silence the persistent *pleader*. The final couplet tersely reformulates these preceding verses with direct reference to the protagonists. *Anubis* is a god of death and otherworldly judgement: the peasant threatens suicide. It is a dramatic ending and a final despairing affirmation of faith in ideal Truth. The mention of the god completes a huge circle, as the peasant's name (mentioned in the first verses of the Tale) means 'One protected by Anubis'.

111. The poem returns to narrative for the resolution. The *two attendants* have appeared earlier in the third petition (B1 217). The peasant's speech laments the fact that Rensi has prevented him from suicide, and expands on his thwarted longing for death. It briefly resumes the lyrical style of the petitions; earlier similar images of sustenance referred to Truth (B1 272–8 and n. 74), but here they express the desirability of life for most of mankind, and also ironically reflect his desire for the absoluteness that he can attain only in death.

112. Rensi's speech reminds the audience that he is a benevolent figure of authority, and he replaces Anubis (B2 115 and n. 110) as the person with whom the peasant will deal. As the exchanges shorten, there is a reversal of roles: Rensi becomes the addresser who enjoins action, while the peasant vehemently spurns cooperation. His oath (referring to *bread* and *beer*) points to the irony of the preceding petitions' food imagery—which he apparently still does not realize—and his last word is a reference to eternity. (The oath is ambiguous; it might also be translated: 'I will not live . . .').

113. The dialogue ends with a simple command, an implicit and dramatic denial of all the peasant's accusations of deafness. The speaker is now the *hearer*, whose growing awareness of the irony of the preceding situation remains implicit. The writing down of the petitions (B1 109–11 and n. 20) is concluded here, and the petitions are enclosed within the narrative. This writing down is a standard successful conclusion of a literary text but here is dramatically, structurally, and thematically necessary: writing is a symbol of how the ideal is actualized (B1 336 and n. 96).

114. The following verses move swiftly to make the final judgement explicit on the highest level of authority. The justness of the king's *heart*, which perceives the perfection of the peasant's 'perfect speech', contrasts it with Nemtinakht's: the heart is not invariably, inherently evil.

115. The ease of the ending throws into relief both the efficacy of authority to uphold Truth and the central irony of the plot—that Rensi's ignoring of the peasant has been a trick to keep him speaking. The exact restoration of the final verses is uncertain. The list of goods echoes and replaces those stolen in the opening narrative: the unjustly robbed is now the just taker. This sudden change in fortune provides a tacit answer to the accusations against Rensi which were made in paradoxical, peripatetic ('then-now') form. The peasant remains quiet (an evocative state; see n. 14): he has at last no further need to speak.

[3]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor

Introduction

The Tale begins in dramatic fashion, *in medias res*, as a clever retainer tries to comfort his master who is sailing back from an expedition in a state of despair, apparently at the failure of his mission. The retainer tells a tale about a previous voyage of his to show how catastrophe can be endured, in order to encourage his master in making his report to the king.

The Tale is an entertaining account of fantastic and exciting adventures. It gives the impression of a simple folk tale, but has a very sophisticated structure with an elaborate pattern of a tale within a tale within a tale, and alludes to esoteric knowledge to articulate its central message. Its mock simplicity is a virtue in itself, producing a sense of bare elegance, but it also drives home the Tale's universal moral and adds verisimilitude to the mariner's narrative.

Such verisimilitude is much needed, for the traveller, who was perhaps then (as now) a type considered to be a teller of tall tales, tells one including a tale told to him; as the audience moves from tale into tale, the experience becomes increasingly unreal. The fact that all the narrators remain nameless gives the Tale the feel of a timeless narration, of universal relevance. The repetition of incidents and phraseology, and the structuring of the whole by accounts of 'similar' happenings, give a sense of the universal similarity of experience, and suggest a world of metaphor and allegory. Voyaging is a common image for a person's journey through life, and the sailor's concern about landfall evokes the attainment of material and spiritual success in life. In the Tale, however, voyages are continually interrupted by disaster. Man's ability to speak (and to produce poetry) is his only safeguard against this, as is demonstrated by the sailor's tale, in which he attempts to allay his captain's fears about reporting to his sovereign by telling how he has had to face meetings with a numinous being as well as with the king.

Although the sailor's narrative of a shipwreck appears objectively straight forward, it is subtly suggestive: when he tells how he was cast onto a southern paradisal island ostensibly sited in the Red Sea, his description hints that the island is not as uninhabited as it seems. He then encounters the inhabitant, a giant human-headed serpent, whose shape declares him to be divine, but whose exact identity remains mysterious.

The sailor implied that his tale would advise bravery in the face of disaster, and he now reveals that his moral was learnt from this serpent, who told him how he had to endure the death of his kinsmen. The lost community of serpents totalled seventy-five, a number that alludes to a religious text, and suggests that the serpent is a metaphorical representative of the creator-god (see n. 17). His tale of catastrophe expands and deepens the lesson to be learnt from the sailor's experience, by suggesting that disaster is an inevitable part of existence that afflicts even the divine. The island was initially described by the serpent as a spirit isle, and now the serpent reveals that it will sink after the sailor is rescued; this alludes to the myth that the universe will end in a cosmic catastrophe, and that only the creator-god will survive, taking the form of a serpent (see n. 23). The serpent's narrative contains a further allusion: he mentions a daughter who was saved from catastrophe, which recalls the daughter of the creator-god, who is Truth, the personification of the ideal order of the universe.

These literary (and unliteral) allusions present an analogue of the nature of suffering. The thrust of the poem is that, since the whole cosmos—even the divine—is prey to disaster, all that one can do is to bear it bravely, attain a degree of self-realization and self-control, and 'view' one's experience without despair (there is much play with 'seeing'). The serpent's survival offers the audience some hope, which is embodied in the sailor's survival and the serpent's prophecy that he will return home safely with another shipload of sailors. In this survival, art has a role: the telling and retelling of misfortune enable people to overcome or to endure it. In the Tale as a whole, literature acts as a redress for suffering: the man saves himself by his quick and skilful speech. The Tale is thus about the value of telling tales, and the formal repetition of the Tale itself provides a reassuring regularity in the tales of disaster. The stanzas likewise fall into regular groups: the first five deal with the introduction and the journey to the island, the second five with the man's dialogue with the serpent he meets there, the next five with the serpent's tale and prophecy, while the remainder take the sailor back home, where he is rewarded with the title with which he was introduced at the start of the whole.

The repetition of incidents, however, also presents many sudden reversals of fortune, and differences between what should be and what actually happens; occasionally these are almost humorous, but they create an unsettling atmosphere. The reassuring narration is clouded by multiple ambiguities: the audience cannot tell the identity of the characters, or precisely why they are travelling; the serpent's identity is left ambiguous, as is his daughter's and (through wordplay) the exact nature of the island; and there are numerous incidental verbal ambiguities (see nn. 10, 14, 15, 18, 22). The various and cross-purposed allusions increase the sense of uncertainty and unreality for the audience.

Disorder reasserts itself with a final unexpected event, and the Tale ends with a reply by the sailor's master. The sailor's monologue has ended and there is no need for any response from his silent interlocutor, but his intricately structured lesson is swept aside with a brutal, cynically laconic response: the Count asks in a terse proverbial-sounding question how it can profit a doomed man to hope for help. Although shockingly sudden, this rejection has been subtly prepared for: the serpent has already brushed aside one of the sailor's declarations as laughable. The dismissal casts doubt on the validity of his moral, on the capacity of speech to change things, and thus perhaps on the reliability of the sailor as a narrator. For all its stoic assurances, the Tale ends on a question with a final unexpected twist, and all is left hanging. The only certainty is the art of the poem, and the Count's final question is left for the audience to answer.

The Tale is preserved in a single manuscript (P. St-Petersburg 1115), written in an archaizing hand in the middle of the Twelfth Dynasty, and was probably composed early in the Dynasty; the name of the copyist is preserved. Although the start of the manuscript has been tampered with to add a strengthening strip (now lost), there is little doubt that the text is complete. Numbers give line numbers of the manuscript.

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor

A clever Follower speaks:[1]
'May your heart be well, my Count!
Look, we have reached home,
and the mallet is taken, the mooring post driven in,
and the prow-rope has been thrown on the ground;
praises are given and God is thanked,
every man is embracing his fellow,
and our crew has come back safe,
with no loss to our expedition.
We've reached the very end of Wawat, and passed Biga!
Look, we have arrived in peace!
Our own land, we've reached it!

Listen to me, my Count![2]
I am free ⟨from⟩ exaggeration.
Wash yourself! Pour water on your hands!
So you may reply when you are addressed,
and speak to the king with self-possession,
and answer without stammering.
A man's utterance saves him.
His speech turns anger away from him.
But you do as you wish![3]
It is tiresome to speak to you!

I shall tell you something similar,[4]
which happened to me myself:
I had gone to the Mining Region of the sovereign.
I had gone down to the Sea,
in a boat 120 cubits long,
40 cubits broad,
in which there were 120 sailors from the choicest of Egypt.
They looked at the sea, they looked at the land,
and their hearts were stouter than lions'.

Before it came, they could foretell a gale,[5]
a storm before it existed;
but a gale came up while we were at sea, before we had reached land.
The wind rose, and made an endless howling,

and with it a swell of eight cubits.
Only the mast broke it for me.[6]
Then the boat died.
Those in it—not one of them survived.
Then I was given up onto an island
by a wave of the sea.
With my heart as my only companion,[7]
I spent three days alone.
I spent the nights inside
a shelter of wood, and embraced the shadows.
Then I stretched out my legs to learn what I could put in my mouth.

I found figs and grapes there, and every fine vegetable;[8]
and there were sycomore figs there, and also ripened ones,
and melons as if cultivated;
fish were there, and also fowl:
there was nothing which was not in it.
Then I ate my fill, and put aside
what was too much for my arms.
I took a fire drill, made fire,[9]
and made a burnt offering to the Gods.

Then I heard a noise of thunder; I thought it was a wave of the sea,[10]
for the trees were splintering,
the earth shaking;
I uncovered my face and found it was a serpent coming.
There were 30 cubits of him.
His beard was bigger than two cubits,
his flesh overlaid with gold,
and his eyebrows of true lapis lazuli.
He was rearing upwards.

He opened his mouth to me, while I was prostrate in front of him.[11]
He said to me, "Who brought you?
Who brought you, young man?
Who brought you?
If you delay in telling me
who brought you to this island,

I will make you know yourself to be ashes,
turned into invisibility!"

"You speak to me, without me hearing.[12]
I am in front of you, and do not know myself."
Then he put me in his mouth,
took me away to his dwelling place,
and laid me down without harming me.
I was safe, with no damage done to me.

He opened his mouth to me, while I was prostrate in front of him.
Then he said to me: "Who brought you?
Who brought you, young man?
Who brought you to this island of the sea,
with water on all sides?"
Then I answered this to him, my arms bent in front of him.[13]
I said to him, "It's because I was going down
to the Mining Region on a mission of the sovereign,
in a boat 120 cubits long,
40 cubits broad,
in which there were 120 sailors from the choicest of Egypt.
They looked at the sea, they looked at the land,
and their hearts were stouter than lions'.

Before it came, they could foretell a gale,
a storm before it existed;
each one of them—his heart was stouter,
his arm stronger, than his fellow's.
There was no fool among them.
And a gale came up while we were at sea, before we had reached land.
The wind rose, and made an endless howling,
and with it a swell of eight cubits.
Only the mast broke it for me.
Then the boat died.
Those in it—not one of them survived, except me.
And look, I am beside you.

Then I was brought to this island
by a wave of the sea."
And he said to me, "Fear not,[14]

fear not, young man!
Do not be pale, for you have reached me!
Look, God has let you live,
and has brought you to this island of the spirit;
there is nothing which is not within it,
and it is full of every good thing.
Look, you will spend month upon month,[15]
until you have completed four months in the interior of this island.
A ship will come from home,
with sailors in it whom you know,
and you will return home with them,
and die in your city.

How happy is he who can tell of his experience, so that the calamity passes![16]
I shall tell you something similar,
that happened on this island,
where I was with my kinsmen,
and with children amongst them.
With my offspring and my kinsmen, we were 75 serpents in all—[17]
I shall not evoke the little daughter,[18]
whom I had wisely brought away.

Then a star fell,[19]
and because of it they went up in flames.
Now this happened when I wasn't with them;
they were burnt when I wasn't among them.
Then I died for them, when I found them as a single heap of corpses.
If you are brave, master your heart,[20]
and you will fill your embrace with your children,
kiss your wife, and see your house!
This is better than anything.
You will reach home, and remain there,
amongst your kinsmen."
Stretched out prostrate was I,
and I touched the ground in front of him.

I said to him, "I shall tell your power to the sovereign.[21]
I shall cause him to comprehend your greatness.

I shall have them bring you laudanum and malabathrum,
terebinth and balsam,
and the incense of the temple estates with which every God is content.
I shall tell what has happened to me, as what I have seen of your power.
They will thank God for you in the city
before the council of the entire land.

I shall slaughter bulls for you as a burnt offering.[22]
I shall strangle fowls for you.
I shall have boats brought for you
laden with all the wealth of Egypt,
as is done for a God who loves mankind,
in a far land, unknown to mankind."

Then he laughed at me, at the things I had said,[23]
which were folly to his heart.
He said to me, "Do you have much myrrh,
or all existing types of incense?
For I am the ruler of Punt;
myrrh is mine;
that malabathrum you speak of bringing
is this island's plenty.
And once it happens that you have left this place,
you will never see this island again, which will have become water."

Then that boat came,[24]
as he had foretold previously.
Then I went and put myself up a tall tree,
and I recognized those inside it.
Then I went to report this,
and I found that he knew it.
Then he said to me, "Fare well,[25]
fare well, young man,
to your house, and see your children!
Spread my renown in your city! Look, this is my due from you."

Then I prostrated myself,[26]
my arms bent in front of him.

Then he gave me a cargo
of myrrh and malabathrum,
terebinth and balsam,
camphor, *shaasekh*-spice, and eye-paint,
tails of giraffes,
a great mound of incense,
elephant tusks,
hounds and monkeys,
apes and all good riches.

Then I loaded this onto the ship,[27]
and it was then that I prostrated myself to thank God for him.
Then he said to me, "Look, you will arrive
within two months!
You will fill your embrace with your children.
You will grow young again at home, and be buried."
Then I went down to the shore nearby this ship.
Then I called to the expedition which was in this ship,
and I on the shore gave praises
to the lord of this island,
and those who were aboard did the same.

We then sailed northwards,[28]
to the Residence of the sovereign,
and we reached home
in two months, exactly as he had said.
Then I entered before the sovereign,
and I presented him with this tribute
from the interior of this island.
Then he thanked God for me before the council of the entire land.
Then I was appointed as a Follower;
I was endowed with 200 persons.
Look at me, after I have reached land, and have viewed my past experience![29]
Listen to my [speech]!
Look, it is good to listen to men.'
Then he said to me, 'Don't act clever, my friend![30]
Who pours water [for] a goose,
when the day dawns for its slaughter on the morrow?'

So it ends, from start to finish,[31]
as found in writing,
[as] a writing of the scribe with clever fingers,
Ameny son of Amenyaa (l.p.h.!).

Notes

1. The Tale opens suddenly. For the ranks of *Follower* and *Count*, see *The Tale of Sinuhe*, n. 1. No more specific names or titles are provided, but the dramatic monologue specifies the location and indirectly provides all the necessary information about the setting. *Wawat* was Lower Nubia, and was the goal of many expeditions at the start of the Twelfth Dynasty. The island of *Biga* is in the First Cataract, just south of Elephantine (modern Aswan), the southern border of Egypt. The opening verses are reminiscent of commemorative inscriptions recording expeditions, which were a familiar motif in official Egyptian writings. The dramatic setting matches the subsequent narrative's theme of a successful homecoming.
2. As the Tale opens, the sailor reassures the audience of the reality of the fiction that follows; the claim is, however, ironic and perhaps humorous (see also n. 3). He also attempts to reassure his Count: the *washing* marks his return home, and is perhaps also a preparation for his reception at court. These encouragements imply that all is not well with the Count, and that he will have to justify himself before the king, presumably for an ineffective expedition. The moral about *speech* is demonstrated by the whole Tale, which is about tale-telling, and ordering one's experience by speaking.
3. This testy couplet further indicates the state of the Count, and explains his silence, which allows the sailor's monologue to develop into a full narration. It is also an ironic touch, since the sailor now continues to speak at great length.
4. The sailor now begins to narrate an earlier journey. The *Mining Region* is the Sinai peninsula, to which he would have travelled by road from Egypt and then sailed from the Red Sea coast. The dimensions of the boat (21 × 63 m) are realistic, but the number of sailors may be schematic. There is wordplay between the homonyms *looking* and *lions* (which were proverbially watchful animals).
5. This stanza is dominated by disaster, and the sailors' foreknowledge proves to be an inadequate protection (it also anticipates the sailor's later meeting with greater prophetic powers). The wave is 4 m tall.
6. An obscure phrase: *it* is probably the wave, so that the sense is that the mast sheltered the sailor from the storm. The pathetic fallacy of the next verse increases the sense of death—a subject which is taken up by a later narrator.
7. For three days the sailor is in shock and exhausted, without bothering to eat. To *embrace the shadows* probably means to be unconscious.
8. A stanza now describes what the sailor discovers. The island is a bountiful paradise (similar to Iaa in *The Tale of Sinuhe*), and its lack of *nothing* makes it seem an image of all the created world (see n. 14). There are hints, however, that it is not uninhabited, since *sycomore figs* have to be notched by hand to ripen; the following verse contains another hint.
9. This pious offering to the gods is answered in the next stanza by the arrival of the numinous.
10. The sailor fears that he is about to be engulfed by another calamitous wave, despite being on land; the cause of the noise is yet more remarkable. The *serpent* seems to be human-headed, similar to the fire-spitting demi-gods seen on contemporaneous magic wands. He is 15 m long, and has a metre-long beard (beards are distinguishing marks of kings and gods); he is described as are gilded images of gods. The phrase *rearing upwards* (i.e. raised up to attack) is ambiguous: it is homophonous with 'wise beforehand/exceedingly'.
11. A stanza of dialogue. The serpent's *young man* (literally 'little man') alludes to their difference in size and in social rank: he speaks like a noble talking to a commoner, and he subsequently always repeats his address (a common means of marking emphasis and exclamations).
12. The change in speaker is unmarked, to indicate that the man's response is immediate: his quick words save his life. He echoes the serpent's threat in a humble reply, declaring that he is overpowered by his grandeur.
13. A gesture of respect. The scene is similar to the expected meeting of the Count and his sovereign (n. 2). The sailor now retells his tale of shipwreck (see earlier notes), and his tale concludes with a couplet which finally answers the serpent's initial question. Although the repetition of his earlier account may help him seem a reliable narrator to the audience, there are slight elaborations on the first version.
14. Although the serpent is portrayed like a god (see nn. 10, 17), he here refers to *God* as a still higher authority. The serpent provides, for the first time, an identification of the island. The *spirit* (*ka*) was the link between life and death, so his description implies that the island exists halfway between this world and the next. There is also wordplay: an *island of the spirit* is homonymous with an 'island of abundance'. Its abundance (see n. 8) makes it a metaphor for the created world.
15. The serpent now reassures the sailor. There is ironically ambiguous wordplay between *the interior* and *home* (and later with 'within' and the 'Residence'); they are homonyms, but are used of radically different locations. The death promised to him is very different from all the previous ones described; this will be a homecoming and a resurrection, not a shipwreck.
16. This exclamation asserts a central moral of the Tale: that telling a misfortune can be cathartic. The serpent begins his narrative with the same words as the sailor used (21–3). This tale within a tale within a tale is the most central and densely allusive part of the poem; it tells of ultimate disaster, but is flanked by reassuring prophecies that the sailor will be spared such an experience.
17. The number of serpents is the same as the number of the forms of the Sungod in a later religious text, *The Litany of the Sungod*. This esoteric allusion suggests that the serpent is an image of the creator, although he has referred to 'God' as distinct from himself (113–14 and n. 14). The identity of the serpent is presented as an obscure metaphor.
18. The serpent's wise intuition recalls that of the sailors; although greater, following events show that his wisdom is insufficient to ward off calamity: he is unable to save his *kinsmen*, only his *daughter*, whom he had taken with him. In mythology the daughter of the creator Sungod is the goddess Truth, the central value of Egyptian culture. (The verse is allusive and ambiguous; it might also be translated: 'who was brought to me by prayer').
19. The stanza begins with a cosmic cataclysm. The serpents' vulnerability to suffering suggests that the divine, including even the creator-god, is not exempt from suffering and chaos (see Introduction, p. 90). Even the serpent 'dies' metaphorically.
20. The serpent shifts abruptly from a narrative of despair to positive injunction: his tale advocates and exemplifies stoic endurance and self-control (implying that the man's calamity is easier than his). The reference to *kinsmen* points the parallel between the serpent's loss and the sailor's. This reassurance is personal and

intimate, following on from the serpent's tale of personal suffering. Here the sailor's happy return implicitly depends on his accepting the serpent's lesson; wordplay links the two together: *brave* and *embrace* are homophones (*embrace* also recalls the sailor's earlier 'embracing the shadows' (44–5 and n. 7)). The sailor's own monologue began with a similar injunction not to despair (1–2).

21. The sailor enthusiastically promises to extol the serpent's divinity. (The royal audience that he envisages recalls the Count's coming audience, which provides the frame of the whole Tale.) He also promises offerings of spices and perfumes suitable for a god; not all of these are securely identifiable.
22. His continuing promises of sacrifices are natural in the circumstances, but are slightly extravagant to judge by the serpent's response. The last two verses of the stanza can also be rendered 'a god who loves mankind (i.e. Egyptians), in a distant land, whom mankind does not know': this ambiguity increases the sense of how impossible it is for the sailor to send anything to the isle and maintains the mysterious atmosphere of the whole Tale.
23. The serpent now gives two reasons why the sailor's offer is ridiculous: compared to the serpent he lacks the means to fulfil his promises; and he will be unable to return to the island. The serpent finally reveals something of his mystical identity: *Punt* was a semi-mythical land of riches, and the source of exotic goods; it was perhaps in the region of modern Eritrea and part of the semi-legendary regions known as 'God's Land'. The island's disappearance evokes its mystical and metaphorical nature: these verses are similar to the end of the created world as related in a later funerary text (*Book of the Dead*, spell 175). The serpent does not specify his own fate, but in that myth the creator-god survives the apocalypse as a primordial serpent in the waters of chaos.
24. At the start of the description of the homeward journey, the sailor meets sailors who compensate in part for the ones who had died (38–9). He recognizes them from past knowledge, whereas the more perceptive serpent perceived them by foreknowledge.
25. The serpent's speech promises a return to certainty and the familiar real world, adding the assurance of reunion with family. What he asks in return, merely the repetition of his fame, is the Tale itself, although there is a touch of irony: *renown* is literally 'name', and the serpent remains anonymous. As *renown* ensured the survival of the dead, the word also alludes to the fact that the serpent is not of this world.
26. The serpent now surpasses the sailor's earlier offer with a list of exotic products from his African kingdom of Punt.
27. In a stanza of leave-taking, the serpent repeats his reassuring prophecy; the mention of *two*, not four, months (118–19) gives a sense of time passing and the speed of his return. For the sailor death now has a positive aspect; the paradox of simultaneously growing young again and being buried is also found in Sinuhe's homecoming. *Children* are a sign of survival and continuity, as well as of family life.
28. In narrating his reception and reward, the sailor makes no mention of spreading the serpent's renown (cf. 159–60). His fulfilling his duty may be tacitly understood, but the lack of any explicit description may foreshadow the unsatisfactory response to the narration that is to come. Once again, the sailor's eloquence benefits him, and he is rewarded with an improbably large number of servants: his promotion to the rank of a *Follower* returns the audience to the start of the whole tale, as does the subsequent mention of *reaching land*.
29. This moralizing triplet is an appropriate ending to the sailor's tale, which was told to urge the value of speaking and experience. *Reaching land* is an evocative

phrase, suggestive of success (it is homonymous with 'endowed') and of a good death.

30. The Tale abruptly returns to the setting. The Count's laconic and unexpected answer makes a brutal ending, and shows that he has not listened to the sailor's moral. He asks who will support a doomed person like himself, and implies that no endurance will help him survive his catastrophe. His warning against *acting clever* alludes scornfully to the sailor's title of 'clever Follower' (1). His answer also echoes the offerings of fowl mentioned by the sailor (145–6) and the *pouring of water* advocated earlier (13–14 and n. 2). The mention of *slaughter* recalls curses against rebels in graffiti left by contemporaneous expeditions to Nubia, suggesting that the Count may expect to be accused of disloyalty.
31. In this colophon the use of (*l.p.h.!*) (see Glossary) after the copyist's name is a little grandiloquent (an occasional tendency in colophons). The mention of *clever fingers*—a standard epithet for scribes—is a witty touch, as 'clever'ness was mentioned in the final lines of the Tale.