyway as translator. It is possible therefore that the manuscript was given—or meant to be given—by someone else” (305). Their hypothesis that it was a copy commissioned by Caxton does not hold on several grounds, as I will demonstrate below.

3 This is evident from Edward IV’s ordinance, issued in 1475, where the king declares that “noe man sytt at his boarde but such as shal be thought by the discretyon of the sayd Erle

as Rivers himself declares in the prologue attached to the printed editions: “Whan I had leyser I loked upon the sayd booke and at the last concluded in myself to translate it in to thenglyssh tonge . . . thynkyng also ful necessary to my said lord the understanding therof.”⁴ In the prologue, Rivers also tells that he received a copy of Tignonville’s *Ditz moraulx* during his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in 1473 from a fellow traveler and admits that it took some time to finish his translation, which must have kept him occupied in the period between his return from the journey and sometime before November 1477. It is impossible to determine whether, in the meantime, he had produced a copy of the *Dicts*, his “original,” for the exclusive benefit of his nephew or had decided to circulate it more widely through Caxton’s print from the outset.⁵ Rivers is rather cryptic in this sense; at the end of the prologue, he writes, in the typical form of an *excusatio*:

Ryvers, and that then ben reade before him, such noble storyes as behoveth to a Prynce to understand; and knowe that the comunicatyon at all tymes in his presence, be of vertu, honor, cunyng, wisdom and dedes of worshippe, and of nothing that should move or styrre him to vyces.” See John Nichols, *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Household, Made in Diverse Reigns. From King Edward III to King William and Queen Mary. Also Receipts in Ancient Cookery* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1790), 28.

4 *Dicts* 1477, [a]1v. This and all subsequent passages from the prologue are taken from the first edition as extant in London, British Library, IB.55004. The text has been normalized according to modern conventions. A transcription of the whole prologue is found in Mahoney, “From Print to Script,” 467–68. Other works by Rivers were produced, at least in principle, for an educational purpose. Alongside his translations of Christine de Pisan’s *Proverbes moraulx* (*The Morale Prouerbes of Cristyne*) and Jean Miélot’s *Les quatre derrenieres choses* (*The Cordyal*), Rivers was also known to have produced other translations, now lost, and he could have been involved with Caxton in further editorial projects, which include a lost treatise on the seven deadly sins, as reported by Caxton in the epilogue to the *Cordyal*; see Walter J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (repr. 1956; London: Early English Text Society OS 176, 1928), 38–40. Rivers is also believed to be the translator of Christine de Pisan’s *Livre du corps de policie* and the sponsor of Caxton’s edition of Malory’s *Le morte Darthur*, issued in 1483. See, respectively, Diane Bornstein, “Sir Anthony Woodville as the Translator of Christine de Pisan’s *Livre du corps de policie*,” *Fifteenth Century Studies* 2 (1979), 9–19; and Lotte Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus: The Beginning of Printing in England* (London: British Library, 1982), 89–94.

5 That the publication of the *Dicts* comes from Rivers’s act of patronage is beyond doubt; in his prologue Caxton himself recognizes the “good reward” he received from the earl for his job; see Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues*, 30.

at the last concluded in my self to translate it in to thenglyssh tonge, wiche in my iugement was not before, thynkyng also ful necessary to my said lord the vnderstandyng therof. And leest I coude not at al tymes be so wele occupied or sholde falle in ydlenes whan I myght now and thenne I felle in hande with all and drewe bothe the sentence and the wordes as nygh as coude. Neuertheles I haue seyn & herde of other of the same bookes whiche difference and be of other inportaunce; and therefore I drede that suche as shold liste to rede the translacion & haue veray intelligence of ony of thoos bookes eyther in latyne or in frenshe sholde fynde errours in my werke, whiche I wold not afferme cause of the contrary, but allegge the deffaulte to myn vnconnyng with the dyuersytees of the bookes, humbly desyryng the reformacion therof with myn excuse and the rather syn after my rudenes not expert.⁶

Rivers's blurring of two audiences (Prince Edward as the primary recipient and a wider readership that could criticize his translation) prevents us from drawing a precise timeline of the earl's publishing program. Caxton, however, tells in the epilogue that "at suche tyme as he [Rivers] had accomplysshid this sayd werke, it liked him to sende it to me in certayn quayers to ouersee," thus suggesting that the translation was sent to him immediately after its completion.⁷

The earliest manuscript copy of the *Dicts* is the Lambeth witness. Obviously, it cannot be identified with the actual book Rivers destined for the education of the prince, but, as shown by the aforementioned illustration, Rivers relied on it and on the ceremonial act that surrounded the bequest

6 *Dicts* 1477, [a]1v–2r.

7 *Dicts* 1477, [k]2r; see also Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues*, 18. For a speculation on the intentions underlying the publication of the *Dicts*, see Omar Khalaf, "Patronage, Print and the Education of the Gentry in Late Medieval England: The Case of Earl Rivers's *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*," in *Current Issues in Medieval England*, ed. Letizia Vezzosi (Bern: Peter Lang, 2021), 45–58; and Khalaf, "The Social Function of a Translation: Earl Rivers, William Caxton, and *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*," in *Medieval Translator: Medieval Translations and their Readerships*, ed. Pavlina Rychterová and Jan Odstrčilík (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), 337–54.

of the manuscript to provide a visual manifestation of himself as an outstanding intellectual in Edward's court. Interestingly, Mahoney defines Lambeth 265 as the product of three textual layers: (1) the original text; (2) the first edition, including Rivers's prologue and Caxton's epilogue; and (3) this presentation copy, which adds the illustration and a poetic colophon that identifies Rivers as the author of the translation. The interaction among these levels contributes to creating "a more prestigious object [than Caxton's printed copies], one more pleasing from both the visual and the tactile point of view."⁸ However, while Mahoney's and other recent investigations have underlined the relevance of Lambeth as an artifact, the text of the *Dicts* preserved therein has been the subject of rather superficial analyses.⁹ Curt Bühler collated a selection of passages taken from Caxton's first and second edition and the two manuscripts he had identified as their copies (Lambeth itself and London, British Library, Add. MS 22718). He concluded that several corrections found in Lambeth correspond to those present in the second edition.¹⁰ In accordance with general opinion, Mahoney argues that "Woodville made, or ordered to be made, these corrections to his translation text, having them included first in the manuscript and then in Caxton's second 'edition,'" thus presuming a linear review process in which the Lambeth witness plays the role of the conjunction ring in the evolution of the *Dicts* from the first edition, more corrupted, to the second, more refined.¹¹ However, a systematic comparison with the two editions shows a more complex situation, characterized by a thorough review of the entire text and the presence of variant readings that do not occur in any of the Caxton

8 Mahoney, "From Print to Script," 453. I agree with Hellinga when she affirms that "with its elaborate initials and spacious layout it shows up to Caxton's printed book a second-rate product, not fit to be owned by a king." Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus*, 77.

9 See also Sonja Drimmer, introduction to "The Manuscript Copy and the Printed Original in the Digital Present," special issue, *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2020): 93–119; and, more extensively, Aditi Nafde, "Replicating the Mechanical Print Aesthetic in Manuscripts before circa 1500," *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2020): 120–44.

10 Curt Bühler, "The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers," *Library* 15 (1934): 316–29.

11 Mahoney, "From Print to Script," 451.

editions. The results demonstrate that the position of this manuscript in the stemma is, in fact, different from what has traditionally been assumed.

A Collation of the Lambeth Dicts

The collation shows notable divergences between the Lambeth manuscript (L) and the first edition (C1), which extend far beyond the “discreet corrections” identified by Bühler and Lotte Hellinga.¹² With the exclusion of spelling variations and accidentals, L counts a total of 669 variants, 85 of which are shared with the second edition (C2), and 584 are independent.¹³ However, quite interestingly, the readings L shares with C2 are scattered throughout the entire text and do not stop at a certain point, as might be expected in the case of an unfinished revision that would have been completed only later with the publication of the printed edition. The following examples show the extent of the revision process (variants are underlined):

C1: right as it apperteyneth to the lepeop to be subgett and obbeissaunt ([a]3r)

L: right as it apperteyneth to the people to be subgett and obbeissaunt (3v)

C2: right as it apperteyneth to the people to be subgett and obbeissaunt ([a]3r)

C1: derysion and scornynge putteth away and wastith leue ([a]8v)

L: derision and scornynge puttith away and wastteth loue (10v)

C2: derysion and scornynge putteth away and wastith loue ([a]8v)

C1: ye do pasing wele to make your dedis assemble your beawte ([c]7v)

L: ye do passingly wele to make youre dedes assemble your beautee (30v)

12 This is how they have been defined in Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus*, 77.

13 The text of C2 is taken from London, British Library, C.10.b.2 (IB.55031).

C2: ye do passingly wele to make your dedis to assemble your beawte
(c[7v])

C1: goodnesse is deuided in iij maneres the first is in the body the
second in the saule ([f]5r)

L: goodnes is deuided in thre maners the first in in the saule the
second in the body (61v)

C2: goodnesse is diuided in iij maneres the first is in the saule the
second in the body. (f[5r])

C1: bysenes of whiche the soule and the body ben addressid ([h]4v)

L: besynesse of whiche the sowle and the body be entreteigned and
knytte (84r)

C2: bysenes of whiche the soule and the body ben entreteigned and
knytte ([h]4v)

C1: as ofte as byrdes drawen many into her companye ([i]5r)

L: as one brid draweth many moo into his companye (96r)

C2: as oon byrd draweth moo into his company ([i]5r)

In general, the variant readings in L show that the manuscript preserves a more refined version of the *Dicts* than C2. Of the forty-six variants shared by L with C1 but not with C2, twenty-one are correct readings that are corrupted in C2. Some examples are:

C1: a suspectious man is of euyl condicions and lyueth in sorowe ([e]4r)

L: a suspecious man is of euyl condicions and lyueth in sorow (48v)

C2: a suspension man is of euill condicions and lyueth in sorowe ([e]4r)

C1: we ought by a grete reason to abstein vs from vices ([e]6r)

L: we ought by a gret reason to absteyne us from vices (51v)

C2: we ought to by as grete reason to abstein us from vices ([e]6r)

C1: the couetous man hath noo reste and the nygard may neuer be
ryche ([i]2v)

L: the couetous man hath no reste and the nigard may neuer be riche
(93r)

C2: the couetous man hath noo reste and the nygard may neuer by
ryche ([i]2v)

Furthermore, sixty-six variants are identified as corrections or improvements only found in L. This further strengthens the view of this witness as a result of a self-standing revision process, divergent from C2. Some examples are reported below:

C1: many harmes comme to beestes bycause thy¹⁴ be domme ([c]4r)

C2: many harmes comme to beestes bycause thy be domme ([c]4r)

L: many harmes come to bestes because they be domme (27r)

C1: yf he gouerne hymself euyll. ([d]8v)

C2: yf he gouerne himself euill ([d]8v)

L: yf he gouerne himself euyly (43v)

C1: if he bere witnes it shalbe veritable ([h]1v)

C2: if he bere witnes it shalbe veritable ([h]1v)

L: if he bere witesse he shalbe veritable (79v)

C1: to forgiue gladly his euil wil maken a man belouid of eche body
([h]4r)

C2: to forgyue gladli his euil wil maken a man belouid of eche body
([h]4r)

L: to foryeue gladly his euyl will maken a man to be beloued of yche
body (83v)

14 I assume this is an erroneous variant reading. The *Electronic Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (*eLALME*) records four occurrences of this form, only one of which is attested in the London area (the copy of Henry Lovelich's *Merlin* extant in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 80). http://archive.ling.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme_scripts/display_lpZ.php?lpref=6360, last accessed 20 January 2023.

Therefore, the scribe of L (who calls himself Haywarde in the colophon found on the last page of the manuscript) put onto parchment a version of the *Dicts* featuring the text of C1 with some of the variants found in C2 and a number of independent corrections and emendations.¹⁵

In no case did the revisor appear to resort to the French source, as the following selection of variant readings in L compared to Tignonville's text (*Ditz*) shows:¹⁶

<i>L</i>	<i>C1, C2</i>	<i>Ditz</i>
degree (14r)	discrecion ([b]3v)	discretion
be chaste (14v)	chastyte ([b]4r)	chastete
refreyne (16r)	absteyne them ([b]5r)	font point abstinence
metriciens (16v)	vercifiers ([b]5r)	versifiers
foryeueth (33v)	forgeteth ([d]1v)	oublie
haue enuye of (35r)	be enuiet at ([d]2v)	qui a plusieurs envieux sur lui

However, a rather peculiar behavior of the author of L is the systematic modification of the name of subjects or disciplines according to the French spelling. For example, in the chapter on Aristotle, L has *phisique* (52r) for *fisike* as found in C1 and C2, *etiques* (53v) for *etikes*, *theologiques* (53v) for

15 The colophon reads “Apud Sanctum Iacobum / in campis per Haywarde” (106r). For a speculation on the scribe's identity, see Mahoney, “From Print to Script,” 459–62.

16 Robert Eder identified four manuscript copies of the *Ditz* circulating in England: London, British Library, MSS Royal 16 F X (mid-fifteenth-century), Royal 19 A VIII (mid-fifteenth-century), and Royal 19 B IV (late fifteenth-century); see Robert Eder, “Tignonvilleana inedita,” *Romanische Forschungen* 33 (1915): 851–1022 at 876. According to the online catalog of the British Library, all of them were produced in England. Another copy, held in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson 537 (fifteenth-century), was probably produced in France. Nothing was known of it before its acquisition by Richard Rawlinson (1690–1755); see Falconer Madan, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford Which Have not hitherto Been Catalogued in the Quarto Series*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 235. It is rather unlikely that one of these might be the copy owned by Rivers. In his prologue he talks about a “boke [that] is called the sayenges or dictes of Philosophres” (1v), suggesting that the manuscript he received from his fellow pilgrim Luis de Bretille was not a miscellany, as all the aforementioned codices are, but contained exclusively Tignonville's work. The edition of the French text is found in Eder, “Tignonvilleana inedita.”

theolegikes, *logique* (54v) for *logike*, *policie* (54v) for *politik*, and so on. Their mapping in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* demonstrates that both variants were widely employed in Middle English texts and, taken alone, do not allow us to draw any definite conclusion.¹⁷ However, if the author of L had not resorted to a copy of the *Ditz* and the variants can be explained as simple stylistic changes, they can still help reconstruct the history of this witness. In his study of Caxton's language, Norman F. Blake identified a significant use of "Germanic" words in the printer's vocabulary, and, quite interestingly in this context, he was the first to attribute the lineage of the verse prologue of the *Moral Proverbs* to Rivers based on the massive presence of French-derived rhyming words against Caxton's epilogue, which contains only Germanic lexis.¹⁸ If Blake's argument holds for the *Moral Proverbs*, it can also be safely applied to the prologue to the *Dicts*, where the earl's personal preference for a French spelling, mitigated by Caxton in his revision of C1, could have reemerged in the production of L.¹⁹

Other variants involve dialectal features; in particular, *will* (also found as *wil*, *wyl*, *wyll*, *wylle*, *wilt*, *wylt*) and the forms of the personal pronoun *hem/ them* have been systematically substituted with *wol* (*woll*, *wolle*) and *thaim* (*thaym*), respectively. According to the *Electronic Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (*eLALME*), while both variants of the personal pronoun are quite common in the southern and Midland dialects, *wol/wolle* is widely attested, among other places, in Buckinghamshire.²⁰ Grafton Regis, Rivers's birthplace, is located just a few miles from Buckingham; therefore, this variant could be characteristic of Rivers's own dialect. Again, the *Moral*

17 University of Michigan, *Middle English Compendium*, accessed 31 January 2023, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary>.

18 Norman F. Blake, "Caxton's Language," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 67 (1966), 122–32 at 128.

19 A very recent investigation has shown that Caxton was fully involved in the respelling of French loans in English texts (which has been termed "etymologising of spelling"); see Yoko Iyeiri and Mitsumi Uchida, "Etymological Spellings in William Caxton's Translations," *English Studies* 102 (2021): 991–1001.

20 See for instance the forms attested in the witness of the *Canterbury Tales* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton Donat. 1, as parsed in the *eLALME*: http://archive.ling.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme_scripts/display_lpZ.php?lpref=6670, accessed 20 January 2023.

Proverbs offer supportive evidence. As Caxton claims in the verse epilogue, Rivers's text was printed without any alterations.²¹ Here, *wole* is attested seven times, against *willeth*, which appears only once.²² Therefore, two of the most recurring spelling changes that distinguish L from C1 and C2 seem to hint at a common conclusion. The copy-text Haywarde had before him was probably an exemplar of C1 already containing a reviewed version of the text made by Rivers. The incunable was then returned to the printer, who took it back at a later stage for the publication of C2.

One last piece of evidence emerging from the collation is the presence in L of a colophon similar to that found in the Manchester incunable of C1 (M), which reads:

Thus endeth the boke of the dictes and notable sayenges of philoso-
phres late translated out of Frenssh into Englissh by my forsaide
lorde therle [space left blank] and by his comaundment sette in
fourme & enprinted in right substancial maner. § And this boke
was finisshed the xxiiij day of Decembr[e] the xvijth yere of our liege
lord king Edward þe iiijth. (fols. 105v—106r)

The version in M is slightly different:

Thus endeth this boke of the dyctes and notable wyse sayenges of
the phylosophers late translated and drawen out of Frensche into
our Englissh tonge by my forsaide lord therle of Ryvers and lord
Skales, and by hys comandement sette in forme and empynted in
this manere as ye may here in this booke see, whiche was fynisshed

21 The last stanza reads, "Go thou lital quayer and commaund me / Unto the good grace of my special lorde / Therle Ryuerys for I haue enprinted the / At his commandement folowyng eury worde / His cople as his secretaire can recorde / At westmenstre of feuerer the xx daye / And of king Edward the xvij yere yraye." The text is taken from Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues*, 32.

22 The examination is based on the incunable held in Manchester, John Rylands University Library, 12025. A facsimile edition of the text is published in William Blades, *Morale Prouerbes, Composed in French by Cristyne de Pisan, Translated by the Earl Rivers, and Reprinted from the Original Edition of William Caxton, A. D. 1478* (London: Blades, East, and Blades, 1859).

the xvijij day of the moneth of Novembre the sevententh yere of the regne of kyng Edward the fourth. ([k]4v)²³

Apart from the yet unexplained omission of the name and title of Rivers, L also differs from M in regard to the dates. Hellinga wondered, understandably, whether it would have been possible to review the text of the *Dicts* and produce L in the around twenty-seven working days between 18 November (date in the colophon of M) and 24 December 1477 (date in the colophon of L). Her investigation of the incunable, however, revealed that the colophon was added some time after the printing of the text, thus indicating not the date of the publication of C1 in general but, as she argues, “‘this copy of a book,’ ‘this copy with a colophon added later,’ or ‘the object in your hands,’ and not the whole edition.”²⁴ Therefore, the *Dicts* might have been published any time in 1477 before 18 November, and this time frame would have given Rivers, Caxton, and Haywarde a considerably longer period to correct the text. This hypothesis seems to find support in the interpretation of the collation results.

The Lambeth Manuscript and the Textual Tradition of the Dicts Reconsidered

As the collation shows, variation in L is much more widespread and articulated than previously hypothesized. The distribution of the variants this witness shares with C2 makes untenable the hypothesis that the former represents an intermediate stage of a revision process that was completed for that edition; conversely, the presence of readings extant in C1 or C2 throughout the entire text of L together with corrections found only in this witness demonstrates that the manuscript was the result of an autonomous process of revision, which took place independently of the preparation of C2. Furthermore, the distribution of the variants found in L and those shared with C1

23 The transcription of this colophon and the photostatic reproduction of that extant in L can be found in Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus*, 78.

24 Hellinga, *Caxton in Focus*, 78.

and C2 suggest that the review followed two distinct phases: one common to L and C2 and one involving only L. Such a scrutiny favors a new hypothesis for the reconstruction of the textual history of the *Dicts*: between late 1476 and early 1477, Rivers gave Caxton his translation of the *Dicts* (the “original,” O) for reading and correction. The printer reviewed the text and set it up for printing by adding the epilogue, and, if Rivers’s prologue had not been included in the earl’s first draft, asking him to provide it. Therefore, C1 could have been ready for printing in the first months of 1477. Meanwhile, Rivers continued the review of O, producing an intermediate version of the *Dicts* (C1^{rev}), which represented the source of L and C2. At this point, the paths diverge. In a draft copy, α , made by Haywarde prior to the production of L, Rivers added further changes to the text of the *Dicts*.²⁵ introducing the French-spelled nouns and, arguably, also retrieving his own dialectal forms that were discarded by Caxton in his first revision to conform the text to the spelling conventions in use in London.²⁶ This version gave birth to L. In the second path, a further correction of C1^{rev} resulted, three years later, in the publication of C2.

If this hypothesis is correct, one should account for the existence of two additional but no longer extant witnesses of the *Dicts*: C1^{rev}, an incunable that features Rivers’s first corrections of C1, and α , which represents the *codex interpositus* between C1^{rev} and L. This reconstruction accounts for a contaminated tradition in which Rivers played the role not only of the author but also of the reviewer of his *Dicts* for such a prestigious manuscript. The resulting stemma could thus be as shown in figure 1. As far as the two colophons are concerned, if we agree with Hellinga that the one found in M can

25 The hypothesis that Haywarde’s copy-text was Rivers’s original implemented with the abovementioned revisions cannot be ruled out in principle, but the presence of both prologue and epilogue in L suggests that the draft given to the scribe was derived from a copy containing both paratextual elements, which were obviously absent from Rivers’s holograph.

26 Caxton complaints on the lack of a standard English appear frequently in his writings. One of the most famous examples is his account found in his prologue to the *Eneydos* (1490), where he tells that two merchants sailing down the Thames landed in Kent to buy food. At one of the two men’s request to have “eggys,” a woman replied that “she coude speke no Frenshe”; the other then asked her for “eyren” and then the woman understood. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues*, 108.

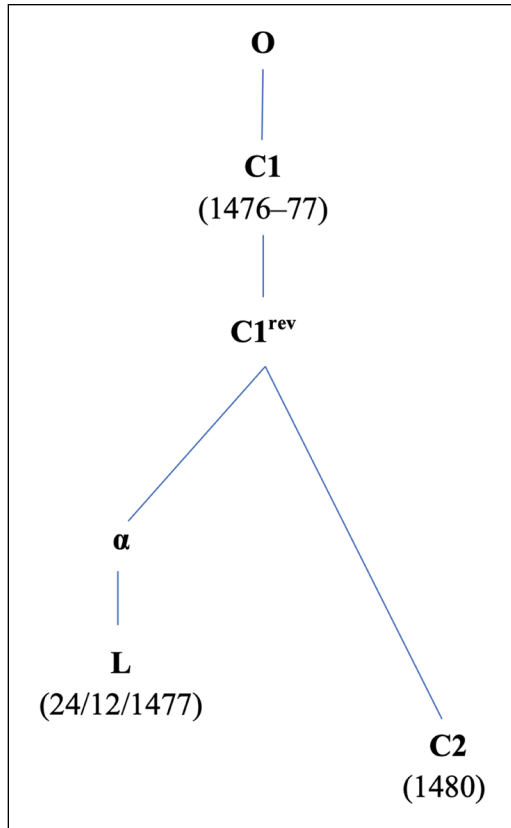


FIGURE 1. Tentative stemma of the *Dicts* after the collation of C1, C2, and L.

be interpreted as “this copy with a colophon added later,” the dates they report would not necessarily reflect their order of production. If Caxton decided to incorporate the colophon later than 18 November, he might have imitated the colophon written by Haywarde. The colophon is not the only element that associates M with L; if compared to the other incunables of C1, M shows a much more elaborate decoration of the initials of the names of the philosophers and the chapter divisions, all drawn in red ink.²⁷ The

²⁷ Red ink was also used by the decorator (?) to correct the erroneous reading *lepeop* (see the first example above) into *people*; this is the only emendation found in the whole incunable.

embellishment of M and the later insertion of the colophon might respond to the desire to create a high-rate printed copy of the *Dicts*, arguably addressed to a wealthy merchant or a member of the nobility and recalling some formal features of the more prestigious Lambeth manuscript; these include a “personal” colophon, which distinguishes this very copy from the rest of the stock.

Furthermore, Rivers’s participation in the review of the text and the nature of the dialect and spelling forms in L generate suggestive speculation about the relationship between the earl and Caxton. It is generally agreed that the *Dicts* with its prologue and epilogue represents a space where Rivers’s and Caxton’s authorities clashed.²⁸ In the epilogue, Caxton tells that in his review of Rivers’s translation, he decided to restore some misogynistic sayings attributed to Socrates omitted by the earl. Despite the printer’s claim that the translation did not require emendations, he probably also felt entitled to intervene silently in the language to conform Rivers’s most obvious dialectal features to the London spelling, as shown above. However, while the printed editions constituted Caxton’s undisputable domain, Rivers claimed his right for “authorial reappropriation” in the Lambeth manuscript. In the long transition from manuscript to print culture, where the former continued to enjoy greater prestige over the latter for a long time, the earl might have conceived the commission and donation of this codex to the king as the most powerful manifestation of his effort as author and translator. Rivers’s taste for books is well known among scholars. Several French manuscripts coming from John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford’s own collection passed to the Woodvilles through Rivers’s mother Jacquetta of Luxembourg, including Christine de Pisan’s holograph (London, British Library, Harley MS 4431), which was the source of Rivers’s translation of the *Ditz moraulx*, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, one of the most precious collections of

28 See Anne E. B. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mahoney, “From Print to Script”; and Omar Khalaf, “Appropriating Authority: William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and the Publication of Earl Rivers’ *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*,” in *Authorial Publication from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Samu Niskanen and Valentina Rovere (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

French Alexander romances, probably also used by the earl for the education of Prince Edward.²⁹ In the case of the Lambeth manuscript, the authority of the text goes hand in hand with the prestige expressed by the object itself. Numerous studies have examined the value of books in the Middle Ages, which could be used as tokens for the preservation or consolidation of social bonds in the form of gifts or bequests. In particular, Ann Astell focuses on what she calls the “use value” of a gifted book, that is, its significance as the object through which wisdom and knowledge is donated, or shared. A book’s contents, in turn, could constitute the “symbolic value” of the gifting act itself.³⁰ In the case of the Lambeth *Dicts*, the care taken with respect to the material form of the gifted book (proportioned to the prestige of the recipient) was accompanied by a thorough review of its content, which gave Rivers the opportunity to reestablish his role of prominence as an author, albeit in the limited space of the court. This explains the earl’s direct involvement in the material production of the Lambeth manuscript and the general review of its contents, which is justified by the stature of its addressees. The care taken in the material production of the book, the opening illustration, and the dedication poem that introduces the text and even the more “exotic,” French-spelled words all contribute to the enhanced glamour of the text contained therein. Taken together, these characteristics identify the Lambeth manuscript as the most effective outcome of Rivers’s plan to restore his authority on the *Dicts*, and, more generally, to strengthen his role as intellectual and patron of letters in the court of Edward IV.

29 See Omar Khalaf, “Lord Rivers and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: A Speculum for the Prince of Wales?,” *Journal of the Early English Book Society* 14 (2011): 239–50.

30 Ann W. Astell, “On the Usefulness and Use Value of Books: A Medieval and Modern Inquiry,” in *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook*, ed. by Scott D. Troyan (New York: Routledge, 2004), 41–62.