

NOTES ON OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, MS DIGBY 86, *THE
NAMES OF A HARE IN ENGLISH*

On fol. 168^{r-v} of Bodley, MS Digby 86, appears the only surviving version of a sixty-four-line poem in rhymed couplets entitled *Les Nouns de un leure en engleis*. It is written in the main hand of the manuscript. Digby 86, which has been dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century, is a miscellany containing over a hundred items, mostly in French or Latin, but including twenty-two texts in Middle English. The poem on the *Names of a Hare* is in the form of a warning about the ill luck associated with meeting a hare and the best way of averting the consequences. Most of the poem (lines 11–54) consists of seventy-seven names or euphemisms for the hare which, if recited, afford protection from unspecified evil. The poem ends with a pious hope that the author may meet a hare only in the form of a stew or pie:

Haue nou godnedai sire hare
God þe lete so wel fare
Þat þou come to me ded
Oþer in ciue oþer in bred. amen

Names of a Hare was first printed in *Reliquiae antiquae*¹ and subsequently edited with detailed textual and philological notes by A. S. C. Ross.² Many of the names are *hapax legomena* and, as Ross points out (p. 348), ‘very obscure, particularly as they have no context’. He goes on to say, however, that ‘nearly all the words yield to philological investigation’ and illustrates the point with copious and fascinating reference to an extraordinary number of sources including *NED*, *EDD*, natural history (both published and gleaned from personal contact), foreign language hare names, an analogous poem in Medieval Welsh about an encounter with a hare, and medieval recipes for hare stew and hare pie. Without support from usage in other contexts, however, many of the readings must remain conjectural, and Ross himself often proposes a choice of possible readings. In three instances, I think that misreading of the manuscript text has led to wrong conclusions and in these cases I would like to propose alternative (though still necessarily conjectural) solutions.³

The seventy-seven hare names are of many different kinds. They include (a) words meaning ‘hare’, e.g. *bare*, *scot* ‘scut’; (b) terms of abuse, e.g. *srewart* ‘scoundrel’, *choumbe* ‘chump, numbskull’, *soillart* ‘filthy beast’; (c) descriptive terms, e.g. *shorte-der* ‘short-animal’, *long-here* ‘long-ears’, *wite-wombe* ‘white-belly’; (d) names referring to the hare’s haunts, e.g. *strauder* ‘stubble-animal’, *bromkat*

'broom-cat'; (e) names referring to what the hare eats, e.g. *gras-bitere* 'grass-biter', *canwel-berit* 'kale-hart'; (f) names implying the taboo quality of the hare, e.g. *euele-Imet* 'ill-met', *make-agrise* 'make-to-shudder', *breke-Forewart* 'covenant-breaker'.

A large proportion of the names, however, derive from observed natural behaviour of the hare. If for no other reason than the exigencies of rhyme and metre, the categories follow no particular order in the poem, although similar types do sometimes seem to cluster. 'Behavioural names' appear as follows: *wei-betere* 'way-beater',⁴ *gobidich* 'go-by-ditch', *stele-awai* 'steal-away', *louting* 'lying hidden' (< OE *lūtian*), **roulekere* (see section I below), *lekere* 'frisker'⁵ or 'lecher',⁶ *lepere* 'leaper', *lorkere* 'lurker', *sculkere* 'skulker', *begroukere* 'hedge-squatter' (< ME *rouken* 'to cower, huddle, crouch, lurk, squat'), *deudinge* 'dew-beater' (cf. ME *dingen* 'to beat'), *deuhoppere* 'dew-hopper', *sittere* 'sitter', *gras-hoppere* 'grass-hopper', *foldsittere* 'ground-sitter' (< OE *folde* 'earth', 'ground'), **fernsittere* (see section II below), *gobigrounde* 'go-by-ground', 'dwarf', *sitte-stille* 'sit-still', **toure-tobulle* (see section III below), *coue-arise* 'get-up-quickly' (< OE *cāf* 'quick, swift'), *go-mit-lombe* 'go-with-lambs'.

The three forms marked with an asterisk in the above list need to be reconsidered. It will also be necessary to re-examine one of the five names in the poem which have to do with the hare's eyes or sight: *westlokere* (see section I below).

I

**Roulekere* is taken by Ross to be a compound comprised of *lekere* which he translates 'frisker' (see the proposed etymology in note 5) and *rou-* '(hedge)row' (< OE *rāw*, *rāw* 'row, line').⁷ I am sceptical about Ross's statement (p. 363) that this gives 'excellent sense'. Whether *lekere* (cf. its appearance as a simplex two lines further on) is taken to be 'frisker' or 'lecher' (see the proposed etymology in note 6), hares do not normally frisk or mate in hedgerows. Hares' frisking activity is associated with mating rituals (hence the term 'Mad March Hare'). The 'mad' leaping, dodging, running (usually the chasing of unreceptive females), and boxing is done to impress both females and potential rivals and happens in the open. Hares in fact prefer open country,⁸ relying on the partial cover of a hollow depression or 'form' (which leaves their back and head visible), camouflage, and the ability to sit still, sometimes for hours at a time, to avoid predators. But hares do occasionally resort to hedges for cover when being hunted.⁹ In these circumstances the animal would be more likely to 'sit' (the word commonly used when the hare is in its protective 'form', 'couch', or 'seat') and a term invoking its nature as a skulker, lurker, or sitter would be more apposite in context.

The name **roulekere* appears at line 28 of the poem. Lines 24–8 run as follows:

De brodlokere þe bromkat
De purblindre þe fursecat

De louting þe westlokere
 De waldencie þe sid-lokere
 And eke the roulekere

The rhyme-scheme of the poem is not very regular, and although the context would seem to require *-lokere* at line 28, to provide a rhyme with the two previous lines, this observation loses some force when one notes (as Ross points out) that the subsequent lines 30–4 rhyme on *-ere* alone. Ross (p. 363) mentions that *NED* (s.v. 'roulekere') suggests emendation to **-lokere* but that no explanation of *rou-* is offered. However, five of the nine terms in these five lines have reference to the hare's eyesight, and the reading **-lokere* should be reconsidered.

Recourse to the manuscript or facsimile reveals that the first 'e' in *roulekere* is very ill-formed. When I was transcribing the poem for the first time I read the word as *roulokere*, whether influenced by the two previous instances of *-lokere* is now hard to say. The Digby scribe writes his 'o's and his 'e's in a very similar fashion. They are both formed with two rounded strokes. In its clearest form, the stem of the 'e' is drawn flatter and considerably more to the right than the first stroke of 'o', which means that when its second stroke, the lobe, meets the stem there is usually a distinct 'tail' at the bottom right of the letter. Sometimes, however, this tail is very short and the lobe also quite rounded, making the 'e' very 'o'-like.¹⁰ The 'o' in its clearest form has two strokes that are both well rounded and meet neatly at top left and bottom right of the letter. But often the letter is quite flattened laterally and the second stroke does not meet the first cleanly; the result is either a gap at the bottom right of the letter or, more frequently, an 'e'-like tail.¹¹ There is a cline of shapes between the clearest and the most ambiguous of each type; context is usually sufficient for the reading to be obvious. In the case of **roulekere/roulokere* the scribe has failed to make the second stroke of the letter meet either at top or bottom. It is as though having missed the connection at the top of the letter and being committed to the angle of the pen-stroke, it was inevitable that he would miss the connection at the bottom. If, as I think right, the letter is to be read as an 'o', we can assume that *roulokere* is a sixth term having some reference to the hare's eyes or sight.

'Hedge-looker' makes no sense; but there are two other possible interpretations of ME *roulokere*: 'rough-looker' or 'raw-looker'. The word 'rough' (< OE *rūb, rūg(e), rūwe*) would most likely be spelled *rou-* in the dialect of the Digby scribe.¹² In Middle English, *rough-lokinge* can mean 'of fierce appearance'.¹³ The hare tends to be thought of as a timid animal. However, both the British hares, the brown hare and the mountain hare, are capable of considerable pugnaciousness, especially in the mating season and in defence of their young.¹⁴ Whether, and in what circumstances, the hare is actually shy or fierce, it is plausibly a 'fierce-looker' or 'wild-looker' for the same reason as it is a 'broad-looker'. The name 'broad-looker' is translated by Ross (p. 361) 'starer' and has reference to the adverbial use of 'broad' meaning 'with eyes wide open, with a stare'. The hare's eyes are large and prominent and there is

a popular belief that it sleeps with its eyes open because it is impossible to catch a hare asleep.¹⁵ The staring or glaring impression comes from the prominence of the eyes and the fact that the entire iris is visible as the hare watches and listens for predators, giving it a wild, fierce demeanour.¹⁶

The word 'raw' is from OE *brēaw*, an ablaut variant of which, *brēow*, gives rise to Middle English spellings in *rou(e)* and *row(e)*, making 'raw-looker' a possible reading for *roulokere*.¹⁷ In this context it is of interest to look at the other hare-names which have to do with the animal's eyes or sight. *Sid-lokere* simply refers to the fact that the hare's eyes are set on the side of the head giving it nearly 360-degree vision.¹⁸ Three others, *purblinde* ('nearly blind', 'short-sighted'), *walden-eie* (a variant of 'wall-eyed'), and *westlokere* (see below) have reference to the tradition that the hare has poor or defective eyesight. Hares' eyes are in fact adapted to detecting movement rather than fine detail,¹⁹ and they depend as much or more on scent and hearing as on sight to detect predators. The tradition that they are short-sighted may perhaps have arisen because of their habit of continuing to lie low at the approach of danger in the hope of being overlooked, and only breaking cover at the last moment, relying for escape on their speed, agility, and stamina.²⁰

'Wall-eyed' has a number of possible meanings,²¹ viz. (i) 'having one or both eyes of an excessively light colour'; (ii) 'having streaked or parti-coloured eyes'; (iii) 'having a divergent squint'; (iv) 'dim-sighted or purblind'; (v) 'having glaring eyes'. Any of the last three of these definitions is plausible for the hare: (iii) goes with *sidlokere*, (iv) with *purblinde*, and (v) with *brodlokere*.

The name *westlokere* is more unusual. Ross explains it as a formation on the word *west* meaning 'sty or inflammatory swelling on the eyelid' and refers to *NED*, s.v. 'west', *sb*² and *EDD*, s.v. 'west', *sb*. He presents an etymology for the word, taking it to be a continuation of an IE *-tō-* or *-tā-* formation, **wis-tō*, **wis-tā-*, to the root *weis-* 'to flow, run'. Ross arrives at the meaning 'matter' for *west* by invoking secondary meanings derived from IE *weis-* referring to animal excretions and fluids, e.g. Welsh *gnyar* 'blood', Sanskrit *viṣṭhā* 'faeces', Latin *nirus* 'slime, mucus, animal semen, poison' and suggests that its meaning is 'the looker with bunged-up eyes, the blear-eyed one'.²² If this translation were accepted it would lend some support to a reading for *roulokere* as 'one with raw or inflamed eyes'. Hares, like other animals, are no doubt subject to eye-infections on occasion. I know of no evidence, however, that they are so especially prone to eye disease that they should be named for it. Moreover, the only other known citation in Middle English of the formation *westlokere* implies a somewhat different meaning.

Medulla Grammaticae, a fifteenth-century Latin-English dictionary, has a *weste lokere* as a translation for Latin *petus* (i.e. classical Latin *paetus*), meaning 'with a cast in the eye', 'divergently squinting'.²³ The variant *a lokere west* suggests that *west* should be taken as an adverb, the simplest explanation being that it implies the direction 'west'. Ross (p. 362) rejects this reading as meaningless, there being no good reason, 'folk-lore or other', why the hare should be described as looking to the west. But if 'one who looks to the west' is

synonymous with Latin *petus*, it links the hare-name closely with *waldeneie* in the sense (iii) above: 'having a divergent squint'. The name *sid-lokere* illustrates how an animal with eyes set on the side of its head can look in two directions at once. It is possible that 'to look west' may mean something like 'to look in opposite directions', 'to look sideways', and that *westlokere* is synonymous with *sid-lokere*. There is an entry in *OED*, s.v. 'west', A *adv.* 1 b (c): 'in Highland Sc. and Anglo-Irish use freq. rendering Gael. *siar, iar* (=west, back) in the sense of "back" "away" "up" or "down"'.²⁴ 'Away-looker' would be a plausible name for one with a divergent gaze.

Whatever the precise implication of 'west' in *westlokere*, it seems not to be related to the modern dialect word for 'sty'. If *roulokere* is to be taken as 'raw-looker' it is perhaps, therefore, less likely to imply red or inflamed eyes. However, the adjective 'raw' when qualifying 'eyes' can in Middle English also carry the meaning 'naked', 'unshaded', or 'protruding'.²⁵ Hares certainly have prominent, protruding eyes, and if the word is taken to be 'raw' in this sense, the implication of the name becomes similar to that of *brod-lokere* or of *waldeneie* in sense (v) above – 'having glaring eyes' – or, indeed, of 'rough-looker'.

II

**fernsittere* appears at line 38 of the poem and rhymes with *foldsittere* in line 37. The simplex *sittere* is in line 36. Examination of the facsimile shows that the word has been misread. The Digby scribe may often make little difference in the shapes of 'e' and 'o' (see above, section I), but unlike many scribes he almost always differentiates between 'n' and 'u'. Commonly in Middle English scripts, 'n' and 'u' are each made with two minim strokes (identical with the single stroke for 'i'); the join at the top of 'n' and the bottom of 'u' may or may not be regularly attempted or maintained. Often the oblique tail-stroke of the first minim and head-stroke of the second cause both letters to appear closed top and bottom. The Digby scribe is unusual in that he nearly always writes 'u' with two distinctly separate strokes joined neither at the top nor the bottom. 'n', however, always has a clear head-stroke linking the second minim to the first.²⁶ In **fernsittere* the **n* is in fact a 'u', while the first **e* is an 'o' of the kind whose second stroke fails to meet the first at the bottom of the letter as described in the note on **roulekere* above.²⁷ The correct reading, *forusittere* 'furrow-sitter', makes perfect sense and, if 'furrow' is taken to mean specifically 'the trench made by a ploughshare', it allows a connection with the names *stobbert* 'stubble-hart', *strauder* 'stubble-animal', and *pe der þa woneþ in þe cornes*.²⁸ In Middle English 'furrow' can however refer to a trench, ditch, or hollowed-out place of any kind. If taken in this sense, 'furrow-sitter' would be almost equivalent to 'form-sitter', referring to the most commonly observed habit of the hare: sitting motionless, using or making a small hollow for partial cover.²⁹

III

**toure-tobulle*. This is the only name in the poem which has been emended by Ross. The manuscript appears to have *toure-hobulle*. Ross emends to **toure-tobulle* although his preferred reading would be **tourne-tobulle* (p. 367) and in any case he takes **toure-* to be for 'turn' since MnE *tour* v. with the sense 'speed, hasten' appears too late to be a viable proposal in this context. The hare as 'one who directs one's steps to the hills' is explained with reference to the hare's peculiar gait, which makes it exceptionally fast uphill. *-hobulle* is, however, a perfectly possible spelling in the Digby scribe's usage for the phrase 'on hill'.³⁰ If *-hobulle* is taken, without emendation, to mean 'on hill', none of the verbs 'tour', 'tower', or 'turn' seem suitable.

It is apparent to anyone who reads large numbers of thirteenth-century manuscripts that scribes do not always clearly differentiate between 'c' and 't'. Both letters are normally formed with two strokes. The stems are curved and, in many scripts, identical. In formal and careful scripts, the top of the 'c' is formed by a stroke running obliquely downwards to the right, rarely extending beyond the stem of the 'c' to the left. The top of the 't', by contrast, is horizontal and often (though not always) extends beyond the stem to the left. The top of the 't' may be made level with the top of the stem or below it. But in more informal and careless scripts, these distinctions are not clearly or consistently made. Johnson and Jenkinson³¹ describe the letter 'c' in the thirteenth century as follows:

The shape of *c* is not materially altered, but the increasing carelessness of the scribe causes *c* and *t* to be written almost indiscriminately. The two letters can generally be distinguished, though not always, but the writers seem frequently to have been indifferent which letter they employed.³²

A scribe may himself distinguish clearly the shapes of the letters 'c' and 't', but if he is copying a text written in a hand which makes no clear distinction, he may sometimes misinterpret the letters in words which he finds ambiguous. The Digby scribe does for the most part differentiate the shapes of 't' and 'c' in his texts. But he does occasionally write a 't'-shaped letter when 'c' is required. This seems to happen most often in initial position.³³ In at least one place, he writes 'c' where the context demands 't' (see fol. 121^{vb} line 33 *conard* which should read *toward* 'toward').

The manuscript may therefore read 'toure-hohulle' or 'coure-hohulle'.³⁴ *MED*, s.v. 'couren', *v.*, gives the following definitions: '1. (a) To crouch, squat or kneel; (b) to cringe, cower; (c) *fig.* to lurk; 2. (a) To stay or lurk in seclusion or hiding; skulk.' These definitions strike a familiar chord with the other hare-names in the poem.³⁵ Of the twenty 'behavioural names' listed above (*roulokere* being now discounted), eleven are to do with escaping notice, sitting still, or skulking. The reason given by Ross for the hare to 'turn-to-hill' turns out to be as good, or better, a reason for it to 'cower-on-hill'. The back legs of the hare are much longer than the front legs. Long hind legs working together with short front ones give the hare greater leverage, and therefore

speed, on an uphill slope than pursuing dogs have. A hunted hare will often try to run uphill in order to outdistance pursuit. But then she must go to ground if she can, because running downhill she is correspondingly slower and may easily be overtaken. If the hare once reaches the summit of a hill without shaking off her pursuers, she will almost certainly be caught.³⁶ Dogs and men are not the hare's only predators. In hilly or mountainous country the hare's best protection from airborne hunters such as eagles or other large raptors is to cower motionless under whatever cover may be available.³⁷

To summarize: in the Middle English poem on the *Names of a Hare*, the following readings should be revised.

1. Ross's **roulekere* at line 28 should be read *roulokere* and translated either (a) 'fierce-looker', 'wild-looker', or 'glarer' (< OE *rūb* 'rough') or (b) 'raw-looker', 'one with bulging eyes' (< OE *brēaw* 'raw').
2. *westlokere* at line 26 should be translated 'away-looker' or 'one with divergent gaze'.
3. Ross's **fernsittere* at line 38 should read *forusittere* 'furrow-sitter'.
4. Ross's **toure-[to]hulle* at line 41 should read *coure-bohulle* 'cower-on-hill'.

These interpretations make sense semantically, etymologically, and from the point of view of the natural history of the hare. The palaeographic observations are supported by wide-ranging and detailed study of early Middle English writing systems. In particular, the suggested readings are linguistically and orthographically consistent with the usage of the Digby scribe. A. E. Housman defined textual criticism as 'the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it'.³⁸ Although Housman was especially hard on editors of classical texts who defended corrupt manuscript readings against all common sense, he also inveighed against those who persisted in 'ignoring the habits of copyists' and those who indulged in unnecessary emendation. He observed that 'many verses hastily altered by some editors and absurdly defended by others can be made to yield a just sense without ... changing the text'.³⁹ A greater understanding of the orthographic systems of copying scribes and of how they relate to those of their exemplars may sometimes provide simple solutions to difficult textual readings.

University of Edinburgh

MARGARET LAING

NOTES

I am grateful to Patrick V. Stiles, Derek Britton, and Keith Williamson for comments on an earlier draft of this paper and to Robert E. Lewis for saving me from an embarrassing mistake. Any errors remaining are my own. The work of the Institute for Historical Dialectology, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh is being supported by the Leverhulme Trust, for which thanks are here expressed.

¹ T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell, *Reliquiae antiquae*, I (London, 1841), pp. 133-4.

² 'The Middle English poem on the names of a hare', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section*, 3 (1932-5), 347-77.

³ The recent publication of *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, with an introduction by J. Tschann and M. B. Parkes, EETS, ss 16 (Oxford, 1996), has made it a great deal easier to check and recheck difficult manuscript readings and to explore in detail the range of shapes employed by the main scribe of Digby for different letters.

⁴ See Ross, 'The Middle English poem', pp. 356–7 for the various possible interpretations of this compound.

⁵ Ross (*ibid.*, p. 364) takes the word to be an agentive noun from a verb derived from OE *lācan* and ON *leika*. The noun is not recorded elsewhere in English until the nineteenth century, but cf. *MED*, s.v. 'leiken', *v.*, and *OED*, s.v. 'lake', *v.*¹. The Middle English forms, however, seem always to be spelled with *-ei-* or *-a(i)-*. The Digby scribe himself spells the infinitive *leiken* in *The Debate of the Body and the Soul*, fol. 196^r line 24, and unless *lekere* is taken to be a misspelling of *leikere*, Ross's interpretation remains difficult. The verb *leiken* does appear in one version of another Middle English hare poem, *The Mourning of the Hunted Hare*, surviving in two fifteenth-century manuscripts. See *Secular Lyrics of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (Oxford, 1952), no. 119 (pp. 107–10). In the version from National Library of Wales, Pokington MS 10, line 34 reads: 'Be hit in worttes or in leyke [= 'leek', rhyming with *heyke*='eke', 'also']'. But the version in Cambridge University Library Ff.5.48 reads: 'And to lurke or to leyke' (see *Secular Lyrics*, ed. Robbins, p. 266). However, the rhyme (*doggnis grete*) is not pure and there may be some textual corruption in this version.

⁶ See *MED*, s.v. 'lekere', *n.*, where the word is taken to be from OF *lecōr*, *lekier* (variants of *lechōr*).

⁷ See *MED*, s.v. 'reue', *n.* (2) sense 1 (c).

⁸ See D. MacDonald and P. Barrett, *Collins Field Guide: Mammals of Britain and Europe* (London, etc., 1993), on the brown hare, *Lepus europaeus*, p. 285: 'prefers temperate open habitats. Found in most flat country among open grassland and farms. ... most abundant in arable areas where cereal growing predominates ... Woods, hedges or shelterbelts frequently used as *resting areas* during the day. Den is referred to as couch or "form", and is a shallow depression in open fields or under cover of long grass, scrub, or hedgerow dug out themselves' (my italics).

⁹ Cf. *begroukere* and Ross's note on p. 365: 'Hares are found, if only occasionally, in hedge-bottoms (*teste* Mr. Bramley) and are liable to squat in hedges when hard-pressed (*teste* Mr. Wood).'

¹⁰ See e.g. fol. 128th line 7 *wrope* and line 22 *brouke* (where the *o* and the *e* look very similar); fol. 165th line 27 *houlawe*; fol. 168th line 15, the second *e* of *sid-lokere* in the line above **roulekere*; fol. 199^r line 27 *were* (first *e*).

¹¹ See e.g. fol. 127th 3 lines from the foot *don*; fol. 129th line 21 *To*; fol. 129th line 11 *eftsoner*; fol. 129th line 19 *þarfore*; fol. 168th line 21 *mon*; fol. 168th line 5 *gobidich*; fol. 198th line 2 *I-suoren*.

¹² The Digby scribe regularly realizes ME *ū* as *ou*, while etymological final velar fricative is not found in his usage: cf. *bou* 'bough', *dou* 'dough', *I-nou* 'enough', *lou* 3rd sg. pret. 'laughed', *plou* 'plough'. Final velar fricative *-h* appears only twice, in words in rhyming position, viz. *I-noub:loub*, in *The Life of St Eustace*, fol. 124^{va}, lines 3–4.

¹³ See *MED*, s.v. 'rough(e)', *adj.* sense 4(a). Cf. *OED*, s.v. 'row', *adv.* 'Chiefly in phr. to look row'.

¹⁴ See G. E. Evans and D. Thomson, *The Leaping Hare* (London, 1972), p. 51 where the authors quote from H. Tegner, *Wild Hares* (London, 1969), p. 22 as follows: 'Henry Tegner mentions a female hare that was "observed to stand up and punch a bullock on the nose, presumably in defence of her leveret" and another which "was

actually seen to ride off a terrier as a polo player will attempt to do with his opponent". Evans and Thomson (p. 51) also quote a retired warrener, Charles Welling, who observed more than once hares unsuccessfully defending their leverets from kestrels which were always too quick for them: 'He always watches the hawk – but of course he comes over so quick, he'll perhaps fall over backwards – the hare does, trying to get at it in his anger'.

¹⁵ On *brodlokere*, see also *The Leaping Hare*, p. 207.

¹⁶ See *The Leaping Hare*, p. 37 (of the mountain hare): 'when it was sitting or lying down it looked as if it had been frozen to death or stuffed in a hunched up position like a cat that is feeling the cold. Its staring eyes were like glass eyes.'

¹⁷ See *MED*, s.v. 'rau(e)', *adj.*, and *OED*, s.v. 'row', *a*.²

¹⁸ Though when hunted and concentrating its sight on the pursuit, with its front vision therefore impaired, it has been observed to run straight into an obstacle directly in its path. See *The Leaping Hare*, p. 230.

¹⁹ See *Mammals of Britain and Europe*, p. 288.

²⁰ See *The Leaping Hare*, p. 21: 'Hares rely for protection first on camouflage and then on speed and deviation as they take flight. If you approach a rabbit cautiously, he will run towards his burrow immediately he sees or hears you. A hare will wait watching you until you are almost upon her, and then with one bound, long and high, start leaping away, her hind legs reaching out before her forelegs at each leap.'

²¹ See *OED*, senses 1a, b, d, and 2.

²² Ross admits that the form of the word *west* is difficult since, if his suggested etymology is correct, one would expect OE **wist*, while a change of OE **wist* to MnE *west* would be hard to account for.

²³ I am grateful to Robert E. Lewis, Editor-in-Chief of the *Middle English Dictionary*, for supplying me with these references before publication of the relevant fascicle. The *MED* entry is from the Stonyhurst MS and reads: '*Medulla* 49b/a: Petus: a weste loker'. As with 'wall-eyed' there seems to be an overlapping set of meanings referring to abnormal eye conditions implied by 'petus'. The Canterbury Cathedral manuscript (a1500) confirms the usual definition of Latin *petus* as 'squinting' ('aliquantulum strabo'), while BL Harley 2270 (a1500) has an interesting variant 'aliquantulum strabo vel luscus'. *Luscus* usually means 'one-eyed', but cf. a figurative extension cited in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, vol. I A–L, ed. R. E. Latham and D. R. Howlett et al. (Oxford, 1975–97), s.v. 'luscus', 2, 'squinting (as apparent guide to character), louche. c. 1460 oculis luscus et denigrate colore, in facie fuscus *Paston Let.* 610 II p. 211'. BL Harley 2257 defines *petus* as 'a weste lokere' but six lines further up has 'Petus est ille qui cito voluit oculos' which sounds more like nystagmus than strabismus. The St John's Cambridge MS (1468) has for *petur*: 'a lokare west'.

²⁴ See also E. Dwelly, *Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary*, 7th edn (Glasgow, 1971), s.v. 'siar', *a*. 'The west, westward, 2 Back, backward, behind, 3 sideways, aside' and s.v. 'siar-shùil, -shùla, -shùilean' s.f. 'Squint-eye 2 Oblique or side look'.

²⁵ See *MED*, s.v. 'rau(e)', *adj.* sense 5 (c).

²⁶ I have found a few examples in the Digby texts of 'u' formed like 'n', but none of 'n' formed like 'u'.

²⁷ It almost looks as if a last-moment attempt has been made to correct the letter from 'e' to 'o' in mid-formation. For a very similar example see fol. 168^{ra} line 21, *bigon*.

²⁸ See *MED*, s.v. 'forwe', *n.* senses 2 and 3. See also *The Leaping Hare*, where reference is made to hares and ploughed land on pp. 54 and 63–4.

²⁹ See *MED*, s.v. 'forwe', *n.* sense 1. See also *The Mourning of the Hunted Hare*, lines 17–18: 'Rochis rennyon on eury syde / In forrovs þat hoppe me to fynd.' Cf. *The Leaping*

Hare, p. 52: 'They'll dig a little hole so they can cover, so they're level with the top of the land, so you can just see them as you walk past. A *seat* we call it. ... If you shot at a hare sett'n in the furrow like that, you wouldn't kill it. They'd just be under enough so the sett would go right over the top of it.'

³⁰ For 'on' with reference to place, the Digby scribe usually has *on* but *o-* appears once (see *Harrowing of Hell*, fol. 120^{vb}, line 1: *opin onwolde*) and *hon* three times (see *Proverbs of Hending*, fol. 142th, line 8: 'Sene hon hende sene on al quad hending'; *The Debate between the Body and the Soul*, fol. 195^v, first line of the text: 'Hon an þester stude I stod'; *The Latemest Day*, fol. 198^r line 17: 'Wendest þou to sitten hon bolster oþe benche'; and cf. *hon* 'on=concerning', *Dame Sirith*, fol. 165^a, line 18: 'Hon his marchaundise'. The spelling *ho-* is therefore a logical extension to the Digby scribe's repertoire, combining separate *hon* and prefixed *o-*. I have not found any other examples of *ho(-)* for 'on' in the Digby 86 texts, but cf. London, British Library, Egerton 613, fol. 1^v (C. Brown, *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1932), no. 54, line 41): 'ho rode-tre'; and London, British Library, Add. 23986, *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* (*Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers, with a glossary by N. Davis, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1968), no. XV, line 46): 'Fayrer ho lond hawy non syen.'

³¹ C. Johnson and H. Jenkinson, *English Court Hand A.D. 1066 to 1500 Illustrated Chiefly from the Public Records, Part 1: Text*, 2nd edn (New York, 1967), p. 9.

³² Two Essex scribes who contribute to Oxford, Bodleian Library, Add. E.6 both illustrate this tendency to employ 'c'-shaped and 't'-shaped letters apparently indiscriminately. For a more easily accessible example see M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250-1500* (Oxford, 1969), plate 4 (from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 406, fol. 125^v) in a hand of 1291. The second last word of the first line of the illustration, *fecit*, shows almost identical 'c' and 't' as does *paralítico* in the following line, while *hec*, also in the second line, has 't'-shaped 'c'.

³³ For some examples see the facsimile edition fol. 119^a line 14 *con*, fol. 119th line 28 *come*, fol. 120^a line 10 *comeþ*, fol. 120th line 19 *cunne*, fol. 120^{va} line 22 *come*, fol. 128^a line 4 *comeþ*, fol. 132th line 6 *Sweche* (compare *-cc-* with the similar *-tt-* in *bitter* fol. 133^a line 17), fol. 167^a line 18 *clarc* (second *ç*), fol. 198^r line 6 *liom*.

³⁴ It is up to individual editorial judgement whether the initial letter should be accepted without emendation as one of the shapes used for the letter 'c' in the Digby scribe's script, or whether the reading is seen as a 'mistake' (perhaps taken over from an exemplar's script) requiring emendation.

³⁵ Note that *MED* quotes from the mid-fifteenth-century English-Latin dictionary *Promptorium parvulorum*: '*Rukkun* or *cowre down*: Incurvo.' Cf. *begroukere* 'hedge-squatter'.

³⁶ See *The Leaping Hare*, p. 33 (on mountain hares): 'Any hare will try to run uphill when chased. Long hind legs working with short front ones give far stronger leverage on an upward slope than the legs of a dog which are all the same length. And the mountain hare lives on the hills. Those who hunt them say they "go to ground" more readily than the brown hare. This is because their ground has safer hiding places, jumbled boulders, which hold up pursuers and confuse them, rocks with shallow hollows underneath, small crevices in cliffs. But if one can be stopped from taking shelter and driven to the summit it is easily caught. Dogs and men with guns are sent up the back of the hill to wait while it is being chased up the front and even if it escapes the guns, its downhill gait is so awkward that any dog can snap it up.'

³⁷ See *The Leaping Hare*, p. 45, quoting G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton, *A History of British Mammals*, II, 344 (on the Irish hare): 'In mountains the habits are thus described: 'They take to natural fissures in the rocks, or to natural courses, called by the natives water-brakes ... In these holes or crevices they seek safety from their enemies or

shelter from bad weather ... It is supposed that hares took to this habit to escape from their chief enemies, the eagles, formerly abundant in these mountains.' Cf. Ross, 'The Middle English poem', pp. 374-5, the medieval Welsh poem *Cywydd yr Ysgyfarnog*, line 19: 'mynyddic wal bennal byllt', which Ross translates 'her mountain lair a protection from darts'.

³⁸ From 'The application of thought to textual criticism' (*Proceedings of the Classical Association*, 18, 1922); quoted from *A. E. Housman: Selected Prose*, ed. J. Carter (Cambridge, 1961), 131.

³⁹ From the preface to *Manilius*, I (1903), quoted from *Housman: Prose*, ed. Carter, p. 40.