

NEW MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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NEW MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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Edited by

Laura Ashe, David Lawton,
and Wendy Sacse



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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	vii
Human Flight in Early Medieval England: Reality, Reliability, and Mythmaking (or Science and Fiction) JAMES PAZ	1
Sanctuary and Sovereignty: Hubert de Burgh in the <i>Chronica majora</i> ELIZABETH ALLEN	29
Margaret's Choice: Negotiating Space, Class Identity and Gender Ideologies in <i>The Paston Letters</i> SHANNON MEYER	73
A Place of 'Long-Lasting Evil and Unhappiness': Rædwald's East Anglia in Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> JOSEPH GROSSI	97
The Once and Future Herod: Vernacular Typology and the Unfolding of Middle English Cycle Drama CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR	121
John Foxe's Chaucer: Affecting Form in Post-Historicist Criticism HOLLY CROCKER	151
The Ethics of Election in the <i>Queste del Saint Graal</i> LUCAS WOOD	185
'Bycause the redyng shold not turne hem to enoye': Reading, Selectivity, and <i>Pietatis Affectum</i> in Late Medieval England SARAH NOONAN	227

Romance, Affect, and Ethical Thinking in a Fifteenth-Century Household Book;  Leamington's Library MS 8009 JAMES WADE	257
Heterosyncrasy as a Way of Life: Disability and the Heterosyncratic Community in <i>Amis and Amiloun</i> TORY VANDEVENTER PEARMAN	287
Analytical Survey: Encountering Disability in the Middle Ages RICHARD GODDEN AND JONATHAN HSY	317

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1, p. 58. 'Knight Sparing his Father's Murderer', Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16, fol. 79^v [82^v].

Figure 2, p. 59. London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.vii, fol. 19^r.

Figure 3, p. 60. 'Common Bell of London', Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, fol. 84^r (detail).

Figure 4, p. 66. 'Hubert de Burgh's Vision', Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, fol. 93^v.

HUMAN FLIGHT IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND: REALITY, RELIABILITY, AND MYTHMAKING (OR SCIENCE AND FICTION)*

James Paz

It's the early eleventh century and Eilmer, a young Benedictine monk living in Malmesbury Abbey, takes it upon himself to fly. Eilmer has read the classical story of Daedalus and wants to test the truth of the fable, so he has fashioned a pair of artificial wings for himself. He may have made these wings from willow wand, stretching fine cloth or parchment over the frame, and may have attached this frame to the back of his shoulders while holding on to hand grips under each wing. Eilmer climbs to the summit of the abbey's bell tower and looks out

* This article's use of science fiction as a lens with which to interpret medieval texts is indebted to several conversations with Carl Kears, a doctoral student in the English Department at King's College, London. I would also like to acknowledge the Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies at King's for providing us with a platform to present our initial ideas.

My retelling of Eilmer's tale is based on the account of it given by William of Malmesbury in *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. by Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, II.13. In order to fill in some of the more technical details, I have also drawn on the reconstruction in Hallion, *Taking Flight*, pp. 16–19.

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Abstract: Anglo-Saxon England produced the first Western European who can be plausibly shown to have flown. Eilmer of Malmesbury was a Benedictine monk living in the early eleventh century who had read the classical story of Daedalus and wanted to test the truth of the fable. Eilmer fashioned a pair of artificial wings, leapt from the abbey tower, and flew for a full furlong before falling to the earth and breaking both his legs.

While it is difficult to strip Eilmer's tale of its mythical associations, the probability of his feat does not buckle under scrutiny. It stands, therefore, at a crossroads. Are we dealing with a technological reality or an imaginative story? This article uncovers and examines some of the most striking incidents of human flight in the literature, art, and science leading up to Eilmer's lifetime in order to gain a sounder understanding of the monk's performance. In doing so, I wrest that performance away from conventional histories of science but also challenge earlier dismissals of the flight as mere legend.

Keywords: William of Malmesbury, Eilmer the Flying Monk, man-made wings, Halley's Comet, cosmology, Old English poetry.

beyond the city wall to the valley of the River Avon. Perhaps he utters a last little prayer. And then he leaps.

The monk falls fast, head first, before his wings start to stabilize him, and his body evens out into a steady glide. Before long passersby in the city below are pointing up at the bird-man and gasping. As Eilmer flies over the city wall, pleased with the success of his careful planning and design, a sense of pride wells up in his breast-coffer. How high can he go?

But a violent gust of wind suddenly unsettles him. Doubt creeps into Eilmer's mind. What is he, a mortal, fallen man, doing in mid-air like this? Panic sets in. The wind blows harder, and Eilmer frantically tries to flap his man-made wings, but now he is losing control altogether. His speed drops, and the monk plunges to the earth, landing heavily on his legs. He hears a thud and a crack.

Leaping from the tower, Eilmer flew for a full furlong (a flight lasting for around twelve to fifteen seconds) before crash-landing and breaking both his legs. He remained lame from that day on, and his disabled, limping body must have served as an ambiguous sign around the abbey in the years to follow. In one sense, Eilmer's tale reads like a cautionary one in the same tradition as the myth of Daedalus and Icarus. And yet, the monk himself always insisted that his failure had been a technological, rather than moral, one: if only he had fitted a tail to his hinder parts, Eilmer claimed, he might have succeeded.

It is difficult to know exactly what Eilmer's fellow monks made of his attempted flight. The fact that he was able to plan, design, and execute it in the first place — and to perform it so publicly — suggests that they did not disapprove. What is more, the monks of Malmesbury evidently remembered the incident and were willing to pass it on, until it reached the ears of William of Malmesbury, who was the first to document the story in his *Gesta regum Anglorum* in the twelfth century.

From there, Eilmer's fame spread and his tale was repeated and rerecorded throughout the medieval and early modern periods, eventually reaching us in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where it has been convincingly reconstructed by modern aeronautic experts and even re-enacted in 1962 with the help of the RAF Royal Tournament Display Team.¹ The first detailed, historical research into Eilmer's flight was carried out by Lynn White Jr in 1961, and his article remains the most significant scholarly engagement with the account.²

¹ Some photographs of this re-enactment are provided in Woosnam, *Eilmer: The Flight and the Comet*, pp. 7–8.

² White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator'.

Yet the tale has moved outside the bounds of scholarship and into the realm of creative medievalism. It has certainly been preserved locally: a stained glass window installed in Malmesbury Abbey in the 1920s shows Eilmer holding a pair of Da Vinci-esque man-made wings; and until recently Malmesbury was also home to a pub named the Flying Monk. Additionally, the tale has entered popular histories, such as Robert Lacey's *Great Tales from English History*, and has even inspired contemporary art and children's poetry.³

As such, the tale of the flying monk of Malmesbury has gathered a legendary or mythical aura about it. This 'mythic' quality is not simply a product of modern, popular medievalism, however. The earliest recorded account, written down by William of Malmesbury, imbues Eilmer's story with such overtones from the start by associating it with the classical myth of Daedalus. Indeed (and as I will explore further on), the account of Eilmer displays some interesting parallels with the Daedalus myth, as well as with the story of Wayland's flight from Germanic legend. Perhaps it is this semi-mythical quality that has prevented Eilmer's feat from finding a secure place in conventional histories of science and technology. In his important study, White pointed out that modern accounts of aviation had neglected Eilmer of Malmesbury and, specifically, that John E. Hodgson's standard *History of Aeronautics in Great Britain* (1924) dismisses Eilmer's flight as 'hardly less legendary' than that of King Bladud.⁴ Bladud, the 'flying king' of Bath, will be familiar to readers of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who describes the king as a magician who taught necromancy and who constructed a pair of wings for himself which allowed him to fly as far as the Temple of Apollo in Trinovantum (or London), where he crashed and was dashed into countless fragments. The tale of Bladud the flying king is 'one of the most curious legends of Britain', and yet it is a legend all the same.⁵

Can we really put Eilmer the flying monk into the same category as Daedalus, Wayland, and Bladud? Perhaps the question should be: why not? For a start, Eilmer's feat does not occur in some misty, mythic past but is recorded only a short time after his death by a monk dwelling in the very same abbey. That monk was William of Malmesbury, whose own life can be dated from c. 1090

³ Lacey, *Great Tales from English History*. For an example of the depiction of Eilmer in contemporary art, see the work by T. S. LaFontaine, available online at *Athelstan Museum: Capturing the History of Malmesbury* <http://www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/people_eilmer.html> (accessed 10 May 2012).

⁴ White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator', p. 97.

⁵ Fear, 'Bladud: The Flying King of Bath', at p. 222.

to c. 1143.⁶ Given that William entered Malmesbury Abbey in his boyhood, it is likely that he would have spoken to fellow monks who themselves would have seen the limping figure of Eilmer and no doubt heard his version of events. In fact, according to William, Eilmer saw Halley's Comet shortly before the Norman invasion of 1066, at which time he was of a ripe old age. This leaves an approximate gap of only thirty years between the lives of the two men, meaning that, although William was not an eyewitness to the flight, he was a reliable enough earwitness. Moreover, unlike the feats of his more mythical counterparts, Eilmer's flight can be dated fairly precisely — a task carried out by White in his article. White used the fact that Eilmer had apparently seen Halley's Comet twice in his lifetime (first in 989 and again in 1066) to work out that the flight (which Eilmer attempted in early youth) occurred at some time between 1000 and 1010 AD.⁷ A further way in which the plausibility of Eilmer's flight can and has been tested is through modern recreation. As mentioned, this was done off the page in the 1962 re-enactment. But Richard P. Hallion has done this very convincingly on paper, too, in his 2003 work on the prehistory of flight, figuring out everything from the design and construction of the winged device to the effect of air pressure on the flying monk to the likely location of his crash landing, concluding that Eilmer 'anticipated not only the modern hang glider but the engineering test pilot as well'.⁸

While it is difficult, therefore, to strip Eilmer's tale of its mythical associations, the probability of his feat does not buckle under historical, scientific, and technological scrutiny. It stands, therefore, at a kind of crossroads. Are we dealing with a technological reality or an imaginative story? I suggest that the answer lies somewhere between the two. What I want to do in this article is to uncover and examine some of the most striking incidents of human flight in the literature and art leading up to Eilmer's lifetime in order to gain a sounder understanding of the monk's performance. In doing so, I aim to wrest that performance away from straightforward histories of science but to also challenge earlier dismissals of the flight as mere legend, and thus find a place for it in the middle. To put it another way, Eilmer's flight might be seen as both science and fiction: a sort of medieval science fiction, bringing together a familiar narrative and current technological possibilities to explore how scientifically plausible changes may impact human

⁶ A recent study of William's life and works can be found in Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*.

⁷ See White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator', p. 99.

⁸ Hallion, *Taking Flight*, p. 18.

minds, bodies, and culture.⁹ In turn, Eilmer of Malmesbury's tale will shed an interesting light on those soaring spirits, winged beings, and ascending bodies that may be found in early medieval English culture. Taking the tale of Eilmer as both its launching and landing pad, then, this article looks at the notion of 'human flight' in pre-1100 English literary, artistic, and scientific culture. I will approach this topic from two, interrelated angles: imaginative flight on the one hand, and actual, technological possibilities on the other.

First, I consider the extent to which a human 'yearning' for flight can be uncovered in the Old English poetry of the tenth century. The *hyge* or *mod* ('spirit' or 'mind') of *The Seafarer*, for instance, can leave the body to roam over both sea and land, while other Old English poems, such as *Vainglory*, demonstrate that the human body could also be exposed to inward flight, which was often harmful. In this way, the sublunary air became a battlefield between good and evil. In the second part of the article, however, I question whether early human flight was limited to the spiritual dimension. How might the Anglo-Saxon body have been transformed in order to fly? An interesting case may be found in the Wayland myth circulating among Anglo-Saxon audiences (e.g. *Deor*, the Franks Casket). Also worth examining in this section will be the winged bodies of angels and demons in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, as well as the 'disappearing Christ' art (a new innovation in Anglo-Saxon Ascension iconography that starts to appear around the millennium) as found in the eleventh-century Bury St Edmunds Psalter (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 12), Tiberius Psalter (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C. vi), and Cotton Troper (London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A. xiv). These are all examples of physical bodies in flight, and yet they call into question the difference between natural, unnatural, and supernatural human flight and force us to consider the moral implications of ascending bodies in the early English world-view.

This will take us back to Eilmer's realized flight and an analysis of William of Malmesbury's account of the flying monk in the *Gesta*. Here, I want to ask what, exactly, the monk thought he was doing. His attempted flight — as it comes down to us in written form — appears to be an audacious and very public feat, at once a physical and imaginative opening up of possibilities. The flight might have been a shocking success. Ultimately, however, it was a spectacular failure, and the

⁹ Science fiction is notoriously difficult to define. I am, however, attracted to it and have drawn upon the definition offered by Stephen E. Andrews in his introduction to Andrews and Rennison, *100 Must-Read Science Fiction Novels*, p. xxix.

malfunctioning of the artificial wings changed whatever outcome Eilmer had in mind, allowing William to later reinterpret and rewrite the event as a half-myth, to recast it as a cautionary tale akin to that of Daedalus.

And so, while early human flight initially seems to be a story of creative and spiritual yearning but technological failure, we will see, as the article develops, that the line between the imaginary (magical or supernatural flight found in myth, poetry, and art) and the real (actual, physical flight that utilizes science and technology) is a fine one. The yearning spirit that soars beyond the body is not only poetic convention but something that a Christian reader can put into practice; the skilled craftsmen who appear in legendary accounts use a strange blend of magic and technology to achieve flight; and the ostensibly supernatural flight of angels, demons, and Christ himself raises very real moral concerns, asking what the human body could, and should, be capable of in a fallen world. All in all, Eilmer's flight will be revealed as a bold, albeit morally dubious, act, and yet also, like the best science fiction, a story capable of sparking some fascinating speculation.

Spiritual Yearning and the Sublunary Battlefield

Is there evidence for a spiritual 'yearning' for flight in the Old English poetry of the tenth century? A well-known instance of how embodied humans might defy their stationary, earthbound state can be found in the Exeter Book poem *The Seafarer*:

Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,
 min modsefa mid mereflode
 ofer hwæles eþel hweorfeð wide,
 eorþan sceatas, cymedð eft to me
 gifre ond grædig, gielleð anfloga,
 hweteð on wælweg hreþer unwearnum
 ofer holma gelagu. (p. 231, ll. 58–64)

(And so now my spirit wanders beyond my heart-enclosure, my mind with the sea-flood, over the whale's home widely roams, over the surface of the earth, and the solitary flier comes again to me, yells, eager and greedy, urges my heart irresistibly on the whale-way, over the lengths of the sea.)¹⁰

¹⁰ References to the Exeter Book are taken from *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir; translations are my own.

The *hyge* (mind, heart, soul) or *modsefa* (a poetical word with much the same meaning as *mod*) of the Seafarer can soar over both sea (*mereflode*) and land (*eorþan sceatas*). As it moves beyond the body, it is said to *hweorfeð* (turn, come, go, wander, or roam). Can this be understood as a form of human flight, or is it only a yearning to do so? Is the movement of the Anglo-Saxon spirit beyond the body an emotion or an action? Is it poetic or literal flight? Part of the difficulty here is that we are presented with more than one word for the thing that is doing the yearning/flying: Old English *hyge*, *mod*, *sefa* (mind, heart). In 1985, M. R. Godden looked into what Anglo-Saxon writers had to say about the nature of the mind. He found that the standard word for 'mind' in ordinary prose is *mod*, 'used to designate the locus or instrument of thought and imagination' but also carrying the meanings of 'courage' and 'pride', so that *mod* 'seems to convey to many Anglo-Saxon writers not so much the intellectual, rational faculty but something more like an inner passion or wilfulness, an intensification of the self that can be dangerous'.¹¹ As well as *mod*, however, Old English poetry uses the terms *hyge*, *sefa*, and *ferþ* (soul, spirit, mind; life) for the concept of mind. Godden's analysis of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* reveals a complex picture of the movements of the mind. In the former, the *modsefa* seems to be an inner self which must be kept captive, fettered, but also sent over the sea, perhaps in search of divine favour. The latter similarly associates mind-words with emotion and volition, whereby the *hyge* or *modsefa* is urging the speaker onwards in a flight over lands and seas. In Godden's view, the 'mind' in *The Seafarer* incites the self to an outer-body voyage associated with divine will and the joys of the Lord.¹²

Yet these two poems seem to deal with the flight of the mind, and we should be careful to distinguish this from the flight of the soul. In her recent book, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, Leslie Lockett makes the point that, as a rule, the mind-entity called *mod*, *hyge*, or *sefa* 'is not said to leave the body at death or to participate in the afterlife' and that 'temporary departures of the mind [...] are associated with memories and imaginations of earthly peoples and places'. In contrast, Old English narratives 'in which the *sawol* (soul) or *gast* (ghost, spirit, breath) temporarily journeys out of the body are accounts of visionary experiences of the after-world rather than of memory or imagination'.¹³ An example of this is provided by a passage in the Vercelli Book's *Andreas*, where the men aboard the ship reveal to St Andrew a vision of heaven they have experienced:

¹¹ Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', at p. 300.

¹² Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', pp. 304–07.

¹³ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp. 35–38.

Us sæwerige slæp ofereode.
 þa comon earnas ofer yða wylm
 faran on flyhte, feðrum hremige,
 us ofslæpendum sawle abrugdon,
 mid gefean feredon flyhte on lyfte,
 brehtmum bliðe, beorhte ond liðe.
 Lissum lufodon ond in lofe wunedon,
 þær wæs singal sang ond swegles gong,
 wlitig weoroda heap ond wuldres þreat.
 Utan ymbe æðelne englas stodon,
 þegnas ymb þeoden, þusendmælum,
 heredon on hehðo halgan stefne
 dryhtna dryhten. (p. 27, ll. 862–74)

(Sleep overwhelmed us, when sea-weary. Then over the surging waves rimy-feathered eagles came in flight, drew out our souls as we slept, and fared forth with them through the sky, loudly happy, bright, and lithe. They lovingly adored and dwelt in praise, where there was continuous song and sound, a beautiful throng of hosts, and glorious multitude. Round about the Prince, angels were standing, thanes around their master in their thousands, praising the lord of lords with holy voices in the heights.)¹⁴

While the mind can fly through this world, then, the soul's flight takes it to the afterworld; another way of interpreting this is that the mind cannot fly beyond the sublunary region; whereas the soul, if it is able to experience God and his angels, can attain the celestial region and the empyrean heaven. It appears from these selections of Old English poetry that different aspects of the human self could fly to different parts of the early medieval cosmos. There is at once a freedom in this (humans were capable of defying their earthbound state and reaching other realms) but also restriction (only certain aspects of the self — mind and soul, not body — could do so, under certain conditions, and at certain stages of life).

What is also important for my purposes here is that this is not flight for flight's sake, or even flight for the sake of intellectual curiosity, but participation in a moral universe. This participation was not always wholly conscious — humans were not always in full control of when or where they might fly. The conscious self had to struggle to contain, restrain, and safeguard the volatile *mod* as it sought to break free of their chests. Beyond his breast-enclosure, the Seafarer's *mod* soars over the sea and across land, and yet its flight is never entirely disembodied but is somewhere between a heart battering against the ribcage and a bird soaring on

¹⁴ References taken from *The Vercelli Book*, ed. by Krapp; translations mine.

the wind, for it wanders free from the body but still comes again to the self, urging it on. Even as the mind roams forth, it is held back, and, even as it incites, it is restrained. Similarly, the flight of the soul was not a feat that one could choose to undertake at will but rather a voyage dependent on the grace of God.

What links both mind-flight and soul-flight is the yearning for things divine. The thrill of the flight itself, the mastery of the air, is subordinate to the heavenly goal at the end of the voyage. The soul gratefully receives the voyage that will lead it to God and his angels — though it seems that the body needs to be in an inert, restful state before and during the flight. The flight of the mind is morally more ambiguous. The *mod* or *modsefa* may yearn for the divine, yet it can also be vulnerable to a darker force — an irrational moodiness that ought to be restrained by the vigilant, conscious self. So, to return to my initial question — as to whether we are dealing here with a form of human flight or only a yearning to do so —, the answer has to be somewhere in between the two. The ‘yearning’ is for the divine rather than for flight in itself, but neither can such non-physical flight be dismissed as wholly imaginative or confined to the literary domain alone.

Indeed, stabilizing the mind and aligning it with the soul was not simply a poetic trope but a real, morally important practice in the lives of Anglo-Saxon Christians: a spiritual exercise that could be performed. *Guthlac B*, for instance, tells how, in the last days of the saint’s exemplary life, his ‘Hreper innan born, | afysed on forðsið’ (breast was burning within, yearning for the onward path) (p. 141, ll. 938–39). Although his body is weakened with sickness, Guthlac is able to keep his mind stable and singly focused: ‘Ða wæs Guðlace on þa geocran tid | mægen gemedgad, mod swiþe heard, | elnes anhydig’ (Then in this distressing time Guthlac’s strength was worn down; his mind was hardened and fixed in courage) (pp. 142–43, ll. 976–78). Throughout this poem, Guthlac’s saintliness is conveyed by his ability to *trymman* (to make firm) and *stapolian* (to settle, fix), his *mod* and his ‘cultivation of mental stability is linked to the beatific state of his soul.’¹⁵ This text demonstrates to its Christian readership that control of the mind’s emotions in this life and this world can help the soul attain heavenly heights and fulfil its yearning for God in the next — it presents this practice as the saintly ideal, with a glorious flight as its eventual reward.

Yet I have also touched upon the darker aspect of human flight, whereby the mind does not always yearn for godly things but can be led astray, turning volatile and even harmful. In this way, early human flight entails participation in a moral battlefield. We should stay with our Mercian saint for the moment, then, for this

¹⁵ Low, ‘Mental Cultivation in Guthlac B’, at p. 631.

aerial tussle between good and evil is made explicit in passages from *Guthlac A*. As Guthlac attempts to set up his saintly retreat on a hill in the midst of the woods, he finds that the very air of that wilderness is teeming with hostile and agitated demons. Having been cut off from the kind of heavenly glory that the saint seeks, but also denied a resting place on earth, these demons must flit about angrily in ceaseless flight:

Ne motun hi on eorþan eardes brucan,
 ne hy lyft swefeð in leoma ræstum,
 ac hy hleolease hama þoliað,
 in cearum cwipað, cwealmes wiscað,
 willen þæt him dryhten þurh deaðes cwealm
 to hyra earfeða ende geryme. (p. 116, ll. 220–25)

(They could not find a dwelling on the earth, nor does the air allow their limbs to rest, but they, shelter-less, endure without homes, mourning amid their sorrows, wishing for death, willing the lord, through death's destruction, to bring an end to their miseries.)

Ethereal as these devils might seem from this description, they nevertheless pose a substantial threat to the saint, who has invaded their region. At one point, the poet claims that while God would not let Guthlac's 'soul within his body' suffer harm from the demons, he would allow them to lay hold of the saint with their hands: 'No god wolde | þæt seo sawl þæs sar þrowade | in lichoman, lyfde seþeana | þæt hy him mid hondum hrinan mosten' (p. 122, ll. 407–10). Consequently, the saint embarks on a brief but hellish flight as the demons physically raise his body into the air (ll. 412–13). The devilish torment does not cease so quickly, however, and a little later on we are told:

Hwæðre hine gebrohton bolgenmode,
 wraðe wræcmæcgas, wuldres cempa,
 halig husulbearn, æt heldore,
 þær firenfulra fæge gæstas
 æfter swyltcwale secan onginnað
 ingong ærest in þæt atule hus,
 niþer under næssas neole grundas. (p. 127, ll. 557–63)

(Yet, swollen-minded, the irate exiles brought the glorious champion, the holy host-child, to hell's door, where after death's agony the sinful spirits of the doomed first enter that evil house, down into the abysses under the ground.)

Once more, these passages disrupt any neat division between physical/spiritual or actual/imaginative flight: the demons themselves are depicted as aerial entities,

as supernatural forces, and yet they can physically lift the saint's body into the sky or even wing it down to the gates of hell; what they cannot do is touch his soul, which is destined for a more heavenly flight in the afterlife.

However, there are instances in Old English literature where the evil denizens of the air are said to penetrate human flesh. Just as the volatile *mod* could erupt from the chest and cause harm, so too could evil fly into an exposed or vulnerable body. Another poem from the Exeter Book, *Vainglory*, relates how certain men in the mead-hall can become proud and boastful. It describes such a man as letting down his defences and exposing himself to the evil arrows of the devil: 'Bið þæt æfponca eal gefyllled | feondes fligepilum' (That evil-thinker is all filled with the fiend's flying darts) (p. 235, ll. 26–27). Further on, the same man is said to 'læteð inwitfla | breca þone burgweal, þe him bebead meotud | þæt he þæt wigsteal wergan scealde' (let shafts of malice break through the city wall, the war-seat that his ruler warned him to watch) (ll. 37–39). Dark, devilish forces have been permitted to pierce the vainglorious man with their flying arrows, but this is also an image of self-harm. The *feondes fligepilum* (the fiend's flying arrows), the *inwitfla* (treacherous shafts), are described as flying into the boaster's body and breaking through the *wigsteal* (war-seat) that God commanded him to guard. Unlike the saintly man, the vainglorious one has left his soul exposed, and so demons can do more than lay hands on his body; they can wound his inner self with their darts. This harmful inward flight thus stands in contrast to the *mod* or *hyge* that outwardly yearns for things divine, and to the *sawol* that flies forth to heaven.

As well as threatening the soul, these evil flying arrows also seem to have been associated with bodily harm. The charm *Wið Færstice*, for instance, tackles a stabbing pain and indicates that this has been caused by an invisible dart or spear sent by a malicious foe: 'Scyld ðu ðe nu, þu ðysne nið genesan mote. | Ut lytel spere, gif her inne sie' (Shield yourself now, that you might be saved from this evil. Out, little spear, if you be here within!) (ll. 5–6).¹⁶ The command for the victim to 'Scyld ðu ðe nu' implies that the human body could set up a kind of barrier to defend against invisible spears. While it was sometimes preferable, then, for the body to release its mind or soul in a positive outward and upward yearning for the divine, on other occasions it needed to shield itself against incoming flight that might cause a physical or spiritual wound.

However, humans could ultimately do what devils could not do and attain the heights of heaven. To understand this more clearly, it is worth taking a moment at

¹⁶ For the text of this charm, see *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, Charm 4, 'For a Sudden Stitch', pp. 122–23.

the close of this section to illustrate the shape and scope of the medieval cosmos — and to consider humankind's position therein. In this model of the universe, the earth dwelt in the centre of a series of concentric spheres of the elements, planets, and fixed stars. Below the orb of the moon to the centre of the earth, the four elements and the bodies composed of them were corruptible and mutable. This was the 'sublunary' realm. Above this, however, lay the incorruptible celestial realm: the seven planetary spheres; the sphere of fixed stars; the crystalline ninth heaven; the tenth heaven, which initiated the movements of all other orbs; and, finally, beyond this and outside it all dwelt God and his angels in the empyrean heaven.¹⁷ Although this is a broad summary of the prevailing model referred to throughout the Middle Ages, there is evidence that Anglo-Saxon writers had something very much like this in mind when they imagined their universe. The Old English *Metres of Boethius* use the metaphor of an egg to try and explain this vision of the cosmos:

Hwæt, hi þeah eorðlices auht ne haldeð,
 is þeah efneð up 7 ofdune
 to feallanne foldan ðisse,
 þæm anlicost þe on æge bið
 gíoleca on middan, glideð hwæðre
 æg ymbutan. Swa stent eall weoruld
 stille on tille: streamas ymbutan,
 lagufloda gelac, lyfte 7 tungla,
 7 sio scire scell scriðeð ymbutan
 dogora gehwilce: dyde lange swa.¹⁸

(Look! Even though nothing holds the earth, it would be easy for this ground to fall up or down, much like the yolk in the middle of an egg which can glide about within that egg. Similarly, the whole world remains still in its station: encircling waters, the surging of waves, the sky and stars, and the bright shell revolves around it every day: long has it done so.)

Ælfric, in *De temporibus anni*, similarly proposes that the earth is the centre of the universe and the planets and sun rotate around it, while the firmament is an outer boundary in which the stars are fixed: 'Seo heofen belicð on hire bosme ealne middaneard 7 heo æfre tyrnð onbuton us swyftre ðonne ænig mylenhweowul, eal

¹⁷ A concise and accessible overview of the medieval cosmos is provided in Page, *Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 36–37; I paraphrase her here. For an older but still excellent study of this complex cosmological model, see Lewis, *The Discarded Image*.

¹⁸ Alfred, *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius*, ed. by Krapp, pp. 153–203.

swa deop under þyssere eorðan swa heo is bufan. Eall heo is sinewealt 7 ansund 7 mid steorrum amett.¹⁹

A picture emerges, then, of the human body surrounded and assailed by flying forces within the sublunary realm. In the examples offered so far, the body predominantly remains earthbound while various entities (good and evil, rational and volatile) fly forth from, into, or around it. The sublunary air serves as a battlefield between good and evil, and yet it was a battlefield that could eventually be escaped via the flight of the soul. Restless demons swarm around and sometimes penetrate humans in this life on earth but the soaring human soul could, in the end, reach the highest of heights where God and his angels dwell. As I have shown, this can be conceived in temporal terms (a flight in the afterlife to the afterworld) but also in spatial terms (a flight from the sublunary realm, beyond the seven planets and fixed stars to the empyrean heaven).

At this stage, the evidence for early human flight points to spiritual aspects of the self that could escape the body, as well as supernatural aerial powers that could fly into the body. The embodied self has some role to play (in stabilizing the spirit, by resisting inner flight) but generally remains on *terra firma*, left behind by the spirit that yearns onwards and upwards towards God.

Yet the flight with which I opened this article — that of Eilmer of Malmesbury — was not purely spiritual by any means. While this section has thrown light on the moral and cosmological connotations of early flight attempts, providing a clearer picture of the universe into which medieval aviators might try to propel themselves, it is now time to turn to instances of overtly physical flight, to look at early medieval bodies that flew, to examine the way that they were depicted in early English literature and art, and to consider the implications of such depictions.

Flying Bodies and the Weight of Sin

How might the human body have been transformed in order to fly in early medieval England? An interesting case to start with is that of Wayland the Smith, whose legendary tale was evidently in circulation among Anglo-Saxon audiences. A literary allusion famously occurs in *Deor*. The first six lines of that poem describe how

¹⁹ Ælfric, *De temporibus anni*, ed. by Henel, p. 4.

Welund him be wurman wræces cunnade,
 anhydig eorl earfoþa dreag,
 hæfde him to gesiþþe sorge ond longað,
 wintercealde wræce; wean oft onfond,
 siþþan hine Niðhad on nede legde,
 swoncre seonobende on syllan monn. (p. 281)

(Welund knew suffering through serpents, the single-minded man endured miseries, had sorrow and longing as friends, winter-cold woe, often found misfortune, since Niðhad laid fetters on him, supple sinew-bonds on the better man.)

While *Deor* makes no mention of Wayland's eventual flight, this passage does refer to the enforced disability that would provoke and inspire the smith to fashion a pair of artificial wings for himself. What these lines seem to be alluding to is King Niðhad's imprisonment and hamstringing of Wayland — an act that would lead the smith to plot revenge and a clever, crafty means of escape.

Another reference to Wayland in Anglo-Saxon culture may be found on the Franks Casket. The front panel of this eighth-century artefact shows, on the far left, a bearded figure standing over an anvil while holding a pair of tongs in one hand and offering forth a goblet with the other. This is usually interpreted as a depiction of Wayland in his smithy. This scene also shows a headless body lying beneath the forge, and there is a robed, female figure standing to the right of Wayland, receiving the goblet he is holding out. The headless body is usually assumed to be that of King Niðhad's son, who Wayland killed in revenge, and the female figure to be Beadohilde, Niðhad's daughter, who drinks drugged beer from the goblet before Wayland rapes her while she lies unconscious.²⁰ All of this accords with the allusions in *Deor*: the smith's imprisonment and hamstringing in lines 1–7 of the poem and his vengeful rape of Beadohilde in lines 8–13. Yet the Franks Casket portrays a further element to the Wayland legend. There is a smaller, male figure to the right of this scene who is shown catching birds. There are four birds in all, and two of them are being strangled. What is this alluding to? It must surely be Wayland's means of escape. He (or his brother) is catching the birds for their feathers, from which Wayland will fashion the artificial wings that allow him to fly away once he commits his horrifying acts of revenge.

This image gives an enigmatic but intriguing glimpse into the craft involved in this instance of early human flight. The use of bird feathers to construct man-made wings is particularly noteworthy, since William of Malmesbury says this

²⁰ For a general discussion see Webster, 'The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket'. For a more recent study, see Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 145–53.

about Eilmer's means of flight: 'nam pennas manibus et pedibus haud scio qua innexuerat arte' (for by some unknown art he fastened feathers to hands and feet).²¹ The ambiguous reference to this artifice (*arte*) which allowed Eilmer to fashion his wings is mirrored by the image of the man strangling birds on the Casket. One might bring a version of Wayland's legend to the Casket and recognize that this is the means by which Wayland flew, yet the actual *process* of transforming avian feathers into wings fit for a human body is left unrelated. We may even say that it is concealed, if we believe that a technological possibility lay behind this 'fiction'. The audience is left to fill in the gaps in knowledge — or to not fill in the gaps and simply accept the feat as magical and beyond one's ken.

Technology and magic appear to be overlapping in this scene on the Franks Casket. The strangling of the birds might hint at ritual and sacrifice, and certainly suggests some sort of human-to-bird metamorphosis. Given that Wayland was supposed to have used 'shaman-like' powers to turn into a bird and escape Niðhad, there is good reason to view this as a magical metamorphosis.²² Yet Wayland is also shown in his smithy in this scene. Here we have a craftsman, then, forging items with an anvil and tongs. As a smith, Wayland uses his advanced technological knowledge in metalworking to transmute the elements of the earth into swords, rings, mail-coats, and more. Given the part-magical, part-technological power that Wayland possesses, it is difficult to really say whether his fashioning of wings and ensuing flight is a feat that belongs to the history of science or fiction. One might follow R. M. Liuzza and define this as a matter of 'craft'. For whatever skills and knowledge individuals may have possessed, improved, and transmitted in Anglo-Saxon England 'do not seem to have existed within a theoretical framework, or rather their theoretical framework was not generally an object of inquiry in itself'. Rather, much of this knowledge 'served as a means to a practical end' and so 'might be characterized as craft rather than science'.²³ We sense that Wayland knew what he was doing when he was making wings and taking flight, but such knowledge was closely guarded, and the fragments of his story that exist in early English literature and art cannot be, and were probably never intended to be, scrutinized for details of how to actually achieve flight beyond the domain of the imagination.

²¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. by Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, II. 13, p. 225.

²² See Vegvar, *The Northumbrian Renaissance*, p. 262.

²³ Liuzza, 'In Measure, and Number, and Weight', at pp. 475–76.

A fuller account of Wayland's legend is found outside of Anglo-Saxon culture in the Old Norse sources. *Völundarkviða*, for example, recounts how Volund was captured in his sleep by King Niðuð and forced to make fine things for him, then goes on to give an account of Volund's revenge, before finishing with an image of Volund rising into the air, boasting of his revenge, and flying away.²⁴ *Piðrekssaga* tells a very similar story of Velent and King Niðung: but here, after exacting his revenge, Velent orders his brother, the famous bowman Egil, to catch birds for him, and makes himself a flying garment from their feathers. He uses said garment to fly to the roof of Niðung's house, perching there to boast of his revenge, before finally flying off, never to be seen again.²⁵

Going by the nature of these two narratives, it would be easy to dismiss Wayland's flight as a wholly legendary one, much like that of King Bladud. And yet it does share some affinities with the account of Eilmer's flight. In fact, it presents us with a curious inversion of Eilmer's tale. Whereas Wayland, having been hamstrung by King Niðhad, constructs artificial wings in order to overcome his disability, Eilmer becomes disabled as a result of (rather than reason for) his artificial flight, his limping figure a constant reminder that his wings failed him. Thus, while Wayland's tale ends on a triumphant note, with his boast and his escape, Eilmer's tale seems a cautionary one, with his disability presented, perhaps, as a punishment received, as opposed to a problem overcome. There is, however, a strong supernatural element to Wayland's tale — an element mostly absent from Eilmer's. In *Völundarkviða*, Wayland is called 'the prince of the elves' and marries a swan maiden; in *Piðrekssaga*, we learn of his training in metalwork by the dwarves. This supernatural element means that Wayland's flight can be more readily dismissed as fantastical, and since his story has, for the most part, been received as myth by successive generations of scholars, any serious inquiry into *how* Wayland flew has been closed down — unlike Eilmer, whose flight has been reconstructed, re-enacted, made plausible. All the same, the parallels and contrasts between the two tales demonstrate that 'imaginary' feats of flight may blur into 'real' ones; and that the technology behind such flight soon becomes magical when knowledge is concealed and craft made ambiguous, while an improbable fantasy may become a technological possibility in the hands of someone who knows what they are doing.

Alongside the Germanic legend of Wayland, the more explicitly Christian literature and art known and reworked by the Anglo-Saxons also offers images of

²⁴ See *The Poetic Edda*, ed. and trans. by Larrington, pp. 102–08.

²⁵ See *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern*, ed. and trans. by Haymes, pp. 40–55.

flying bodies. At first glance, one might, with good reason, consider the flight of angels and demons to be a 'supernatural' phenomenon. However, the illustrated Anglo-Saxon poetic manuscript, MS Junius 11, shows both angels and demons with winged, humanlike bodies.²⁶ Visualized in this way, angelic and demonic flight appears to be a much more physical, perhaps even natural, feat.

It would be anachronistic to say that these angels and demons are depicted in a naturalistic manner, yet their bodies do look very human, a humanness that extends to several fallen angels displaying male genitalia on page 16 of the manuscript; in other places, the angels wear human clothing: long classical costume. Where these angelic/demonic bodies diverge from their human counterparts is that they also come with wings. What does the poetic text of MS Junius 11 have to say about these winged bodies? In *Genesis B*, the Old English term *feðerhama* (pl. *feðerhoman*) is used to describe the wings of the rebel angels. Satan himself calls on one of his followers to escape from hell 'þæt he mid feðerhoman fleogan meahte, | windan on wolcne, þær geworht stondað | Adam and Eue on eorðrice | mid welan bewunden'.²⁷ *Feðerhoman* can be translated straightforwardly as 'wings' but is defined literally by the *Toronto Dictionary of Old English* as 'feather-covering'.²⁸ The term 'feather-covering' hints at artificiality, at something added to or worn over the body. Pairing this description with the pictorial depiction of winged bodies in MS Junius 11, it is tempting to compare the angels' *feðerhoman* to the man-made wings worn by Eilmer of Malmesbury or Wayland the Smith, both of whom deliberately fashioned and attached feather coverings to their fallen, human bodies as a kind of prosthetic, turning an earthbound body into an airborne one.

This is not something an angel would need to do, though. After all, according to *Genesis A* the angels dwelt with God in heaven before there was even an earth to be bound to (*Genesis A*, p. 109, ll. 1–23).²⁹ If the angels' *feðerhoman* are not artificially constructed, then their winged bodies must be 'natural' things — that is, god-given rather than man-made. The angels are, indeed, pictured with wings

²⁶ Images of the manuscript may be viewed online at <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msjunius11>> (Accessed 10 May 2012).

²⁷ References from Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, p. 215, ll. 417–20 (Modern English translation: 'so that he might fly with a feather-cloak, circle the sky, to where Adam and Eve stand created in the earth-kingdom, surrounded by riches').

²⁸ *Toronto Dictionary of Old English*, available online at <<http://www.doe.utoronto.ca>> [accessed 10 May 2014].

²⁹ See Doane, *Genesis A*.

from the very beginning of Creation.³⁰ Would an Anglo-Saxon audience have assumed that angelic bodies were created with wings from the outset? *Genesis A* says only that God had shaped them to be ‘beautiful’ and ‘glorious’ (*wlite and wuldre*) (l. 36), and that they should inhabit the heavens (ll. 82–83). *Genesis B* similarly states that God shaped ten orders of angels with his hand, giving them beauty, brightness, and knowledge (*Genesis B*, pp. 207–08, ll. 246–68). No mention is made of wings, specifically.

When it comes to the creation of humankind, *Genesis A* tells how God forms Eve from Adam’s rib and then ‘feorh in gedyde, | ece saula. heo wæron englum gelice. | þa wæs adames bryd | gaste gegearwod’ (instilled life in her, an eternal soul. They were like the angels when Adam’s bride was adorned with a spirit) (ll. 184–87).³¹ It is the spirit within their bodies (OE *ece saula* or *gaste*) that makes the first man and woman like the angels (*englum gelice*). Yet whereas the angels dwelt in heaven at the beginning of time, Adam was shaped from the earth, as Satan declares in *Genesis B*: ‘Þæt me is sorga mæst, | þæt Adam sceal, þe wæs of eorðan geworht, | minne stronglican stol behealdan’ (That to me is the sorest of sorrows, that Adam, who was made from earth, shall hold my mighty throne) (ll. 364–66).³² And so, while angelic and demonic flight might in some ways be considered a supernatural phenomenon, their flying bodies could be deemed natural, or at least god-given. We have seen how the human soul can attain flight, yet in comparison to the angels the human body remains a heavy, earthbound thing. This contrast between angelic and human bodies is visualized on p. 61 of MS Junius 11, which shows the ascension of Enoch. In this image, winged angels are physically raising the patriarch into the heavens. The suggestion here is that it is ‘unnatural’ for the human body to fly without such angelic assistance.

Of course, the winged bodies seen in MS Junius 11 may be dismissed as merely metaphorical, a way of picturing an angelic swiftness and ethereality that is otherwise difficult to conceive. Nevertheless, the physical differences between angelic and human bodies, the potential for the human to overcome such differences, the naturalness or unnaturalness of realizing this potential — these are surely concerns that an Anglo-Saxon monk constructing his own wings and preparing to fly would have had to address. And there is evidence that this was a live issue in

³⁰ See pp. ii, 2, and 3 of MS Junius 11.

³¹ *Genesis A*, ed. by Doane, pp. 116–17. Although *Genesis A* recounts Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib, the account of Adam’s creation seems to be missing; there is a break in the narrative between the pages now numbered 8 and 9 in the manuscript; three manuscript leaves may be missing here.

³² *The Saxon Genesis*, ed. by Doane, p. 213.

England at the turn of the first millennium, when Eilmer was about to attempt his flight.

So why couldn't human bodies fly in the early Middle Ages? Why would it be unnatural for them to do so? If we wish to unpack these questions, there is no better place to turn at this point than to the 'disappearing Christ' art found in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, for a remarkable innovation in Ascension iconography seems to have been invented in England around the year 1000 AD. In traditional Ascension art, up to that point, Christ had been depicted as fully visible as he rose to heaven: yet the new Anglo-Saxon iconography portrayed Christ in the process of vanishing into heaven, with his upper body already hidden in the clouds and only his lower torso or feet still manifest. This type of depiction was christened the 'disappearing Christ' by Meyer Schapiro in study published a 1943,³³ and can be found in three eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts: the Bury St Edmunds Psalter, the Tiberius Psalter, and the Cotton Troper. In his examination of disappearing Christ art, Schapiro related this new innovation, which showed Christ partly veiled but unsupported by cloud, to the exegetical tradition that Christ had ascended to heaven without any help. This is commented on in the late tenth century Old English *Blickling homilies*, where the anonymous author is at pains to emphasize that even if Christ vanished into a cloud, he did not need the cloud to raise his body skywards:

Nalas þat wolcn þar þy forþ com þe ure Drihten þæs wolcnes fultomes þearfe hæfde at þære upastignesse, oþþe þat wolcn hiene up ahofe, ah he þæt wolcn him beforan nam

(The cloud did not come forth there because our Lord had need of the cloud's aid at the Ascension, nor did the cloud raise him up, but he took the cloud before him).³⁴

In a more recent study of the disappearing Christ, Robert Deshman attempted to explain the masking of Christ's upper body in cloud. Deshman agreed with Schapiro in that Anglo-Saxon artists were representing Christ from the Apostles' viewpoint, allowing the beholders of the image 'to re-experience the event in the role of the disciples watching their Lord vanish into heaven'.³⁵ What was less clear was why Anglo-Saxon artists did this.

Influenced by older scholarship on the issue, Schapiro thought that the disappearing Christ art was a form of daring realism that sought to humanize and per-

³³ Schapiro, 'The Image of the Disappearing Christ'.

³⁴ *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. and trans. by Morris.

³⁵ Deshman, 'Another Look at the Disappearing Christ', p. 529.

sonalize the Ascension by adding concrete details drawn from the artists' empirical observations of the material world. Deshman, however, found this interpretation hard to accept and saw the new art as being deeply rooted in early medieval Christian practices and piety that 'facilitated the dramatic re-enactment and re-experiencing of New Testament happenings'.³⁶ To quote Deshman further:

The representation of Christ in the process of vanishing into cloud emphasizes the paradox that Christ's disappearance from the Apostles' view was necessary so that, with the spiritual vision of faith, they could at last truly see him as God as well as man. Since Christ's head symbolized his divinity and his feet his humanity, the veiling of his upper body in heaven while his lower limbs remained visible illustrates the point that corporeal vision could see the flesh he assumed on earth but not his godhood, which had always existed in heaven with the Father and the Spirit.³⁷

Deshman's view of the disappearing Christ art fits precisely with my discussion in the first section of this article, underscoring the fact that, while early medieval humans could attain the highest heights of heaven *in spirit*, their bodies must remain on the earth. What is important for my purposes here is the point that the disappearing Christ art allows a re-enactment of the Ascension from the spectator's viewpoint only; it does not allow for a literal imitation of the levitating Christ. The art facilitates a visionary, spiritual experience but does not entail physical flight *per se*. Lynn White saw the disappearing Christ art and the speculation it provoked as producing

a new, realistic, and almost irreverent way of representing the Ascension [...] the Anglo-Saxons of Eilmer's days were beginning to show Christ almost jet-propelled, zooming heavenward so fast that only his feet appear at the top of the picture, while the garments of his astounded disciples flutter in the air currents produced by his rocketing ascent.³⁸

It is fascinating that this innovative iconography should coincide with Eilmer's flight attempt, but the fact remains that it is Christ doing the 'zooming' and 'rocketing' in this artwork — and Christ was a special case. Christ's human flesh had been unburdened by any mortal corruption, for he had been immaculately conceived by the Virgin Mary. Ordinary human flesh, on the other hand, was thought to be weighed down by sin — not only metaphorically but literally. Unlike the pure body of Christ, a body conceived by sexual intercourse was a heavy thing

³⁶ Deshman, 'Another Look at the Disappearing Christ', p. 533.

³⁷ Deshman, 'Another Look at the Disappearing Christ', p. 534.

³⁸ White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator', p. 102.

that could not ascend heavenwards without help. Ælfric makes this very point in one of his homilies by contrasting the ascensions of Enoch and Christ: ‘Enoh was gefeƿod, seðe was mid hæmede gestryned, and mid hæmede was strynde[n]de [...]. Se Hælend astah to heofonum, seðe næs mid hæmede gestryned, ne he sylf strynde[n]de næs’ (Enoch was conveyed, who was begotten by coition, and who begot by coition [...]. Jesus ascended to heaven, who was not begotten by coition, nor did he himself beget).³⁹

Thus, unlike winged angels whose bodies were made for heaven, and unlike the sinless flesh of Christ, sin-laden humans could lift hearts and spirits to heaven but not their physical selves. This may be conceived of in moral terms, but also, once more, in spatial terms: celestial bodies can fly to the celestial realm; corrupt and mutable bodies cannot escape the corrupt and mutable sublunary realm.

And yet the flight of Wayland the Smith, which was known by Anglo-Saxon Christians and used in Christian contexts,⁴⁰ suggests that the naturally sin-heavy state of the body may be defied through artificial means. Wayland enhances his disabled, earthbound body with his ‘craft’ — that weird blend of magic and technology. While he is never said to reach heaven, the smith does manufacture wings that work, somehow producing a supernatural mobility that is akin to the movement of angels and demons, unlocking the human potential for physical flight. But this is art, this is literature, this is myth. What about when it came to putting this potentiality into practice?

Eilmer of Malmesbury took these possibilities from off the manuscript page to the top of a bell tower on a windy day in Wiltshire. It is time, now, to return to our monk as he is uttering his last prayer and preparing to leap into the sky.

Eilmer’s Realized Attempt: Modest Success or Spectacular Failure?

What do all these instances of human flight leading up to Eilmer’s lifetime reveal about the monk’s own performance?

Studies that try to place his feat within the history of science and technology present it as a rather modest success.⁴¹ Although such work can tell us a lot about the mechanics of the flight, and situate it in the wider context of human aviation, they usually end up depicting Eilmer as a primitive hang-glider, a daring but

³⁹ Ælfric, *Homilies*, ed. and trans. by Thorpe, ‘Homiliae xxi’.

⁴⁰ On the Franks Casket, Wayland is featured alongside the Adoration of the Magi, and he is mentioned in the same Exeter Book anthology as overtly Christian poems, such as *Guthlac A* and *B* or *Vainglory*.

⁴¹ In addition to Hallion, *Taking Flight*, see Scott, *The Shoulders of Giants*.

eccentric inventor whose achievements are ultimately overshadowed by the more ambitious and intricate designs of Leonardo Da Vinci, and by the later and more significant breakthroughs of the Wright Brothers. More often than not, these studies also portray Eilmer as a quasi-modern technologist trapped in the wrong era, neglecting the relevance of his medieval world-view altogether.

My discussions so far in this article show that Eilmer's flight was not so much a modest success as a spectacular failure. It is important to remember that Eilmer was not only an educated and experimental man, but also a man of his particular time and place. As a monk located in Malmesbury Abbey, one of the leading seats of learning in Europe by the eleventh century, how could he have been ignorant of some, if not all, of the issues that have been raised in the previous sections — the need to guard and stabilize the soul for its flight in the afterlife, the shape and scope of the medieval cosmos and the position of humans therein, the differences between angelic and human bodies, the weight of sin, the unnaturalness of ascending mortal flesh? Moreover, how could a man in his position not have taken such concerns seriously?

So what, exactly, did Eilmer think he was doing? His attempted flight appears to violate the boundaries between the earthly and heavenly, between corporeal and spiritual ascension. In a kind of transhuman act, Eilmer added *something* to his body in order to enhance it and circumvent its natural sin-heaviness, making it capable of a performance ordinarily off limits to fallen human flesh.⁴² We may recall how St Guthlac's breast burned with yearning for heaven, but how his saintliness was conveyed by his ability to stabilize that emotion, in preparation for the glorious flight of his soul in the afterlife. Yet I am tempted to ask whether Eilmer was trying to take a shortcut. Certainly, he seems to have constructed his artificial wings as a form of prosthesis — a device that could not only supplement but super-enhance the enfeebled, postlapsarian body and explore the limits of the human condition in this, not the next, world. What was more, Eilmer's flight was a public performance that started at the top of a renowned and respected abbey and took him over the walls of a hilltop city. It was a feat to be seen. It was an audacious endeavour. It was at once a physical and imaginative opening up of possibilities.

As such, Eilmer's flight might have turned out to be not a modest success but a *shocking success* if only the wings had worked — if only, as the monk himself remarked, he had fitted a tail on the hinder parts: 'Ipse ferebat causam ruinae

⁴² I am drawing on Julie Singer's transhuman model of medieval disability: Singer, 'Toward a Transhuman Model of Medieval Disability', at p. 175.

quod caudam in posteriori parte oblitus fuerit.⁴³ This comment in itself shows that Eilmer did not deem his flight a success but a failure. This prompts the questions: What had the monk wanted to achieve with the attempt? What would success have looked like to him? Could it have revised the early medieval view of the human self and its place within the cosmos? In the end, however, Eilmer's flight was neither a modest nor a shocking success but a spectacular failure. It was a very visible, very impressive display, yet the malfunctioning of the artificial wings changed whatever outcome Eilmer had had in mind, allowing William of Malmesbury to later reinterpret and rewrite the event as a half-myth, to recast it as a cautionary tale akin to that of Daedalus and Icarus.

What did William, writing in the twelfth century, make of the event? For Lynn White Jr: 'It should be emphasized that William of Malmesbury's account of Eilmer breathes an atmosphere of approval and admiration.'⁴⁴ But my reading of the short passage in the *Gesta*, combined with my findings regarding early human flight so far, must lead me to disagree with this statement. In my view, William is a lot more morally ambivalent in his account of Eilmer than White claims. I detect disapproval, in places, as opposed to wholehearted approval, and as much undermining of the monk's ambition as there is admiration for it.

To start with, we should keep in mind that William only mentions Eilmer because of the monk's sighting of Halley's Comet shortly before the Norman Conquest. Eilmer's flight is only mentioned after the ominous sighting of the comet, almost as a digression. But the comet sighting serves another, more intriguing narrative purpose. Eilmer's observation of Halley's Comet and the fact that he could correctly identify it as the same comet that he had seen previously in 989 (*dudum est quod te vidi*) implies that he was something of an astronomer/astrologer. The idea that Eilmer was a scientifically-minded man is further bolstered by the likelihood that he was responsible for a number of astrological works, which were still in circulation in the sixteenth century.⁴⁵ Indeed, William refers to Eilmer as 'learned' and 'well-instructed': 'Is erat litteris, quantum ad id temporis, bene imbutus.' However, although Eilmer seems to have been an intelligent individual, and a keen stargazer, his 'scientific' observation of the heavens would have been coloured by a distinctly medieval awareness of the cosmos, the

⁴³ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. by Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, II. 13, p. 225. All further quotes from the Latin of the *Gesta* appear in the same place.

⁴⁴ White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator', p. 100.

⁴⁵ White, 'Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator', points this out (p. 98).

nature of which I have already outlined. The implications of this are not spelt out by William but are easy to discern for a modern reader *au fait* with medieval cosmology — and would have been even more pertinent to a medieval audience. Surely, the transition between Eilmer's stargazing and his flight would have provoked some speculation as to the monk's aspirations. What if his flight had actually worked as he had intended? How high did he want to soar? What might he have seen up there? What would have happened to his body beyond the sublunary sphere? Did he dare to dream of reaching the planets, the stars, the empyrean heaven? What happens to time, to temporal boundaries between life and death, when you travel upward through space?

It is difficult to say whether William consciously or unconsciously provoked such speculation, but his reference to the mythical Daedalus dampens it back down. William says that Eilmer fashioned his wings 'ut Daedali more volaret' (so that he might fly like Daedalus). Any reader familiar with the classical myth knows, of course, that to try to fly like Daedalus is to overreach, to fly too high, as his son Icarus did, and to suffer punishment as a consequence. The reference makes failure seem inevitable. One might, initially, be encouraged to ask about the possibilities Eilmer opened up, but, by associating him with Daedalus, William prevents his audience from pursuing them too far, or from thinking about putting them into practice for themselves. The Daedalus myth adds a cautionary note to Eilmer's tale, limiting its disruptive potential.

There is no firm evidence to say whether or not Eilmer actually read the Daedalus myth himself, or whether it was his main inspiration for the flight attempt. All we have is William's word, and he simply states that 'nam pennas manibus et pedibus haud scio qua innexuerat arte, ut Daedali more volaret, fabulam pro vero amplexus' (by some unknown art, he had fixed feathers to his hands and feet, so that he might fly like Daedalus, mistaking fable for truth). The last part of that sentence is particularly revealing: 'embracing the fable as truth'. This touches on one of the main themes of this article: the problem of separating the imaginary from the physical, the creative from the practical, in early human flight. That phrase suggests that Eilmer believed he could realize the imaginary, that he could convert creative yearning into something that might actually work. Yet, given the outcome of his attempt, it is hard not to detect an undermining of this belief — William, I think, is not presenting Eilmer's efforts as laudable but as foolish. The accusation of mistaking fable for truth is not unlike more modern dismissals of voyages to distant planets or alien encounters or sentient robots as mere 'science fiction' or, worse still, escapist fantasy.

As well as dismissing Eilmer's reasons for attempting the improbable, William also conceals the mechanics behind *how* the monk tried to fly. As mentioned,

historians of science and technology have been able to reconstruct these details: Hallion tells us that the wings ‘were probably of ash or willow-wand construction’, and that they ‘would have had midspan hand grips’ and were ‘perhaps attached with pivots to a bow brace across the back of the shoulders’, and so on.⁴⁶ None of this information is included in William’s original account, though. The *Gesta* only says that ‘nam pennas manibus et pedibus haud scio qua innexuerat arte’ (by some unknown art, he had fixed feathers to his hands and feet). That ambiguous reference to ‘some unknown art’ casts Eilmer in the mysterious role of a conjurer-craftsman, like Wayland. Again, we might assume that Eilmer knew what he was doing in designing and devising his wings, but that knowledge is not passed on to the reading audience. We may be put in mind of Arthur C. Clarke’s axiom that ‘any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.’⁴⁷ Like the allusion to Daedalus, this concealment is another way of closing down scrutiny into how the feat was actually performed, preventing inquisitive readers from putting this fiction into practice, from embracing *this fable* as truth.

William expresses his disapproval in a more explicit way, too. He introduces Eilmer’s flight by saying that ‘immanem audaciam prima juventute conatus’ (White translates this sentence as ‘in his early youth had hazarded a deed of remarkable boldness’⁴⁸). But while the Latin word *audaciam* can be rendered into modern English as ‘boldness’, it also carries more dubious connotations of ‘audaciousness’. Together with the detail that Eilmer hazarded this deed in ‘early youth’ (*prima juventute*), the inference is that the young monk was overconfident to the point of recklessness. There is less ambivalence about William’s interpretation of the event when he goes on to relate how Eilmer, ‘venti et turbinis violentia, simul et temerarii facti conscientia, tremulus cecidit, perpetuo post haec debilis, et crura effractus’ (agitated by the violence of the wind and turbulence, and also from consciousness of the rash attempt, he fell, broke his legs, and was disabled ever after).⁴⁹ Eilmer’s deed is here described as rash or reckless — one of temerity (*temerarii facti conscientia*). What is more, William attributes this interpretation to Eilmer himself, an opinion apparently formed in mid air, no less. Eilmer is then said to fall and break his legs. Whereas Wayland’s flight, if you recall, was a way of overcoming his disability, of triumphing over his impediment, Eilmer’s disability

⁴⁶ Hallion, *Taking Flight*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ See Clarke, *Profiles of the Future*, p. 36, footnote.

⁴⁸ White, ‘Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh-Century Aviator’, p. 98.

⁴⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom, II. 13, p. 225.

is here presented as a punishment, the price he had to pay for his youthful temerity. Perhaps Eilmer should have considered himself fortunate, as Icarus's punishment for his overreaching was death. Despite an awareness of his recklessness, Eilmer does not come across as particularly repentant at the end of the account, which finishes with the reported words of the monk himself: 'Ipse ferebat causam ruinae quod caudam in posteriori parte oblitus fuerit' (He said the cause of his ruin was that he forgot to put a tail on his hinder parts).⁵⁰ So it seems that, for Eilmer, the failure was not a moral one but a technological one. If anyone had asked the monk about the cause of his injuries, one can assume that he placed less emphasis on his audacity, his overambition, than on his flawed craftsmanship.

Thus, as it comes down to us from the *Gesta*, the tale of Eilmer the Flying Monk is at once provocative and admonitory, speculative, exploratory, but morally dubious. We do get a sense of Eilmer himself, of his learnedness, his experimental character, his aspiration, and yet the story of his very public performance is also censured in parts and overwritten with caution.

It has been my intention to wrest that performance away from conventional histories of science (we must engage with the issues raised by literature and art and recognize the medieval world-view they reflect) but to also challenge easy dismissals of the flight as myth or fiction (it is at once more plausible and more disappointing than the shape-shifting of Wayland or the miraculous ascensions of Enoch or Christ) and so find a place for it in the middle of these discourses. Eilmer's flight might be seen as a sort of medieval science fiction. It is undoubtedly a singular tale, a one-off that defies the genres into which medieval literature is usually categorized; it stands out from the chronicle context within which it was originally confined and has taken on a life of its own across time, continuously calling for reinterpretations, reconstructions, re-enactments.

Like many great works of science fiction, this narrative features an experiment so plausible but so paradigm-shattering that it was doomed to failure. Eilmer could have created a monster, an incredible flying birdman that might have flown to the stars and beyond. But that would have changed everything. The science of the time could not be stretched that far, the technology could not take our monk beyond the limits of the possible, the moral boundaries, though tested, could not be broken. Eilmer did do enough, however, to provoke some fascinating speculation, encouraging both medieval and modern audiences to think again about the things we make, the bodies we inhabit and the tales we tell.

⁵⁰ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom, II. 13, p. 225.

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SANCTUARY AND SOVEREIGNTY: HUBERT DE BURGH IN THE *CHRONICA MAJORA*

Elizabeth Allen*

In thirteenth-century England, the privilege of sanctuary fell securely within the common law: a felon could seek protection in any church, and remain there for forty days in the care of the local community. He would then either stand trial, be starved out of the church, or confess his crime and abjure the realm.¹ Henry II had established the office of the coroner, a royal administrator charged with (among other things) overseeing and recording cases of sanctuary and abjuration. The coroners' rolls that survive from the late twelfth century onward record criminals by name, occupation, and chattels ceded to the crown.²

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¹ On the law of sanctuary in England, see Baker, 'The English Law of Sanctuary'; Cox, *The Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*; Helmholz, *The 'ius commune' in England*, pp. 16–81; Rosser, 'Sanctuary and Social Negotiation'; Trenholme, *The Right of Sanctuary*. On abjuration, see Réville, 'L'Abjuration regni'.

² Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner*.

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Abstract: This essay considers the *Cronica Majora's* account of the flight into sanctuary of Henry III's fallen justiciar, Hubert de Burgh, as it illuminates the practice of sanctuary seeking in general. Far from simply providing a 'home base', sanctuary affords symbolic opportunities for both fugitive and pursuer. Roger Wendover highlights the king's ire and his subject's humility, divorcing Henry from divine sanction while sanctifying Hubert. Wendover frames Henry's action as a refusal to perform the powerful role of merciful monarch exemplified by Richard I. Thus while Wendover shows Hubert's skill in fleeing to the church at key moments, he portrays Henry as a clumsy player in the symbolic 'game' of sanctuary. Matthew Paris's additions and illustrations intensify the conflict, but finally shed light on its resolution. Sanctuary does complex symbolic work to recast political crisis and sovereign power.

Keywords: *Cronica Majora*, Henry III, Hubert de Burgh, Matthew Paris, sanctuary, sovereignty, Roger Wendover.

Sanctuary practice — its conditions explicit, its records carefully monitored, and its profits accounted for — became a carefully modulated response to criminal conduct and a demonstration of the strength of the king's administration of justice.³ The vast majority of cases concerned the most vulnerable members of society, who could save their own lives by fleeing to the church.⁴ But in a few *causes célèbres*, aristocratic fugitives sought sanctuary from royal disfavour, fleeing, in a sense, into the arms of their enemy. Such was the case when, in August 1232, a young King Henry III ousted his longtime justiciar Hubert de Burgh, and Hubert sought sanctuary not once but three times in the course of the next fourteen months.⁵

This essay investigates the case of Hubert de Burgh in order to unpack the symbolic function of sanctuary seeking. The fullest account of the fall of Hubert is in the *Chronica majora*, where Roger Wendover tells the story and where Matthew Paris, probably after consulting Hubert himself, adds verbal and visual marginalia that enhance the tyranny of Henry and the holiness of Hubert. The work of the two chroniclers makes visible a range of symbolic meanings that can accrue to the fugitive, the 'host', and the sacred space. That is, the episodic and breathless accounts of Hubert's flights reveal the way in which sanctuary law make available a range of possible effects that exceed the legal conditions of the practice. I am less concerned here with Wendover's or Paris's ideological positions than with the way they select and activate the symbolic repertoire of sanctuary, calling attention to its inherent conflicts — flight and pursuit, justice and mercy, power and desperation — and revealing the peculiar capacity of sanctuary to recast social and political roles.⁶ In particular, the fallen justiciar's sojourns in churches, extrac-

³ For the history of sanctuary as social regulation and as demonstration of royal power, in particular the 'domestication' of sanctuary under royal jurisdiction in the thirteenth century, see Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 112–51.

⁴ 'The fundamental outcome of sanctuary was the saving of the lives of vulnerable people': Jordan, 'A Fresh Look at Medieval Sanctuary', p. 31.

⁵ The justiciar was the most important office in the government during this period. As David Carpenter explains it, the justiciar's duty was twofold: enacting justice in court and maintaining the rights of the crown. Hubert presided at the king's bench, oversaw the chancery (controlling the seal), and also presided in the exchequer, where he heard county accounts and was made aware of the small size of the king's treasury. He was the king's right-hand man, calling councils, resuming lands, and delaying judicial decisions when necessary. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 139–44.

⁶ Sanctuary practices offer more than practical action. They produce narratives that carry out 'symbolic action', in Kenneth Burke's sense: transformations of attitude effected through metaphorical language. Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 1–117.

tions from them, reinstatements, imprisonment, and final escape respond to persistent questions of royal authority that flare up throughout the High Middle Ages. During a period of vigorous argument about the extent and demonstration of royal authority — a period that saw the development and reissue of Magna Carta and a series of baronial rebellions culminating in the ascendancy of Simon de Montfort — sanctuary creates a state of indeterminacy, a space and time that suspends political givens and allows fugitive and king to shift their relations.⁷

1/ Sanctuary: The Angry King and the Vulnerable Fugitive

Hubert de Burgh was the most powerful man in government from 1221 until his fall; he held the office of justiciar under King John and retained it when Henry came to the throne in 1216, at age nine.⁸ He practiced ‘a form of open and moderate government acceptable to the magnates’, and, in 1219, when regent William Marshal resigned, a council of barons chose Hubert to continue as justiciar. Hubert’s capacity for compromise and conciliation may have developed as a result of his humble origins and ‘material insecurity.’⁹ His government was responsible, among other things, for the reissue of Magna Carta in revised and final form (1225, 1229) and for developing methods for the crown to exploit that document’s parameters. Henry’s long and ambiguous minority, however, led to serious factional dispute.¹⁰ Initially Hubert won out over his rival, Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, tutor to Henry and briefly justiciar (1213–15). Peter was sidelined after 1224 in part because of his autocratic style.¹¹ But when

⁷ For the symbolic action of texts in historical situations wherein received truths have been suspended, enabling political roles to be recast, my approach owes much to Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne*, esp. pp. 101–27.

⁸ For Hubert’s ascendancy and fall, see primarily Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*; Carpenter, ‘The Fall of Hubert de Burgh’; and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*. On the weakness of royal finances and Hubert’s fiscal conservatism, see Stacey, *Politics, Policy, and Finance*. See also Ellis, *Hubert de Burgh*. More generally on thirteenth-century politics, see Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*; Prestwich, *English Politics*; and Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*.

⁹ Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, p. 139, who revises older criticisms of Hubert, portraying him as a tactful and patient negotiator.

¹⁰ On conflicting definitions of majority, see Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 123–24.

¹¹ On the contribution of the factional crisis of 1223–24 to Hubert’s later fall, see Carpenter, ‘The Fall of Hubert de Burgh’, and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 208–28. For Peter’s political decline during Hubert’s ascendancy, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 184–208.

Peter returned from crusade in 1231, he found an increasingly isolated justiciar, an impoverished crown, and a king eager to assert his personal rule, and he rapidly rose to power. Although for a few months the two rivals were both in government, the catalyst for Hubert's fall was a rash of well-orchestrated attacks against Italians awarded English benefices. An Italian canon of St Paul's was kidnapped and the granaries of two foreign clerics in Kent were robbed — and when the attackers showed warrants from the king to avoid apprehension, Peter tarred Hubert with responsibility for providing the warrants.¹² Henry took the opportunity to assert royal authority with a new force and dismissed his aging justiciar under accusations of corruption and mismanagement.¹³ Hubert fled to the monastery at Merton, casting himself in the role of vulnerable fugitive.

As reported in the *Chronica majora*, Henry's accusations against Hubert suggest in their excess an embattled and uncertain king. Enraged or confused (*perturbatus*), he brings a detailed list of accusations. He demands an account of Hubert's financial dealings in the government since the reign of John; requires a review of his domains and liberties, including fines and taxes levied and land laid waste; and accuses him of inflicting harm and injuries upon the Roman clergy and other foreigners. When Hubert cites a royal warrant from the time of King John releasing him from such reckonings, Peter des Roches dismisses its validity. Henry then accuses Hubert of outright treason in matters of finance, war, marriage, and wardship, accusations which, 'sive in veritate, sive mendositate malitiosa, sunt domino regi ab aemulis praefati Huberti suggesta, quae rex instantia vehementi ab eodem Huberto exegit sibi [...] emendari' (whether true or maliciously false, had been suggested by the rivals of the said Hubert to the king, who with great eagerness ordered satisfaction to be taken from the said Hubert).¹⁴ The language suggests not just the influence of new advisors but the king's own 'instantia vehementia', his severe urgency or eagerness in turning against his former mentor. The charges border on the fanciful, including an accusation of theft worthy of ancestral romance: 'Dixit etiam rex, quod lapidem quendam pretiosum nimis, qui talem habuit virtutem, quod nulli, qui eum portaret in bello, vinci potuisset, de thesauro suo furtive sustulit, et eam Leolino inimico suo, regi Walliae, proditi-

¹² Carpenter, *The Struggle For Mastery*, p. 313. See also Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 303–09.

¹³ On Henry's combination of desire and reluctance to dismiss his aging justiciar, see Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', and Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 389–95.

¹⁴ Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. by Luard, III, 222 (hereafter cited as Luard); *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History*, trans. by Giles, II, 554 (hereafter cited as Giles).

ose transmissit' (Also that he, Hubert, had surreptitiously taken from his treasury a certain jewel, which rendered the wearer invincible in battle, and had treacherously sent it to his enemy Llewellyn the Welsh chief).¹⁵ The king emerges as infuriated, eager for reprisal, and willing to marshal any and all evidence against his former justiciar, regardless of the source or nature of the evidence itself.

Hubert asks for a delay in the legal trial and flees to Merton priory near London in alarm (*perterritus*). Here Wendover emphasizes Hubert's isolation and the flaring up of anger among both barons and populace, including London citizens' memory of a cruelly suppressed riot and widely held rumours that Hubert poisoned William Longspée, William Marshal, Falkes de Bréauté, and Richard, archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁶ The justiciar, by Wendover's account, has only one friend:

Sic Hubertus, qui prius ob regis amorem et regni defensionem omnium Angliae magnatum in se provocaverat odium, nunc a rege desertus, absque amicis, fit solus et omni solatio destitutus. Solus Lucas, Dublinensis archiepiscopus, instantissimis precibus et lacrimis rogavit regem pro eo, sed non potuit in tantis excessibus exaudiri.

(Thus this Hubert, who had formerly excited the envy of all the barons of England against him on account of the king's regard and his care for the kingdom, now deserted by the king, and without friends, was alone and comfortless; Luke archbishop of Dublin, was the only one who spoke to the king in his behalf, which he did with tears and urgent entreaties, but on account of such excesses his request could not be granted.)¹⁷

Long-standing resentments against Hubert have now escalated to 'odium' that isolates the justiciar; his isolation is repeated many times and linked by assonance to his affective state, his lack of comfort or solace ('absque amicis [...] solus [...] solatio destitutus. [...] Solus Lucas'). And yet Wendover's account implies a

¹⁵ Luard, p. 222; Giles, p. 554.

¹⁶ The citizens of London had been the object of cruel reprisals at Hubert's command, after a competition between London and Westminster resulted in rioting in 1222; see Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 290–91 and Ellis, *Hubert de Burgh*, pp. 69–73. For tensions between Hubert and William Longspée, see Luard, pp. 96–97, 101, 104. On Hubert's complex relations with William Marshal, including Hubert's interference in the succession after his death, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 260–73. On Falkes de Bréauté's opposition during the crisis of 1223–24, see Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', pp. 2–3. On the opposition of Richard, archbishop of Canterbury, see Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh'; and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 270–71.

¹⁷ Luard, p. 222; Giles, p. 555.

degree of sympathy for the justiciar that will increase with each flight to sanctuary; though the 'excesses' he refers to might be Hubert's, they might equally refer to the accusations of the king and his new advisors.¹⁸ Henry wishes to inquire into every aspect of his government, and Hubert's fears in turn intensify. Wendover essentially gives an account of the scapegoating of the justiciar, rendering him a lone victim of the king's aggressive confusion.

Here, at the point of flight when Hubert is at his most vulnerable, he symbolically challenges the authority of the king. For while he hides at Merton, Hubert becomes associated with the sacred, an association that Wendover expresses through language that gestures toward timelessness by muddling linear time. In depicting the first phase of his flight, Wendover mentions the act of taking refuge three times, foiling the sense of linear progress: first, Hubert goes to Merton priory; then, hides among the canons; and finally, seeks the church as his last recourse, each time gaining a closer connection to the space's sanctity. The temporal progress of this flight is increasingly repetitive and highly charged. Indeed, events unfold with a notable simultaneity. The protests against Roman priests are investigated; 'Circa dies istos' (About this time), the Welsh invade; 'Per idem tempus' (About the same time), the king dismisses Hubert; 'tempestate eadem' (in the same season), a council assembles and Hubert refuses to appear.¹⁹ On one hand, such temporal indications convey an eventful and violent political moment; on the other hand, they suggest a failure of progress that makes Hubert's flight a kind of 'time-out' — a gap in linear time that opens into eternal time. Events 'pile up' rather than accruing incrementally; causal connections erode. This impression of simultaneity construes Hubert's refuge as something resembling a miracle: a sudden, temporally awkward intrusion of the sacred within the urgent political landscape, and an event that interrupts the 'horizontal' narrative of the king's self-assertion. Hubert's flight makes him a sacred figure, fallen but difficult to kill. In

¹⁸ Although Giles's translation suggests that Wendover accepts Hubert's guilt ('the justiciar's offenses were so great'), the Latin says only that the archbishop could not be heeded in the context of such excesses ('in tantis excessibus'). Giles's translation is based not on Luard but on Roger Wendover, *Flores historiarum*, ed. Coxe. Coxe's edition is based on the manuscript of Wendover's chronicle alone (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 207) whereas Luard is based on the manuscript of Matthew Paris's chronicle, which copies, emends, and extends Wendover (London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.vii). Luard distinguishes between Wendover and Paris by setting them in different font sizes; Giles's translation includes some of Paris's additions in footnotes. Occasionally I have silently modified Giles's Wendover to agree with Luard's. For the relations between the two historians and their manuscripts, see Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, pp. 21–41 and Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 53–57.

¹⁹ Luard, pp. 219, 220, 223; Giles, pp. 552, 553, 555.

Wendover's account, Henry's effort to scapegoat Hubert does not consolidate but disrupts the king's effort to confirm his personal rule.

2/ Kingship and English Sanctuary Law

For Henry's predecessors, sanctuary had bolstered royal law. The practice was understood as a prerogative of the king, and among Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings the establishment of and respect for sanctuary was an expression of monarchical power.²⁰ Sanctuary privileges were an extended form of lordly protection of friends and kin — a defining feature of the king's *grið* or peace.²¹ Granting sanctuary was an act of hospitality, inasmuch as it extended the king's peace to all comers. Akin to largesse but in a different spatial register from grants of land or office, sanctuary expressed the king's power to inhibit violence and grant both space and time, slowing but enabling legal judgement. For Anglo-Saxon kings, seeking sanctuary helped to regulate blood feud: vengeance could not simply be pursued anywhere, but was suspended in courts and royal halls as well as churches to allow time for negotiation of a composition payment.²² The practice of seeking sanctuary was increasingly subject to royal law in the late Anglo-Saxon period: legislation was written concerning the number of days of protection a fugitive could expect, the fines for breaching sanctuary, the terms of standing surety for a criminal, and the proper payment of compensation.²³ At least since Augustine, moreover, seeking sanctuary was understood as a penitential act: to take sanctuary from crime was not to avoid punishment, but to pay for one's crime in spiritual currency, as it were.²⁴ The expectation of penance linked royal law with ecclesiastical institutions, secular jurisdiction with spiritual power. When the king exerted legal control of sanctuary, he exercised control over the availability of mercy and penance. Thus, as Karl Shoemaker writes: 'sanctuary legislation was not a concession of [monarchical] weakness but an emblem of strength.'²⁵

²⁰ This is the argument of Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*; see esp. 85–92; 98–99.

²¹ On *grið* as royal protection from feud, see Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 94.

²² On sanctuary's provision of an opportunity for negotiation, see Rosser, 'Sanctuary and Social Negotiation'.

²³ Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 88–92. On the integration of sanctuary with royal policy, see also Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 92–98.

²⁴ Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 18–20.

²⁵ Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, p. 88.

The link between sanctuary law and royal power survived the Norman Conquest, and indeed, in the first half of the twelfth century, English ecclesiastics elaborated a discourse on the relationship between sanctuary law and pious kingship that justified permanent 'special' sanctuaries at places like Battle Abbey and Durham.²⁶ With the legal reforms of Henry II, ordinary sanctuary was 'domesticated' under common law, while its basic procedures were left unchanged. Even as Henry II called into question clerical privilege and jurisdictional immunities — most notoriously in his conflict with Thomas Becket over ecclesiastical jurisdiction of 'criminous clerks' — he preserved sanctuary laws 'because sanctuary protections were not in tension with the fundamental aims of royal law', including the exclusion of felons from the community and realm.²⁷ However, Henry's absorption of sanctuary under common law (the office of coroner was established in 1194) shifted the discourse of sanctuary away from its earlier pious and penitential function. Shoemaker writes: 'Sanctuary law was unmoored from the penitential discourses of the patristics and given a place in the royal law that was compatible with, but not dependent upon, the logic of feud resolution.'²⁸ Nonetheless, Hubert de Burgh's case suggests that such changes did not materialize overnight, and that the religious significance of both granting and seeking sanctuary remained available: sanctuary still relied on the powerful piety of the 'host' and the submissive penitence of the fugitive that had underpinned the laws of the Anglo-Saxon kings. According to Gervase Rosser: 'The three parties respectively of Church, king, and local inhabitants each held a stake in the operation of sanctuary in the medieval period; no one of these ever gained a monopoly.'²⁹ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, even as sanctuary was increasingly controlled by agents of the crown, its rituals and conditions retained their basis in the protection of sacred space, and its procedures still ritualized mercy and penance. This is evident, for example, in the process of abjuration, which required the presence of the coroner, the secular official, but in which abjurors took an oath, wore a shift,

²⁶ Special sanctuaries, where fugitives could stay indefinitely, were located all over England, often with the help of charters forged in the early twelfth century: Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 95–111. On special sanctuaries, see also Cox, *The Sanctuaries and Sanctuary Seekers*; Thornley, 'Sanctuary in Medieval London' and 'The Destruction of Sanctuary'; and Trenholme, *The Right of Sanctuary*, pp. 47–60.

²⁷ Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, p. 119.

²⁸ Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, p. 114. On developments in canon law that also played down the penitential aspect of sanctuary-seeking, see Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 121–23, 152–73. See also Helmholz, *The 'ius commune' in England*, pp. 16–81.

²⁹ Rosser, 'Sanctuary and Social Negotiation', p. 74.

and carried a cross, like pilgrims, as they travelled to the nearest port to leave the island.³⁰

For Hubert de Burgh, seeking sanctuary is a canny political manoeuvre. He calls upon Henry III to perform the part of the pious king, powerful enough to contain a wayward subject, magnified by granting sanctuary. After six weeks at Merton Priory, Hubert refuses to show up at court. Instead, he flees into the church proper at Merton, emphasizing his desperation by calling upon the church as 'quae ultimum remedium est omnibus injuriam patientibus' (the last resource of all who [suffer] injury).³¹ When Hubert takes sanctuary, his call to God is directed vertically, 'over the head' of his king.

Henry lacks the foresight or the political leeway to demonstrate sovereign mercy. Flying into a rage when he hears that Hubert has fled, the king orders the mayor of London to attack Merton and bring him Hubert dead or alive. The mayor obligingly orders twenty thousand Londoners to attack early in the morning. Henry refuses to 'accept' or 'host' the fugitive, and instead identifies himself as agent of deprivation as he curbs the very conditions of sanctuary. Such action entails a certain ambition: Henry claims his majority by pure insistence, wresting it from the hands of his aging right-hand man. But in refusing to act as the gracious and merciful monarch, Henry separates his jurisdiction from that of God. He chooses to cast sanctuary as a place, and a practice, essentially outside his purview. Accordingly, he encounters serious jurisdictional limits: his advisors warn that he will not be able to control the London mob once he sets it loose. The king is forced to change his mind, and the Londoners return to the city in consternation.

As Hubert cannily seeks refuge, Henry's royal ire appears abortive, even impotent. To be sure, his anger initially shows his willingness to breach sanctuary and overturn completely his former dependence on the justiciar; it suggests a narrative in which Henry destroys his justiciar to assert his personal rule.³² Calling upon the Londoners also demonstrates his capacity for violence and shows an astute deployment of the vengeful populace as an instrument of his own sense

³⁰ The law treatise *Britton* records the oath as follows: 'Hear this, coroner and other good people, that I, for such an act that I did feloniously or assented to do, will go out of the realm of England [...] and never will I return unless by consent of the king or his heirs, so help me God and the Saints': *Britton*, ed. and trans. by Nichols, cap. 17. Quoted in Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, p. 120.

³¹ Luard, p. 224; Giles, p. 556.

³² Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', argues it was not until Henry broke free of both Hubert and, within two years, Peter as well that the king could begin his personal rule.

of injured authority. But his violence in turn exposes his sensitivity to injury. Nowhere does Wendover suggest that Henry willingly respects Hubert's right to sanctuary: far from it. The king, even when he calls off the mob, still focuses on Hubert's guilt; he is a wrongdoer, a criminal, a traitor. Far from depicting a magnanimous monarch, Roger Wendover portrays an embattled youth. Henry's actions suggest that to grant Hubert refuge is also to open himself to abuse — to disloyalty or, symbolically, to the powerful influence of his fallen justiciar. The first phase of Hubert's spectacular fall exposes a confused and rattled king 'buffeted by rival influences and unable to exercise consistent control over events'.³³ Far from demonstrating the power of *ira regis*, he fails to adjust his affective performance to the symbolic demands of his fallen favorite.³⁴ Hubert, on the other hand, adeptly uses sanctuary seeking to save his skin, and in the process disrupts Henry's self-assertion.

The conflict between king and fallen favorite — played out and extended in the theater of sanctuary seeking — invokes the wider debate in the period about whether the king is above the law or subject to it. These two conflicting concepts of sovereignty are embodied in Henry's rival advisors: Hubert, whose government is based on compromises with barons and reissues of Magna Carta, acts on the notion that the king is subject to law and to counsel; Peter des Roches, unwilling to appeal to government by consent, argues for a royal power derived from God and hence above the law.³⁵ But the debate is not simply about the relative power of king versus magnates: F. M. Powicke reminds us that the king and barons were not natural enemies, and that in fact each understood the exercise of royal prerogative as beneficial to the realm.³⁶ Instead, as Robert M. Stein argues, there are fundamental contradictions in the concept of monarchy itself, and in particular the way in which divinity is understood as the source and sanction for royal prerogative. Stein encapsulates it this way:

On the one hand, the king is *sui generis*, a sacred figure, and on the other hand he is a lord like other lords, *primus*, to be sure, but *inter pares*. Briefly, is the king part of the realm, a power, however superior in strength, in essence like any other power

³³ Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', p. 15.

³⁴ On the potential political uses of expressions of *ira regis*, see White, 'The Politics of Anger', and Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 34–68.

³⁵ On Peter's autocratic political attitudes, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, esp. pp. 455–65; Carpenter, *The Struggle For Mastery*, p. 314; Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, pp. 210–18.

³⁶ Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, pp. 6–7.

in the realm, or is he a singularity, a power comparable to no other and therefore transcendent to the realm he holds?³⁷

In Stein's pithy formulation, the king as sacral figure is raised above human laws and practices of lordship, while the king as earthly lord is restrained by human law and the counsel of magnates.³⁸ As we have begun to see, the practice of sanctuary interrupts the connection between kingship and divinity: it complicates contemporary debates over the sources of sovereignty by suspending the relation between transcendent and immanent forms of power. When Hubert flees to sanctuary, he seeks a platform for negotiation, and he makes an implicit demand for mercy: his symbolic action combines an appeal to lordship with an appeal to sacral kingship, both of which Henry initially refuses. Hubert's flight weakens both the king's role as sacral figure and his role as lord.

Because sanctuary loosens the relation between the king and his sources of power, the conditions of sanctuary — its legal parameters and customary practices — allow people to readjust, negotiate, and substitute payment or exile for death. The pious king embraces such negotiations and is paradoxically empowered by them. Henry III refuses such adjustment in favour of sheer self-assertion. When he demonstrates his royal prerogative in this way, he separates himself from both divine sanction and, as we shall see, baronial consent. As events develop, angry bishops twice order Hubert's return to sanctuary, and eventually dissent flares into rebellion. Hubert's canny moves in the game of sanctuary repeatedly put pressure on the king, whose moves are less adept. Unable to avoid the scene of hospitality with all its demands, Henry places severe conditions upon the sanctuary and curtails his own capacity for mercy and tact. As a result, the king is backed into a corner: to grant Hubert refuge is to tolerate a threat to the crown; to refuse him is to reveal the crown as weak, its purview limited, its jurisdiction narrow. Henry does not redefine the space but loses his grip upon both space and fugitive: instead of offering protection, he excludes himself from the spaces where Hubert finds asylum.³⁹ He undermines the exercise of sovereignty by neither asserting himself as above the law nor upholding the law. He thus alienates the bishops and fails to adjust to the needs of his barons, much less his desperate justiciar.

³⁷ Stein, *Reality Fictions*, p. 183.

³⁸ The classic exploration of this contradiction is Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*.

³⁹ I am influenced here by Derrida's account of the 'impossibility' of hospitality, which requires both an absolute openness to any stranger and the setting of limits or conditions on who can enter. See Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. by Bowlby.

3/ *Richard I: Sovereign Mercy*

Before relating Hubert's fall, Wendover provides an introductory vignette of a very different king, Richard I. The exemplum provides evidence that Wendover means us to read the conflict between Hubert and Henry III through the lens of sanctuary, and, indeed, the tale surveys a symbolic repertoire of ways in which its actors might avail themselves of the practice. Flight to the holy place opens an array of opportunities for the principal actors — a young knight, an old knight who steals the young knight's inheritance, and King Richard himself — to demonstrate and to recast their relations. The story shows, in particular, that such flight puts action under the aegis of divinity in ways that become 'portable', endowing both fugitive and host with a sanctity that they can invoke in new circumstances later. In the process, sanctuary opens up space and time for meditating upon the sources of political sovereignty.

In the middle of the scandal involving the Roman clergy, between Peter des Roches's return to favour and the drama of Hubert's fall, Wendover reports that, while presiding over the divine service, the bishop of Rochester declared the release from purgatory of Stephen Langton and of King Richard I (1189–99).⁴⁰ The timing of Richard's release from purgatory justifies Wendover's digression: 'Et quoniam hic mentio facta est de magnifico rege Ricardo, unum de actibus ejus ad aedificationem audientium referamus' (And as mention has here been made of the noble king Richard I, I will relate an occurrence which happened to him, for the edification of my readers).⁴¹ The episode is marked as exemplary because it is displaced from its original context in order to educate readers. In this way, the account meditates on monarchical justice and invites readers to apply the example of Richard to his nephew Henry III. Richard is richly praised as a devout king, just *and* merciful, in a narrative that originates with feud and sanctuary.

The story concerns a knight, a poacher of deer in the king's forest, who, having been exiled for his crime, many years later seeks Richard's mercy; he is forgiven because once, before he poached the king's deer, he suffered an injustice and granted mercy himself. The exiled poacher-knight is desperate to be reconciled to the king and seeks him out at a church in Normandy, but he is too abashed to approach him. Richard, however, notices that as the knight is praying, the crucifix bows its head and shoulders in reply. The king, in amazement, sends for the

⁴⁰ Recalling Langton here is important: Langton was, as Carpenter argues, crucial to Hubert's triumph in 1223–24, and his death is part of what leaves Hubert isolated in 1232. Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', p. 4.

⁴¹ Luard, p. 212; Giles, p. 547.

knight: he asks him whether he has ever in his life done good in honour of the holy cross. The knight tells him that he has. He says that, when he was a boy, his father unjustly lost his inherited land to a spendthrift knight, who murdered him. When the boy reached his majority, he determined to seek revenge. On Good Friday, he spotted his enemy on his way to church, and drew his sword to kill him. The enemy, now worn down by age and unable to defend himself, fled to sanctuary in the form of a cross near a road. Embracing the cross and calling upon Christ, he wept and promised to appoint a chaplain to say mass every day for the knight's father. Moved, the knight took pity upon him and for the love of Christ, forgave him. Hearing this story, Richard praises the knight's wisdom, 'quia Crucifixus tibi nunc vicem pro vice sufficienter persolvit' (for now that Crucified One has repaid one good turn by another).⁴² He restores to the knight everything he held before his banishment. There follows an encomium to Richard particularly praising his crusader's zeal, after which Wendover returns to the events of the present day, including, in short order, the fall of Hubert de Burgh.

King Richard is depicted in Wendover's account as a just king *because* he is merciful — a distinct contrast with Henry, who demands a trial and refuses Hubert's implicit request for mercy. Richard is said to have found too severe the famously harsh forest laws of Norman and Angevin kings — namely, blinding, castration, and dismemberment as punishments for poaching.⁴³ Such punishments, Wendover writes, reverse the hierarchy between men and beasts:

Sed tale iudicium pio regi Ricardo visum est nimis inhumanum, ut homines ad imaginem Dei creati pro feris, quae juxta legem naturalem generaliter omnibus sunt concessae, de vita vel membris periclitarentur, ut id faciendo feris ac bestiis deterior videretur.

(But to the pious king Richard such a punishment seemed inhuman, that men, who are made after God's image, should be periled of life or limb for beasts, which, according to the law of nature, were given for the general use of all, by which man was made to appear of less importance than the wild beasts.)⁴⁴

For Richard, beasts belong to the king by virtue of being subject to natural law, not because they are his own objects.⁴⁵ Natural law derives from divine law, which

⁴² Luard, p. 215; Giles, pp. 547–48.

⁴³ On forest law in the period, see Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, pp. 18–60.

⁴⁴ Luard, p. 213; Giles, pp. 547–48.

⁴⁵ According to forest law, poaching was essentially understood as an abuse of what properly belonged to the king. Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, p. 35.

creates a hierarchical order from God to man to beasts. Richard does not torture poachers because that would be an abuse of the very hierarchical order that the regulation of hunting is supposed to protect.⁴⁶ Similarly, when Richard restores the exiled knight, he does so in honour of a law that transcends his own will: he notices and interprets correctly the gestures of the crucifix, and his own command is thus a divinely sanctioned legal act. Richard's forgiveness of the poaching knight is an act of mercy that manifests both his proper legal jurisdiction and its derivation from God.

Long before Richard forgives the knight, the latter's story originates in vengeance deterred by sanctuary — precisely the scenario that the furious Henry resists when Hubert flees to Merton. The story of the wronged knight and his enemy pares down sanctuary practice almost to abstraction, both in the manner of seeking sanctuary — embracing a cross rather than entering a church — and in the sanctuary's stark interruption of vengeance. The knight is carrying out a private feud. When the old man takes sanctuary by embracing the cross, the knight intends 'perimere et cerebrum effundere' (to slay him and dash out his brains), a commonplace of sanctuary breaches and other criminal violence.⁴⁷ But pity (*pietas*) motivates the knight to respect the law, depicted here as though it came straight from Christ: he acts, he says, 'ob amorem et reverentiam Illius, qui pro salute mea et omnium crucem ascendit, et eam suo sanguine sacratissimo consecravit' (in my love and reverence for him who, for my salvation and that of all, ascended the cross and consecrated it by his most holy blood).⁴⁸ *Pietas* foils the knight's intention to seek vengeance and to repossess his property, expressing instead Christ's merciful presence in sanctuary. Sanctuary suspends violence and allows the old man to admit guilt, express contrition and do penance, saying daily prayers for the murdered father.

In this way, sanctuary appears as a ritual of mystification. Calling upon divine aegis deflects the question of the knight's inherited property: the act of seeking refuge shifts the discourse away from the dispute over land, opening a different path of negotiation and compromise. The old man says nothing about restor-

⁴⁶ Contrast the complaint recorded by William of Newburgh about Henry I: 'He cared for the wild animals more than was right, and in public punishment he made too little distinction between a person who killed a deer and one who killed a man' (*Feras quoque propter venationis delicias plus justo diligens, in publicis animadversionibus cervicidas ab homicidis parum discernebat*): *Historia rerum Anglorum*, ed. by Howlett, I, 30. Quoted in Young, *The Royal Forests of Medieval England*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Luard, p. 214; Giles, p. 549.

⁴⁸ Luard, p. 215; Giles, p. 549.

ing the knight's property to him. Although the knight is said to have enjoyed 'exquisitis deliciis' (all the dainties of life) before his punitive exile with wife and children, one possible explanation for his poaching would be precisely that he lacked access to adequate landed wealth to support himself and his family.⁴⁹ The knight's back-story — his disinheritance, attempted revenge, and forgiveness of his enemy — does not restore his father's lands. Richard eventually restores his property, but only what he held at the time of his banishment, not what was originally taken. The tale of sanctuary allows the knight to go home: it does not restore the knight's original loss, but it does suspend the necessity for revenge, and the king's pardon later 'fits' the knight back under the aegis of the law.

Even as the story of Richard and the poacher frames the king as ideally merciful, it also casts sanctuary as the source of a holy sanction that exceeds physical bounds, a remarkably flexible sanctity that can be transferred to different situations. Richard's knight can be reconciled to the law of the land not simply as a kind of 'repayment' for his suffering but because of the sanctity of the cross embraced by his enemy. In forgiving the old man, the knight binds himself to divinity in a way that is later manifested when the crucifix nods on his behalf and hence allows for Richard's pardon, which in turn restores the knight to *terram suam*. The poacher's divine sanction travels with him even in his punishment and desperate exile, until finally God himself 'speaks' to the purveyor of justice on earth. While the portability of sanctity is fundamental to medieval Christian demonstrations of holiness in the world — visible in contexts as wide-ranging as the tabernacle of Exodus and the translation of the relics of saints — sanctuary presents a special case. The legal privilege relies on a fixed space, carefully bounded by the cross or church, and a fixed time (forty days). Legal sanctuary is determinate in both space and time, and any portability would seem to run against the conditions of refuge; but here, the symbolic function of sanctuary extends through both space and time, from the feud to the scene many years later in Normandy. Legal sanctuary is designed to protect the desperate fugitive; but here, the poacher's act of forgiving the sanctuary-man makes the *attacker* part of the sacred action — granting sanctuary sanctifies him, much as granting sanctuary could demonstrate the piety of a king. Sanctuary opens a narrative of the knight's own life as a story of divine justice, which has the power to call him back from the disaster of exile to his proper land (England, if not his father's land) and proper self. His respect for sanctuary paradoxically loosens the relation between

⁴⁹ On poaching as an activity of desperation, see Birrell, 'Peasant Deer Poachers'. But poaching could also be a 'social statement', often as part of local feuds over land; see Sykes, 'Animal Bones and Animal Parks', pp. 56–57.

space and protection so that the poacher can deploy his earlier connection to divinity in a wholly new context.

The sanctity of the fugitive, in turn, demonstrates the divine sanction of the king. In the exemplum of Richard and the poacher, the king perceives a kind of divine ekphrasis: he sees a statue move and allows Christ's gesture to unfold into the knight's personal narrative. That narrative makes plain the knight's vulnerability to monarchical judgement, his sheer abjection before the king. His dread is so great, in fact, that although he enters the church precisely in order to seek pardon, he does not approach the king directly but instead prays to the crucifix. The knight's proper dread and indirection allow his suffering to be revealed and his story told. Richard, far from being constrained by strict human justice, recognizes a miracle: he 'listens' to divine justice, which exceeds his own law. Because Richard grants the pardon that will allow the knight to go home (with wife and family in tow), the outlaw is now brought back into the sacred native embrace by the perceptive king. When Richard listens to the knight's story, that is, he hears a story that occurs under divine aegis *and therefore* within the king's jurisdiction: a story that confirms the king's pardon as divinely sanctioned.

The story of Richard and the poacher proposes a model for the king's response to the contemporary debate about the sources of sovereignty. Richard's monarchical potency is confirmed, paradoxically, because he accepts a miracle that 'skips over' his decision-making authority. In fact, in the chain of forgiveness that structures the story, the king essentially derives his opportunity for mercy from his subject, the exiled knight, who in turn derives his own opportunity from the desperate old man, a criminal. Sanctuary, in this sense, foregrounds a breach of hierarchical and moral norms: reminiscent of Christian reversals in status ('the last shall be first'), the flight to sanctuary authorizes the king from below. Richard's sovereignty emerges from this basic reversal. The king's submission creates a community in which the disenfranchised knight can speak, through Christ's intervention, to his king. The exemplum thus imagines one way of resolving the contemporary tension between the king's theocratic power and his capacity to compromise — between the 'sacred figure' and the 'lord'. Theocratic power is not automatic but staged as the king's assent to divine justice.

By interrupting the chronological progress of his history to relate an exemplary story, Roger Wendover makes Richard I a foil for Henry III's disastrous self-assertion. It is Richard's receptive, almost passive form of potency that Henry resists so powerfully in the aftermath of Hubert's fall because, scrabbling for his majority, Henry seeks the authority of decision and action. The direct access to God available to Richard, who could read a crucifix's little nod, seems unavailable

and even undesirable to Henry. When Henry tries to extract Hubert from sanctuary, he misses an opportunity — perhaps, I would suggest, an opportunity deliberately set up by Hubert — to play the divinely sanctioned role of merciful king. As with the old murderer in the story of Richard, so too with Hubert's resort to sanctuary: the fugitive, reduced to nearly nothing, makes a sacred demand. God does not simply initiate a top-down form of mercy but is called upon to sanction its growth from the bottom up. The confirmation of monarchical power, paradoxically, lies in the monarch's accession to the need of the fugitive. It lies in a process of adjustment or adjoining initiated by the subject but required of the king. The exemplum of Richard's mercy, Wendover implies, exposes Henry's weakness. Having refused to protect Hubert, Henry casts about in impotent frustration and excessive ire in search of a new narrative of his own majority.

4/ Hubert: Defender of the Realm and Friend of Rebels

Sanctuary strips the fugitive of his chattels, separates him from his ordinary role, and takes him out of the political world. It would seem to reduce him to nothing. For Hubert de Burgh, it represents the last recourse of a fallen magnate who, having spent a career in careful compromise over royal demesnes, now garners social significance precisely in having nothing, for Henry takes away all his lands and castles. But fallen though he is, Hubert de Burgh continues to play a deft political game. His flights to sanctuary become a public scandal, and they expose the excessive ire of the king as much as they humiliate his fallen favorite. Indeed, sanctuary provides the mechanism by which Hubert, stripped of possessions like Richard's poacher-knight, maintains an identity formed through sojourns in churches. Hubert flees to Merton; is granted a safe conduct; flees again to a chapel of St Thomas in Norwich but is extracted, returned, and starved out; is imprisoned at Devizes; flees again to the parish church but is extracted, returned, blockaded, and finally rescued by rebels. Each successive flight reduces him to desperation before monarchical judgement. Yet each flight constitutes a new move in a game at which Hubert proves maddeningly adept, whereas Henry's moves are clumsy and belated. In the context of intensifying complaints about the king's 'foreign' advisors, Hubert's successive flights symbolically associate the fallen justiciar with concrete English holy places and make sacred his established identity as a 'native' defender of the English realm. From each place, Hubert derives a portable sanctity, like that of Richard's knight, transferable from one situation to the next. Meanwhile Henry, surrounding himself with 'Poitevins', increasingly separates himself from his 'native' subjects and from the divine sanction that Hubert

so flamboyantly invokes every time he grabs the cross before the king's knights. Henry does relent when he imprisons Hubert at Devizes and allows him to have his inherited lands, but in less than a year he orders him extracted from sanctuary yet again. In this way, Hubert's flights to sanctuary not only make the sources of Henry's power indeterminate, calling into question his connection to divinity, but also, by authorizing Hubert as defender of the realm, raise the specter of rebellion. Though Hubert repeatedly insists upon his loyalty, his flights ultimately make him available for appropriation to the rebel cause.

We have already seen the ways in which Hubert's fall exposes Henry as rash, inexperienced, and unwilling to exercise the potent mercy of Richard I. For Richard, the king's mercy began at home, with his leniency in prosecuting violations of forest law, and extended to his recognition of a banished English knight in a Norman church. By contrast, Henry surrounds himself with foreign advisors associated with harsh treatment of 'native' men — Peter des Roches; Peter's nephew or son, Peter de Rivallis; Peter de Maulay; and Engelard de Cigogné, both of whom had had lands seized by Hubert's government in the factional crisis of 1223–24. Though there were certainly important English ministers in the regime, Henry's installation of these men made it easy to cast the previous century of political history as a struggle between native and foreign factions.⁵⁰ Wendover writes that after 1232, Henry is too easily influenced by foreign knights,

qui homines Angliae naturales et nobiles totis viribus opprimebant. [...] [C]um Petrus Wintoniensis episcopus et complices ipsius, in odium gentis Anglorum pariter et contemptum, cor regis ita immutaverant, ut eorum exterminium modis omnibus moliretur, invitavit paulatim tot Pictavensium legiones, quod totam fere Angliam repleverunt, quorum rex agminibus quocunque pergebat vallatus incessit.

(which men used their utmost endeavors to oppress the natural English subjects and nobles. [...] Peter bishop of Winchester and his colleagues had so perverted the king's heart with hatred and contempt for his English subjects, that he endeavoured by all the means in his power to exterminate them, and invited such legions of people from Poitou that they entirely filled England, and wherever the king went he was surrounded by crowds of these foreigners.)⁵¹

⁵⁰ Carpenter, *The Struggle For Mastery*, p. 314. Xenophobia framed much of Henry's reign: see Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 261–62, 394–95; Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, pp. 228–45; and Prestwich, *English Politics*, pp. 79–94. On the months leading up to the rebellion, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 393–96.

⁵¹ Luard, pp. 241–44; Giles, pp. 566–68.

Henry's Poitevins seek to destroy 'homines Angliae naturales', or Englishmen by birth.⁵² The term *naturales* does more than simply assert Englishness: it suggests that certain nobles ought to counsel the king by natural right — by birthright.⁵³ Richard I restored his subject's 'birthright', sending him back to England, if not to his original inheritance. In contrast, Henry's Poitevin advisors alienate him from his natural advisors, his native men, making him tyrannically aggressive and undermining the government of compromise and conciliation that defined the minority.

In this context, Hubert's flights into churches symbolically lay claim to his robust identity as native defender of the realm. As we have seen, the catalyst for Hubert's fall was his apparent support of violence against papally sponsored clerics — an association that brought about his dismissal but that also identified him closely with the defense of native English people and their local claims against foreign interlopers. From early in the minority, Hubert is an English hero: he defends castles in Poitou during John's reign, and defends Dover against France in the aftermath of John's death. Later, Hubert's holdings of castles and lands in the Welsh marches tie him to British rather than Norman territories.⁵⁴ In 1229, when the young king seeks war in Brittany as an inroad to recovering lost lands in Normandy and Anjou, Hubert fails to provision the ships, to Henry's consternation, and in 1230 Hubert talks the king out of launching an attack on Normandy itself. In recounting these events during the decade and more of Hubert's ascendancy, Wendover qualifies Hubert's defense of the realm by suggesting his personal ambition: for instance, he records, without contravening the rumour, that Hubert poisoned that other 'native' hero, William Longspée, and he implies that in Wales Hubert built castles to satisfy personal greed, not to defend the realm.⁵⁵ But in relating the narrative of his fall, Wendover reminds us of Hubert's 'native' affiliation: during the account of the flight to Merton, he slips in a bit of praise for Hubert's former protection of the kingdom ('regni

⁵² Carpenter writes that 'native' English status could be construed in two ways: being of native birth (*naturalis*) and considering England one's homeland (*partes nostrae*). Either way, 'Bishop Peter was very clear that he was a Touraingeau not and Englishman'; Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, pp. 261–62.

⁵³ Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, pp. 228–30.

⁵⁴ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 262–63.

⁵⁵ Henry's fury at Hubert over the expedition to Gascony is reported in Luard, pp. 190–91. Hubert's counsel against trying to retrieve Normandy appears in Luard, p. 197. On William Longspée, see fn. 23. On the castle-building in Wales and criticism of Hubert, see Luard, pp. 158–59.

defensionem').⁵⁶ The reminder marks sanctuary's symbolic function, which is more than to help Hubert survive: his flight confirms his identity as a native baron persecuted by the alienated king.

Wendover 'defends' Hubert further when he depicts Henry's embattled assumption that Hubert's 'native' Englishness is a political threat. Richard I saw the crucifix's nod — and welcomed back the exile who had been punished under his own laws; his pardon and his reintegration of a native subject into England demonstrated his just rule. Henry instead acts as the potential victim of violence. In September, after calling off the London mob at Merton, the king reluctantly grants Hubert a safe conduct, under which Hubert visits his wife in sanctuary at Bury and goes to stay with his nephew, the bishop of Norwich. But Henry worries that Hubert will '*perturbationem machinaretur in regno*' (cause a great excitement in the kingdom) — that is, he suspects Hubert of gathering political support for rebellion.⁵⁷ He repents of having granted him respite and sends Godfrey of Craucombe and three hundred knights after the justiciar:

At illi cum festinatione profecti invenerunt Hubertum in quadam capella hospitio suo vicina, crucem in una manu Dominicam et in altera corpus Domini bajulantem; erat enim praemunitus de adventu quaerentium animam ejus, et surgens de stratu soporatus, ad capellam nudus confugit. At Godefridus praedictus cum sociis armatis capellam ingressus praecepit ex ore regis, ut exiret de capella et veniret Londonias cum rege locuturus. Sed Hubertus respondit, quod nullo modo exiret. Godefridus et ejus complices rapuerunt de manibus ejus crucem et Dominicum corpus, vinculis eum constringentes artissimis, equo imposuerunt, et ad turrim Londoniarum ipsum ducentes, posuerunt in carcere compeditum.

(They then marched with all haste, and found Hubert in a church near his abode, holding the cross of our Lord in one hand, and the body of Christ in the other: for he had been forewarned of the approach of those who sought his life, and rising from the couch where he had been sleeping, he fled naked to the church. The aforesaid Godfrey however entered the chapel with his armed followers, and ordered him in the king's name to leave the chapel and come to London to speak with the king. Hubert replied that he would not leave the chapel on any account; on which Godfrey and his accomplices snatched the cross and the body of our Lord out of his hands, and, after securing him, placed him on a horse, and conducted him to the Tower of London, where they placed him in close confinement.)⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Luard, p. 222.

⁵⁷ Luard, p. 227; Giles, p. 557.

⁵⁸ Luard, pp. 227–28; Giles, pp. 557–58.

Wendover stages Hubert's vulnerability so as to emphasize the breach of sanctuary. The soldiers find him in the chapel at Brentwood holding cross and Eucharist; then, with the temporal awkwardness we saw in the account of Merton, the narrative backs up to tell how he came to be there, fleeing naked from his bed. Despite the fact that Hubert has friends to warn him of the king's displeasure, the account stresses Hubert's isolation and desperation. The soldiers enter, snatch away cross and Eucharist, and drag him off. The account of Hubert's flight lingers on breach and protection, the structural poles of sanctuary—the same elements that come together in the poacher-knight's account of his pursuit and the old man's desperate embrace of the roadside cross. This black-and-white picture deflects the imputation of Hubert's rebel-mongering and highlights Henry's violence.

Indeed, Hubert's loyalty to the king is part of his native identity. At Brentwood, Wendover depicts Hubert praying for protection 'sicut ipse super omnia honorem regis semper dilexerat eatenus et salutem' (as he himself had always regarded the king's honour and safety above all things).⁵⁹ The chronicler adds that Henry pays little attention to the deserts of the man who had served him with such zeal. It is worth noting that Hubert's first two sanctuaries are linked to the homegrown martyr, Thomas Becket: Merton, where Becket was educated, and Brentwood, a chapel of St Thomas and a frequent stop along the route to Canterbury.⁶⁰ Hubert's fall is not, like Becket's, the culmination of sustained institutional conflict, and Hubert is not a clerical leader of dedicated followers but an aging former favorite. Indeed, in seeking sanctuary at Brentwood's chapel of St Thomas, Hubert demonstrates the comparatively personal nature of his conflict with the king and his own desire for survival. Whereas Becket, desiring martyrdom, had to be dragged into the cathedral by his followers, Hubert flees to the chapel in the night in the hope he might survive.⁶¹ Hubert's refuge there thus suggests more the role of supplicant and pilgrim than the role of Christian athlete. Still, Hubert distantly resembles Thomas in the fact of his conflict with the king, and the violation of sanctuary by the king's men in both cases gives Hubert a hint of the archbishop's righteous ardor. At the same time, beneath Hubert's loyalty lie sugges-

⁵⁹ Luard, p. 229; Giles, p. 559.

⁶⁰ On Brentwood or Broisars, see Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, p. 82. Broisars was the Norman word for Brentwood ('burnt wood') which was a chapel, built in 1221 to house pilgrims to Canterbury and hence new at the time Hubert fled there. See Josiah Pratt's note to Foxe's version of the fall of Hubert in Pratt, *The Church Historians of England*, trans. by Stevenson, Appendix to Part II, p. 873 nn. 339, 400.

⁶¹ This is in the account of Becket's flight given by Edward Grim, excerpted in *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, ed. and trans. by Staunton, p. 199.

tions of potential rebellion—but rebellion cast as a desperate effort to influence the king, not destroy him.⁶² Hubert's flight confuses the nature of the relation between king and subject, and the king anxiously awaits his knights' return with Hubert in chains; when he hears that the justiciar is in custody, he immediately heads for his couch in relief.⁶³

Hubert's sanctuary seeking creates a contested space that the king cannot easily control, and Henry's next moves are hampered by jurisdictional disputes. Roger, bishop of London, rebukes the king for having violated the sanctity of the holy church and orders Hubert returned on pain of excommunication. Henry sends Hubert back to the church but gives orders to the sheriffs to blockade the chapel: they are to prevent Hubert's escape and even prevent his receiving provisions. The command flies in the face of sanctuary law, for the surrounding community is responsible for guarding and feeding the sanctuary-seeker for the requisite forty days.⁶⁴ Here, although there is a pause before Hubert begins to fear starvation, the length of time before he emerges is indeterminate, and the implication is that the king wishes to starve him out immediately, whatever the law may be.⁶⁵ Two retainers do supply Hubert with provisions even after the king forbids it: either they do so against Henry's wishes, or the chronology of events is reported out of order (Wendover narrates the command to cease provisions *before* the delivery of food). The sheriffs meanwhile dig trenches around both the chapel and the bishop's house nearby. The king is described as having a clear conscience ('puram habens concientiam').⁶⁶ Henry makes the sanctuary resemble a prison under his own jurisdiction, asserting royal power in excess of the law, while Hubert does everything in his power to shore up his virtue and call upon divine protection. Sanctuary has created competing views about both the amount of time the fugitive is safe and the degree to which the king has jurisdiction over the space itself.

⁶² On rebellion as a way of defending rights and seeking redress, see Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 51–67; Rosenthal, 'The King's "Wicked Advisers"'; and Valente, *The Theory and Practice of Revolt*. See also Blurton, 'From Chanson de Geste to Magna Carta'.

⁶³ 'et ille, qui pervigil illorum expectabat adventum, laetus stratum petivit', Luard, p. 228.

⁶⁴ Shoemaker remarks that Henry's restriction of food conflicted with canonical principle and common law procedure alike; Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime*, pp. 143–45.

⁶⁵ On the legality of starving out the fugitive *after* the requisite forty days, see Baker, 'The English Law of Sanctuary'. Powicke also notes that there is some ambiguity about whether Hubert was starved out, Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Giles p. 558; Luard, pp. 228–29.

Even though it would seem that the power of legal sanctuary ought to derive from its stable institutional status and the predictability of its conditions, Hubert's canny flights suggest something more complex: that when sanctuary becomes contested, it can become all the more powerful a political tool. Indeed, precisely because its legal parameters come under question, sanctuary holds open various possibilities for symbolic action. Hubert's flight finally creates the opportunity for negotiation: the bishop's intervention buys time for tempers to cool, supplications to be made, solutions to be found. Under further clerical pressure, the king offers Hubert the options of abjuration or imprisonment as a traitor: Hubert refuses, claiming he deserves no such disgrace; he offers only to leave the country temporarily. In November 1232, he is starved out and imprisoned in the Tower to await trial.⁶⁷ Within a month, commanded by the king, Hubert releases treasure worth a sum of more than eight thousand pounds; ever the loyal subject, he adds 'quod seipsum et sua omnia regis submitteret voluntati' (that he would resign himself and all he possessed to the king's will).⁶⁸ After this show of submission, Henry relents, in spite of the advice of those whom the chronicler dubs Hubert's tireless persecutors. The king finally lays claim to the mercy that Hubert's flights have demanded and declares he will not have Hubert unjustly killed: 'si contra me male egerit, nunquam per me iniqua morte morietur. Malo enim rex fatuus reputari ac remissus, quam crudelis et tyrannus' (although he has acted ill towards me, he shall never by my means suffer an unjust death; for I would rather be considered a foolish and easy king, than a cruel and tyrannical one).⁶⁹ He restores the lands Hubert had held from King John or had purchased (that is, not including the lands, castles, and offices with which he himself had endowed Hubert in the five years since he declared his majority).⁷⁰ Hubert is not kept in the Tower but sent as prisoner to the royal castle of Devizes in Wiltshire, under the care of four barons. However belatedly, Henry has shown a species of

⁶⁷ Vincent describes the parliamentary trial itself — recorded in the Curia Regis Rolls but not in the *Chronica majora* — as 'a procedure approximating to that judgement by peers and the law of the land proposed by Magna Carta. In short, the first State Trial'. Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 317–18.

⁶⁸ Luard, p. 232; Giles, p. 561. Eight thousand pounds was an enormous sum for an impoverished crown. The receipts recorded for 1217 (a low point) total £4,500 and by 1240 rose to £34,635. The first number is calculated by Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, p. 113; the second is part of a table of receipts in Stacey, *Politics, Policy, and Finance*, p. 208.

⁶⁹ Luard, p. 233; Giles, p. 562.

⁷⁰ Hubert's losses in land are thus enormous; he does retain his castles in Wales, but these too are later taken from him. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, pp. 83, 142.

mercy; and he has adjusted his demands to the capacities of his subject, resisting his more draconian advisors and accepting a payment in treasure and property instead of Hubert's life. In essence, violence based on feud has been averted. To be sure, Henry's own court is designed to justify Hubert's demise. But Henry tempers his assertion of monarchical will, though he still holds Hubert in prison, and Hubert has retained his identity as a defender of the realm — the king recalls his service to Richard and John before him — and remains a virtuous and protected figure.

Despite this apparent resolution, the sanctity that has accrued to Hubert can still be used to call into question the sources of Henry's power. We have seen that medieval sanctuary, while it has by the thirteenth century become a secular practice, nonetheless continues to rely on the sanctity of church space: the implicit logic remains that the church protects the fugitive because the church is under God's protection. But sacredness does not simply reside at the altar, where men cling to it and leave it, or are pried loose. Indeed, the experience of sanctuary can travel, like other experiences within the church, communion or veneration of a shrine; as the confessed sinner takes his atonement with him or the cured pilgrim takes his eyesight with him, so too the fugitive can carry with him his association with the holy even as he moves out of the sacred space. In the exemplum of Richard I and the poacher, we saw that sanctuary could generate a sanctity that exceeded its original boundaries, so that not only the fugitive but the knight who granted sanctuary kept and carried his symbolic association with the holy; and that eventually, that association was revealed in the Norman church where, at a sign from Christ, he was forgiven. It is precisely this form of sanctity — a flexible sanction, applicable to new situations — that Henry dismisses when he orders his men to breach the sanctuary at Brentwood. In contrast, Hubert makes clever use of 'portable' sanctity: his sojourns in churches exceed the bounds of the spaces that protect him, so that his body accumulates sacred authority that can be redeployed later. This portable sanctity, attached to a person rather than only to a place, is most evident when Hubert escapes from Devizes and flees for a third time to a nearby church, proving himself a true virtuoso of sanctuary.

Hubert's last move comes almost a year after his imprisonment at Devizes, at a precarious time for Henry's government. While Hubert is imprisoned, tensions between king and barons flare into rebellion.⁷¹ Richard Marshal, after the king's arbitrary seizure of his friend Gilbert Basset's castle, complains against

⁷¹ For the most detailed recent account of the rebellion, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 399–428.

the Poitevins and demands that Henry dismiss Peter des Roches, or else Richard and his followers 'ipsi omnes de communi consilio totius regni ipsum cum iniquis consiliariis suis a regno depellerent, et de novo rege creando contrectarent' (would, by common consent, unite to drive [Henry] as well as his evil advisers from the kingdom, and proceed to choose a new king).⁷² The situation is on the verge of civil war, with the knights who stood surety for Hubert no longer supporting Henry.⁷³ As the rebellion flares, Peter des Roches petitions the king for control of Devizes. Fearing for Hubert's safety, two loyal retainers take Hubert to the local church:⁷⁴

Dormientibus castelli custodibus, unus eorum, altero explorante, ... praefatum Hubertum in humeris arripuit compeditum, et de turri clam custodibus descendens, et pium furtum ferens, latitudinem castelli, pertransiit; veniensque ad maiorem portam per ostium exivit, et sic quoddam ingens fossatum, licet cum difficultate, transcendens, ad ecclesiam villae parrochiam impiger viator contendit, nec sarcinam prius deposuit quam ad majus altare laetus pervenit. Juvenes vero qui Hubertum liberaverant, ab eo recedere nolentes, pro laude sibi futurum reputabant et mercede caelesti, si pro tanti viri liberatione mortem incurrent temporalem.

(When the garrison were asleep, one of them, whilst the other kept watch, took Hubert, fettered as he was, on his shoulders, and descended from the tower carrying his pious theft with which he passed entirely through the castle, unheard by the garrison, till he reached the great gate, where he went out, and, crossing a deep trench, though with much difficulty, made his way to the parochial church, and did not set down his burden till he arrived before the great altar. The two men who had set Hubert at liberty then refused to leave him, considering that it would be to their glory if they should suffer a temporal death for preserving the life of such a great man.)⁷⁵

⁷² Luard, p. 245; Giles, p. 568. Carpenter points out the incongruity Richard Marshal claiming 'native' status when he had lands in Normandy and a Breton wife. Carpenter, *The Struggle For Mastery*, p. 14. See also Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, 394–98.

⁷³ The four knights who stood surety for Hubert were Richard of Cornwall, the king's brother; Richard Marshal; and the earls of Warenne and Ferrers. The rebels included Richard Marshal, the earl of Ferrers, and initially Cornwall as well.

⁷⁴ According to Vincent, the two men were Hubert's chamberlain and a retainer of one of the knights guarding the bailey of the castle, himself a retainer of John earl of Lincoln and a relative of Peter des Roches's official, Humphrey de Millieres. See Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 407 n. 32.

⁷⁵ Luard, pp. 249–50; Giles, p. 571.

This narrative makes Hubert's connection to the holy the cause of his escape, not its result: his sanctity makes him precious (a great man) and physically portable. This 'pious theft' echoes the language used in justifying the theft of sacred relics.⁷⁶ The spatial increments from castle to trench to church to altar highlight the risk to the men who spirit Hubert away, implying a logic of sacrifice that both justifies the rescue and sacralizes the entire movement as a treacherous approach to the most powerful locus of holiness.⁷⁷ Hubert's fetters manifest a vaguely saintly passivity. Once again, sanctuary makes indeterminate what seems like a cut-and-dried problem of monarchical control. Instead of shoring up the prison, Peter's bid for jurisdiction at Devizes has highlighted the way in which sanctuary-seeking paradoxically allows the fugitive to exceed jurisdictional claims by garnering symbolic significance. Hubert's canny escape gives Henry few options for his next move.

Moreover, Hubert's rescue implies that his sanctity is ideologically useful to the rebels. The story unfolds much as it did at Brentwood: Hubert is found with the cross in his hands and is fiercely seized and driven back to the castle. The bishop of Salisbury promptly excommunicates the violators of the church and Henry is forced, again against his will, to restore Hubert to the church and wait to starve him out. This time, however, Henry's fears come true. In a series of events all 'per idem tempus', Hubert is taken away from the church, clad in armor, and carried to Wales to join the enemies of the king. The relationship between the rebels and Hubert is heavily mystified: Wendover does not name the rescuers, almost as if to 'protect' the rebels or mystify Hubert's intimacy with them.⁷⁸ But Henry clearly understands Hubert as a rebel after this point, declaring him outlaw along with Richard Marshal and the others — a declaration that will later have to be rescinded on the grounds of his having judged them without trial.⁷⁹ Essentially, the rebels have appropriated Hubert to their cause. In fleeing (or being carried in his fetters) to sanctuary, Hubert has made himself available for symbolic use. While initially his flights made him vulnerable to Henry's accusations and then to the king's mercy, his continued vulnerability and

⁷⁶ On the conventional language of relic theft, see Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 108–28. In using the word 'pius' instead of 'sacra', Wendover makes Hubert's living body the object of mercy (*pietas*), and the act of 'stealing' it becomes at once a religious and a political duty.

⁷⁷ On spatial degrees of sanctity, see Hall, 'The Sanctuary of St. Cuthbert'.

⁷⁸ Both Powicke and Carpenter note that the rescuers were Gilbert Basset and Richard Seward. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, p. 60; Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, p. 315.

⁷⁹ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 416–17, 419.

the king's reluctance to protect him have made him available to the rebellious barons. Regardless of Hubert's professions of loyalty, the rebels, claiming their own natural or native rights against the assertion of royal prerogative, associate themselves with Hubert's status as native hero and the sanctity he derives from seeking refuge.

Hubert's adept performance of sanctuary seeking derails Henry's attempt to make his justiciar's fall the springboard for his personal rule, for Hubert turns his own fall into a serious game in which he is always one move ahead, so that the king is in the position of reacting to events rather than controlling their significance. It is Hubert, not Henry, who uses sanctuary to reassert the twenty-five-year-old story of his own influence in government, in part because he submits repeatedly to the 'satisfaction' or 'pleasure' of the king. Even from the beginning of his fall, his flights create a scenario in which Hubert is a potential rebel, a powerful magnate only just barely displaced, a threat to Henry's power. Hubert was justiciar from the time John sealed Magna Carta at Runnymede. He was responsible for the heroic defense of Dover and other military victories. In 1226 he ousted Peter. In 1229 he began gradually resuming crucial royal lands to the crown. He shaped monarchical justice for thirteen years. Hubert's policy of building the treasury slowly, reiterating and revising Magna Carta, and centralizing justice built a richer and more powerful monarchy and provided a model of governance by compromise, the very mode that Henry and his 'Poitevins' now refuse. The Waverley annalist writes that Hubert himself '*cui nihil regiae defuit potestatis, praeter solius regii diadematis dignitatem*' (lacked nothing of royal power except the dignity of a royal diadem).⁸⁰ Hubert's crucial influence upon the king looms large in the drama of his fall. Sanctuary provides a platform for the powerful baron to demand mercy, assert loyalty, negotiate protection, and finally exceed the grasp of his pursuer; more important, it provides a framework within which the fugitive's actions raise questions about the duties and capacities of his king, even to the point of justifying rebellion. Sanctuary calls into question Henry's capacity to rule.

After the rebellion, Peter des Roches and the Poitevins are dismissed, but throughout Henry's long reign the barons put serious pressure on the terms of his sovereignty, culminating with Simon de Monfort's rebellion and the closest thing to an interregnum before the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, though sanctuary saves Hubert's life and gives him immense symbolic power, in real terms Henry diminishes him. The justiciar loses everything but his earldom; he is no longer

⁸⁰ *Annales monastici*, ed. by Luard, II (1865), p. 311.

justiciar, though he does remain a counselor to the king; but during the rest of the decade he is repeatedly the object of scandal, until Henry once again brings charges against him in 1239.⁸¹ Sanctuary saves Hubert's life: it threatens the narrative of Henry's majority. It leaves dangling a series of questions about the nature and extent of monarchical sovereignty as expressed in punishment, mercy, and baronial resistance — even though, in practical terms, sanctuary does not garner Hubert the familial or economic stability he seeks. As we shall see, this failure makes Hubert perfect for Matthew Paris's sacred narrative.

5/ Matthew Paris: Rupture and Repair

When Matthew Paris recopied and made additions to Wendover, he responded to the repertoire of sanctuary seeking by enhancing Hubert's power.⁸² Paris assigns Hubert's successive flights a more determinate significance and heightens their symbolic efficacy. In Wendover's account, Hubert's flights give him a sacred significance that protects him from Henry's ire, demands his mercy, and calls into question the basis of his sovereignty. Paris amplifies Hubert's righteousness and the sacred power of sanctuary, and he thus shifts the ground of political analysis away from faction and rivalry, and toward religious conceptions of power.⁸³ On the face of it, this sacralization makes Matthew Paris's critique of Henry III more trenchant than Wendover's, stressing even more the king's human limits, his ire and ingratitude, and Hubert's corresponding loyalty despite his desperation.⁸⁴ But finally, in sacralizing Hubert, Paris powerfully reconnects Henry to divine sanction as well. At last the king demonstrates the powerful mercy that Hubert's

⁸¹ The most detailed summary of these events is Ellis, *Hubert de Burgh*, pp. 154–69.

⁸² One manuscript of the *Chronica majora* survives in three volumes in Matthew's hand, the second volume of which is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, where Hubert's fall appears. For a description of the manuscript including a list of all illustrations, see Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 446–57. CCCC MS 16 is Matthew's copy of Wendover's text from 1189 to 1253, including some anecdotes within the body of the text and others (presumably added later) in the margins. Together with CCCC MS 26 (Creation to 1188) and the second half of London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.vii (1254 to 1259), it forms the basis of Luard's edition of the whole *Chronica majora*. I have consulted the manuscript online by subscription, at <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home> [accessed September 2012].

⁸³ For a reading of Matthew Paris's apocalyptic religiosity, see Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris*.

⁸⁴ That Hubert is probably Matthew's source is generally accepted. See Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. by Madden, II, 359. Cited in Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, p. 13.

flights demanded of him and reconciles with Hubert and the rebels. In the process, Paris asserts that the king's connection to divinity is not so much a 'divine right', a source of exceptionality or a claim to absolute power, as a special sanction that the king must earn through sacred signs, born of surrender to the needs of his subjects: that is, he gains sanctity by ceding to the worldly imperative of compromise with his baronial subjects.

Matthew's additions in the *Chronica* for 1232–34 offer visual and verbal signs of Hubert's authority, condensing and heightening his threat to the king. A pair of anecdotes embedded within Henry's raising and dispersal of the London mob — one about a proverb given by the earl of Chester, the other about a sign given by God—encapsulate his threat to Henry's power. An anecdote about a smith at Brentwood who refuses to fetter Hubert links his power with his vulnerability, as he is supported by the humble and lowly. Paris's marginal illustrations vividly epitomize these reversals, demonstrating the way in which sanctuary makes the vulnerable strong and shames the violent. Finally, Hubert's fall is enclosed symmetrically within two narratives — the exemplum of Richard I told by Wendover, and the story of Hubert's mercy in wartime, added by Paris. Each framing narrative is accompanied by a drawing: to begin, a particularly violent drawing of sanctuary, and in conclusion, a tonsured priest carrying a cross. Visually, in both cases, Matthew stresses the fugitive's symbolic access to divinity.

The illustration that introduces the fall of Hubert strikingly combines sanctuary and breach. In the margins of Wendover's exemplum of Richard I and the poacher, an armed knight gallops full tilt toward a man who, mouth open, helplessly embraces the cross (Fig. 1).⁸⁵

Formally, the illustration highlights the way in which Wendover's story of the poacher, pivoting as it does on sanctuary, provides an emblem of that year's events. The sword and cross represent the axes along which sanctuary always takes place: the worldly, 'horizontal' narrative halted by the 'vertical' appeal to divine aegis. The interruption just barely happens (or has not yet happened): the sword comes within a hair's breadth of the fugitive's shoulder, while the old man hangs on desperately, his feet falling off the edges of the cross's base. The drawing polarizes the two men, armed and unarmed, perpetrator and victim: it emphasizes the violence of the knight's charge, and thereby enhances the power of the cross. The illustration is not narrative but heuristic: it abstracts the action

⁸⁵ I follow Lewis's system, putting new refoliation in brackets to avoid confusion with older research by Luard, Vaughan, and others. Lewis describes and reproduces the drawing: *The Art of Matthew Paris in the 'Cronica Majora'*, pp. 311–12, fig. 197. She argues that Matthew plays down the miraculous nature of the cross in favour of psychological realism.

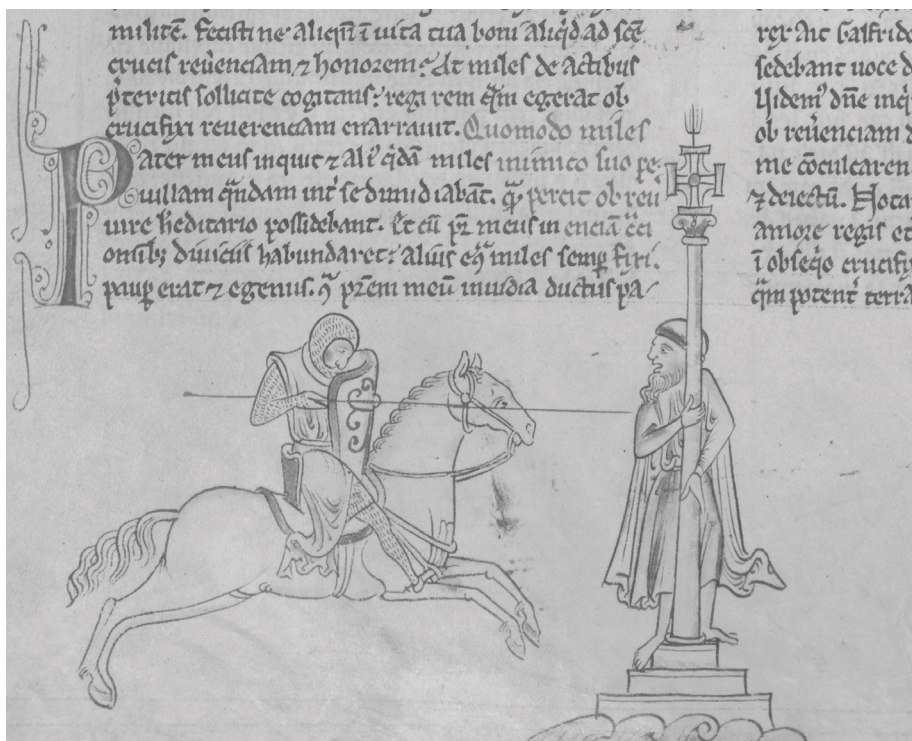


Figure 1. 'Knight Sparing his Father's Murderer', Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16, fol. 79^v [82^r]. Reproduced with permission.

from its causes, subordinating both the feud and the question of moral right to the structure of violence they produce. Matthew's drawing dramatizes the power of sanctuary to halt imminent aggression, turning flight into another sort of action. But at the same time, in its exorbitant violence, the drawing suggests the knight's desperation. This too emphasizes the sheer force of the disorder that is allowed to enter, is even welcomed, into the tiny space where the old man can barely balance his feet.

The drawing of the poacher and the old man can usefully be compared to another of Paris's drawings, a more predictable portrayal of Hubert de Burgh in sanctuary in the *Historia Anglorum* (Fig. 2).

Here Paris draws Hubert at Merton, kneeling with cross and Host in his hands — those emblems of devotion that will soon be snatched from his hands. The image asserts the safety of the sanctuary and the sanctity of Hubert's refuge, though the attack is imminent; the king and his men gather outside. The cap-



Figure 2. London, British Library, MS Royal 14.C.vii, fol. 19^r. Reproduced with permission.

tion reads: 'Hubertus de Burgo, discalciatus et in camisia solum ante altare de Meretona, mortem orando expectat; adveniunt enim cives Londonienses hostes ejus' (Hubert de Burgh, barefoot and in his shift, praying alone before the altar at Merton, expects death; for the citizens of London, his enemies, are coming).⁸⁶ Together, these two drawings encapsulate the combination of protection and breach that defines the act of seeking refuge. They place Hubert and Henry firmly on opposite sides of the sanctuary's physical and moral boundaries.

In the Cambridge manuscript, a small drawing of a bell and a substantial marginal addition call attention to Hubert's political power (Fig. 3).⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Lewis, p. 462; my trans.

⁸⁷ Lewis points out that Hubert 'joined Matthew's small pantheon of secular saints and political martyrs' (p. 231).



Figure 3. 'Common Bell of London', Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, fol. 84^r (detail).
Reproduced with permission.

The bell was rung to summon the commons to attack Hubert at Merton. We have seen that, in the midst of Hubert's flight, his advisors — in particular, his old enemy the earl of Chester — advised the king to put a stop to the London mob. Paris adds the force of a humiliating proverb to send home his advice. If the mob were to get out of control, Chester argues, the French would ridicule the English king for destroying his 'father figure':

Diceturque [...], 'Ecce qualis est alumnus regulus Angliae, qui in suis et in his, qui eum sub alis nutrierunt, novit desaevire'; et dicatur de Huberto, quod de avicula dicitur cuculum nutriente,

Alis ales alis alium ne longius ales.

(It would be said, 'What sort of a child is this English prince, who can thus oppress his subjects and those who have nursed him under their wing!' And of Hubert it would be said as of the sparrow feeding the cuckoo,

Bird, you nurse beneath your wings an alien: You should suckle it no longer.)⁸⁸

The proverbial image of the parasitic bird and the foster parent indicates the quasi-maternal intimacy of Hubert, under whose tutelage the king had learned the administration of the realm at least since Peter's dismissal as his tutor in 1221. Breach of sanctuary, Chester argues, would reveal that Hubert has all along been hosting the king, shoring him up, preparing him for his majority, and that now Henry has turned parricide. The proverb implies not only Hubert's risk of death but also the dynastic destruction of his lineage. Indeed, the proverb inverts the very idea of dynastic succession by making the king into a parasitic interloper, while preserving, more overtly than Wendover did, a sense of Hubert's proper jurisdiction — his role as host to the king. The proverb casts King Henry as the desperate alien, the stranger now transgressing the conditions of hospitality by attacking the man who has treated him with an excess of graciousness, an absolute hospitality. The effect of such a turnabout is to assert Hubert's righteousness: his paternal guidance, and the ingratitude and brutality of Henry's persecution. Far more than Wendover's account of Chester's advice, Paris's addition encapsulates the degree to which it was possible to imagine that a desperate sanctuary-man might retain a semblance of political power. The extravagance of the foster parent's generosity points to his unconditional, absolute, and extravagant political mentoring.

Indeed, part of the energy of Henry's wrath toward Hubert arises from the impotence of a sovereign who knows that his own object of vengeful rage could become — or might already embody — the hand of God. A wrathful God appears more explicitly in what follows, for Paris adds a second vignette. By Chester's advice, Henry's warrants for turning back the crowd are sent (in passive voice) via two different messengers:

Missi sunt autem duo aeditui ad revocandum populum praedictum catervatim ruentem, et sanguinem effundere innocentem sitienter praeparatum; quorum unus, raptus equo velocissimo, literas regis deferens, earum auctoritate etiam primos revocavit; alter autem fictus et fraudulentus, qui odio habens comitem Cantiae

⁸⁸ Luard, p. 225; Giles, p. 556. The translation of the punning proverb is my own, with thanks to William West.

Hubertum, [...] licet jussus accelerare, sponte tardans, nec attigit mediocres. Unde merito ira divina percussus, ad aliquod offendiculum equo cespitante, licet pedentim ambulante, in terram corruit resupinus, et fracto collo misere, nec tamen miserabiliter, expiravit.

(Two messengers were sent to recall the multitude thus tumultuously rushing to shed innocent blood; one of these mounted on a swift horse and carrying the king's warrant, recalled the foremost of them by his authority; the other messenger, however, who hated the earl of Kent, Hubert, [...] took his own time, and did not reach the middle of them; for which he was visited by the Divine anger, for his horse happening to stumble at some obstacle, although only proceeding at a slow pace, he fell flat to the ground, and, breaking his back, expired.)⁸⁹

The miracle gives a clear sign of Hubert's divine sanction. The slow messenger is a liar and fiction-maker: 'fictus et fraudulentus'. The irrelevance of the enemy — he is merely a messenger, a go-between, whose role is moreover doubled by another, better messenger — shows the ideological basis of his appearance, essentially as a vehicle for divine wrath. An expendable proxy stands in for the king himself, his messenger punished for his own errors. The unnatural, parricidal bird may itself go unpunished, but its evil avatar, 'fictus et fraudulentus', falls dead. The messenger's death vividly represents divine vengeance coming out of nowhere to reveal the truth about the king.

But as the reversible structure of sanctuary suggests, further displacements are possible too. The divine sign is precisely designed to express, in mystified form, Hubert's own hostility: when he seeks sanctuary, he barely suppresses his own potential for rebellion and revenge. Wrath can justify monarchical violence, but it can also belong to the London mob, to the wronged favorite, or to the hand of God. This transferability points out the contingent relationship that *ira regis* bears to justice, and hence the contingency of the king's own authority. Paris's additions make overt the implications of sanctuary seeking: Hubert's resorts to sanctuary remind Henry that the power of his sovereignty does not reside within him but has been dependent on Hubert's care and nurture. It has been continually created — confirmed in a second coronation, announced in reissues of Magna Carta, claimed in successive declarations of majority — through the careful negotiations that connect the king to the barony and to divinity alike. For this reason, Hubert's retreat to sanctuary is both desperate and sly: it buys him time; it reminds the king of the duty of mercy; it shores up Hubert's native heroism; it veils the threat of Hubert's aggression. Sanctuary also threatens to appropriate to

⁸⁹ Luard, pp. 225–26; Giles, pp. 556–57 fn.

the fugitive the most mystified aspect of monarchical rule, divine sanction, casting Henry away from the divine aegis that protects his enemy. Henry grows frustrated in part because he cannot kill off Hubert: he is sacred and profane, a pious and wicked burden, at once an enemy and a host.⁹⁰ Killing him would taint the king. He would become not simply merciless and tyrannical, but parricidal, and therefore he, himself, would be vulnerable to the inversions of order that constitute the structure of sanctuary.

In his additions to the subtler and more equivocal text of Roger Wendover, Matthew Paris dramatizes the invertibility of host and guest, king and sanctuary man. Moreover, Paris enhances Hubert's humility, cementing the connection between his status as defender of native England and his divine sanction. At Brentwood, where Henry III's knights snatch cross and Eucharist from Hubert's hands, Paris adds that the knights summon a smith to put fetters on him, but the smith refuses:

'Fiat de me iudicium quod vobis placet, propitietur Deus animae meae, vivit enim Dominus, nunquam ferrea vincula apponam illi, antea moriar quocunque discrimine. Nonne est iste Hubertus fidelissimus et magnanimus, qui totiens eripuit Angliam a vastatione alienigenarum, et restituit Angliam Angliae? Qui servivit tam constanter et fideliter in Wasconia, in Normannia, et alibi, regi Johanni suo domino, ita ut aliquando equos comedere cogeatur; ita etiam, quod hosted nostri constantiam in eo laudaverunt mirabilem [...] Judicet Deus inter ipsum et vos, quia injuste et inhumane cum tractatis, mala pro bonis, immo pessima pro optimis impedentes.' Hubertus autem his auditis, tacitus in corde considerabat illud evangelicum; *Confiteor tibi, Pater coeli et terrae, quia abscondisti causam meam a prudentibus et superbis, et revelasti pauperibus et humilibus.*

('Do with me as you please; may God be merciful to my soul, for the Lord liveth, but I will die rather than put fetters on him. Is he not that most faithful and noble-minded Hubert, who so often saved England from the ravages of foreigners, and restored England to itself? Is it not he who in Gascony and Normandy served his lord king John so faithfully and boldly, that he was even obliged to eat horse-flesh,

⁹⁰ Matthew Paris emphasizes the notion that Hubert is a 'pious and wicked burden', used when Hubert's retainer carries him to the chapel in Brentwood, by adding a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III, describing Cadmus, whose search in exile for Europa is called 'facto pius et scleratus eodem' (a deed pious and wicked at once). Luard notes the reference (p. 249 n. 6). Here as in Ovid, *pietas* has suggestions of both sanctity and political duty. The notion of a pious theft also recalls the theft of relics; see n. 74. By Matthew's estimation, Hubert's retainer does his duty by Hubert even as he transgresses against his king. The act of sacred theft remains, in Paris's valence of the word, both pious and just despite contravening the law.

so that even our enemies praised his remarkable boldness [...]? Let God decide between him and you, for you are treating him unjustly and inhumanly, returning evil for good, yea even the worst for the best.' Hubert on hearing these words, thought of the words of the gospel where it said, 'I confess to thee, father of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden my cause from skilful and wise men, and hast revealed it to the poor and humble.')

⁹¹

In recalling Hubert's defense of England against France, Paris's smith underscores Hubert's threat of rebellion, for Hubert remains a warrior who could turn against the king. At the same time, the smith emphasizes his loyalty, not so much to Henry as to John, and to the autonomous English realm. To fetter Hubert would be to assent to Henry's deprivation of the realm, as though England were itself a sanctuary violated by its own king. Recalling Hubert's defense of the realm in war and government makes him once again the loyal host to Henry, who is in turn the monarchical traitor presiding over an influx of Poitevin knights and government officials.

Hubert's recollection of the gospel verse sends home his own special access to God's justice, distinct from the king's. The wisdom of the lowly confirms a crucial effect of Hubert's sojourn in sanctuary: his own form of lowliness, his material loss and hence his vulnerability, has conferred upon him an association with the poor and humble. That this lowliness makes him not simply a refugee but also a defender of indigenous Englishness calls attention to the way in which seeking sanctuary has inverted his desperation. Even outside the church, when the sacred objects have been taken from him — indeed, precisely because they have been violently snatched from him — Hubert retains a connection to both native Englishness and divine aegis that does not just help him survive but helps him demonstrate the significance of his fall. In part because of his flights to sanctuary, Hubert threatens Henry's monarchical power in a way that makes him even more difficult to contain than the political rebellion. The fallen justiciar retains a connection with divinity, or with sacred things, that is portable, not confined to the inside of a church or to the temporal crisis of one instance of flight. It is not manifested in material wealth or confirmed in office-holding but can be invoked at any time in any place (church, castle, battlefield, court). This mobile form of sanctity makes the king's frustration, anxiety, and especially his wrath look strangely profane, for it strips him of a central source of his authority, the connection of the monarch's will to the will of God.

⁹¹ Luard, pp. 227–28; Giles, p. 558n. The smith quotes Matthew 11. 25.

In the end, Henry is forced to dismiss Peter and reconcile with the rebels and with Hubert, and he rejoins — or readjusts himself to — his native barons.⁹² The political ritual of reconciliation is staged in the wake of Richard Marshal's death, before a council at Gloucester in 1234, where Henry, having accepted the advice of his bishops, finally performs with some skill the role of merciful protector of the realm. Indeed, Henry re-establishes sovereign authority through pity, lamenting the loss of Richard Marshal and giving generous alms on Richard's behalf; Wendover writes: 'Beatus ergo rex talis, qui novit inimicos diligere, et cum lacrimis pro suis persecutoribus Dominum exorare' (Blessed indeed must such a king be, who could love his enemies, and pray to God with tears for his persecutors).⁹³ More to the point, it is finally through an offer of protection — the granting of safe conducts to all the rebels under the care of the bishops — that Henry gathers the barons to display his granting of pardon. He now appears well in control of the sanctuary game initiated and played with such maddening proficiency by the fallen Hubert de Burgh.

Matthew Paris enhances the ritual of reconciliation by expanding Hubert's role in it. As we have seen, Wendover introduced Hubert's fall with the story of Richard I and the poacher, where the good king yielded to the need and privilege of his own banished subject, a story Matthew illustrated with the knight attacking the old man. As if to create symmetry, Matthew concludes Hubert's exile by adding a vignette and a marginal illustration to Wendover's account of the reconciliation between Hubert and the king in 1234 (Fig. 4).

Like the poacher, Hubert kneels in gratitude before the forgiving king, and recalls a good deed he performed in Christ's name long ago:

O Jesus Salvatore Crucifixe, Quem cruentatis in cruce vulneribus aliquando dormiens conspexi, et in crastino secundum admonitum Tuum Tuae peperci effigiei, eandem venerando, nunc mihi vestri gratia tempore opportuno gratam rependisti vicissitudinem.

(O Jesus, crucified Saviour, I once when sleeping saw thee on the cross pierced with bloody wounds, and on the following day, according to thy warning, I spared thy image and worshipped it, and now thou hast in thy favour repaid me for so doing at a lucky time.)⁹⁴

⁹² For the death of Richard Marshal and the process of reconciliation, especially the influence of the pope and bishops, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 429–45.

⁹³ Luard, p. 290; Giles, p. 592.

⁹⁴ Luard, p. 291; Giles, p. 593n.

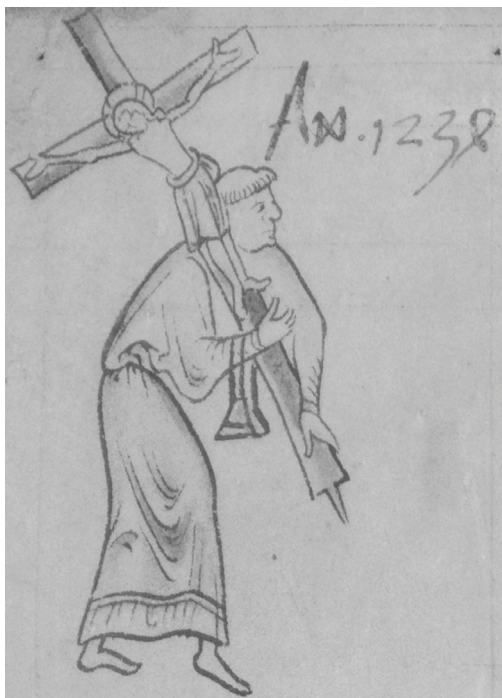


Figure 4. 'Hubert de Burgh's Vision',
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College,
MS 16, fol. 93'.

Reproduced with permission.

Matthew elaborates, explaining that during the war in the time of King John, Hubert's men were indulging in their customary rape and pillage. Hubert dreamed that the crucifix spoke to him, commanding that when he next saw the image of Christ, he spare it and carry it away and worship it. The next day, he saw a priest fleeing just such rape and pillage, carrying a crucifix like the one in his dream, and pleading for help; Hubert immediately dismounted and worshiped the crucifix, and restored all the property of the despoiled church. The marginal illustration depicts the priest, carrying a cross almost the height of his body.

At one level, Hubert's memory serves to reauthorize Henry as the king rescinds Hubert's outlawry and restores his property. Hubert is forgiven his crimes, by Henry now as by Christ in the past. Hubert's prayer of thanks associates the crucifix with Henry's grace: as when Richard recognized the signal of the crucifix and ceded to Christ's judgement by forgiving the banished knight, so too Hubert's dream asserts a narrative within which the king cedes to the divine sign. The narrative re-elevates the king to the status of divinely sanctioned monarch, and the marginal illustration gives a kind of stamp of approval to the king's act. Yet through the authority of his divine vision, Hubert

also recalls his own defense of the realm and the power of his own divinely sanctioned political power. The Hubert who restored the stolen artefacts of the church resembles a king himself. He led his men into battle, and he restored pillaged possessions to the sanctuary. He also knew how to interpret divine signs: as King Richard interpreted the nodding crucifix, Hubert interpreted his own dream and related it to the priest and crucifix he saw in battle. He saw the priest carrying the cross pictured in the margins. He acted as intercessor. He granted safety to the despoiled monastery. The subtle implication is that Hubert's sacred privilege derives from his own mercy: that the king derives power from the act of restoring his subject, and that the God who once worked through Hubert now works through Henry. Hubert portrays his reconciliation in religious terms that still suggest his capacity to displace and partially neutralize monarchical self-assertion. The gratitude he expresses, like the protection of sanctuary itself, renders the monarch powerful if — and only if — Henry accepts the role of merciful intercessor: if, that is, he will play the host by accepting his guest's potential for transgressive violence, his potential to alienate the king, to rebel and to become, himself, the host.

Formally, when Matthew Paris adds Hubert's vision of Christ to Wendover's chronicle, he increases the symbolic resonance of sanctuary because he links sacred space explicitly to Hubert's reconciliation with the king: he gives the chronicle a local symmetry, as the long account of Hubert's fall is introduced and concluded by outlaws ritually reconciled through Christ to their kings, the poacher to Richard, and Hubert to Henry. This symmetry makes the story of Hubert's fall a cyclical tale of the rupture and repair of sovereign justice. The marginal illustrations enhance this coherence: the knight hurtling toward the helpless man and the cross-bearing priest open and close the long episode of Hubert's fall: and, more even than the narrative of rebellion itself, these images tag or index violence and its resolution, flight and refuge, rupture and repair. By enhancing the coherence and ritual efficacy of Hubert's divine sanction, Paris can ultimately suggest an optimistic reading of Henry's actions: Hubert the soldier long ago restored the church's goods (*bona*), eventually to be restored himself to the favour of the king, and to the possessions and titles that came with it. Similarly, Henry now restores, at least temporarily, a sense of balance between past and present, between Hubert's deserts and his rewards, that implies the restoration of goods in all senses — legal justice, property, and divine sanction. Matthew Paris's additions to Wendover's chronicle ultimately confirm the king's connection, through human mercy and generosity, to divine sanction.

Following the ouster of Hubert's enemies, Henry's kingship once again rests upon pious foundations.⁹⁵ Wendover and Matthew Paris together suggest that Henry's sovereignty requires him to learn mercy. But mercy relies on continual political compromise and adjustment — acts of making men 'proximate' to himself or 'joining' his law to the interests of barons, rebels, bishops, and other men in the realm, hosting them as it were.⁹⁶ Acts of adjustment (like reconciling with rebels, forgiving outlaws, releasing sanctuary-men) allow him finally to inhabit the role of merciful sovereign that ties him most overtly to divine right. The king's divine sanction is depicted as earned, not given, a result of action rather than a justification for it. Sanctuary has the potential to confirm or question the king's power. But by providing a space of negotiation and a space of transaction with the divine, the practice can also reveal the sheer mobility of human connection to divinity. In assigning sanctity to Hubert de Burgh, and in temporarily severing the king from the place of God's aegis, the *Chronica majora* shows the process by which sanctuary exposes the king as profane, violent, and radically endangered. Together, the two authors of the *Chronica* highlight the symbolic function of sanctuary in revealing the degree to which kingship is intensely under construction in the period. Hubert's successive flights show ways in which divine right and royal subjection to the law are more than opposite poles in a debate: they constitute two complementary aspects of the effortful, and always provisional, creation of sovereignty. As much as sanctuary is conceived in the period as a legal practice that expresses sovereign power, the repertoire of actions available to sanctuary seekers and their hosts is much broader than its legal conditions might imply. Sanctuary's ultimate reference to divine aegis can always exceed the jurisdictional claims of the king: it can sacralize violent breach; it can sacralize the fugitive; and it can authorize rebellion. In this way seeking sanctuary resembles many other actions attributable to divine intervention, including the portents and thunderings and miracles that the chroniclers so often record as political messages. But sanctuary differs from miracle inasmuch as sacred spaces do not represent the sudden explosion of divine action in the world but the continual presence of divine aegis, the space where God's care for the world is manifest, the evidence of his protection of human bodies. Sanctuary is a space where God makes himself

⁹⁵ Indeed, following the events of 1232–34, Henry soon began to prove his piety by supporting the cult of Edward the Confessor: see Carpenter, 'King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor'. On Matthew Paris's depiction of Henry's use of Edward, see Binski, 'Reflections on *La Estoire de Saint Aedward le rei*'.

⁹⁶ On the aftermath of the crisis of 1232–34, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 442; Carpenter, *The Struggle For Mastery*, pp. 338–68; and Carpenter, 'King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor', pp. 879–81.

available for human use. Accordingly, sanctuary may provide a stage where the relationship between sovereign and subject can fray and unravel, but as Matthew Paris's additions particularly show, it also provides a framework within which king and subject may weave themselves together again.

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MARGARET'S CHOICE: NEGOTIATING SPACE, CLASS IDENTITY AND GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN *THE PASTON LETTERS**

Shannon Meyer

In 1449, Robert Hungerford, Lord Moleyns, dispatched some lackeys to break down a wall in order to forcibly remove Margaret Paston from her chamber at Gresham Manor, which she was attempting to retain under her family's control. When Hungerford subsequently sent a delegation to speak with her, Margaret haughtily refused them admittance and met with them instead outside, at the gates, 'and prayid hem that they wold hold [her] exkusyd that [she] browth hem not in to the plase'.¹ This incident is a singularly dramatic example of the way in which the Paston women both experienced and negotiated their relationship to power in and through their relationship to the particular ideologies reflected in late medieval gentry architecture. This article will consider the literary evidence of the famous *Paston Letters* alongside the material and archaeological

* This article began as my master's thesis, written at the University of York under the direction of W. Mark Ormrod and Jane Grenville, to whom I am grateful for their guidance.

¹ *Paston Letters and Papers*, ed. by Davis, I, 229 (hereafter *PL*). This incident is discussed further below, p. 17.

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Abstract: This article offers a reader response to the trope of the woman ensconced in her tower through the life and writings of Margaret Paston. The Pastons were avid consumers of romance, so the trope is one that Margaret would have known well. During her lifetime, the Pastons came to possess Caister Castle, and Margaret spent some time there. She found that with the increase in social status of owning a castle came the more restrictive movement necessitated by castle life. While living in her manor houses, Margaret made herself accessible to all manner of people, and manor house architecture itself expressed a gender ideology of equality. I argue that through her move from castle to manor house, Margaret was actively rejecting the higher status position of the upper aristocracy and the restrictive gender ideologies laid out by castle architecture and chose instead to remain part of the lower aristocracy, its gender ideology of greater female freedom witnessed by both the more equal accessibility of spaces within the manor house, and by Margaret's relative ease of movement and accessibility there.

Keywords: Paston family, gender, class, architecture, late medieval gentry.

evidence of surviving late medieval gentry manor houses in order to argue that Margaret Paston actively recognized and selected from the ways in which different architectural spaces enabled more or less adept articulations of her own practical power and control.²

Theorizing architectural space has concerned everyone from literary critics and philosophers to archeologists and practicing architects. Most of their conversations, however, have remained isolated from one another: for literary critics, imagined spaces are projections of the psyche or allegories for some other thing; for anthropologists and philosophers, informed by the material world but also abstracting it, spaces are social constructions, imposing structure on our daily lives; for architects and archaeologists, who generally agree with the anthropologists and philosophers, architectural space is also a material reality that must be contended with, analysed, and considered from the point of view of embodied persons inhabiting it. The Pastons lived in architectural environments that are still extant today — manor houses much like those they lived in, and Caister Castle, the hotly contested property that John I and his sons spent decades attempting to secure. These extant buildings, combined with the experiences recorded by the Paston women in their letters, provide us with the unique opportunity to engage multiple discourses about space, social status, and their relationship to literary texts. We can place the women's experiences in their architectural context, consider the ways in which those architectural contexts determined women's experiences, and, finally, reflect on what this might mean for texts circulating amongst the gentry.

The Pastons of Norfolk were a family on the rise in the fifteenth century: William Paston, son of a peasant, married Agnes, the daughter and heiress of a local gentleman. Their son John I (1421–66) married equally well, acquiring the inheritance of Margaret Mautby, the daughter of another substantial local landowner. While John and their sons pursued careers in law and the court in London and abroad, Margaret remained in Norfolk handling the family business, which included hanging on to the contested properties purportedly bequeathed to John by his friend Sir John Fastolf against both the duke of Norfolk and the duke of Suffolk, as well as the elopement of their daughter Margery, among other more mundane concerns.

While the Paston men attempted to live the chivalric life of the court, the Paston women must have encountered, in romance especially, the trope of the

² The major study of the Pastons is Colin Richmond's series: *The Paston Family: The First Phase*; *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; and *The Paston Family: Endings*. Also see Rosenthal, *Margaret Paston's Piety*.

high-status aristocratic woman tucked away in her tower. It proliferated throughout the medieval period in texts that had wide circulation: Marie de France's *Lais* feature several instances; Chrétien de Troyes's *Knight of the Cart* finds Guinevere imprisoned in a tower; in the popular Middle English romance *Sir Orfeo*, a fairy king abducts Orfeo's queen and locks her in his castle. The Pastons were not aristocratic, but they wanted to be. And no one wanted this more than Margaret Paston, who fought as hard as any of her male family members for the possession of Caister Castle, that supreme sign that the family had arrived. Her letters give us a fascinating view of a woman negotiating her class through her particular use of and experience in the differing status of the architecture of manor house and castle. I argue that we find Margaret carving out a sense of her own individual interests distinct from her family's because she preferred the habitus — the architectural programs and the corresponding behavioral possibilities — of her gentry family to the higher status one manifested at Caister, where there was the possibility of needing an enlarged household of retainers whose behaviour she could not control, and from whom she might have needed sequestering in its tower.

Architecture was then, as it is today, a key way in which people organized space: not only a material with which historical, material human agents interact but also a structure that contains those human agents and is designed to project the ideal world of those human agents in a complex dialectic. Pierre Bourdieu initiated a materialist approach to understanding social constructs in developing the concept of habitus, whereby social structures are maintained and propagated by the material conditions in which they are lived. It is through everyday practice, unspoken and unquestioned by the subjects that enact it, that a 'commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus of meaning' is produced.³ Inhabited spaces are particularly rich sites for such social production, because they establish relations between people, things, and practices.⁴ The popular expression 'social position' demonstrates this inextricable link between the material and the social: it is a dead metaphor, and it describes an individual's status in relation to others through the use of physical space.⁵ Architects Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson argue specifically that ordering space functions to order relations between people.⁶ They developed spatial analysis to describe the relative permeability of different spaces — that is, how accessible they are, par-

³ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Nice, p. 80.

⁴ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Nice, p. 89.

⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Nice, p. 82.

⁶ Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, pp. 1–2, 14.

ticularly to visitors from the outside.⁷ Medieval architectural programs worked to prescribe how those who inhabited them interacted, from the decoration of the medieval hall that put the lord at the 'high' end and relegated those of lower class to the 'low' end, to the ordering of space that created private rooms like the parlor, located behind the high end of the hall and often in a tower, theoretically inaccessible to those of low social station. The secluded lady in the tower of courtly literature bears out Hillier and Hanson's theory about how the 'deepest', that is, least accessible, spaces work: her high status and value is reflected in her inaccessibility.

The ubiquity in literature of the lady in the tower would suggest that she has real, historical counterparts. Historians and archaeologists certainly think so. Pioneering feminist historian Barbara Hanawalt argues that noblewomen were limited to the domestic sphere, claiming that some may have considered the castle more a cell than a home.⁸ Feminist archaeologist Roberta Gilchrist concludes likewise. She finds that the female household was always positioned in the upper ends of halls or the highest part of the castles, with towers occasionally incorporated into the female quarters.⁹ Often, a private pew with direct access from the female quarters in the castle was also provided: the 'cumly closet', or private pew, of the women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* seems to corroborate the architectural evidence.¹⁰ Moreover, in royal palaces, a queen's chambers were the most secluded and far more isolated from the public buildings and ceremonial routes of the palace than a king's.¹¹

Just as women of medieval romance are often locked away for the explicit exploitation of their own sexuality (for example, the adulterous Guinevere), scholars give as the historical reason the general belief that women were untrustworthy and distracting. Gilchrist writes that the 'honour and patrimony of lordship rested on the impermeability of both the castle and female body, [...] [so] the castle [was] used as a metaphor for the female body, a tabernacle protecting the precious virginity contained within'.¹² Evidence for this kind of thinking nevertheless comes mostly from literature. A more pragmatic, and perhaps likely,

⁷ Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, pp. 14, 147, 149.

⁸ Hanawalt, 'At the Margins of Women's Space'.

⁹ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, pp. 125, 137.

¹⁰ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 123.

¹¹ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 139; Richardson, 'Gender and Space in English Royal Palaces', p. 163.

¹² Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 139.

reason is women's need for protection from large numbers of idle and at times drunken men resident within the great household.¹³

These studies of women's place in the household tend to conflate women of noble and gentry status. Nevertheless, Gilchrist argues that ideologies surrounding gender differed amongst different classes: she writes that in medieval England, 'segregation was used to convey a sense of social order, while the actual physical practices of female seclusion varied according to social status and age',¹⁴ with increasing status leading to increasing segregation of women's quarters.¹⁵ Though studies of the late medieval English gentry tend to ignore women and assume that women simply towed the family line in all matters,¹⁶ they agree that the gentry's values can be contrasted with the nobility's.¹⁷ Localized studies in particular have concluded that the greater gentry were happy associating with their social inferiors in their local milieu.¹⁸ Chris King's study of manor house architecture also suggests that rather than emulating the nobility in their architecture, the gentry were responding to their own needs.¹⁹ All of this suggests that gentry women may have had a different experience of their lived spaces than noblewomen.²⁰ The Pastons were only one family, and in some ways, such

¹³ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 45; Mertes, *The English Noble Household*, p. 57; Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 34.

¹⁴ Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology*, p. 113.

¹⁵ Gilchrist, 'Medieval Bodies in the Material World', p. 53.

¹⁶ There are a very few, brief exceptions: Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 135–37; Moreton, *The Townshends and their World*, pp. 136, 144; Richmond, *John Hopton*, pp. 115–36; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, pp. 51–58.

¹⁷ The attempt to define the gentry, its values, and self-perception began with K. B. McFarlane. He first maintained that the gentry were simply part of the nobility, but later argued instead for the increasing distinction between the parliamentary peerage and the rest of land-owning society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 6–7, 7n). Subsequent studies agree that no single definition is possible, but that the gentry's values can be contrasted with the nobility's. The difficulty of defining the gentry does not concern my study. The Pastons are generally agreed to count amongst the greater gentry, which is easy to recognize in contrast to distinguishing between minor gentlemen and yeomen.

¹⁸ Moreton, *The Townshends and their World*; Moreton, 'A Social Gulf?'; Richmond, *John Hopton*.

¹⁹ King, 'The Organization of Social Space', p. 121.

²⁰ Fiona Swabey's work on Dame Alice de Bryene is the one study of the household of a specific gentlewoman that is conscious of the distinct position of the gentry. Swabey notes, however, that 'We can only guess at the degree of social intercourse between those of the third estate and the clergy and Alice's peers sitting at the top table' (Swabey, *Medieval Gentlewoman*, p. 113).

as their litigiousness, they probably do not represent the majority of their peers. Nevertheless, the abundance of evidence of their lives cannot be ignored, since it does not exist elsewhere, and certainly they must still have shared much in common with others of their class. Though it must be done with caution, it is possible to extrapolate from the lives of Agnes and Margaret Paston in order to draw conclusions about the lives of later medieval gentry women. While they lived in static architecture that set out rules, the way in which the Paston women used and experienced that architecture is not necessarily predetermined. Active human agents have the option of modifying or even resisting the use prescribed by the built environment, and documentary evidence can illuminate how that might be done. From their letters we find that Margaret and Agnes were both mobile and very accessible in their own private spaces, when they could control the access of the people who were admitted to those spaces. Unlike what the architecture prescribes, admittance was based on behaviour rather than social status. I argue that this is the particular ideology reflected in gentry manor architecture, and that it differs from that of the higher status architecture emulated at Caister Castle, where female quarters seem to have been more secluded. After fighting so hard for Caister Castle, Margaret's firsthand experience of the lifestyle of the noblewoman at Caister, with its reduced mobility and authority, led her to reject that lifestyle.

As in great households, Margaret's manor household had few women: she mentions a female servant once in her letters, and one other appears in an inventory.²¹ There must have been more, but probably not many. No matter what their numbers, the Paston women could not have been locked away in private chambers and closets, only seeing people when they were admitted by a close personal servant. The best evidence that they were not isolated in chambers comes from a letter to John I from Margaret's chaplain, James Gloys. Gloys wrote to John apologizing that Margaret had not written John herself; Gloys had already written in his own letter what Margaret wanted to say. Furthermore, she knew of no messenger who could send a letter, whereas Gloys did.²² Nor did Margaret's female servants stay sequestered off in their mistress's chamber. Margaret sends the one female servant that appears in the letters as a messenger, 'for [she] kowd geten no man to do it'.²³ This suggests that when Margaret had letters to send, she must have left her to chamber to find messengers herself.

²¹ *PL*, I, 227; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*, p. 25.

²² *PL*, II, 67.

²³ *PL*, I, 228.

Furthermore, the many interactions recorded by their letters demonstrate that Margaret and Agnes were in fact highly accessible to a large range of people inside and outside their homes. Margaret can be seen dining out and in with female kin and friends, but she also met with her husband's and sons' many associates on her own. Some were purely social visits: the historian William Worcester visited her at Christmas:²⁴ both he and John I were close professional servants to Fastolf.²⁵ Some meetings were explicitly held on John's business, particularly with regards to the estates that John claimed Fastolf had left him on his deathbed. Ownership of these manors — Caister, Hellesdon, and Drayton — was disputed for years, and Margaret often had to act on John's behalf in the ongoing contest between the Pastons and various claimants.²⁶ It is clear that these manors were primarily of interest to John, so Margaret was only lending him her assistance.²⁷ Margaret often also entertained these men. She wrote that Hugh Fenn, a gentleman servant of Fastolf and supporter of the Pastons in their fight for the manors of Hellesdon and Drayton, had told Richard Calle, the family's bailiff, that he and his wife would be with her within a week to discuss a place that he had purchased, and Margaret assured John that she would 'make hym gode chyre'.²⁸ In addition to these more formal meetings, associates of the Paston men also came and went from the women's homes in a very informal capacity, running errands and carrying messages. There can be no doubt that Margaret and Agnes actually interacted with those carrying letters to them, rather than receiving them through a servant: while expecting a letter from John, Margaret sent him one claiming she 'see[s] nothere [the messenger] ne the letters'.²⁹

The Pastons' visitors were not only gentleman associates and family servants. They also included peasants and yeoman. Many of these were Paston tenants. The

²⁴ *PL*, I, 281.

²⁵ Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 15, 249.

²⁶ These include a William Skypwyth (*PL*, I, 297), a 'lesser gentleman' (Richmond, *The Paston Family: Endings*, pp. 178–79), and Sir John Heveningham twice (*PL*, I, 324, 340).

²⁷ The fact that she could choose not to lend him her assistance should not be taken for granted. She held out at Gresham when it was under attack, but, as Richmond points out, it was her jointure and so was explicitly her interest (Richmond, *The Paston Family: Endings*, p. 90). Later she did not lend John II the money he needed to recover Caister (Richmond, *The Paston Family: Endings*, pp. 109–10), so clearly she could choose when she wanted to support the Paston line and when she was solely maintaining her own interests.

²⁸ *PL*, I, 316; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 190, 250; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*, p. 145.

²⁹ *PL*, I, 370.

majority that we see came to launch complaints,³⁰ but one incident demonstrates that the Paston women offered their tenants hospitality and sympathy, that they were neither distant in terms of physical space nor conduct. When the duke of Norfolk's men prevented tenants of Caister from farming their land, Margaret wrote to John II that 'it is gret pety to here the swemefull and petowse compleynes of the pore tenauntes that come to me for comfort and socour, sumtyme be vi or vii to-gedere'.³¹

Whether Agnes and Margaret shared as much intimacy with men as with women when they visited is difficult to determine. John III (1444–1504), John I and Margaret's second son, told Margaret that he should invite Elizabeth Brews to dinner, where they could have 'most secret talkyng'.³² They perhaps would have retired alone together to the parlour or great chamber to eat, talk, or both. Margaret and William Rookwood probably did this when they spoke of covert things after dinner. It is clear, however, that Margaret was not alone with Rookwood, as she told John that Thomas Playter, a family associate, could relate to him what was said.³³ Though men's presence in the semi-private spaces of women was clearly allowed, whether the presence of a second man made this acceptable can only be speculated.

Though some have argued that use of the hall was in decline, in favour of the great chamber or parlour, in the later Middle Ages, the letters suggest that Margaret would have met most of these people in the hall.³⁴ The hall is perhaps the room in which the traditional view of the hierarchical household is most clearly manifested. The lord sat at the 'high' end on a raised dais under a canopy, close to his private apartments, while the servants sat in descending order toward the 'low' end, approaching the service rooms.³⁵ This opposition was not the only way of superimposing status upon space: elements in the timber roof did so, as well as codes of conduct. While the common entrance of the hall admitted everyone, only more important guests would have moved through the lower bay of

³⁰ For instance, complaints against Agnes over the building of a wall that obstructed the road to the church and her failure to fully pay the manorial court (*PL*, I, 42; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 9–10), and against two Paston servants who took tenants' cattle when they could not pay their rent (*PL*, I, 301).

³¹ *PL*, I, 336–37.

³² *PL*, I, 605–06.

³³ *PL*, I, 258.

³⁴ See Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 107–10.

³⁵ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 89; Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 161.

the hall towards the upper ones where the lord sat.³⁶ Margaret's letters, however, suggest that such rigid rules cannot always have been followed. Margaret and her visitors would not have carried on conversations, yelling at each other from their respective places within the hierarchical layout.³⁷ Codes of conduct may have determined where people sat but did not stop them from interacting with those sitting in higher (or lower) status positions. This means that either Margaret left the upper end and moved toward the lower, or that low-status visitors were allowed to leave their stations and approach Margaret at the upper end.

Margaret also quite clearly enjoyed a large amount of authority within the halls of her manor houses. If the hall of Giffords, a house comparable to those Margaret would have occupied, can be taken as typical, then it seems that the gentry hall's architectural program reflects the inclusion of women in that space.³⁸ The main decoration remaining in the hall at Giffords is the carvings on the spandrels of the timber roof. These include foliage, musical instruments, chalices, wooden wheels and their spokes, bellows, a flagon, mortar and pestle, a fish on a platter, a mouse entering a pitcher, a crown, a sword belt or arrow shafts, a thistle, and a pomegranate.³⁹ Of these, only the pomegranate may have been specifically associated with women, and several are specifically gendered masculine, but most are domestic and so would have been associated with the hospitality of the master and the entertainment and servicing of the entire household. This is a role that Margaret often took on, and the decorative program, with its nod toward a female presence and its gender-neutral symbols, appears to make room for this possibility. The hall nevertheless prioritizes masculine pursuits, so how would Margaret have experienced such a space? Women did not normally, or ideally, occupy the position of authority within the hall, but they were visible there as wives and daughters and therefore would not have been at a total loss when they found themselves in the position of power representing their menfolk. The medieval hall would have been familiar to them even if they were disenfranchised within it. Women who could effectively run a household on their own are well

³⁶ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, p. 89.

³⁷ The halls that Margaret would have occupied would have been too large for normally carrying on conversations across them, but some were quite small, and so may have allowed for this; see Wood, *The English Mediaeval House*, pp. 62–66, for a list of great halls and their dimensions.

³⁸ The builders of Giffords, the Mannock family, were of comparable status to Margaret's natal family, the Mautbys, so the house can be taken as analogous to her ancestral home at Mautby (King, 'The Organization of Social Space', pp. 109–10).

³⁹ Sandon, *Suffolk Houses*, p. 206.

documented.⁴⁰ They would not have been so effective had they cowered and simpered. Instead, they must have, to a degree, demonstrated the authority normally ascribed to the male head of household. Margaret Paston certainly demonstrated her confidence. Gaining a position of authority within surroundings that would have cued her more masculine behaviour did not, however, provide her with the authority that ultimately rested with her husband. Margaret headed the household most of the time, but she still had to write to her husband to get her a new servant who would actually obey her.⁴¹ Like other women in her position, she must have felt that she had to negotiate the environment of the manor house hall carefully, but she did manage it quite well.

The family lodgings at Giffords also do not conform to an ideology of female seclusion. There is no tower at all, but rather two ranges that, along with the gate-house complex and hall/parlour complex, form a courtyard. These rooms were assigned status through their varying size and elaboration, and they were separated from the public, ceremonial parts of the house, but there is almost direct access to the private chambers from the courtyard, arguably the most public part of the complex.⁴² Furthermore, though there may have been gradation in the luxury of each room, there is no suite of rooms that is less accessible than others. Placing Margaret in these suites, then, we find her to be no less accessible than her husband or sons might have been. She may very well have gone to the hall, used the parlour or the great chamber for meeting with her visitors, but in her sleeping quarters there is no distinction made from the men's, no extra protection given. The owners' choice not to incorporate a tower must have been deliberate: they had the resources, and manor houses with towers were not unheard of.⁴³ This would suggest that King is correct: the builders of Giffords wanted to impress, but they did not do so through blind emulation of their social superiors — rather, they were discriminating in the choice of architectural elements that they felt fit their needs. This includes the establishment of a gender ideology manifested in the architecture. Within Giffords Hall, the architecture does not establish a normative ideal of a secluded woman, suggesting that at Mautby, as well, Margaret would be reached spatially and could herself easily reach and see the courtyard and great hall and the busy activity of the household she was running.

⁴⁰ See especially Archer, "How ladies...who live on their manors ought to manage".

⁴¹ *PL*, I, 257.

⁴² See the plan and spatial diagram of Giffords in King, 'The Organization of Social Space', illustrations 3 and 4.

⁴³ For instance, at Faulkbourne Hall, where the tower displayed status but had no military function whatsoever (see Tipping, 'Faulkborne Hall').

As we have seen, Margaret and even Agnes enjoyed a degree of freedom in their movements and interactions. At their manor houses they cannot have been secluded, and both seem perfectly comfortable with this. But their letters also show that this comfort was predicated on their ability to control who could appear in their direct presence. In their manor houses, they had the authority to do so; elsewhere they did not. It is in those spaces where they did not have complete control that we find Margaret and Agnes concerned about who could gain admittance to the spaces they occupied.

The parish church offers a key to who ideally had access to them. It was a particularly liminal space where women enjoyed a certain amount of authority even apart from their families, but where anyone was welcome. Lay piety was an important aspect of later medieval life, and members of the higher, more leisured classes attended Mass on a daily basis.⁴⁴ We find Margaret and Agnes at the parish church several times.⁴⁵ Whereas other public spaces, like the judicial court, denied them any authority, the sacred space of the church was a place where women could claim authority. Women played a very active role within the church, donating money, goods that they commissioned, and their own precious belongings to their parish churches for its decoration.⁴⁶ This included iconic images, saints' statues, and even altar cloths. Like the hall at Giffords, the parish church was a space where women's presence was institutionally acknowledged through its architecture.

On one occasion when Margaret visits the church, she writes that one of her tenants approached her over a dispute with the parson concerning an alleged agreement about the purchase of a parcel of land, '[w]her-vppon [Margaret] have don hym examyn a-fore the same parson and all the parysh, and there he sware vppon a boke that he made neuer bargyng'.⁴⁷ The scene unfolds as though she were a judge presiding over a courtroom. Here, within the protected, sacred, and less male-dominated space of the church, Margaret can assume the role of judge, emphasizing her activity with the complex verb phrase 'don hym examyn'.

Because of their social status in the community, Margaret and Agnes would have occupied sequestered space within their private pews. Seating was as hierarchical in the church as it was in the hall, so these pews would have been at the

⁴⁴ Bennet, *The Pastons and their England*, p. 204; Jewell, *Women in Medieval England*, pp. 165–66.

⁴⁵ *PL*, I, 35, 36, 224; II, 30.

⁴⁶ See especially French, 'Margery Kempe and the Parish', p. 162.

⁴⁷ *PL*, I, 331.

front of the church, with visual access by those of lower status behind them blocked by a screen.⁴⁸ These pews served entire families, however, so their function would not have been one of gender but of class segregation. Margaret and Agnes sat at the front because they were the patrons of the churches they were attending. Moreover, they were segregated only during the service, as after the service people of lower status could move toward the front of the church. If parallels can be made between the hall and the church with regard to the hierarchical demarcation of space, so too can they be made for how people moved through those spaces. Agnes and Margaret had to rise from their pews and make their way through the low end of the nave to the doors, and others could rise from their pews in the back and move forward to speak to Agnes and Margaret. Unlike their halls, however, the two women could not dictate who came into the church, so they could end up confronted by people with whom they did not invite contact. Here their authority could be very easily challenged, as it was on at least a couple of occasions.

The most telling incident involves Warin Herman, one of Agnes's tenants at Paston. He and two others approached her in her private pew, her 'closett', to discuss a wall that she was building. Agnes Ball and Clement Spycere approached Agnes and 'bad [her] good euyn'.⁴⁹ Agnes then 'acsyd hym what he wold' before Spycere launched into his complaints about the wall. That she admitted them to the pew but not Herman is clear: 'And all that tyme Waryn Herman lenyd ouyr the parklos and lystynd whatt we seyde, and seyde the chaunge was a rewly chaunge'.⁵⁰ Agnes then provides the reason: she told him that 'it was no curtesé to medyll hym jn a mater butt if he were callyd to counsell'.⁵¹ The problem was not that he was a lowly tenant, but that he had not been 'called'. The others showed Agnes 'curtesé', a concept that is not often associated with the lower classes but which they, as much as their social superiors, were expected to display. They did not accost her but left her with control over the course the encounter would take. Herman, on the other hand, did not respect the social norms that dictated his deference toward her but felt that the church was a space within which he could speak to Agnes on equal ground: Agnes complains that he 'prowdly goyn forthe wyth me jn the cherche'.⁵² Here both his demeanour and his claim to occupy her space — he 'goes forth with' her — disturbs Agnes's sense of decorum.

⁴⁸ Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp. 90–91.

⁴⁹ *PL*, I, 36.

⁵⁰ *PL*, I, 36.

⁵¹ *PL*, I, 36.

⁵² *PL*, I, 36.

Richmond suggests that it is because of incidents like her run-in with Herman that Agnes and all the Pastons after her built chapels in their homes, implying that they wished to avoid anyone they considered socially inferior to themselves, that they were '[m]aking "space" for themselves, as they developed a new concept of' their social position.⁵³ Christine Carpenter disagrees, offering evidence that the gentry continued to invest large sums in their parish churches and pointing out that it would be 'political suicide' to withdraw from public religious life, 'the single significant focus of social life', at a time when asserting one's manorial lordship was most crucial.⁵⁴ The Pastons certainly did make use of private chapels,⁵⁵ but it is difficult to say whether Margaret and Agnes preferred their private chapels, as they did attend the parish church. If the Paston women did prefer their private chapels, it cannot have been simply to avoid their neighbours or enemies, as Colin Richmond suggests. The fact that Agnes Ball and Clement Spycere were allowed to enter Agnes's pew, though Herman was not, demonstrates that Agnes had no aversion to the lower classes. Rather, it was the lack of control over who had access to them in the public space of the church, as opposed to that which they exercised in their own homes, which appears to concern the Paston women.

These rules of behaviour applied as much to those of equal status to Margaret and Agnes, as incidents with poorly behaved and aggressive gentleman demonstrate. The Pastons had to battle three magnates who were trying to claim Paston lands: Robert Hungerford, Lord Moleyns, over Gresham; the duke of Suffolk, over Hellesdon and Drayton, and the duke of Norfolk, over Caister Castle.⁵⁶ These magnates never did the dirty work themselves but rather sent bands of their retainers to do it for them, men who did not scruple to bully even women of gentle status. In his attempt to gain Gresham, Hungerford sent men to forcibly remove Margaret. They broke down the wall of her chamber and dragged her from it. Margaret fled to Sustead, where Hungerford sent Walter Barow, a squire, and others to speak with her. Rather than be admitted to the house to see her, however, 'they abedyn styl wyth-owt the gates, and [she] kam owth to hem and spak wyth hem wyth-owt, and prayid hem that they wold hold [her] exkused that

⁵³ Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, 'The Religion of the Gentry', pp. 65–66.

⁵⁵ Agnes had one built at Paston in 1445 (*PL*, I, 27–28); there was already one at Caister when Margaret moved in, and John II paid for a priest for her out of his own pocket (*PL*, I, 283).

⁵⁶ See Davis's introduction to *PL*, I, pp. xliii–xlvi.

[she] browth hem not in to the plase'.⁵⁷ She then gave her reason: 'in as meche as thei were nott wele-wylling to the godeman of the plase I wold not take it up-on me to bring hem in to the jantylwoman'.⁵⁸ Because he had been an enemy to her husband, and because he was not trustworthy — she said that she did not trust the promises he made her on this occasion — she considered him a particular threat to the women. Though Barow was a squire, a gentleman, Margaret would not even allow him into the space of the hall, the least private part of the house, because he had not earned it through his behaviour.

The encounters with Herman and Barow demonstrate that admission to the space of the household and access to the women who occupied it were based on trust and courtesy as much as on social class or function. Servants who were of a lower social status were free to interact with the women of the family they served because, as members of the household, they could be trusted. So too could tenants and farmers who demonstrated courtesy.

Margaret was vulnerable to violent and unruly men but, significantly, not those of her regular household or community. The danger came instead in times of trouble from the retainers of local magnates and from the retainers of the Paston men brought into her household as defenders. The lawlessness of the fifteenth century affected the Pastons perhaps more often than others, but their many experiences testify to the kind of violence that became possible during the period. Margaret Paston has become famous amongst late medieval and early modern feminist scholars for ordering crossbows and poleaxes to defend Gresham when it was under attack. Inevitably this evidence is used to claim that women could fully take on the responsibilities of their absent husbands as heads of the household.⁵⁹ Yet Margaret quite explicitly recognizes that her gender rendered her particularly vulnerable and a less than entirely adequate defender. Before being dragged from Gresham, she heard rumour that Hungerford's men meant to 'plukk [her] out of here howse'.⁶⁰ When one of Hungerford's retainers asked her to have her men lay aside their 'wyfeles and [...] jackes', she refused, saying that they were a precaution until John came home. She also heard that the men of the duke of Suffolk had boasted that they would enter her house at Hellesdon to drag her out of it.⁶¹ She states in a letter to John I that she believed the duke's men were being much

⁵⁷ *PL*, I, 229.

⁵⁸ *PL*, I, 229.

⁵⁹ Salih, 'At Home; Out of the House', p. 129; Saunders, 'Women and Warfare'.

⁶⁰ *PL*, II, 30.

⁶¹ *PL*, II, 313.

bolder in their actions because he was in prison and not himself present to defend his estate.⁶²

In these times of trouble, moreover, manor houses like Gresham and Hellesdon could not accommodate an expanded household for their defense, but the higher status Caister Castle was built for the purpose. And during this expansion of the household, when men who were not Margaret's servants were lodged within the house, she did feel threatened. John II seems to have recognized this possibility. When he gathered men to defend Caister against the duke of Norfolk, he wrote to her that they were 'sadde and wel advised men', and of one that 'he is no brawlere, but ful of cortesy'.⁶³ It is clear that he felt he needed to justify his choices, and again we see that 'cortesy' was expected. No matter how John perceived these men, however, Margaret remained sceptical of them. She wrote to John:

ye wote wele that I haue ben affrayd there be-fore this tyme [...]. And I can not wele gide ner rewle sodyour, and also thei set not be a woman as thei shuld set be a man. Therfore I wold ye shuld send home your brothere or Dawbenye [...], for if I were there wyth-ought I had the more saddere or wurchepfull persones abought me, and there comyn a meny of knavys and prevaylled in there entent, it shuld be to me but a vylney.⁶⁴

The men she feared were not of her household and would have thus been strangers to her. Several were soldiers from Calais or were in the service of nobles not based in East Anglia: among these were a French man and a German man. Some were servants of John II and John III, but they seem to have not been connected with Margaret, though there were also many local men, including ones from Mautby, who Margaret undoubtedly would have known.⁶⁵ Though she would have known some of them, Margaret clearly felt unsafe sharing the space of her home with men who, not being members of her household, she could not trust to be 'wurchepfull'. At Caister, Margaret clearly did not feel like an adequate replacement, if only for the simple reason that the soldiers, friends and retainers of her sons, would not respect her in the way they would their male masters: 'thei set not be a woman as thei shuld [...] be a man'. Kate Mertes states that householders generally appointed single men rather than married ones, perhaps because they

⁶² *PL*, I, 304.

⁶³ *PL*, I, 398.

⁶⁴ *PL*, I, 335.

⁶⁵ Richmond, *The Paston Family: Eastolf's Will*, pp. 194–95.

were aware of the dangers of unoccupied men to women.⁶⁶ This may or may not have been true for larger noble households. In the case of the Paston household, the 'single men' who regularly occupied the house did not present the threat: Margaret mixed freely with them and never expressed any apprehension of danger from them. The threat only arrived when men from outside the household, whom Margaret could not trust, arrived.

While Gresham, Hellesdon, and Drayton were more vulnerable to attack than Caister, it is clear that Caister is the place where Margaret felt unsafe in what was ostensibly her own home. It is difficult to say whether the architectural program at Caister propagated or reacted to this vulnerability, but it is clear that the higher status architecture of the castle involved segregation of female occupants that the lower status architecture of Giffords — and presumably the manor houses that Margaret actually occupied — did not. Like the royal abodes of Gilchrist's studies, Caister was built for two households, having two halls and sets of living quarters. The bigger of the two, the great hall, was quite clearly meant to be a masculine space. It was decorated with armor, weapons, and a tapestry depicting the siege of Falaise, at which Fastolf fought.⁶⁷ The so-called winter hall occupied a second story and has not survived, but it is conjectured to have been next to the great tower where Millicent Fastolf probably lived.⁶⁸ It was decorated with an arras of the 'Morysch daunce', and, if the location has been identified correctly, it also had a small sculpture occupying a recess next to the entrance to the tower that had Fastolf's armorial achievements on one side and his arms impaling his wife's on the other.⁶⁹ This decoration is certainly more gender-neutral than that of the great hall and suggests Millicent's occupation in its inclusion of her arms and its concern with dynastic identity, in which women could have as great a role as men.⁷⁰ The decorative program suggests that it was not just the winter hall but

⁶⁶ Mertes, *The English Noble Household*, p. 58.

⁶⁷ *PL*, II, 108–09. Also see Gairdner, *The Paston Letters*, p. 487: the main inventories were taken while it was still occupied by Fastolf (pp. 475–90). Oxford, Magdalene College, Falstoff Paper 43 is another inventory of the same date which differs only slightly from the one printed by Gairdner and is included in a summary table of the rooms of Caister in Woolgar, *The Great Household*, Table 5, but another inventory made by John Paston shows that the furnishings were still the same when he had possession (*PL*, II, 107–14).

⁶⁸ Barnes and Simpson, 'Caister Castle', p. 43.

⁶⁹ Barnes and Simpson, 'Caister Castle', p. 37.

⁷⁰ It was certainly so for the Fastolf's. Millicent Fastolf brought to the marriage her Tiptoft inheritance, a family socially superior to Fastolf's, and so increased Fastolf's status from the minor gentry: McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', p. 103.

a hall for the use of the female element in the household.⁷¹ Margaret may have used the great hall, but its strong evocation of the exclusively masculine domain of war and nonexistent acknowledgement of a female presence might have made it a more difficult place for Margaret to assert her authority than that at Giffords.

The architectural program, in addition to excluding female presence in the great hall, seems to locate women in one of its two towers. Caister was not well-fortified: its towers were therefore much more likely to have a social function, like those at the more famous Bodiam Castle in Sussex.⁷² Caister's builder, like Bodiam's, was a soldier who had made a fortune and married well. He was upwardly mobile, as were the Pastons when they acquired the castle. The castle's towers, like many built in the fifteenth century, were primarily statements of their owner's new status and wealth.⁷³ And it is in one of these towers that Millicent Fastolf's suite of rooms was most likely located. The presence of fireplaces and garderobes certainly suggests that it provided high-status accommodation, and its only access was through the hall that seems to have been decorated with her in mind. The other tower in the inner court was called the 'treasury' and functioned as offices and storage for Fastolf's valuables.⁷⁴ It did not contain his suite of rooms. It is possible to suggest a correlation between a wife and important papers and valuable goods: all precious things which need to be protected. It seems that Gilchrist's supposition of the valuable lady in her tower is proven correct in this instance.

There is no reason to doubt that when Margaret Paston moved into Caister, she took over the rooms that had once belonged to the lady of the house. We can conjecture, then, that Margaret lived in the tower, which would, according to the principles of access analysis, make her inaccessible, yet she clearly was not. Simply because her sleeping quarters were in the tower does not mean she never left it, nor does it mean that people were not admitted to her rooms. Undoubtedly, her male and female personal servants were admitted, but visitors of any status, provided they behaved properly, may have been too. At Caister, however, her position seems to have been particularly tenuous: by day, she had to adapt in order to

⁷¹ There is the possibility that the two halls existed so that one could be occupied by the lord and his family and another by high status visitors, as at Bolton and Goodrich Castles (Faulkner, 'Castle Planning', pp. 221–30), but it seems that the lodge positioned outside the main castle was meant to be accommodation for high-status visitors (Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 58).

⁷² See Turner, 'Bodiam, Sussex'.

⁷³ See Turner, 'Bodiam, Sussex', for a general discussion of this phenomenon.

⁷⁴ Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, p. 59.

function as head of the household within the very masculine space of the hall, but ultimately she was still a woman who retired to her chambers within the protection of the tower.

Margaret ultimately stayed only a short time at Caister, opting instead to retire to her ancestral home at Mautby. I want to suggest that this is because she recognized the particular gender ideology represented in the architectural program at Caister, which saw greater vulnerability and reduced authority, both perhaps necessitating increased seclusion, for women. I suggest that the lower-status gentry's ideology, borne out in its manor houses, was more commiserate with Margaret's preference. In the final years of her life, Margaret's family had moved up the social chain, but she was presented with a choice. She quite clearly chose to remain in an environment — correlating to both the class ideology and its corresponding architectural program — that acknowledged and fostered female mobility and authority. This choice was also reflected in her decision not to establish a completely separate household from her sons after her husband's death, as widows of the nobility and greater gentry were wont to do,⁷⁵ and which she could easily have afforded. She did maintain her own household servants and those servants of her natal family's estates,⁷⁶ but she also continued to use those old trusted members of her husband's household who remained in her sons' service, her own household rather informally blending with her sons'.

Margaret certainly stakes out an identity separate from the upwardly mobile one of her male family members, but she reverts to the very established class identity of her natal family. Nevertheless, it is highly significant that she makes this decision. It suggests that she did not view her material world as given or 'objective', that she did in fact question to some extent the logic of the practices dictated by an aristocratic habitus. And while documentary evidence shows that architecture can only set out rules, not dictate behaviour, Margaret's situation proves that through its establishment of a normative ideology, domestic architecture could profoundly affect the experiences of those living in it.

The Pastons are unique, not least because they have left such a wealth of documentary evidence of their lives. They cannot, without caution, be taken to represent their peers. How exactly to define their peers is in fact still under debate, but they were certainly easily distinguished from the nobility, often, it seems, through their own choice. At Giffords, Mautby, or Paston, a gender ideology of greater female accessibility and more possibility of greater female authority oper-

⁷⁵ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Richmond, 'Landlord and Tenant', pp. 20–30.

ated. Nevertheless, the greater gentry did mingle with the nobility, and some, like Fastolf and the builder of Bodiam, did much to emulate their superiors, including espousing an architectural program that ostensibly secluded women. The upwardly mobile Pastons never amassed the wealth for such a building program, but they were quick to take the opportunity of acquiring its results. We are lucky to see them at the transitional stage, from greater gentry to the greatest of gentry families: they eventually became earls of Yarmouth in the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ The Paston men fought hard to gain Caister, and Margaret was there at every step. Still, it is curious that she only stayed there for a short while after it was finally securely gained, choosing instead to retire to her ancestral home at Mautby. She may have recognized the importance of Caister to the family's status and legacy. But perhaps she also recognized that her own interests were better met at a place like Giffords, where she could enjoy her own natal family's long established good standing while avoiding the more restrictive ideology represented in the architecture of a place like Caister.

Colin Richmond has shown how the Pastons intersected with the most notorious, and perhaps the most well-known, literary figure of the fifteenth century, Thomas Malory, contending that Malory's and the Pastons' shared world of Arthurian and chivalric ideals and concerns explicitly informed Malory's *Morte Darthur*.⁷⁸ The Pastons were certainly invested in this world: John II owned a 'Grete Boke' that was filled with descriptions of tournaments and ceremonies and tracts on war and governance, and he took place in a tournament alongside Edward IV. Richmond remarks that Malory and the Paston brothers knew that 'life was not straightforward' and that 'Literature had been a mirror to reflect that since at least the twelfth century'.⁷⁹ But he also notes that the Pastons, as well as the king of England, sometimes took courses that were patently not chivalric. They had choices. Nevertheless, in Richmond's words, the Paston brothers 'had [...] romance in them'.⁸⁰ But did the Paston women? Diane Watt argues that Margaret's oft-criticized homely style was a deliberate choice, that though she received letters employing courtly rhetoric from her sons, and so was well familiar with it, she felt a plain style to be appropriate for herself.⁸¹ So far as her writing style was concerned, then, Margaret had options: but regardless of how

⁷⁷ See Davis's introduction to *PL*, I, p. lii.

⁷⁸ Richmond, 'Thomas Malory and the Pastons'.

⁷⁹ Richmond, 'Thomas Malory and the Pastons', p. 204.

⁸⁰ Richmond, 'Thomas Malory and the Pastons', p. 206.

⁸¹ Watt, "No Writing for Writing's Sake".

we might consider social constructs constraining, writing (its mode, though perhaps not the resources to do it in the first place) is not constrained by an already present material reality. Negotiating the built environment, on the other hand, is. It seems possible that historical aristocratic women did experience forced seclusion as their romance counterparts did (Eleanor of Aquitaine's imprisonment by Henry II is an example, though a particularly extraordinary one). But it is also likely that a large number of female readers in the later Middle Ages would neither have identified with nor wished to occupy the position, spatial or social, of many of the aristocratic women depicted in romance. Indeed, their reading of romance may have done for gentry women what literature still does for contemporary readers: that is, allow them to experience another place and time and actively engage it, as they must have done their architectural surroundings, in reflecting on their own lives.

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A PLACE OF 'LONG-LASTING EVIL AND UNHAPPINESS': RÆDWALD'S EAST ANGLIA IN BEDE'S *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*

Joseph Grossi

The Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* is concerned to promote Christian orthodoxy, and to this end its teleological historiography envisages religious cohesion among the various kingdoms of England.¹ Often at odds, however, with this centripetal view of the English people gradually coalescing around a single English church was the evidence of centrifugal kingdoms pursuing strictly material ends. Of these various *prouvinciae*, Bede

¹ This sentence and the one that follows it owe much to Alan Thacker's insight that Bede 'sought to chart how the English became part of the universal Church and to establish their particular role in the economy of salvation' ('Bede and History', p. 172); to George Hardin Brown's observation that 'the main aim of the whole work [i.e. the *Historia ecclesiastica*] is to expound the development of God's plan for the English as a chosen people and the development of one unified Church in a violent and feuding land' (*A Companion to Bede*, p. 106); and to Walter Goffart's pronouncement that the *Historia* is 'a tale of origins framed dynamically as the Providence-guided advance of a people from heathendom to Christianity' (*The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 235).

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Abstract: The seventh-century kingdom of the East Angles threatened the pan-English Christian unification envisaged by Bede in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Rædwald first raised East Anglia over its neighbours, but his pagan and Christian altars scandalized the monastic historian and prompted him to demonize that king and, by extension, the whole East Anglian *gens* during his reign. The region was tainted with spiritual evil until the mid- to late seventh-century conversion efforts of Kings Eorpwold, Sigeberht and Anna and the missionary initiatives they sponsored. Bede trumpets these subsequent glories to prove to his readers, and likely to convince himself, that the religious ambivalence long characteristic of East Anglia had ceased to be a guiding political imperative in a fully Christianized England.

Keywords: Anglo-Saxon literature, Anglo-Latin literature, early English history, regional identity, Venerable Bede, early English kings, East Anglia.

offers us no real cartographic picture;² yet their distinct identities can be inferred from his accounts of kings, queens, and prelates, from their political as well as their religious activities.³ If there was one kingdom that initially posed the greatest danger to Bede's long-hoped-for English ecclesiastical unification, that kingdom was East Anglia. Its ruler Rædwald and, thanks to his influence, the whole East Anglian *gens* became scapegoats in the *Historia* for what in reality had been a complex intermingling of the Germanic cultural heritage with newer Christian religious practices throughout England.⁴ Although he acknowledges this complexity elsewhere,⁵ Bede aims to persuade his readers that Rædwald's efforts to synthesize paganism with Christianity had been uniquely perverse among the English and had caused such depravity in East Anglia that the later spiritual triumphs of Bishop Felix, St Fursa, and St Æthelthryth urgently needed to be brought to the fore to prove that the district's diabolical possession under Rædwald had safely receded into the background of history. In order to show that the English 'nation' and Church had successfully joined the larger world of Roman Christianity, Bede demonizes early East Anglia, literally associating it with devils, and then effects its historiographical exorcism, lest the kingdom's influence keep all England in that remote *angulus* to which it was sometimes relegated by medieval Continental writers and mapmakers.⁶

² On the non-visual nature of Anglo-Saxon ideas of place, see Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, pp. 6–7; Howe, 'An Angle on This Earth', esp. pp. 6–8, repr. in Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 4–6; Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, pp. 6–10 and *passim*; Hiatt, 'Beowulf off the Map', pp. 18–19. Hiatt's use of the term 'chorography' has informed my own in what follows.

³ Early Anglo-Saxon identities are far more complex than what Bede's book or my essay can disclose. See Hamerow, Hinton, and Crawford, *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* especially but by no means exclusively, the essays in Section I, 'Anglo-Saxon Identity: Ethnicity, Culture, and Genes' (pp. 3–116). Literary and material intersections are explored with characteristic richness by Hines, 'Literary Sources and Archaeology', in the same volume. On early medieval *ethnic* identities, see Pohl, 'Ethnic Names and Identities', p. 13 and, for the English context, Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*.

⁴ My use of 'scapegoat' is indebted in a general way to Northrop Frye's '*pharmakos*, or scapegoat', the 'sacrificial victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others', 'the human symbol that concentrates our fears and hates': Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 41, 148, 45.

⁵ Though severe in his orthodoxy, Bede deployed a range of approaches when dealing with pagans and incompletely converted Christians: see, e.g., Barrow, 'How Coifi Pierced Christ's Side'; O'Brien, 'A Quotation from Origin's *Homilies on Leviticus*'; and Giacco, 'Exegesis and Sermon', esp. pp. 26 and 28.

⁶ On Bede's awareness of the tropes of Rome as centre and Britain as periphery, see Howe, 'An Angle on This Earth', esp. pp. 9–12, and Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*,

Bede's depiction of East Anglia resembles his accounts of other kingdoms in so far as it derives from written texts and trustworthy oral reports.⁷ Lists of names figure among his source texts, and it is in part to this kind of seemingly unprepossessing but vitally important written documentation that the *Historia's* textual chorography of East Anglia owes its form.⁸ One such list famously names the Continental Saxons, Angles, and Jutes and traces their settlements in England, thus situating the East Angles within a wider Insular and Germanic context.⁹ Two others which receive extended treatment in this essay respectively name regional rulers who wielded *imperium*, or 'overlordship',¹⁰ and record the geneal-

pp. 104–11. My use of Thietmar of Merseburg's word *angulus* to describe Britain is indebted to the discussion of Thietmar and the *mappamundi* in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.v in Howe, 'An Angle on This Earth', esp. p. 12. Cf. Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, pp. 142–60. Pohl similarly comments on Widukind's reference in the *Res gestae saxonicae* to Britain's location 'in angulo [...] maris': Pohl, 'Ethnic Names and Identities', p. 17.

⁷ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, 'Praefatio', pp. 2–7, Latin text and English translation on even-numbered and odd-numbered pages respectively. Hereafter this edition will be cited parenthetically as *HE*.

⁸ Recent studies of the important literary and political uses of the list genre in early medieval England include Stodnick, "Old Names of Kings or Shadows"; Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*; Yorke, 'The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship', pp. 85–86. My essay acknowledges its many debts *passim*, but one that must be recorded here is to Stodnick's chapter, including her analytical overview of the scholarship on lists (including Howe's *Old English Catalogue Poems*) on pp. 110, 120–26, and her claim that 'decontextualized' medieval lists presuppose their readers' active contextualization of content (pp. 110, 121, 123, adapting the work of Robert Belknap, Howe, and Jack Goody).

⁹ '[D]e Anglis, hoc est de illa patria quae Angulus dicitur, et [...] inter prouincias Iutarum et Saxonum perhibetur, Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merci, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenies, id est illarum gentium quae ad boream Humbri fluminis inhabitant, ceterique Anglorum populi sunt orti' (from the country of the Angles, that is, the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber) as well as the other Anglian tribes): *HE* I. 15, pp. 50–51.

¹⁰ On Bede's term for 'overlordship', rendered later in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as *bretwealda* (more commonly *brytenwealda*, 'overlord' or 'wide ruler'), see esp. Colgrave and Mynors in *HE*, p. 150 n. 1; Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History'*, pp. 58–59, 220–22; Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*'; Wormald, 'The Age of Bede and Aethelbald' (pp. 73, 99–100); Campbell's essay in the same volume, 'The First Christian Kings', pp. 53–54; Campbell, 'Secular and Political Contexts', pp. 27–28; Fanning, 'Bede, *Imperium*, and the *Bretwaldas*'; Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, pp. 17–20; Keynes, 'Rædwald the Bretwalda'; Higham, *An English Empire*, pp. 185–200; Yorke, 'The *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of Overlordship'; Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, pp. 5–6, 27, 48.

ogy of the East Anglian kings in particular. Walter Pohl has characterized the lists as 'a rather opaque piece of ethnic rhetoric'; but underneath their seeming opacity, and precisely because of their rhetorical character, these documents reveal the East Angles and their neighbours to have been 'kingdoms [that] were certainly the foci of politically meaningful ethnic identities'.¹¹

In Bede's famous *imperium*-list, Rædwald of East Anglia appears as but one especially powerful ruler among several who held *imperium* for a time (his regnal dates being uncertain¹²) over all the English peoples living south of the River Humber:

Nam primus imperium huiusmodi Aelli rex Australium Saxonum; secundus Caelin rex Occidentalium Saxonum, qui lingua ipsorum Ceaulin uocabatur; tertius, ut diximus, Aedilberct rex Cantuariorum; quartus Redwald rex Orientalium Anglorum, qui etiam uiuente Aedilbercto eidem suae genti ducatum praebebat, obtenuit; quintus Aeduini rex Nordanhymbrorum gentis, id est eius quae ad borealem Humbrae fluminis plagam inhabitat[.]

(The first king to hold the like sovereignty was Ælle, king of the South Saxons; the second was Cælin, king of the West Saxons, known in their own language as Ceawlin; the third, as we have said, was Æthelberht, king of Kent; the fourth was Redwald, king of the East Angles, who, while Æthelberht was still alive, acted as the military leader of his own people; the fifth was Edwin, king of the Northumbrians, the nation inhabiting the district north of the Humber (*HE* II. 5, pp. 148–49).)¹³

Despite vigorous debate over its nature, scholars at least agree that 'overkingship' existed, and most hold that even if its political status and geographical reach were never codified, *imperium* was neither Bede's coinage nor a purely notional or honorific title.¹⁴ Even Simon Keynes concedes that 'all of the kings may have been

¹¹ Pohl, 'Ethnic Names and Identities', pp. 13, 14; cf. Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, pp. 40, 44.

¹² '(?–616/627)', in Campbell, 'The First Christian Kings', p. 53; '(ante AD 600–c. 625)' in Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, p. 28.

¹³ In this quotation I replace Colgrave and Mynors's translation of Bede's remarks on Rædwald with the translation proposed by Wormald and Charles-Edwards (*Addenda*, p. 222). For discussion, see below.

¹⁴ As regards the list of 'overlords', however, its form if not its content may have been crafted by Bede himself rather than being inherited by him from his sources; thus Yorke, 'The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship', p. 85. Yorke concedes (n. 21) that Keynes and Higham go further than she does by suggesting that the *imperium*-list's content too may have been Bede's idea. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, notes that 'Bede's list of overkings or Bretwaldas occurs in a context of Canterbury material and has Kentish sensitivities. I should imagine that the

important figures in their different ways, and they were certainly important to Bede.¹⁵ *Imperium* apparently connoted 'far-flung rule' rather than 'mere rule',¹⁶ though owing to its temporariness it must also have evoked the mutability of any one kingdom's ascendancy.¹⁷

Southumbrian *imperium* passed from Kent to East Anglia in the first place because the mere fact of Æthelberht's Christianity had not sufficed to keep the pagan tributary king Rædwald content as Æthelberht's *subregulus*.¹⁸ Modern scholars have shown that Rædwald's rise against his overlord's power was a political act.¹⁹ Bede, however, was disturbed by its implications for religion because it slowed 'the transition from pagan to Christian among the Anglo-Saxons' that he intended should seem 'inevitable'.²⁰ Indeed, as Nicholas Higham observes, any 'recognition' by Bede of the success of pagan kings would have 'posed a serious threat to his fundamental message concerning the relationship between the English and God'.²¹ Yet Rædwald's achievement may have imperilled Bede's message even more than this astute insight acknowledges.

The question hinges on a well-known passage within the excerpt from the *Historia* provided above. Higham, following Nicholas Brooks and Patrick

list reached Bede from Canterbury and was not put together by himself from assorted scraps of information' (p. 58). Cf. Fanning, 'Bede, *Imperium*, and the Bretwaldas', pp. 24–25.

¹⁵ Keynes, 'Rædwald the Bretwaldas', p. 115.

¹⁶ Fanning, 'Bede, *Imperium*, and the Bretwaldas', p. 15; cf. pp. 17, 19, and 25. Fanning questions the extent of the overlords' dominion but not its reality. Cf. John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 18–19; Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 116; Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 43–46, responding to the scepticism voiced by Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*'.

¹⁷ 'The kingdoms of Bede's England,' Kirby observes, 'had evolved over a long time and continued to do so. The geography of power was in an almost continuous state of flux as more powerful principalities assimilated weaker neighbours': Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁸ On this and related terms in Bede, see Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, pp. 85–98, 132, and Loyn, 'Kings, Gesiths and Thegns', pp. 75–76.

¹⁹ For example, Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 64–68; Higham, *An English Empire*, pp. 192, 194; Church, 'Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 177–78; Pestell, 'Paganism in Early-Anglo-Saxon East Anglia' (p. 69; citing Church's essay in n. 12); and Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, pp. 28–29.

²⁰ With regard to HE i. 22, Howe writes that '[t]he matter of conversion completes the migration myth by making the transition from pagan to Christian among the Anglo-Saxons seem inevitable': Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, p. 69.

²¹ Higham, *An English Empire*, pp. 184–85.

Wormald, prefers a translation of it that has “Rædwald [...] conceding leadership in war of his own people even during the lifetime of Æthelberht”.²² This translation erases Rædwald’s influence before 616 by suggesting that the East Anglian ruler was content to stand in Æthelberht’s shadow.²³ By contrast, the rendering that Wormald later proposed with Thomas Charles-Edwards in the *Addenda* to Wallace-Hadrill’s historical commentary, *Bede’s ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’*, favours a more active role for Rædwald pre-616. They justify it as follows:

Bede is not saying that his people had the leadership over other peoples given to them by Redwald, as Colgrave would have it, but simply that Redwald led his own people in war. Since Redwald was king of the East Angles, and kings were meant to lead in war, this may seem a grossly redundant thing for Bede to have said. The implication must be, however, that the holder of the *imperium* over the southern English would have been expected to exercise military leadership, *ducatus*, over the East Angles and the other southern English peoples.²⁴

In Wormald and Charles-Edwards’s version, Rædwald indulges his expansionist desire and makes a name for himself at the expense of Æthelberht, his Christian overlord. Bede thus condemns him and his spiritually harmful governance because, as the revised translation suggests, Rædwald rebelled against Christian kingship ‘while Æthelberht was still alive’ and thus launched his *provincia*’s resistance to Canterbury at a very early juncture. Eventually, in the mid-seventh century, East Anglia along with Kent would recognize that archbishopric’s spir-

²² Higham, *An English Empire*, pp. 58, 192.

²³ Higham, in *An English Empire*, defends this controversial translation by claiming, plausibly enough, that Bede sought to preserve Æthelberht’s reputation and diminish Rædwald’s, and by noting that ‘Nicholas Brooks and Patrick Wormald preferred [this] meaning’ (p. 58). Higham oversimplifies, however, when (on p. 213 n. 70) he advises his readers to consult, ‘[f]or discussion of this translation’, not only Brooks’s and Wormald’s arguments along these lines but also those of Charles-Edwards (*Addenda*, pp. 220–22) and Keynes (Keynes, ‘Rædwald the Bretwaldas’, pp. 106–07). Although Charles-Edwards and Keynes carefully acknowledge the merits of the Brooks rendering used by Higham, both Wormald and Charles-Edwards together arrived at a different translation, discussed in what follows, and one approved by Keynes for reasons that are at least as persuasive as Higham’s (p. 107). Other scholars who favour the Wormald and Charles-Edwards version include Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, pp. 17, 42; Yorke, ‘The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship’, p. 83 and n. 9; Church, ‘Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England’, p. 177 and n. 76; Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Addenda*, p. 221.

itual primacy;²⁵ but Wormald and Charles-Edwards's wording implies that the corrupting influence of Rædwald preceded the term of his *imperium* and underpinned East Anglia's rise to Southumbrian hegemony.²⁶

Rædwald's precocious assertiveness contrasts all the more strikingly with his notorious ambivalence in religion and with the less often remarked ambiguity of his masculinity. Whether acting nobly or not, the king is usually shown to be in thrall to his queen. In *HE* II. 12 (pp. 174–83), for example, Bede provides a narrative that supplements the *imperium*-list by explaining the background to Rædwald's overlordship. The East Anglian king had helped the exiled Deiran prince Edwin to wrest the Northumbrian throne from the Bernician claimant Æthelfrith, from whose persecution Edwin had been obliged to flee. Æthelfrith discovered his flight, however, and plied Rædwald with offers of money, followed by threats, to make him hand over the refugee. Rædwald changed his mind,²⁷ but the East Anglian queen intervened: “reuocauit eum illa ab intentione, ammonens quia nulla ratione conueniat tanto regi amicum suum optimum in necessitate positum auro uendere, immo fidem suam, quae omnibus ornamentis pretiosior est, amore pecuniae perdere” (she dissuaded [Rædwald] from it, warning him that it was in no way fitting for so great a king to sell his best friend for gold when he was in such trouble, still less to sacrifice his own honour, which is more precious than any ornament, for the love of money (*HE* II. 12, pp. 180–81)). Thus schooled by his wife, Rædwald assisted Edwin and fought against and killed Æthelfrith, losing his own son, Regenhere, who had joined the fray. Where the *imperium*-list notes Rædwald's military success against Æthelberht, the narrative in *HE* II. 12 illuminates the queen's altruistic counsel underlying that success. Rædwald is shown meriting *imperium* because he had helped the desperate Edwin to win the Northumbrian crown; but it is the queen who — for the

²⁵ In the time of Bishop Thomas, consecrated by Archbishop Honorius in 647, ‘East Anglia was the only kingdom outside Kent which acknowledged the authority of Canterbury. East Anglian contact with Canterbury was never broken’: Whitelock, ‘The Pre-Viking Age Church’, p. 8. Cf. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 66. This vital link between the two districts helps to explain Bede's anger at Rædwald, who had threatened to dissolve an English religious ‘unity’ that in fact had barely begun.

²⁶ Building on work by Barbara Yorke, Church speculates that Rædwald's influence retarded the conversion of Essex, Kent, and Northumbria: Church, ‘Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England’, pp. 177–78 and n. 78.

²⁷ ‘Qui uel minis fractus uel corruptus muneribus cessit deprecanti, et siue occidere se Eduinum seu legatariis tradere promisit’ ([He], being either weakened by [Æthelfrith's] threats or corrupted by his bribes, yielded to his request and promised either to slay Edwin or to give him up to the messengers (*HE* II. 12, pp. 176–77)).

moment — is shown to revive royal ‘honour’ (*fides*) and to obtain prestige for her realm as a land whose leaders keep their oaths. As a place, East Anglia distinguishes itself by fostering the kind of basic ethical propriety that can legitimate violent regional expansion as the precursor to English ecclesiastical unity.

Because East Anglia rose to morally conscientious Southumbrian domination through its anonymous queen, Rosalind Hill is surely right to identify in Rædwald’s ‘nameless and remarkable wife’ that devotion to ‘fidelity’ which, in early Anglo-Saxon England, underpinned one’s loyalty to a secular lord as well as one’s religion, whether pagan or Christian.²⁸ Bede inadvertently memorializes her as East Anglia’s conscience and as the agent of historical change who determined that Rædwald’s military action should raise the kingdom beyond purely local prominence. Rather than being relegated to the background of the textual passage, her counsel appears in the foreground as an irresistible yet laudable ethical force that compels Rædwald to lead the East Anglian dynasty out of its isolated corner of England to pursue the greater good of wide-ranging and, ideally, Christian overlordship. Yet, by not describing the queen’s ethics in terms of religion, Bede temporarily permits a space for East Anglia as an ideologically dualistic polity, poised between Christianity and paganism even as it challenges both Kent and Bernicia.

In comparison to the engaging story of East Anglia’s collaboration with the Deiran house, Bede’s *imperium*-list looks static; this effect, however, may have been intentional. The list organizes kings’ names into a textual monument, an epistemological product that lends itself readily to reception or codification in a variety of contexts without disclosing the complex processes that had shaped the list in the first place. This kind of stasis served Bede’s purposes well because it allowed him to present the wielders of hegemony as a monolithic, uniformly English elite, perhaps by excluding the possibly Frankish roots of *imperium* itself.²⁹ The elite’s members, thus ‘decontextualized’ (to return to Stodnick’s term), are undifferentiated: bound by the sheer similarity of membership in the

²⁸ Hill, ‘Bede and the Boors’, p. 100. Cf. Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, p. 31 (suggesting that the queen may have been responsible for depositing the coin hoard at Sutton Hoo); Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 21, 65–66; Stevenson, ‘Christianity in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Southumbria’, p. 180; and especially Klein, *Ruling Women*, p. 35.

²⁹ Like Stodnick, Howe, and others, Yorke too is sensitive to the ideological usefulness of lists, and suggests that Frankish influence may lie behind the *imperium*-list: Yorke, ‘The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship’, pp. 85–86. Links between the Franks and the East Angles are also discussed by, e.g., Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 65, and Wood, ‘The Franks and Sutton Hoo’.

list, they impart ideological coherence and stability to the very notion of overlordship. It is thus in contrast to this calculated stasis that Bede's account of the cause and circumstances of Rædwald's rise to wide-ranging power is meant to look dynamic. If the *imperium*-list memorializes hegemony as product, Bede's narrative of Rædwald and his queen's liberality illustrates deliberation and dialogue as process, despite the dialogue's being reported second-hand, and despite the possibility that a sympathetic portrait of this royal couple might have vindicated, as a bulwark of virtue and 'fidelity', an East Anglia that instead remained in 'an almost continuous state of flux', much like the rest of England in Kirby's phrasing, and *pace* Bede's assumption of its unified ecclesiastical history.

In the first account of Rædwald and his queen, the 'fidelity' identified by Rosalind Hill as a trait of the latter implicitly extends to East Anglia, because it was this realm's support that enabled Edwin to obtain the kingship of the Northumbrians. Much later, Edwin was killed in battle, and Bede naturally accords him a hagiographical portrayal.³⁰ The Christian Northumbrian ruler and his land are not the focus, however, of the second account of Rædwald and his queen, where Bede this time characterizes them in relation to Æthelberht's Christian Kent. Within this different framework, not fidelity but infidelity comes to mark the East Angles' religious practices. Where Edwin had crossed sacred thresholds in hearing divine counsel and becoming a saint, Rædwald merely straddled a fence, initiating Christian practice in his kingdom but, owing again to his wife's influence, inhibiting it as well.³¹ Whatever agency Rædwald may have sought to exert over the state of religion in East Anglia diminishes with the prestige of his *imperium* when Bede blames the queen for the ambivalence infecting the whole region:

Et quidem pater [Earpualdi] Reduald iamdudum in Cantia sacramentis Christianae fidei inbutus est, sed frustra; nam rediens domum ab uxore sua et quibusdam peruersis doctoribus seductus est, atque a sinceritate fidei deprauatus habuit posteriora peiora prioribus, ita ut in morem antiquorum Samaritanorum et Christo seruire uideretur et diis, quibus antea seruiebat, atque in eodem fano et altare haberet ad sacrificium Christi et arulam ad uictimas daemoniorum. Quod uidelicet fanum rex eiusdem prouinciae Alduulf, qui nostra aetate fuit, usque ad

³⁰ On the Edwin narrative as a 'miracle story', see Lutterkort, 'Beda Hagiographicus', pp. 94–99.

³¹ In summing up his analysis of pagan kings in Bede, Richard North writes that 'Rædwald's lapse is different from the others discussed so far', because the East Anglian king tried to observe pagan and Christian practices without committing himself to either: North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, p. 322.

suum tempus perdurasse, et se in pueritia uidisse testabatur. Erat autem praefatus rex Reduald natu nobilis, quamlibet actu ignobilis, filius Tytili, cuius pater fuit Uuffa, a quo reges Orientalium Anglorum Uuffingas appellant.

(Indeed [Eorpwold's] father Rædwald had long before been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith in Kent, but in vain; for on his return home, he was seduced by his wife and by certain evil teachers and perverted from the sincerity of his faith, so that his last state was worse than his first. After the manner of the ancient Samaritans, he seemed to be serving both Christ and the gods whom he had previously served; in the same temple he had one altar for the Christian sacrifice and another small altar on which to offer victims to devils. Ealdwulf, who was ruler of the kingdom up to our time, used to declare that the temple lasted until his time and that he saw it when he was a boy. Rædwald, who was noble by birth though ignoble in his deeds, was the son of Tytil, whose father was Wuffa, from whom the kings of the East Angles are called Wuffings (*HE* II. 15, pp. 188–91).)

Unlike Edwin, who took ten years to adopt the new religion but then embraced it fully,³² Rædwald had been a Christian *iamdudum* only to yield, without a thought, to his wife and counsellors' influence. The contrast between their conversions could not be starker. Higham has claimed persuasively that Rædwald and his queen's flexible approach to religion resulted from a considered political strategy to preserve traditional culture.³³ One can also attribute to the queen the practical wish to maintain her influence over the religious life of her people. Martin Carver has pointed out that in Scandinavia 'women, key spiritual agents in the pagan period, remained in charge during the conversion process. Only when Christianity became institutionalised within the political process of nation-building did women all over Europe surrender their spiritual authority'.³⁴ Early

³² Uncertainty about Christianity remained his crowning trait long after he became king of Northumbria, as stressed by Lutterkort, 'Beda Hagiographicus', p. 95.

³³ Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 183 (Rædwald was 'the champion of religious conservatism [i.e., paganism] and political orthodoxy in an England already touched by the new Christian monotheism') and p. 205 ('If the traditional [pagan] world was to be fully restored [...] [t]he obvious direction for Rædwald and his *doctores* ['teachers' or 'priests'] to turn was the Baltic littoral whence the English believed, with good cause, that they had originally derived. There lay the heartland of Germanic paganism [...] [and] the fount of English cultural and racial identity'). See too the perspicacious defence of Rædwald's agency in Kilbride, 'Why I Feel Cheated' (pp. 5–8), cited in Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, p. 29. Also relevant is Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, pp. 6, 14–15.

³⁴ Carver, 'Agency, Intellect and the Archaeological Agenda', p. 3. For related insights, see Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, p. 14, citing (n. 23) Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 25–28. Women in pagan Germanic societies were valued for their

East Anglia's dual commitment to Scandinavia and to Rome takes on a gendered character in Bede: the queen showed more backbone than her husband because it may have been her duty to uphold 'spiritual authority' in her domain. Bede's East Anglia thus stands out from the rest of England not because its rulers fell short of the Edwin model of prudent deliberation and delay, and not merely because they remained pagan, but also because the fortitude behind their policy was evinced by a woman who may have stood to lose power under the new dispensation.

Bede reviles this female-orchestrated power for keeping Rædwald and his kingdom in a state of spiritual unregeneracy. Examining Bede's representation of Anglo-Saxon kings (including Rædwald) in their domestic contexts, Stacy Klein compellingly argues that 'increased proximity between husband and wife tends to be associated with apostasy', and that at the very least 'the king's home space and domestic life appear as wholly inadequate sites for fostering spiritual change'.³⁵ Certainly in Bede's East Anglia the queen's resolution contrasts vividly to the king's irresolution both in governance and in conversion. Moreover, when he says that Rædwald had 'in vain' been 'initiated into the mysteries' of the new faith, Bede is not simply employing elegant periphrasis: he is reminding his audience of the public, ritual sacrality of baptism that the East Anglian king had violated in deference to the wishes of his spouse and court circle.³⁶

To be sure, Bede permits Rædwald nothing of the agency that ethnic communities exercise when they define themselves.³⁷ Richard North has pointed out

political counsel as well as for their religious authority: see Klein, *Ruling Women*, pp. 11, 35.

³⁵ Klein, *Ruling Women*, pp. 39–45 (pp. 39, 42). According to North, 'there is neither reaction nor apostasy in this tale' because 'Rædwald's wife and friends did not expel the Christian cult': North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, p. 322. The corrective, however, raises Bede's demonization of Rædwald to that much higher relief. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History'*, p. 76: '[Rædwald] was not hostile to Christianity and not unique in his decision to keep his options open [...]. It is clear that East Anglian paganism was strong enough to resist conversion and possible that the dual-purpose temple was the brave effort of a defeated Christian at a serious form of religious syncretism; but Bede does not give Redwald the benefit of the doubt' (citing Hawkes, 'The Archaeology of Conversion', p. 48, and Diesner, 'Inkarnationsjahre', p. 22).

³⁶ The performative and even 'exorcistic character' of baptism is noted in Dumitrescu, 'Bede's Liberation Philology', p. 49, and sources cited therein.

³⁷ John Hines distinguishes between 'external and self-attributions of identity (a range which includes the analytical attributions produced by modern researchers)' and argues that '[e]thnic identity is a certain form of attributed membership of a group of people. As *attributed*, it is distinctly a product of ideology, although this may be an ideological response to social and economic factors': Hines, 'The Becoming of the English', p. 49 (emphasis in original). Harris, in *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, admirably elucidates the religious agenda

that the words *seductus* and *deprauatus* describe a king who is 'not the subject but the object of heathen activity'.³⁸ Similarly, the participle pairing *inbutus est* [...] *seductus est* underscores Rædwald's passive lordship by juxtaposing his earlier, admirable catechesis with his later about-face.³⁹ Grammatical parallelism underscores ideological collision. Of course, Bede is mainly condemning Rædwald and his court; yet he also, if only secondarily, figures East Anglia as a place where contact between religions assumes polarized form as the clash between baptismal purity and diabolical pollution, the latter evidenced in the king's *arula* (little altar). Whether or not this noun's diminutive ending *-ula* is meant to convey contempt,⁴⁰ the pagan altar puts the monastic historian in mind of demon worship because it sits next to and mocks the Christian *ara* (altar), which Bede, when he later praises Hild's tenure as abbess of Whitby, treats as a synecdoche for the liturgy and for the correct training of the priests in '*altaris officium*' ('the service of the altar' (*HE* iv. 23, pp. 408–11)). Crossing back into pagan East Anglian territory from Æthelberht's Christian Kent, Rædwald traversed a frontier whose physical location goes unremarked, like that of other geopolitical boundaries in the *Historia*, but whose ideological significance marks a spiritual *limes* between the Christian world and that world's implacably evil 'other'.⁴¹ This geographically invisible border becomes tangible in the contact between the *altare* and the *arula*. The latter seems only secondary, but, for Bede, it dominates the temple and

underlying the identities that Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* ascribes to the English *gens* (pp. 45–78).

³⁸ North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, p. 322. John, in *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*, claims that the advising role of the Anglo-Saxon *witan*, or 'wise men', was normally a mere formality and that kings took decisions unilaterally: 'When there appears to be evidence of genuine debate it is unwise to make too much of it' (p. 17). On the other hand, 'Redwald, returning home [from Kent, where he had undergone conversion to Christianity], found his wife and some of his senior *witan* opposed, so he sought a compromise' (p. 29).

³⁹ Noticing sexual connotations in Bede's critique, Klein claims that, both in this passage and in his account of the impiety of Eadbald of Kent, Bede concurs with 'the pervasive formulation within biblical and patristic writings of apostasy as spiritual fornication': Klein, *Ruling Women*, p. 41 (and sources cited on p. 215 n. 57).

⁴⁰ Dorothy Whitelock, in 'The Pre-Viking Age Church', suggests that 'the diminutive is probably contemptuous' (p. 3). To this view Wallace-Hadrill, in *Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History'*, replies that 'it is unclear why the diminutive *arula* should be contemptuous: Redwald meant the pagan altar to be less prominent than his Christian altar' (p. 76). Newton claims that Bede's differentiation between *altare* and *arula* 'is purely rhetorical': Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, p. 16, citing *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum*, ed. by Plummer, II, 60.

⁴¹ Like Bede, Gregory of Tours understood the ideological nature of spatial borders: see Goetz, 'Concepts of Realm and Frontiers', p. 77.

thus the ideological space of the entire kingdom. In these respects, the 'little altar' is not unlike the queen herself.

The 'marriage' between the two altars concentrates Bede's animus towards early East Anglia, mirroring within the temple the royal couple's own precarious symbiosis. Klein regards the couple's fusion of pagan and Christian practices as evidence of the ideological division and political stasis that she perceives in Bede's depiction of royal couples generally who come from different religious backgrounds.⁴² Such stasis would, in any event, be of a different kind from that which suffuses Bede's *imperium*-list; yet the spiritual malaise afflicting East Anglia, thanks to the queen's influence, perhaps reflects neither kind of 'stasis', but rather a worsening of the realm's fortunes since the king's baptism under Æthelberht of Kent. In his scornful aside 'habuit posteriora peiora prioribus' (his last state was worse than his first), Bede adapts Luke 11. 26 to amplify his invective against the East Anglian king's religious dualism,⁴³ which, as scholars have remarked, becomes for Bede an evil worse than thorough-going paganism.⁴⁴ North observes that 'Bede does not forgive Rædwald, comparing him with the Samaritans in a reference to the worship of rightful and unrightful gods' and associating him with the possessed man in Luke 11, from whom an unclean spirit is exorcised only to return to it accompanied by seven more demons.⁴⁵ It may be, however, that Bede is linking Rædwald to the unclean spirit itself rather than to the afflicted man alone. Dismissing as foolish his hecklers' charge that he enlists Beelzebub's aid to drive out demons, Jesus replies that '[o]mne regnum in seipsum divisum desolabitur, et domus supra domum cadet' ([e]very kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall [Luke 11. 17]).⁴⁶ Like the possessed victim whose 'last state' of demonic possession is 'worse than his first', East Anglia is worse off than it had been before Rædwald's conversion; furthermore, it too is a 'kingdom divided against itself'. Its ruler, having permitted

⁴² 'Apparently convinced, or at least intent on convincing his readers, that queens were powerless to effect kingly conversions, Bede consistently figures spiritual division within marriage not as a catalyst for individual or national change but as an inert and static condition to be remedied only by the intercessory efforts of kings, or more typically, churchmen': Klein, *Ruling Women*, p. 43.

⁴³ Colgrave and Mynors note the quotation from Luke 11. 26 (*HE*, p. 190 n. 1).

⁴⁴ See e.g. Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 188; North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, p. 322.

⁴⁵ North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature*, p. 322.

⁴⁶ Quotations from the Bible, here and in n. 47 below, are from the Vulgate and Douay-Rheims versions.

religious dualism, defeated the exorcistic purpose of baptism,⁴⁷ and so introduced 'long-lasting evil and unhappiness' into his realm.⁴⁸

Although Bede would have his readers believe that in seventh-century England only this king and this kingdom had thus tried to reconcile different religious world-views to one another, such an admixture was hardly unique to East Anglia. John Blair adduces the half-heartedness of Rædwald but also the temporary apostasy of the East Saxons and Northumbrians (a point also conceded by Bede) when he argues that in this period 'the skin-deep conversion of a king and his household was a shaky foundation at best'.⁴⁹ Even Kent had not undergone conversion without difficulties.⁵⁰ Æthelberht, who already knew something of Christianity because his Frankish wife Bertha practised it, nevertheless proceeded with caution because, in Bede's report of the Kentish king's speech to Augustine, "Pulchra sunt quidem uerba et promissa quae adfertis; sed quia noua sunt et incerta, non his possum adsensum tribuere relictis eis, quae tanto tempore cum omni Anglorum gente seruauimus" ("The words and the promises you bring are fair enough, but because they are new to us and doubtful, I cannot consent to accept them and forsake those beliefs which I and the whole English race have held so long" (*HE* I. 25)). Carver has gone so far as to question the very notion of conversion, doubting whether in England at this time there were two belief systems so exactly demarcated that they could oblige a king to choose between them.⁵¹ Such misgivings lead him to demur at the use of the familiar term 'syncre-

⁴⁷ See above, n. 36.

⁴⁸ As discussed below, Bede credits St Felix for bringing the East Angles 'a longa iniquitate atque infelicitate' (from long-lasting evil and unhappiness (*HE* II. 15, pp. 190–91)). Bede's rigid dichotomy between Rædwald's long-lived *iniquitas* and its later eradication by Felix recalls Jesus's stern admonition in Luke 11. 23: 'Qui non est mecum, contra me est: et qui non colligit mecum, dispergit' (He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth).

⁴⁹ Blair, 'The Anglo-Saxon Period', p. 77.

⁵⁰ I have Æthelberht in mind, but see Brooks's analysis of the danger which that king's temporarily pagan son Eadbald posed to the Christian mission in Kent: Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 64; cf. Higham, *An English Empire*, pp. 202–04.

⁵¹ Carver prefers 'early medieval ideology' to 'the terms "pagan" and "Christian"', which he judges to be 'imprecise and anachronistic generalisations': Carver, 'Agency, Intellect and the Archaeological Agenda', pp. 14 and 8, respectively. For related caveats, see Pestell, 'Paganism in Early-Anglo-Saxon East Anglia'; Kilbride, 'Why I Feel Cheated'; Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 73–96; and Pluskowski, 'The Archaeology of Paganism' (who, like Petts, cites Kilbride). Hines usefully defines early Anglo-Saxon religion as 'a human response to a perceived but intangible spirit world that coexists with the real and concrete human world': Hines, 'Religion:

tism' to describe Rædwald's religion because it implies that the king amalgamated two world-views out of ignorance.⁵² Bede, of course, propounds vivid antagonism between 'paganism' and 'Christianity', indicts the king and queen for blurring the boundary between the two, and so makes East Anglia stand out as a region in especially dire need of missionary reclamation.

It will be noticed, in the quotation from *HE* I. 25, above, that Bede endows Æthelberht with a voice and a mind — in short, with subjectivity — the implication being that prudence justified hesitation because the king of Kent needed to weigh the implications of a sea change in his court's cultural orientation. By contrast, East Anglia splendidly — and, if we believe Bede, atypically — bungled the process of Christian conversion because Rædwald was 'seduced' by his queen and counsellors' diabolical paganism. The East Anglian king is denied subjectivity, despite the fact that he grows and later diminishes in stature within the inherent dynamism of narrative. A more complex story, however, and one that leaves room for agency and negotiation, emerges from archaeology. Apparently confirming Bede's belief in the existence of 'pagan' temples as such,⁵³ material evidence also suggests that pagan and Christian practices of site consecration may have been in dialogue with each other in sixth- to seventh-century England.⁵⁴ If Rædwald had a *fanum* (temple) built in imitation of Christian sacred architecture, he may have been trying to augment the power of the old faith or ease East Anglia into the new. In any event, the temple reflects agency, an intelligent intervention in the landscape of East Anglian religious belief; yet Bede never considers whether the king and queen's *arula* was intended to accommodate legitimate if evolving

The Limits of Knowledge' (p. 377; Hines also sees 'functional continuity' between Christianity and 'traditional Germanic religion' despite 'profound changes').

⁵² Carver, 'Agency, Intellect and the Archaeological Agenda', p. 7; cf. Kilbride, 'Why I Feel Cheated', p. 8.

⁵³ For example, the shrine at Goodmanham (*HE* II. 13), discussed from an archaeological perspective in Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines', at pp. 22–24, cited (*inter alia*) in Barrow, 'How Coifi Pierced Christ's Side', p. 695 n. 13. Nevertheless, Church has demonstrated that '[Bede] had a model of paganism, inherited from Gregory the Great, the writings of other Fathers of the Church, the Bible, and even the works of pagan authors of the past, according to which paganism was characterized by the worship of idols that were housed in temples presided over by high priests who had responsibility for leading the folk in the worship of their deities': Church, 'Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England', p. 170 (Church's article is also cited in Barrow, 'How Coifi Pierced Christ's Side', p. 694 n. 6). Cf. Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 73–96.

⁵⁴ Hines, 'Religion: The Limits of Knowledge', p. 389; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Pagan Shrines', p. 22; Pluskowski, 'The Archaeology of Paganism', p. 772 (citing Blair).

cultural needs. Nor does he concede that the Christian *altare* makes the temple at least half-Christian: rather, he treats it as wholly pagan. In contradistinction to Æthelberht, and even to obviously ruthless kings like Penda and Cadwalla (*HE* II. 20), Rædwald becomes Bede's scapegoat for the sins of his land,⁵⁵ and ultimately of England, in a process of literary representation that conceals the multifarious interplay between the 'new [...] and doubtful' teachings of the Christian missionaries and the traditional religious wisdom enshrined by the East Anglian dynasty.

East Anglia's semi-pagan temple seems to have persisted amidst efforts by Eorpwold, Sigeberht, Bishop Felix, Fursa, and Anna, and possibly Æthelthryth and Seaxburh, to restore the kingdom *in sinceritatem fidei*.⁵⁶ Did Bede fear that the work of conversion was unfinished, despite his own evidence to the contrary? His indignation, along with the survival of the half-pagan, half-Christian shrine into Ealdwulf's day, suggest that even Rædwald's illustriously Christian successors only gradually purged the realm of its ancestral taint. Even the use of the East Anglian royal genealogy in *HE* II. 15 perhaps shows Bede detracting from East Anglia's lustre rather than adding to it when he contrasts the *natu nobilis* of his villain to his *actu ignobilis*.⁵⁷ According to Higham, '[t]he literary device is a subtle one and far from accidental, serving to separate Rædwald as an individual from the inherent nobility which (as Bede was keen to emphasise) was the general condition of his dynasty'.⁵⁸ But the contrast between the half-pagan Rædwald and his thoroughly pagan forebears is itself more subtle than it appears. With the

⁵⁵ Bede also condemns the brothers Osric and Eanfrid, kings of Deira and Bernicia, who apostatized from Christianity (III. 1), but he does not use them to characterize all Northumbria. 'These reigns were short and came to a bloody end, so they posed no threat to the dynamics of Bede's Christian message' (Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 185). This distinction between Northumbria and individual Northumbrians further confirms Walter Goffart's thesis that 'Bede's interest in other kingdoms and in Canterbury is genuine, but subordinate to his narrower homeland': Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 240. Cf. Harrison, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, pp. 69–77. His distance from East Anglia may have made it easier for Bede to paint events there in broad strokes; as a result, Rædwald's dual religiosity becomes a disorder characterizing the whole kingdom.

⁵⁶ Some support for this claim may be inferred from Stevenson, 'Christianity in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Southumbria', p. 182; Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, p. 36; Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, pp. 15, 17; Hoggett, *East Anglian Conversion*, p. 29. With regard to St Botolph, active at Iken in Suffolk but ignored by Bede, see Hoggett, *East Anglian Conversion*, pp. 47–51, 165; Whitelock, 'The Pre-Viking Age Church', pp. 2, 10–12.

⁵⁷ The following argument is inspired by the analysis of the form and function of royal genealogies in Stodnick, "Old Names of Kings or Shadows".

⁵⁸ Higham, *An English Empire*, p. 189.

phrase *natu nobilis*, Bede is referring only to the mere fact of Rædwald's birth in a royal line; he is not explicitly saying one thing or another about that line's 'general condition'. Such information belongs instead to a mass of unrecorded lore that this genealogy and the earlier *imperium*-list leave out in order to impart to their contents the 'constructed continuity' that Walter Pohl discerns in 'the rudimentary but highly structured narratives of genealogies'.⁵⁹ As in the *imperium*-list, so too in the naming of Rædwald, Tytil, and Wuffa among the 'Wuffings', continuity offers readers a finished historical product which obscures the processes that brought it into being. Unlike the *imperium*-list, the East Anglian royal genealogy enables Bede to locate Rædwald's place in history longitudinally, in relation to predecessor kings within the same kingdom, rather than laterally, alongside rulers from other *prouinciae*. This new context simultaneously memorializes and diminishes the dynasty by associating it with the *pharmakos* singled out in Bede's ideological exorcism of East Anglia. Stodnick has observed that 'when they are put into writing, lists "acquire a generalized, decontextualized authority" of their own and begin to generate their own systems of categorization'.⁶⁰ If this is so, then Bede in *HE* II. 15 may be trying to manipulate this process. The East Anglian regnal list was originally intended to preserve 'constructed continuity' in general and East Anglia's past in particular; by insinuating his exegesis of Rædwald as a new context for that list, Bede turns the genealogy into the very means of unravelling that kingdom's integrity so as to enhance the continuity of his own moralization. At the very least, the juxtaposition of Rædwald with his ancestors recalls the diatribe against the pagan-Christian temple: in both strategies, Bede figures the East Anglian royal *gens* as an ideologically hybrid people and counters this hybridity with an approach that grafts his own 'external attribution' of East Anglian identity onto the 'self-attributed' identity provided in the list of kings.⁶¹ The effect is in keeping with Bede's broader effort to grant East Anglia a place on England's spiritual terrain, but on the wrong side of a textual dyke between paganism and Christianity that Bede himself has engineered.

Of course, the kingdom later witnessed resounding triumphs for the new faith that would seem to have made amends for Rædwald's obstructionism.⁶²

⁵⁹ Pohl, 'Ethnic Names and Identities', p. 9.

⁶⁰ Stodnick, "Old Names of Kings or Shadows", p. 123, quoting and citing Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*, in n. 52.

⁶¹ I adapt Hines's phrasing: see above, n. 37.

⁶² Sir Frank Stenton held that the tenacity of the new faith in East Anglia after Rædwald's rule was disproportionate to the later kings' short reigns: Stenton, 'The East Anglian Kings', p. 399.

Bede has nevertheless laid the foundation of East Anglia's character as a place whose dualistic religion made it doubly reprehensible. Nicholas Howe has perceptively shown us that 'demarcating the world as he knew it, designating it as Christian or pagan terrain, as converted or yet-to-be converted, was fundamental to Bede's sense of his work as a historian and as a biblical commentator in the cause of religious orthodoxy'.⁶³ Rædwald is scapegoated as the enemy of orthodoxy precisely because he resisted demarcation. His demonization imparts added clarity to Bede's vision of the English Church, and that much more urgency to Bede's exaltation of East Anglia's later Christian kings and saints as a means of discrediting the ambivalence that might open England once more to the tide of Germanic heathenism.

It is appropriate, then, that when he narrates East Anglia's fortunes after Rædwald's death, Bede should employ imagery which brings us inland, away from the sea and its associated tidal fluxes in religious ideology.⁶⁴ In the time of King Sigebert and at Archbishop Honorius's bidding, Bishop Felix successfully preached the new faith in East Anglia: 'quin potius fructum in ea multiplicem credentium populorum pius agri spiritualis cultor inuenit. Siquidem totam illam prouinciam, iuxta sui nominis sacramentum, a longa iniquitate atque infelicitate liberatam [...] perduxit' (for the devoted husbandman reaped an abundant harvest of believers in this spiritual field. Indeed, as his name signified, he freed the whole of this kingdom from long-lasting evil and unhappiness (*HE* II. 15, pp. 190–91)). Thanks to Felix, the 'spiritual field' of East Anglia at last coalesces firmly. Never mind that the *prouincia* lies in a sea-girt corner of an island; that its bishopric was near to or faced the sea at *Dommoc* (*HE* II. 15, p. 190);⁶⁵ and that the site given by Sigebert to the Irish Fursa for monastic use '[e]rat [...] siluarum et maris uicinate amoenum, constructum in castro quodam quod lin-

⁶³ Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 130.

⁶⁴ On Rædwald and the Wuffings's *vicus regius* at Rendlesham in Suffolk, not far from the North Sea, see, e.g., *HE* III. 22, p. 284; Clarke, *East Anglia*, p. 138; Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald*, pp. 18–24 (and sources cited therein); Newton, *The Origins of Beowulf*, pp. 127, 139. Relevant too are Howe's comments on the solitude, homelessness and dislocation which the Anglo-Saxons associated with the sea: Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 72.

⁶⁵ Whether at now-vanished Dunwich or at nearby Felixstowe, Bede's *Dummoc* seems to have lain on the Suffolk coast. For the debate see Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History'*, p. 78; *Addenda*, p. 224; Scarfe, *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, p. 41; Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, pp. 36–39. Campbell considers that the site may have been further inland at what is now Hoxne or Eye, but he also judges Blythburgh, closer to the coast, to be 'a strong candidate': Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 108–10 (quotation at p. 110).

gua Anglorum Cnobheresburg, id est Vrbs Cnobheri, uocatur' (was pleasantly situated close to the woods and the sea, in a Roman camp which is called in English *Cnobheresburg*, that is the city of Cnobhere [Burgh Castle] (*HE*, III. 19, pp. 270–71)). Bede's harvest imagery distracts from what Tim Pestell discerns as the East Anglians' coastal proneness 'to absorb or react to the beliefs and material culture of those passing through or choosing to settle within the local landscape.'⁶⁶ The Roman forts of the Saxon Shore having fallen into disuse, Felix and Fursa watch over East Anglia like sentinels on guard against new pagan irruptions. Felix stands his ground inland, as a 'pius [...] cultor' (devoted husbandman (*HE*, II. 15, pp. 190–91)), praise reminiscent of the sowing trope used by Christ himself in Luke 11. 23 to distinguish believers from unbelievers.⁶⁷

More apropos is the similarity, *mutatis mutandis*, between Felix's rustic evangelizing and Cædmon's own. Asleep in the 'stabula iumentorum' (cattle byre (*HE* IV.24, pp. 416–17)), the Whitby cowherd had received a command to sing God's praises; subsequently he committed monastic doctrine to memory 'quasi mundum animal ruminando' (like some clean animal chewing the cud (*HE* IV.24, pp. 418–19)) before turning it into sacred song. Like the ground of ancient Germanic heroic verse, redeemable only because Cædmon seeded it anew with Christian hymns, East Anglia's own pagan substratum has been superseded, apparently, by the fruits of Felix's toil.⁶⁸ Thus does Bede attempt to fit a singularly 'angular', even multangular, Anglian kingdom within his ecclesiastical England. And the 'potius fructum' (abundant harvest) Felix reaped in his territory recalls the agricultural turn of phrase deployed by Bede himself in his preface, in which, ruminating on his own authorial labours, he asks the audience of his 'historia [...] nostrae nationis' (history of our nation) to pray together on his behalf: 'apud omnes fructum piae intercessionis inueniam' (let me reap among them all the harvest of their charitable intercessions (*HE*, 'Praefatio', pp. 6–7)). The *Historia* displays its intellectual husbandry at the outset, for the metaphor of prayer as harvest evokes the early evangelizing of Germanic peasants, who, according to Peter Fowler, regarded agricultural and religious labour as 'really the same thing', for 'once you get Christian religion coming in as the latest of religions, it very quickly colonizes the agrarian cycle, which is, if you like, God-given.'⁶⁹ It is inter-

⁶⁶ Pestell, 'Paganism in Early-Anglo-Saxon East Anglia', p. 66.

⁶⁷ See above, n. 48.

⁶⁸ My argument here is informed by Frantzen, *Desire for Origins*, pp. 141–46, and need not conflict with the claim in Dumitrescu, 'Bede's Liberation Philology', that the Cædmon story, despite its Latinity, exalts the English language.

⁶⁹ Fowler, "Discussion" of Hines's "Religion", p. 403. Fowler thus considers the converted

esting that Bede's *captatio benevolentiae* should yoke a verb in the subjunctive mood (*inueniam*) to a now-Christianized harvest trope,⁷⁰ for a kindred expectancy suffuses Bede's depiction of Felix. His episcopacy must have proved to the *Historia*'s early eighth-century readers that Christianity was now deeply rooted in East Anglia. Bede, however, knew that ideological mutability underlay all the English kingdoms, and could only hope that it would not crop up again in the land whose 'abundant harvest' Rædwald had so successfully delayed.⁷¹

farmers' point of view: 'And, you know, it doesn't take a great deal of energy to say a prayer: it's a good thing to do and it's not much effort. It seems to me that the Christian religion very quickly moved in and took over in the thought processes that go along with the physical activity of farming' (p. 403).

⁷⁰ In what follows, my thinking about Bede's subjunctive is influenced by John Hines's discussion of the Old English *The Seafarer*'s appeal to us to contemplate how we might discover and reach our true spiritual home: 'The sentiment, and in particular the variability implied by those two subjunctives ['hwær wē hām āgen' and 'hū wē þider cumen' in ll. 117–18], were indeed deeply embedded in the Anglo-Saxon experience': Hines, 'No Place Like Home?', p. 39.

⁷¹ I am grateful to the anonymous readers for *New Medieval Literatures* and to two outside evaluators of my 2012 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant application.

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THE ONCE AND FUTURE HEROD: VERNACULAR TYPOLOGY AND THE UNFOLDING OF MIDDLE ENGLISH CYCLE DRAMA

Christopher Taylor

The character of Herod the Great creates a strange bifurcation in the narrative of Christianity as understood in the Middle Ages. Although a character of the New Testament, Herod resides at the juncture of Old and New Testament logics: original enemy of the young Christ, but one whose ruling tactics explicitly recall those of Pharaoh. His death in some medieval Christian traditions even predates the birth of Christ.¹ And whilst Herod the Great received little biblical attention, his exegetical significance was made apparent from even the earliest patristic commentaries.² Christian writers in the Middle Ages portrayed Herod the Great as an exemplar of pride whose characteristic rage betrayed a funda-

¹ Michael Grant discusses a medieval belief that Herod died during the very year of Jesus's birth; however, most scholars believe that the historical Herod the Great died in 4 BCE, the year that Roman Jewish historian Josephus Flavius cites. See Grant, *Herod the Great*, p. 16.

² The early Latin Church Fathers generally viewed the biblical episode of 'Massacre of the Innocents' (Matthew 2. 16–18) as producing the first Christian martyrs. On Herod's early exegetical significance, see Mans, 'The Early Latin Church Fathers on Herod'.

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Abstract: From the writings of early Church Fathers through the twelfth century, Herod the Great was considered an exemplar of arrogance as madness, a role that is expanded in the English cycle plays of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. In the York, Chester, N-Town, Towneley, and Coventry plays, Herod's keen historical foresight betrays his awareness of the unfolding of Christian eschatology. The predetermined failure of his own actions to prevent the ascendancy of Christ suggest the impotence of a non-Christian future. Herod's performances align deviance with knowledge, reaffirming faith and humility as the governing ethics of Christian epistemology. As a medium through which playwrights develop a kind of vernacular typology, the dramatic Herod testifies to the vitality of cycle drama within the landscape of fifteenth-century vernacular theology in England.

Keywords: Herod the Great, typology, drama, cycle plays, unknown, vernacular theology, eschatology, impotence, performance, genealogy.

mental madness — the result of a blind insistence on material accomplishment.³ Herod not only provided a bridge between Old and New Testaments, he also figured in the politics of Christian eschatology and demonstrated the superiority of spiritual over temporal manifestations of power.⁴ The figure of Herod loomed so large in the Christian imagination that oftentimes late medieval narratives collapsed the three biblical characters named Herod — Herod the Great (Matthew 2), Herod Antipas (Acts up to 4. 27), and Herod Agrippa (Acts 12) — into one figure, a singular King Herod.⁵

Since authoritative information on the life of Herod was limited to a handful of Bible verses (with perhaps a smattering of Josephus⁶), most early portraits of Herod focus on his exemplarity rather than address his psychological makeup or the historicity of his actions. From late antiquity through the twelfth century, scholars tended to view Herod as exemplar of the moral insanity produced by a hubristic appetite for earthly power.⁷ By the late Middle Ages, vernacular writers began to more inventively extrapolate on the scant source material on Herod, departing from the exegetical tradition responsible for his typological significance.⁸ Among these more popular renderings, Herod receives the most

³ Penelope Doob focuses on the exemplarity of Herod's madness in her chapter 'The Mad Sinner: Herod and the Pagan Kings'.

⁴ In twelfth-century Latin liturgical plays Herod became a political tool used to comment on and intervene in the contemporary tensions between pope and emperor. See Marlin, 'The Investiture Contest'.

⁵ Hussey, 'How Many Herods', discusses the flattening of the multiple Herods.

⁶ *Bellum judaicum* and *Antiquitates judaicae*, both written by Josephus, predate the Gospel of Matthew and proved the most reliable sources on Herod's life throughout the Middle Ages. Most medieval traditions regarding Herod's death rely at least indirectly on Josephus. I refer to book and chapter numbers from Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. and trans. by Thackeray, and Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus.

⁷ Herod and the Infanticide received little attention in Latin patristic works prior to the fourth century, but became a popular homiletic point of reference about madness in Prudentius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Isidore, and Bede. See Mans, 'The Early Latin Church Fathers on Herod'. The twelfth-century Latin liturgical drama helped establish the iconic 'raging' Herod. The 'Feast of Fools' celebrations, popular both in England and on the Continent, inspired the comic dimensions of Herod's rage evident in the English cycle plays. For more on Herod's development, see Ashley, 'The Politics of Playing Herod', p. 155, and Stevens, 'Herod as Carnival King'.

⁸ Herod is featured in several non-biblical medieval texts, including Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* (c. 1175), Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (c. 1260), the *Cursor mundi* (c. 1300), Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (c. 1342), the *Historia trium regum* (c. 1370), John Mirk's *Festial* (late fourteenth), the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* (late fourteenth/early fifteenth), Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (1430s), 'The Ballad of St. Stephen and Herod' (fifteenth), and the *Life*

expanded treatment in the pageants of the English mystery cycles, where a comparatively unique balance of bumbling physicality and tyrannical madness marks him as the character most anticipated, consistently played, and often studied in the tradition of medieval cycle drama.

Within the extant English cycles (Chester, York, Towneley, Coventry, N-Town), Herod retains his traditional significance as originary Christian enemy, but also engages with the present and becomes a negative exemplar of a corrupt English noble. In this essay, I examine the ways that dramatists of these five cycles negotiate between an inherited exegetical tradition on the one hand, and contemporary political-religious concern on the other, in order to portray a realistically dangerous, and yet perpetually inept, Herod. And while each cycle presents a unique vision of the tyrant, my goal is to stress two characteristics that these depictions of Herod share: an epistemological arrogance and a burlesque physicality. In each of the cycles, Herod lusts after knowledge and often knows too much: each of the five cycles indicates, in one way or another, that his is the wrong kind of knowledge. Herod's physicality — crystallized in the famous Coventry stage direction 'Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the street also' — underscores his ability to break through the play's temporal constraints of a biblical past in order to remind playgoers and readers of his continued relevance in the present.⁹

Given how much we still do not know about the English cycles,¹⁰ studies of early drama often focus on a specific cycle or set of pageants: my attempt to seek continuity across the cycles guides me to choose Herod as my text. I focus on how the plays utilize Herod, a kind of epistemological bridge between old and new

of *Saint Anne* (mid- to late fifteenth).

⁹ This stage direction from the Coventry Shearmen and Taylor's pageant (*The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by King and Davidson, l. 729 s.d.) has been analysed for its implications in how the plays were staged and what technically constituted the acting area.

¹⁰ Along with the difficulties in dating and preparing texts contemporaneous with their performances, scholars have recently complicated previously held notions of how and where the plays were staged, how they relate to the Church, how they were paid for, and other issues crucial to understanding medieval drama. As John McGavin quips, 'it has taken a lot of dedicated scholarly work and much medieval-style enactment over the last fifty years to make the civic religious drama of the Middle Ages look as complicated as it does today'; McGavin, 'Performing Communities', p. 210. Among the drama scholars engaged in these issues, see especially the work of Alexandra F. Johnston and David Mills. For the most exhaustive documentation of the logistical specificities required to stage the plays, refer to the Records of Early English Drama (REED), much of which has been digitized and is available online at <<http://www.reed.utoronto.ca>> [accessed 19 May 2014].

orders, to interrogate the relationship between typology and the limits of knowledge.¹¹ Kathleen Biddick contends that ‘the layout of the [late twelfth-century] glossed Bible rationalizes textual organization and thus renders typology, once an argument about reference [to another event], now also a representation.’¹² Following Biddick, I submit that the representational potential of typology reaches its apex with the English dramatic Herod.

The cycle play tradition of an embodied Herod engaged with past and present can be understood as an antitype whose fulfillment rests not in one but a never-ending series of incompetent, anti-Christian villains. I show how the playwrights utilize Herod’s performances as a kind of shorthand for an entire legion of fruitless attempts to alter the unfolding of Christian eschatology. An obsession with Herod’s impotence, shared by medieval writers and modern scholars, all but guarantees one of two possibilities: either he will *not* transmit the real threat he poses or, if he does, the potential usurpers he phantasmatically engenders will inherit his characteristic impotence in the face of real power. Herod’s performances of villainy become metonymic in the sense that he comes to represent a larger Christian truth — the futility of resisting Christian eschatology — while their vernacular insistence on revision renders the traditionally neat parallelism of typology something sloppy and indefinite.

Thus, in addition to telling the story of the English dramatic Herod, this essay urges an expanded understanding of medieval typological thought, and, through it, a reconsideration of the epistemological stakes of English cycle drama. I structure my discussion in three sections, each of which attends to an important facet of Herod’s representation: his unique typological function within the pageants, his ability to exist simultaneously within the past and present of the pageants, and, lastly, the textual obsession with his potency (or lack thereof).¹³ In each section, I also emphasize the frequency with which playwrights across the cycles associate the process of knowing with arrogance and not-knowing with faith. These practices underscore Herod’s representative role as Christian villain whose epistemological hubris augurs a similar fate for anyone pretending to knowledge

¹¹ For an overview of the role of typology in the English mystery plays and the critical debate that surrounds it, see Myers, ‘Typology and the Audience of the English Cycle Plays’.

¹² Biddick’s theological use typology refers to the supercessionary understanding of Old Testament events as belonging (*via* allegory) to the epistemological paradigm of the New Testament. See Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary*, p. 14.

¹³ I follow V. A. Kolve’s useful distinction between ‘pageant’ and ‘play’, in which ‘pageant’ denotes one specific biblical episode/event (often put on by one guild) and ‘play’ refers to the collection of pageants that make up the cycle. See Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*.

outside of the realm of Christian faith. As I hope to show, these pageants, far from eliciting a naive confabulation of historical and cultural identity, provide a representation of the tensions between inherited exegetical practices and their practical use value for understanding the complex narrative of Christian history.

'For Mahound's Blood!' From Saraceny to Susa

Due to its centrality to my argument, the notion of typology merits a few preliminary remarks. The separation of the biblical-hermeneutic understanding of typology from its homonyms is a good place to begin. Typology refers at once to a set of recognizable traits that defines a character type, the study of linguistic structures, and, in the tradition of Christian exegesis, a relationship between biblical happenings, in which an Old Testament historical event prefigures another later historical event (usually New Testament), whereby the former event's full significance is grasped only in the fulfillment of that second event.¹⁴ Although the Pauline definition of typology, deployed by Biddick, among others, restricts the two-part understanding of history to the discrete temporal categories of Old and New Testament, I would like to adopt a broader understanding, as traced by philologist Friedrich Ohly.¹⁵ Ohly investigates the ways in which medieval deployments of typology accommodate events outside of traditional Old/New Testament relations, and refer more broadly to a harmony that embraces the simultaneity of pasts and present, one in which 'the difference between the two is eliminated by the unity of their both being directed towards Christ'.¹⁶ Like Erich Auerbach, Ohly always understands the second event as a kind of fulfillment, but Ohly also suggests that this fulfillment might alter the stakes of that original event, whilst still preserving the memory that first event has historically impressed.¹⁷ I will try to be clear in my usage of this vocabulary.

¹⁴ More specifically, typology (or *figura*) refers to the capacity for a figure or event to possess meaning not only to his/her time or place but also future events, however unrelated they may seem. This prefigural sense is always rooted in a concrete historical context in order to announce something that is also both historical and real. In the seminal work 'Figura', Erich Auerbach traces the etymology of the term *figura* from 'plastic form' to 'simulacrum' and 'form' (Lucretius) to form of rhetorical discourse (Cicero and Quintilian) to *imago* of the future (Tertullian) to tool for the ethical interpretation of history (Origen) to prefiguration (Augustine) to, most generally, deep or allegorical meaning. See Auerbach, 'Figura', trans. by Manheim.

¹⁵ See Ohly, 'Typology as a Form of Historical Thought'.

¹⁶ Ohly, 'Typology as a Form of Historical Thought', p. 33

¹⁷ Ohly argues that typology 'makes a great claim upon the new era by demanding that it

The sheer amount of scholarship concerning the English dramatic Herod compared to studies of other biblical dramatic characters (including Christ) attests to his exceptional status in the field of medieval drama criticism. Yet those who have previously employed a typological approach to the cycle plays have omitted Herod from their analyses, focusing instead on the more conventional antitype events of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Noah's flood, Moses' burning bush, and Abel's sacrificial lamb.¹⁸ Although we might compare Herod typologically with Pharaoh, he does appear to lack the clear New Testament fulfillment possessed by these more traditional figures.¹⁹ The lack of criticism on Herod's typological status in the plays is not surprising given the disagreements over whether the English Herod even reflected a consistent characterization across the cycle plays. Yet among those scholars who emphasize the variety of Herods on the English stage, there still exists a propensity to classify Herod's character within a discrete set of predetermined characterological types. This critical move runs the risk of constructing dichotomies — between comic and tragic, local tyrant and exotic potentate, ignorant pagan and self-aware pseudo-Christian — that the plays themselves resist. Indeed, the most salient commonality among these portrayals of Herod is the way that they provoke terror and ridicule from the audience in nearly equal parts.

Another major line of scholarship on the English dramatic Herod relies on an excavation of possible source texts, attempting to resurrect a piecemeal Herod who is little more than the sum of his source parts. The end game of this exercise leaves little to savour: either the development of Herod as a stock dramatic character merely clarifies the import of allusions found in the more canonical writings of Chaucer and Shakespeare,²⁰ or the strange paradoxes inherent to his character

not only keep pace with the whole of the old era, including antiquity, as it does with renaissances, but that it *change* it, by intensification into a new era, and also *raise* it, at the height of a return, in such a way as to make the old era remain unforgotten even in the moment that it is being surpassed' (Ohly, 'Typology as a Form of Historical Thought', p. 65, emphasis mine).

¹⁸ See Woolf, 'The Effect of Typology'; Williams, 'Typology and the Cycle Plays'; Sheingorn, 'Typology and the Teaching of Medieval Drama'; Myers, 'Typology and the Audience of the English Cycle Plays'.

¹⁹ In these cases, Abraham and Abel's sacrifices suggests God/Christ's sacrifice, the ark resting on the mountain of Ararat prefigures Christ's resurrection, and Moses' burning bush is fulfilled by Mary's virginity.

²⁰ See, for example, Parker: 'The Reputation of Herod in Early English Literature'; King, 'He pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye?'; D'Arcy, "'Cursed folk of Herodes al new'"; Beidler, 'Dramatic Intertextuality in the *Miller's Tale*'; Harris, "'Look not big, nor stamp, nor stare'"; Hassel, "'No Boasting Like a Fool?'".

are naturalized, and thus satisfactory reconciled, by the accidents of local tradition. To assume a linear or evolutionary view of the dramatic Herod does a disservice to the complexity of the plays themselves and the interesting connections between them. Rather than naturalizing his playing as indebted solely to local concerns, insisting on a singularly understood villain, or restricting analysis to distinct character types, I propose an understanding of Herod as an inherently flexible character, one who allowed playwright and audience to explore tensions between Herod as human character and Herod as exegetical *figura*.

Other than his characteristic rage and sometimes humorous inability to provide any threat to Christ, Herod's non-Christian religious allegiances are the most recognizable component of his character. Each of the five major cycles (Chester, York, Towneley, Coventry, N-Town) performs at least two of the three events that prominently feature Herod: the coming of the Magi to Herod, the Killing of the Innocents, and Christ's trial before Herod.²¹ In each of the cycles, Herod admits to multiple spiritual affiliations whether by action or in boastful speech. The most common of Herod's proclaimed affinities, found in all cycles, is with the figure 'Mahound' or 'Mahowne'. Whether by oath ('Be Mahound'), as genealogical relative ('cosyn Mahound'), or as guarantor of his title ('by grace of Mahowne'), the playwrights in each cycle forge a relationship between Herod and one of the most recognizable enemies of Christendom, mythical or actual.²² Though little more than a caricature of the historical Muhammad, Mahound — from the Old French 'Mahon' — had long proved a useful placeholder for writers of medieval romance, amalgamating the spiritual heritages of villainous characters across time and space into one convenient, pseudo-pagan genealogy.²³

²¹ For the Chester, York, Towneley, and N-Town pageants, I refer to individual pageants by number according to the order that they appear in that cycle (as printed in the EETS editions). See *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, 1: *Text*; *The York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, 1: *Text*; *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Stevens and Cawley, 1: *Text*; *The N-Town Play*, ed. by Spector, 1: *Text*. For Coventry, I refer to the name of the play itself, as printed in the most recent edition published by Medieval Institute Publications. See *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by King and Davidson. A Herod figure appears in Chester nos 8, 10, 16; York nos 16, 19, 31; Towneley nos 14, 16; N-Town nos 18, 20, 29; and Coventry's 'Nativity Play', 'The Death of Herod', and 'Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors'.

²² The above lines come from N-Town no. 18 (l. 92), Towneley no. 16 (l. 78), and Towneley no. 16 (l. 15), respectively.

²³ The figure of Mahoun derives from French romance, where he often comprises one part of a trio of pagan gods that also includes Termagant and Apollo. For more on the use of Mahoun in the English cycle plays, see Paull, 'The Figure of Mahomet'. For the best account of the understanding of Islam in western medieval Europe, see the work of John Tolan, especially *Saracens: Islam in the European Imagination*.

As the plays establish a single genealogy for the titans of non-Christian villainy, the pageants themselves maintain a sense of Herod as fundamentally out of place. David Staines concludes that ‘more than any other single character in medieval drama, Herod becomes a variety of persons under one name.’²⁴ As an Idumaen (from the Semitic region of Edom), the historical Herod the Great, per Josephus, was of Arab blood and, although nominally a Jew, was accepted by neither the Jewish community over which he ruled nor the Roman government under which he served. As modern biographer Michael Grant reasons, Herod existed ‘in a no-man’s land of cultural territory.’²⁵ The medieval plays certainly seem to pick up on his placelessness.

The Towneley *Magnus Herodes* (no. 16) begins with a speech by Herod’s messenger (Nuncius), who proclaims Herod’s sovereign and fearsome qualities in a speech that lasts some 115 lines. After demanding silence from the audience, Nuncius employs the inexpressability topos to approximate Herod’s unknowable significance:

His renowne
Can no tong tell,
From heuen vnto hell;
Of hym can none spell
Bot his cosyn Mahowne. (ll. 74–78)

Nuncius maintains the ineffable breadth of Herod’s geographic jurisdiction and simultaneously inserts him into an imaginative and putatively non-historical genealogy of romance xenophobia. Although Mahound traditionally functioned to mark non-European geographies as homogeneous and inherently threatening spaces that demanded redemption under the aegis of history, the cycle plays collapse that spatio-temporal alterity onto the English present.

Herod’s villainy knows no geographic border, nor does it recognize temporal boundary. In addition to Mahound, Herod aligns himself with the other traditional enemies of the Christian past, present, and future: Roman gods, traditional pagan gods, Jews, Satan/Lucifer, and Antichrist. Each cycle relies on multiple associations to secure an understanding of Herod as not only non-Christian but persuasively *anti*-Christian — even if these affiliations produce contradiction. In the York ‘Trial Before Herod’ (no. 31), Herod prays to ‘ser Satan oure sire,| And Lucifer moste luffely of lyre’ (ll. 51–52); whereas at the end of the Chester ‘Massacre’ (no. 10), a dying Herod speaks of Satan as ‘my foe| [coming]

²⁴ Staines, ‘To Out-Herod Herod,’ p. 207.

²⁵ Grant, *Herod the Great*, p. 11.

to fetch me to hell' (ll. 428–29). In the Magi pageant of the York Cycle (no. 16), Herod calls on 'Jubiter and Jouis, Martis and Mercurij' (l. 2), and also proclaims Mahound as his true God (l. 157) while nonetheless professing himself the legitimate 'juge of all Jury [Jewry]' (ll. 182–83).²⁶

V. A. Kolve views the practice of characterizing Herod in such a thoroughly anti-Christian manner as 'undoubtedly the result of nothing more than a wish to write vivid, colloquial dialogue', and, to be sure, Herod was hardly the first figure to boast a partly invented spiritual legacy. It seems, however, that the plays also evoke Herod's religious attachments in order to strategically maximize his distance from the Christian faith at all times. Herod's affiliations with figures and ideas that cross temporal and spiritual boundaries, coupled with the consistent characterization of Herod's 'renowne' as unknowable, suggests a figure who absorbs an entire history of anti-Christian deviance.²⁷

Herod's relationship with Christ reinforces the notion of his metonymic status. In the York 'Trial before Herod' (no. 31), Herod compares himself favorably to Christ as a ruler, concluding that 'He [Christ] knawes noyot the course of a kyng' (l. 192). Yet, as the audience is well aware, Christ *does* know: the dramatic irony effected by Christ's clueless enemy, who insistently poses as *knowing*, marks Herod as representative of all infelicitous knowledges. The negative consequences of Herod's actions stand in stark contrast with the superiority he attempts to exhibit when speaking to the audience — they cannot even fathom how much he knows.²⁸ Indeed, Herod's arrogance not only exemplifies the pitfalls of a life without Christ but also calls attention to the more opaque dangers of unwarranted epistemological certainty.

This arrogance, insofar as it demonstrates that he understands what he is up against, becomes one of the more fascinating aspects of Herod's character. In the N-Town Magi pageant (no. 18), Herod predictably reports his relation to Mahound but couches his boasts in the familiar, but chronologically inaccessible,

²⁶ As John Tolan has noted, the line between Saracen and pagan remain blurred well into the late Middle Ages, and the former was commonly considered to practice polytheism. See 'Saracens as Pagans' in Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the European Imagination*, pp. 105–34.

²⁷ Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, p. 104.

²⁸ Herod's self-assurance in the plays complicates Jody Enders's argument about the role of pagan figures in her discussion of the epistemology of torture and its role in the foundation of Christianity. While Enders's torturers know not the 'Christian truth that is expounded through the death of their victims', Herod betrays his understanding of Christian exegesis in several of the Magi plays, which, as I will argue, makes him all the more evil and contributes greatly to his significance within the plays. For Enders's influential treatise on the intersections of drama, torture, and Christian epistemology, see Enders, 'The Dramatic Violence of Invention', pp. 44–46.

Gospel rhetoric of Jesus: 'I dyngge with my dowyntes the devyl down to helle, | For both of hevyn and of herth I am kynge, sertayn!' (ll. 7–8). The practice of depicting Herod with a premature awareness of Christian history becomes common across cycles, perhaps because it gives Christ a legitimate antagonist. In lines 82–94 of the same Magi pageant Herod reveals prescient knowledge of Jesus's birth and then announces his plan to kill the young children of Bethlehem *even though* this knowledge should not be made available to him until the Slaughter episode that occurs two pageants later (no. 20). Whilst Stephen Spector, the editor of the Early English Text Society N-Town play edition, reasons that this must be an error, given the forethought Herod possesses in other plays, we must reconsider the purpose of a Herod who foresees an ascendant Christianity.

When Herod's dies in the N-Town Massacre (no. 20), the question of what he *knows* again takes centre stage. Early in the pageant (l. 6), Herod the Great, normally located in Jerusalem, appears instead in Galilee, which happens to be the realm of his son Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and main character of the later 'Trial of Christ before Pilate and Herod' (no. 29). At the end of the Massacre, Herod the Great dies in an extended scene that culminates in a lengthy moralization (ll. 246–84) by Death, who offers up Herod's demise as example:

Off Kynge Herowde all men beware,
pat hath rejoycyd in pompe and pryde.
For all his boste ofblysse ful bare,
He Iyth now ded here on his side. (ll. 246–49)

Whilst the earlier error appears to conflate the two Herods, it also foreshadows the later trial of Christ before Pilate and the Antipas (no. 29), which connects the villainy of the two Herods despite the on-stage death of the former. If the play does indeed pair these two Herods, this dramatic choice creates another moment that reveals Herod's foreknowledge of Jesus's theological significance as well as Herod's own messianic pretensions.

In the Chester Magi pageant (no. 8), we find a similarly anticipatory logic whereby Herod once again parrots Christ's rhetoric, referring to himself as 'kinge of kinges' (l. 168) and promises to 'drive the devils all bydeene' (l. 174).²⁹ This pageant also divulges Herod's familiarity with Judeo-Christian prophecy, despite the fact that he 'is noe Jewe borne nor of that progenye' (l. 278). Although he has his doctors gather prophecy for him, Herod possesses knowledge of Old Testament prophecy himself: he denounces 'that olde Villard' Jacob (l. 284), the

²⁹ These two lines have biblical analogues in Revelation 17. 14, Revelation 19. 16, and Luke 12. 15, respectively.

'sleepie sluggard' Daniel (l. 305), and the 'Shepard with his Sling' David (l. 354).³⁰ As David Mills points out, Herod 'possesses the necessary Scriptural information, but he refuses to believe it'.³¹ To have Herod reveal intimate knowledge of the very system he is set to destroy casts him as all the more villainous for knowing the stakes of his actions. As Herod typologically prefigures attempts to usurp the eschatological power of Christianity, he remains uncannily aware of both the gravity and impossibility of such a task. Perhaps his anxiety over a Scripture he intuitively understands explains why Herod's death in the Slaughter can be attributed, according to the Demon character, to his heresy or false beliefs, rather than the traditional reason, his madness: 'I am comen to fetch this lord you froe, | in woe ever to dwell [...] and all false beleevers I burne and lowe' (ll. 436–37; 439). Indeed, the ability for a playwright to connect a single figure to the entire history of Christian alterity without obscuring the coherence of the narrative appears to have a stronger effect than making good dialogue.

As both a typological instantiation of Christian triumphalism and an exemplum of the dangers of epistemological arrogance, Herod serves as an effective foil of Christ. Yet the plays do more than position Herod as the mere prefiguration of present and future anti-Christian heresiarchs. Herod becomes the very metonymic embodiment of villainy: a convenient and recognizable, but ultimately unknowable, historical figure who stands in for a larger, endless historical process. By performing Herod's failure as predetermined, the cycles thus situate non-Christian knowledge as necessarily incomplete. Herod's Christian audience knows better than to claim to *understand* these performances of eschatology when the payoff for belief can be spelled out so clearly. Staines and Roscoe Parker have documented the ways in which the plays parallel contemporary sermons,³² but these dramatic decisions also validate the program of willed unknowing (as both a forgetting and a refusal of mastery) advocated by contemporary contemplative manuals such as the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Just as the *Cloud* urges against active thought in favour of epistemological submission, cautioning that we fundamentally misperceive the very notion of knowledge, the Herod pageants reaffirm an almost Boethian understanding of agency in which epistemological submission becomes a tool for the management of belief. In performance, on the razor's

³⁰ In the notes to the Chester Cycle, R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills remark that Herod's un-biblical search through the Scriptures might be unique to the Chester play although the general narrative framework for the episode can be found in Comestor and Mirk. See *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. by Lumiansky and Mills, II, 129.

³¹ Mills, 'Some Possible Implications of Herod's Speech', p. 140.

³² See, for example, the sermon 'De innocentibus' in Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Erbe, pp. 35–38.

edge of typology, biblical past and political present coalesce, revealing themselves as equally rehearsed.

'Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the street also'

Herod's perceived grasp on the futures of such disjointed temporalities draws on a paradox inherent to the structure of the plays. As Kolve emphasizes, the Corpus Christi dramas perform the sequence of world history in seven ages and, in doing so, explore how the current, sixth age maps onto that arrangement.³³ Yet this is not to say that we should understand these plays as discrete episodes we need merely *read*. Writing about the York Cycle, Richard Beadle observes that 'topographical evidence indicates that the stations were occasionally within sight and usually within earshot of the one preceding and the one after, so that a sense of simultaneity in the presentation of adjacent episode [...] must have been perceptible to the audience'.³⁴ This simultaneity allows the audience themselves to not only become complicit but to become bound within in an embodied Christian eschatology. The effect of simultaneous temporalities, John Marlin explains, helped emphasize 'the interconnectedness of historical events with both the historical present and the absolute present inhabited by the divine'.³⁵ In other words, despite their frequently populist aims, the mystery cycles in fact provide a highly complex and exegetically sound representation of a typologically inflected Christian eschatology.

Whilst Kolve argues that the present in the plays served 'mainly as a time for amendment and preparation',³⁶ the English dramatic Herod establishes how the past can inform, and possibly even redeem, the present. Because the flexibility afforded to the English Herod inspired such a diverse set of historical and imaginative resonances, Herod became an especially good medium through which playwrights could satirize specific rulers and stereotype the English nobility more generally.³⁷ Most famously, the Wakefield Master's characterization

³³ Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, pp. 101–23.

³⁴ Beadle, 'The Chester Cycle', p. 114.

³⁵ Marlin, 'The Investiture Contest', p. 2. Though too, as Miri Rubin insists, the performances varied from year to year and place to place, in both the quality of their execution and in the number of mistakes, the visual arrangement itself likely produced a captivating unfolding of Christian history regardless of the nuances of individual performances. For a better picture of the evolution and logistical concerns of Corpus Christi drama, see Rubin, 'The Living Feast'.

³⁶ Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, p. 102.

³⁷ Exploring the political valence of the cycle plays, scholars have noted the ways that

of Herod in the Towneley '*Magnus Herodes*' (no. 16) recalls the duke of Suffolk.³⁸ Still, lest an overtly English locale undermine the verisimilitude of the play's action, the Wakefield Herod guarantees his sovereignty in places both exotic and local (ll. 46–49). Flattening time and space, Herod reaffirms the breadth of his influence.

Herod also emphasizes the importance of the present within a play's larger historical context through his speech: not only *what* he says but also *how* he delivers it. In the Chester Magi pageant (no. 8), the English-speaking Magi switch to French only when introduced to Herod (ll. 153–60). Considering that it is the Magi whom are the putative foreigners in this arrangement, the direction of this code-switching is somewhat surprising. Herod replies once in French before transitioning to English, punctuating a bizarre moment that secures a courtly and an English resonance for the pageant. Herod's code-switching pervades other cycles as well: he is trilingual in both York's 'Christ before Herod' (no. 31) and Towneley's '*Oblacia Magorum*' (no. 14).³⁹ In the York pageant, Herod's use of Latin (ll. 243, 245, and 260–63) and broken French (l. 239) forges a parallel between Herod's speech and the (sometimes clumsy) trilingualism of England's own rulers. Herod's bungled execution of common Latin and French phrases in the Towneley Magi pageant — that is, 'ditizance doutance' (*dit sans doutance*: said without a doubt) (l. 247) — takes a more overt stab at the faux-sophistication of the English nobility. The last line of the pageant, in which Herod claims to have no more 'Fraunch', confirms the dilettantism of his courtly pretensions as it once again echoes Herod's desire to appear knowledgeable. For the audience, this 'French' moment secures an eminently English resonance for the play and suggests that, stripped of epistemological hubris, Herod might be closer to the audience than they had initially imagined.

characters of individual pageants or cycles criticize contemporary English personages or social groups. Rosemary Woolf, building on the work of G. R. Owst, reads the delight the soldiers share in the murders of children in the Chester and Towneley Innocents pageants as a satirical stab at the contemporary military life, lampooning, for instance, the notion of the 'carpet-knight' — one who earns knighthood on the carpet of a palace rather than in the field of battle. See Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, pp. 205–07, and Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*.

³⁸ In a letter from J. Whetley to John Paston II, the former writes of the Duke of Suffolk: 'Ther was never no man that playd Herrod in Corpus Crysty play better and more agreeable to hys pageaunt than he dud.' Stevens and Cawley note this quip in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Stevens and Cawley, II: *Notes and Glossary*, p. 521. For the letter in its original context, see *Paston Letters and Papers*, ed. by Beadle and Richmond, II, 426.

³⁹ Herod is also the only trilingual character in each of these cycles.

Herod's performances have been regarded as satirizing not only individuals but institutional practices as well. James Simpson finds that the cycle plays often recontextualize scriptural events in order to 'act out dramas of interrogation and punishment that address critical prohibitions in fifteenth-century English society'.⁴⁰ Focusing on the York and Towneley cycles, Simpson finds in them a spirit of 'inclusive theology' that he carefully avoids equating with Lollard sympathy.⁴¹ Simpson turns to Herod's demands for the audience's silence in the opening scene of the York 'Christ before Herod' (no. 31; ll. 1–7) as at once a comic public service announcement and a poignant reminder of contemporary strictures on religious expression, including perhaps a specific allusion to English Archbishop Thomas Arundel's 1409 ban on vernacular translation of Scripture.

Simpson's citation of the famous 1409 ban provokes a larger question about the place of these cycle plays in the context of fifteenth-century vernacular theology in England. The publication of *After Arundel* (2011) has thoroughly dismantled the once-dominant notion that Arundel's program of orthodoxy in England held in check the exploration and advancement of fifteenth-century theological thought, and that, subsequently, religious writings written in the vernacular slowed.⁴² The theological complexity of cycle drama, whilst not quite speculative, provides excellent support of *After Arundel's* counter-narrative, including, for example, the deployment of a kind of vernacular typology in the case of Herod. However, *After Arundel*, in its expansive thirty essays and six-hundred-plus pages, contains not a single essay on the version of vernacular theology to which the

⁴⁰ See Simpson, 'The Dramatic', p. 506.

⁴¹ At least one Lollard tract, 'A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyng', railed against clerical participation in mystery plays and even cautioned against priest's attendance at these spectacles. For the text, see *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Hudson, pp. 97–104. The degree to which Lollard theology affected the composition of the mystery plays is an ongoing debate among specialists of medieval English theatre. Although Wycliffe's doctrines secured a popular audience around the same time that the cycles became established civic routines, the majority of the cycle plays (for which we have evidence) were played in the north of England, where Lollardy was slower to take hold. Certainly, Lollard sympathizers would likely find the sacramentalism at the heart of the cycle plays problematic, and it is unclear just how much the playwrights themselves took Lollard views into account. For more on the issue see, Lepow, *Enacting the Sacrament*; Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation of England*; and Bills, 'The "Suppression Theory" and the English Corpus Christi Play'.

⁴² Instead, *After Arundel* reorients the narrative of vernacular religious history in England away from Thomas Arundel, who becomes, for the volume, an emblem of the historiographic desire to view fifteenth-century vernacular Christian history as either haunted by a fear of dissent post-Arundel and/or as marking a point after which English theological writings remained remarkably and consistently orthodox. See Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*.

largest number of people in the English fifteenth century were likely exposed. Whether understood as the locus for the production of vernacular theology or a site through which scholars might trace its changes, the cycle plays help complicate the picture of the very nature of orthodox thought. After all, what was so harrowing about Herod was his insistence that he knows better, an epistemological arrogance associated with (depending on one's perspective) vehement reformers such as Wycliffites but also orthodox lackeys.

Although Simpson's analysis astutely singles out a telling political resonance embedded in Herod's bombast, it is equally important to recognize that Herod is also used unironically in the plays as a negative exemplar of the *dangers* of thinking for oneself. Herod's sense of omnipotence and his own 'inclusive theology' are, after all, the very bad habits that lead to his death in the N-Town and Chester cycles. This is the same Herod who, in this York play, swears by Mahounde (l. 9), prays to Satan (ll. 51–54), and compares his might favorably to that of Jesus (l. 13). Simpson's sensitivity to the satirical overtones of York may indeed suggest that the pageants contain instances of 'sharply critical reflection on royal and episcopal mechanisms in the prosecution and management of "sedition" and "heresy"'.⁴³ Nonetheless, in the larger picture, Herod also reinforces some of those very same mechanisms, insofar as he serves as negative exemplar of the epistemological pride that stems from thinking for oneself.

As Herod exemplifies through his own interactions with Scripture the dangers of reading hastily, we can understand him as a simultaneous foil to orthodox theological practice and also of the ignorant clerics preaching what they do not themselves understand. Thus it is all the more interesting that the presentation of Herod's villainy aligns so well with a traditional three-fold exegetical practice. In terms of discerning the historical from the allegorical, each cycle distinguishes its individual pageants such that each represents a single biblical event, usually staged and performed by one guild. Once staged, the discrete pageants remain spatially and narratologically independent of the other action, distinguishing the historical *res gestae* from the higher, spiritual levels. The fact that not all English towns adhered to the cycle format, preferring instead to stage one or two of the most popular biblical events, suggests that these pageants could be enjoyed at this most literal level.

However, the organization of the cycles into independent pageants that nonetheless interlink across time and space parallels the co-mingling of historical and spiritual senses of scripture championed by medieval Europe's most authorita-

⁴³ Simpson, 'The Dramatic', p. 506.

tive exegetes. Although some characters and settings are modernized to establish familiarity with their English audience, these choices do not enforce a specific interpretation and do not affect the literal plot.⁴⁴ These hyper-referential cycle plays embrace the present as they also postpone the significance of their historical concerns, inviting audience and reader to approach them not *only* as individual pageants representing linear events, but as hypotactic narratives whose meaning cannot be gleaned without reference to the whole cycle. Herod's ability to exist in a pre-Christian time but also to encapsulate the false beliefs of generations of Christian doctrinal disobedience relies on a balance between such a literal and figurative understanding of the pageants.

The moral or tropological level of traditional exegesis, while also evident in each of the cycles, varies in its degree of transparency. Since these plays certainly served partly as moral edification for the townspeople, some cycles built this didacticism directly into the pageants, often as a kind of epilogue. The N-Town 'Death of Herod' (no. 20) features a character, Mors, who explicitly conveys the moral significance of Herod's death at the end of the pageant:

Off kynge herowde all men beware
 That hath rejoyced in pompe and pryde
 Ffor all his boste of blysse ful bare
 He lyth now ded here on his syde. (ll. 246–49)

Although Herod does not earn this death until after his part in the Massacre (no. 18), the message is clear: we can be sure of very little else than the inevitable demise of all things temporal.

In the main Towneley Herod play, '*Magnus Herodes*' (no. 16), the Wakefield Master accentuates another incongruity, that between Herod's perception of himself and the audience's knowledge of the actual unfolding of events. In this pageant, Herod takes thirteen lines to painstakingly describe the breadth of his jurisdiction (ll. 66–78).⁴⁵ The conspicuous discrepancy between the powerful, cosmopolitan identity he professes and the bumbling, English one to which he always returns suggests that his word and, subsequently, his authority are not to be believed. When Herod prematurely celebrates a successful massacre, the audience knows better. Though he does not die in this cycle, those final words, 'I can

⁴⁴ Rather, as Rubin notes, the entire production of the cycles — from number of plays to the characterization of their figures — was tailored to a town's needs. The addition, deletion, or merging of crafts were also conveyed in the changing structure of the plays; Rubin, 'The Living Feast', p. 276.

⁴⁵ As mentioned earlier, these are the lines that recall the duke of Suffolk.

nomore Fraunch' (l. 513) suggest that, exasperated, he is losing the only grip he ever really had — the ability to bluster on about a willed sense of cultural-legal authority.

If the plays adhere to authoritative exegetical modes in order to depict the narrative of Christian eschatology, Herod himself provides a lesson about the dangers of reading incorrectly. As mentioned earlier, Chester's 'The Three Kings Come to Herod' (no. 8) depicts Herod's familiarity with prophecy (ll. 233–36) and also specific prophets (ll. 261–68). Yet when his doctor confirms the legitimacy of these prophecies, Herod refuses to acquiesce to the demands of Scripture and instead commissions the Massacre (ll. 327–38). Herod spends the remainder of the pageant looking for his 'grand parent' in old texts in an attempt to establish authoritatively his lineage and right to the throne.⁴⁶

Like its York counterpart, the Towneley 'Offering of the Magi' (no. 14) presents a scene in which the kings inform Herod of scriptural passages that herald the coming of Christ. Herod ignores altogether the authority of biblical prophecy — he claims that he received the news not from this text, but when 'Oone spake in myne eere| A wonderfull talking' (l. 287–88). Rebelling against the merits of scriptural hermeneutics, Herod gives his counselors the following task:

Syrs, I pray you inquire
In all wrytyng,
In Vyrgyll, in Homere,
And all other thing
Bot legend.
Sekys poecé-tayllys,
Lefe pystyls and grales;
Mes, matins noght avalys —
All these I defende. (ll. 291–99)

Herod authorizes his counselors to search for prophecy in any but biblical texts, which are, of course, the texts on which playwright and audience rely as *the* authoritative locus of knowledge. Herod's counselors attempt to object, but Herod insists on reading incorrectly. Of all of the cycle playwrights the Wakefield master most effectively contrasts Herod, who cannot read the events that unfold

⁴⁶ Coletti writes: 'Herod spends much of the remainder of the play [...] seeking to disguise the lowly origins that biblical historians such as Josephus had attributed to him. When Herod lays claim to "the tytle and right| of Romans hye conquest which to mee in heritage | is fallen for ever, as prince of hye parengage" (p. 169, ll. 285–87), he appears to confuse right based on conquest and on lineage' (Coletti, 'Re-reading the Story of Herod', pp. 49–50).

before his very eyes, with the good Christian, who understands that Scripture involves historical, eschatological, and hermeneutic unknowns.

Herod's failure to read correctly across cycles affirms one version of the epistemological economy of Christianity, in which a subject must sacrifice knowledge for a faith in the unknown through which that believer will be redeemed. Not simply an anti-Christ, Herod represents the inversion of the Christian economy of knowledge, a figure through which Christianity's own complicated poetics of knowing can be negatively understood by a character who shows us what *not* to do. Stubbornly assured of his omnipotence, Herod turns the practice of faith on its head; confident that the logic of the temporal-political extends to the eschatological-divine, Herod mistakenly understands knowledge to be purely material and therefore fundamentally available. Herod's rejection of Christian forms of knowing — rooted as they are in faith in and sacrifice to the unknowable — become the self-abdicating act through which he is undone in the plays. In other words, the plays reify the importance of faith by playing a faithless Herod who understands but rejects the very eschatology that he is powerless to alter. Unable to comprehend that his reliance on non-Christian knowledges limits his ruling potential to the material world, he effectively eliminates any possibility of defeating Christ.

If Herod's reading practices reaffirm the importance of faith, the moments where he engages the audience provide them an opportunity to activate their faith by inserting themselves into the narrative of Christian history. In the York Magi pageant (no. 16), for instance, Herod opens the pageant by addressing the crowd, challenging them to become his subjects:

Lordis and ladis, loo, luffely me lithes,
 For I am fairer of face and fresher on folde —
 Þe soth yf I saie sall — seuene and sexti sithis
 Þan gloriūs gulle, at gayer is an golde.
 In price.
 How thynke ye þer tales that I talde?
 I am worthy, witty, and wyse (ll. 16–22)

As Herod transforms the pageant's audience into his audience, his direct threats to the playgoers expel him from the play's historical context and, in turn, insert the audience into the cycle's eschatological context. Even the prosody of these lines suggests that this moment was meant to stand out from the rest of the play: as Beadle and King note, this opening scene is cast largely in the alliterative long line while the remainder of the pageant is composed in the standard, twelve-

line stanzas.⁴⁷ Whilst Herod's fate has already been decided, this marked shift of poetic and dramatic registers indicates that the audience maintains an as-yet undetermined role in the human drama of Christian salvation.

In this light, the famous stage direction in the Coventry 'Pageant of Shearman and Taylors', which describes Herod physically leaving the stage ('Here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the street also') might be revisited, not as proof of the popularity and expectation garnered by Herod as a character but as an indication of the degree to which the playwrights use Herod to write the audience into the eschatological arc of the plays.⁴⁸ Herod's descent into the crowd arouses the possibility that the audience has become the spectacle, written into the narrative. Regardless of the verisimilitude of Herod's rage, this moment allows the audience to experience Christian history as if immanent to the scriptural event. In these moments, the plays participate in an abiding exegetical fantasy in which the unknown — once understood as a potential disruption to accepted eschatology — is now reined in by faith, subjected to a logic of impotent repetition, and repurposed as the lubricant needed to inch forward the progression of Christian history.

An Impotent Genealogy? The Once and Future Herod

Despite the attention paid to Herod's characteristic raging, scholars have yet to achieve a consensus on what his anger signifies.⁴⁹ One camp of critics, consisting primarily of specialists of medieval drama, argue that cycle playwrights utilize an inherited tradition of Herod's anger as an opportunity to strategically manage Herod's place in a cycle's particular orchestration of Christian history.⁵⁰ A second camp employs strategies not unlike those of medieval exegetes to determine a

⁴⁷ *York Mystery Plays*, ed. by Beadle and King, p. 65.

⁴⁸ See the stage direction after line 783 in *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Craig.

⁴⁹ Theologians derived the motif of Herod's anger from Matthew 2. 16: 'Tunc Herodes videns quoniam illusus esset a Magis iratus est valde et mittens occidit omnes pueros qui erant in Bethlehem et in omnibus finibus eius a bi matu et infra, secundum tempus quod exquisierat a Magis' (Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry; and sending killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men). Cited from the Vulgate, with translations from Duay-Rheims.

⁵⁰ Coulson-Grigsby, for example, focuses on how Herod's anger epitomizes larger concerns about language in the plays, concluding that Herod becomes 'a locus for the vernacular dramatists to explore the relationship between a corrupt soul, a diseased body, and inarticulate language' (Coulson-Grigsby, 'Enacting Herod the Great's Diseased Spirit', p. 115).

symbolic dimension of Herod's anger.⁵¹ Although these critical strains differ in the traditions they target, they share an overriding concern with Herod's failure. After all, Herod must fail. What remains puzzling is the consistency with which assessments of his character, regardless of the critical point being made, describe Herod's rage specifically as 'impotent'.⁵²

Is Herod's rage impotent? If so, why must we see it this way? At the most literal level, Herod the Great cannot be considered sexually impotent, given the genealogy he extends in the Bible and in Josephus. Likewise, if we understand potency as the ability to exert power or influence, we can hardly forget the damage Herod does to the blood lines in Bethlehem. What other ways, then, might we understand these charges? Perhaps more importantly, what does the preoccupation with impotence suggest about the way we understand the medieval dramatic Herod? Just as theologians through the thirteenth century reduced Herod to his madness, so can we perceive that the English plays and scholarship on them share a desire to condense the entire network of Herod's ambitions within one final assertion of his ultimate generative failure.

Medieval writers and modern critics have insisted on the teleological failure of the troubling desires Herod expresses, in part, to unknow the complex theological landscape made possible by a virile Herod. A mass slaughter becomes impotent fury, unchecked madness becomes impotent rage, and ruthless ambition becomes political impotence. By discussing the generative, political, and eschatological resonances of Herod's impotence, I hope to illustrate how critics reanimate a medieval desire to understand Herod as a fearsome ruler ultimately doomed by a powerlessness to hold his kingdom, an inability to grasp Christianity, and an incapacity to produce an heir through which his ambitions might be realized.

In both the Bible and Josephus, Herod the Great produces a son and heir in Herod Antipas. In the biblical account (Matthew 14. 1–11; Luke 23. 6–12),

⁵¹ Penelope Doob, for example, views Herod's rage as a symptom of madness and concludes that Herod's 'biblical anger [...] becomes real madness leading to further sin, to loss of control over the body and mind, to disease, death, and damnation' (Doob, 'The Mad Sinner: Herod and the Pagan Kings', p. 129).

⁵² See, for a sample, Herod's 'impotent fury' in Doob, 'The Mad Sinner: Herod and the Pagan Kings', p. 128; the 'impotent old tyrant' in Campbell, 'Liturgy and Drama', p. 291; Herod's 'ultimate impotence in the face of supernal power' in Marlin's reading of the Latin Herod plays in, 'The Investiture Contest', p. 14; the 'impotent ranting' and 'ironic impotence' in Hassel, "No Boasting Like a Fool?"; pp. 211–12; Herod's 'political impotence' in Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity*, p. 121; Herod's 'impotent' authority in McGavin, 'Performing Communities: Civic Religious Drama', p. 210. Morse, taking a different tack, asserts that 'If Herod came to symbolize dramatic crudity, he was no less potent for that' (Morse, *Truth and Convention*, p. 66).

Antipas even explicitly maintains his father's struggle against Christ and Christianity. Given the inauspicious beginnings of a troublesome family tree, we might revisit the question of *why* medieval scholars and playwrights commonly collapsed the three biblical Herods into one figure. Perhaps this conflation grounds a sustained repression of a certain kind of potency that Herod represents. An admission of Herod's ability to reproduce his desires patrilineally might, in other words, uncover a fear of the alterity that he metonymically engenders in the form of heresy, corruption, and epistemological arrogance. As long as Herod remains impotent, however, theologians can domesticate non-orthodox practices as toothless, which maintains an uninterrupted narrative of Christian salvation. Similarly, the charge of impotence in criticism provides scholars a lowest common denominator from which to establish *a* medieval Herod.

The contrast between Herod's broken genealogy and Christ's mystical one supplies some of the most successful dramatic tension in the cycle plays. First, although several of the Latin Herod dramas featured a son of Herod, the same cannot be said for the English mystery cycles.⁵³ As discussed earlier, the tradition of collapsing the various Herods into one figure along with the lack of clarity within the texts themselves makes it difficult to determine conclusively whether the Christ's trial pageants featured the same Herod the Great observed in the Massacre pageants or whether they featured Herod the Great's son, Antipas.⁵⁴ In addition to the process of condensing or confusing the number of Herods, the plays revise medieval traditions regarding the makeup of Herod's immediate family as well as how he (and they) die, all of which effectively casts Herod's pre-/non-Christian genealogy, built on arrogance and loss, as divinely superseded by a Christian one built on faith and grace.

Only the York Cycle features a speaking role for a character verified internally as Herod's son. In the York Magi pageant (no. 16), Herod's son, called only Filius, aids his father in the decision to commission the Slaughter. The pageant makes no effort to explain why Filius is there or how he got there, from which we might insinuate that his appearance was hardly remarkable. However, given Herod's

⁵³ Several of the Latin Herod plays, including Fleury and Montpellier, include Herod's son, called either Archilaus or Filius, as a significant character in the drama.

⁵⁴ In the York 'Christ before Herod' (no. 31), Herod is called 'Rex' in the character headings and 'Herowde' in the dialogue of the play; in the Chester 'Passion of Christ' (no. 16) it is 'Herodes' and 'Herode'; and in the N-Town 'Herod: The Trial before Annas and Cayphas' (no. 29), it is alternately 'Herowdys' and 'Rex Herow[de]' (clearly the same character) along with 'Herowndys/Herowde' in the dialogue. The Coventry and Towneley plays lack an interaction between Christ and Herod.

proposal to eliminate an entire generation of males from Bethlehem, the contrast between his eager son who, likely thinking of his own political fortunes, urges his father to carry out the slaughter and an absent infant Christ who is one of few males to escape the Massacre helps enhance the dramatic tension of the episode, at the very least. While the York pageant plays the Herod's son/God's son parallel more explicitly than other versions do, York's Herod also proves the most toothless of his English versions. Whereas the other Herods fight off the prophecies received by the Magi and Herod's own advisors, the Herod of the York Magi pageant uniquely responds to the prophesied loss of his kingship with exasperation rather than anger: 'Allas, than am I lorne,| This wax ay werre and werre' (ll. 235–36). The York Massacre, though no less violent, presents a comparatively desperate Herod, resigned to the loss of his kingdom. It is no small irony that the only play to extend Herod's family tree is also the play in which Herod's reign is the most evidently doomed.

A son of Herod does materialize in another episode of the Massacre, but here, as a non-speaking infant, he proves little more than a prop. In the Chester 'Slaughter of the Innocents' (no. 10), after Herod approves the Massacre, one of his knights kills an infant whom any attentive audience member would recognize as too richly adorned to be the son of simple townsfolk. Shortly after the boy's caretaker reveals the identity of the slain infant to the knight, Herod enters the scene to confirm what the audience already knows:

Hee was right sycker in silke araye,
In gould and pyrrie that was so gaye.
They might well knowe by this daye
He was a kinges sonne. (ll. 409–12)

The Chester pageant appears to include baby Herod in order to highlight the contrast stressed in the York cycle with additional poignancy. In a dramatic turn of events, Herod's knights spare the infant Christ and instead kill the king's only heir, ending Herod's reign doubly. Reconciled to his now-impotent future, Herod's arms and legs begin to rot and he dies twenty lines later.

Although the death of Herod's infant son was hardly biblical, its apocryphal popularity must have been activated by *some* desire: to position Herod's knowledge and faithlessness as herald of the premature end to his family line makes for divine retribution indeed.⁵⁵ The Chester playwright emphasizes the tidiness of

⁵⁵ Lumiansky and Mills explain the story as indebted to 'a misapplication of a comment made elsewhere of Herod's treatment of his sons' in Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, bk II, chap. 4, trans. by Davies, p. 156. The death of Herod's son is featured in two popular sources for the English

Herod's downfall by playing the death of father and son so closely to one another — some sixty lines apart — testifying to the swift and sure justice meted out to those who misperceive the grip of faith over blood in matters of regal legitimacy.⁵⁶ If we can understand Herod's potency as related to genealogical concerns, the Chester cycle visualizes just such an effectively castrated Herod. Curbing Herod's ability to felicitously reproduce, this scene counteracts some of the more dangerous contingencies that threaten to spawn from the shadows of the cycle's epistemological program of faith as reason.

The issue of Herod's potency, consonant with his ability to extend a genealogy of anti-Christian villainy, relates also to the varied history of his death. The most popular depiction of his demise, in which a corrupted Herod decomposes while still alive, comes from Josephus, and can also be found in the *Historia scolastica*, *Legend aurea*, and the *Stanzaic Life of Christ*. In these texts, as in the Chester Massacre, Herod rots to death, although in Josephus this occurs only after he murders two sons and suffers the accidental death of a third.⁵⁷ However, in a stark reversal of Josephus, the *Cursor mundi*, inspired perhaps by Herman of Valenciennes's versified French Bible, arranges Herod's death at the hands of his own son: aided by members of Herod's court, Herod's son Archelaus drowns the king in a tub of boiling oil.⁵⁸ Traditions of a suicidal Herod also proliferate in a strand of apocrypha that includes Eusebius and Remigius of Auxerre, narratives that also made their way into late medieval Middle English texts,⁵⁹ including the

cycle plays, the *Legend aurea* and *The Stanzaic Life of Christ*.

⁵⁶ As Marlin argues, Latin playwrights had historically used Herod to advocate in favour of ecclesiastical authority in contemporary conflicts over investiture and the bounds of secular power.

⁵⁷ In Josephus's account, Herod suspects disloyalty among his sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and travels with them to Rome for a hearing in front of the Emperor. The Emperor finds the sons innocent of conspiracy. However, Herod's lingering, paranoid doubts begin to drive him mad. Herod holds his own trial where he finds his sons guilty and has them strangled (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, 16. 394; Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. and trans. by Thackeray, 1. 27). The aforementioned texts abbreviate these events and attempt to reconcile them with timeline of related events in the Bible.

⁵⁸ For a detailed account of this strange version of Herod's death, see Skey, 'The Death of Herod'.

⁵⁹ Josephus reports that in his later life, wracked with disease, Herod attempts suicide with a fruit knife, but is 'saved' by his cousin, Achiabus. When in the third century Eusebius translates Josephus, he renders the suicide successful — a proper ending for a wicked king. See Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. by Williamson, bk 1, chap. 8.

Life of St. Anne and a sermon of John Mirk.⁶⁰ Such interest in Herod's downfall should not be surprising given his popularity as an exemplary figure throughout the Middle Ages. However, the fact that each of these traditions emphasizes Herod's failure to ensure the transmission of his genes, lineage, and narrative for another generation testifies to a long-standing association between the fate of a failed Herod and that of a triumphant Christendom.

In no tradition then is Herod sexually impotent, and yet the narrative accounts of his death indicate a cursed lineage: either he kills his sons (directly or indirectly) and then kills himself, or, murdered by his son, suffers an unnatural death related to his sinful life. Often his death relates directly to regal failures, through which some level of political impotence is implied. While the expansive tradition of Herod's death signals an undeniable interest in his genealogy, we cannot yet safely conclude that castrating him helped playwrights neutralize the villainy these plays cite as descending from him. Though Herod's Filius in the York cycle proves harmless, some of the cycles feature a more powerful Herod Agrippa, the son of Herod's son Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great. As remarked earlier, Herod the Great's death in the some cycles recalls the biblical description of the death of Agrippa, described in Acts 12. 20–25. In Acts, Agrippa is literally eaten alive by worms, which Josephus understood as gangrene of Herod's genitals.⁶¹ The N-Town death of Herod invokes this image of a divinely castrated king, punished for his evil behaviour such that 'wormys mete is his body' (l. 256). So even Herod's relatives — along with the N-Town Herod the Great — suffer a death symbolically located at the site of male potency. Even if his progeny are able to escape Herod's madness, they partake of the same cursed fate that plagued their forbear.

While questions about the genealogy Herod engenders often centre on reproduction, the fact that the most significant challenge to his rule comes from a child of unknown paternity calls attention to the matter of regal legitimacy. Across the texts that discuss his efficacy as a ruler, Herod displays his customary arrogance and jealousy, but also exudes a paranoia through which he betrays his own insecurities about the authority of his kingship. Historically, this make sense given that, as an Idumean and pro-Roman 'client king', Herod lacked a secure hold on the throne of Judea. Not only was he widely considered a usurper of the throne, the Chester playwright insists that he 'is noe Jewe borne nor of that progenye' (l. 278).

Herod certainly paid little respect to those who came before him, in any case. According to Josephus, he rifled the tombs of David and Solomon, his forebears

⁶⁰ Mirk, *Festial*, ed. by Erbe, p. 194.

⁶¹ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. and trans. by Thackeray, 1. 656

and models for kingship, in order to secure the necessary funds to continue his own building projects.⁶² Eusebius, in another attempt to more effectively align Herod's actions with his growing typological import, modifies Josephus and claims that Herod burned the Jewish genealogies so that no one would know that he was only nominally Jewish (1. 7).⁶³ Thus, by the time of Eusebius, Christian scholars recognized King Herod as an illegitimate stranger of ignoble blood who, as the first foreign king of Judea, paid no respect to past or future kings, and whose jealousy and paranoia inspired the murders of his own family members — the only allies he might have had. The *Stanzaic Life of Christ*, expanding this medieval legend of Herod, textures Herod's jealousy and paranoia with an underlying madness: here Herod burned the genealogies so that no would know that there ever existed any other king (ll. 3597–3612).⁶⁴

The plays certainly pick up on Herod's desperate and paranoid attempt to establish forcefully the legitimacy, singularity, and permanence of his rule. In the Chester Magi pageant (no. 8), Herod's doctor explains Christ's coming as a direct consequence of Herod's illegitimacy: 'the Jewes knowe non of ther blood descendinge| by succession to claime the scepter and regaltie' (ll. 281–82). Tautological as it might be, Herod's refusal to surrender to the faith-based genealogy of Christian rule legitimates his fear, expressed in Chester (no. 10), that Christ will 'bereave [his] heritage' (l. 27). Such insistent preventative thinking, combined with a serious oversimplification of the circumstances he attempts to escape, accomplishes a view of Herod who deceives himself, with a history-denying *mauvaise foi*, into thinking that he *knows* better. Though he possesses the scriptural information, Herod also lacks faith, which leaves him necessarily shrouded in ignorance. Of course, these narratives also stress that Herod's impatient disposition negates any notion of permanence to which these legitimating tactics might aspire.

To position a virile Herod as genealogical forbear of spiritual infelicity and epistemological hubris would seriously threaten Christian eschatology, which guarantees victory only to true believers. However, the pageants illustrate the

⁶² Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, 16. 7

⁶³ Moreover, as Coletti notes in 'Re-reading the Story of Herod', Eusebius stresses Herod's lowly origins, claiming that Herod's father was the son of a 'certain temple slave' who, because *his* father was too poor to pay for his return, was brought up as an Idumaen after robbers carried him there from Ascalon (bk I, chap. 6).

⁶⁴ Doob views the revision in the *Stanzaic Life* as a purposeful accentuation of Herod's anxiety over his renown, which matches his status in the plays as exemplar of the importance of humility; Doob, 'The Mad Sinner', p. 99.

inevitable sterility of ambitions not rooted in faith. Although his raging and arrogance may command the audience's immediate attention, the manifest valences of Herod's 'impotence' across the cycles — sexual, spiritual, political, and linguistic — help establish his eschatological appeal. In each cycle, a comparison between Herod and Christ pits a history of patricide, suicide, and ruin against the fluid, if not mystical continuity of Judeo-Christian eschatology. In such a comparison, Herod's impotence becomes the genealogical metaphor through which audience and critic understand resistance to a Christian unfolding of history as futile.

Reading with Herod

I have traced the characterization and performances of Herod in Middle English cycle drama to show how he becomes the metonymic villain in the plays who marks the shift between an older, 'impotent' historical genealogy and the ascendancy of the eschatological narrative of Christianity. There is clearly something anxiety-provoking about a virile Herod, and yet the real conflict regarding his potency centres on a struggle to untangle Herod's ability to fruitfully multiply from his doomed prowess as ruler. The cycle plays partially undercut the threat he poses by simplifying his genealogy into a Herod-function, collapsing Christian alterity into one genealogical line of Christian enemies, and then, through his actions, eliminating the possibility of regeneration altogether.

It is the very abundance of conflicting spiritual, political, and narrative associations that finally defines Herod in the cycles. Wedged between earthly and spiritual rule as well as historical-Roman time Christian-messianic time, Herod represents the oppression Christianity had overcome. Embodied on stage, he also evokes contemporary enemies of the Christian present, known and unknown, and suggests, through his predetermined failures, the impotence of a non-Christian future. Herod, vacillating from negative historical exemplar to comic relief to epistemological model — whipping the audience in and out of time in the process — models the necessity of attending to both local and universal concerns when reading the plays. To understand Herod's antagonistic relationship with Christ as only dangerous would be to ignore the audience's position as participants in an already understood salvific history. To view Herod's absurd pomposity as a merely comic distraction from a cycle's more sober concerns misreads the figural significance of Herod's bombastic effect.

As a medium through which playwrights develop a kind of vernacular typology, these representations of Herod also testify to the vitality of cycle drama for the project of more clearly understanding the landscape of fifteenth-century ver-

anular theology in England. Given Herod's outsider status, his role in the cycles complicates both medieval and contemporary assessments of the Christian typological imaginary and of the supercessionary narrative traditionally affixed to the figural relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Whilst in some moments, the cycle plays hint at Christian supersession in terms of traditional typological foreshadowing, their explicit entrance into Christian epistemology occurs elsewhere.⁶⁵ This moment, crystallized in the annunciation of Christ's birth, represents a movement from the aberrant, worldly, and non-transcendent genealogy of Herod to the elegantly mystical dynamics of Christ's genealogy, traced from generations of Jewish prophecy. Herod's function as epistemological hinge is important because it shows that the cycles align Jewish with Christian time and pit that unbroken genealogy against one representative of temporal force and non-belief. In the context of Lollard threats and other concerns about orthodoxy, the plays favour a unitary understanding of the narrative of Christianity rather than one punctuated by reform and renewal.

And, indeed, although typological readings of the cycle plays have been criticized as intellectualizations of a decidedly popular narrative form, Ohly reminds us that typology was so pervasive in medieval thought that its deployment in cycle drama would hardly be considered elite or esoteric. The English mystery plays complicate supercessionary typology by uniquely foregrounding the degree to which Herod *knows* the severity of his actions. The composite picture of Herod's character across pageants belongs to a larger practice of forecasting the Christian enemy as eternal, knowing, and thus outside traditional notions of history. The alignment of deviance and knowledge reaffirms faith and humility as the governing ethics of Christian epistemology.

In a Christian cosmology, there are far worse things than the unknown.

⁶⁵ See Myers, 'Typology and the Audience of the English Cycle Plays.'

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JOHN FOXE'S CHAUCER: AFFECTING FORM IN POST-HISTORICIST CRITICISM

Holly Crocker

Medievalists usually don't think of the sixteenth-century martyrologist John Foxe as a precursor. Although he spent much of his later life in Continental exile due to his radical reformist views, Foxe was intensely engaged with the medieval past: his Latin *Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum*, printed near the beginning of Mary I's reign in 1554, featured forerunners of the 'true church', from John Wyclif, to the lollards, to Jan Hus; similarly, his *Actes and Monuments*, beginning with the 1570 expansion, assembles a vast array of documents, texts, and accounts from the centuries that preceded Foxe's own.¹ Nevertheless, Foxe's grand narrative is mostly overlooked because, as Andrew Escobedo explains, 'Foxe establishes a religious link to the past at the expense of a national one'.² For many, Foxe distorts the medieval past to authenticate his presentist story. That's not the only reason Foxe's history has been neglected, however. While pursuing the continuity of a godly community across time, Foxe fails to organize

¹ King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'*, takes a comprehensive look at the collaborative process used to produce the successive editions of the *Actes and Monuments*. Following his lead, throughout this paper 'Foxe' does not designate an individual but rather the collaborative that compiled the documents, accounts, and testimonies contained in these volumes.

² Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss*, p. 30.

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Abstract: This essay considers John Foxe's treatment of Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Actes and Monuments* as it might shed light on 'post-historicist' criticism. Instead of a chronology, Foxe uses a combination of form and affect to unite the threads of his reformist history. Chaucer is not connected to events of the fourteenth century, but finds formal and affective affinities with other reformist writers across three centuries. By emphasizing Chaucer's mobile poetic forms, Foxe combines irregular temporal trajectories to figure a reformist aesthetic that exceeds traditional historicist analysis.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, affect, historicism, post-historicism, form.

his exhaustive chronicle of pre-1500 England using traditional markers of temporal coherence. In fact, the account of the medieval past contained in *The Actes and Monuments* is far more dispersed than its regimented partitions of history might otherwise indicate. To read Foxe's Middle Ages first requires one to find it amongst the scattered temporal ruins of the *Book of Martyrs*, since many of the figures we have come to view as familiar monuments of medieval history are ostentatiously out of place.

Foxe described himself as a 'story teller', and in this essay I seek to understand what that self-attribution might mean in the context of our current critical moment in medieval literary studies.³ In other words, rather than worry over whether or not Foxe was a proper historian, I suggest Foxe's methods of engagement with the past are relevant to what is increasingly called 'post-historicist' criticism in medieval literary studies.⁴ Foxe assembles his vision of the medieval past using a radical form of temporal dislocation, which, I will suggest in what follows, is made startlingly apparent by his treatment of the fourteenth-century poet Geoffrey Chaucer. If medievalists know one thing about Foxe, ordinarily it is the fact that he recruited Chaucer into the reformist cause by calling him a 'right Wicleuian' (VII.965).⁵ What is less well known is that this attribution is included in a discussion of sixteenth-century erudition. If you go looking for Chaucer in Foxe's history of the fourteenth century, he is nowhere to be found.

Chaucer's historical dislocation reveals Foxe's approach to the past. As I shall suggest in what follows, Foxe's vision of history is organized not by temporal sequence but by expressive affinities. Although he proclaims strict fidelity to the literal sense, Foxe evinces a keen awareness that shared formal characteristics influence the ways particular figures, events, or texts might be grouped together across time. Foxe therefore validates important aspects of post-historicist criticism: Paul Strohm and Maura Nolan emphasize 'the form of the utterance' as crucial to a criticism that retains a concern for history's multiplicity.⁶ But Foxe doesn't

³ Collinson, 'Foxe as a Historian', explains Foxe's relation to protocols of sixteenth-century historiography. His essay calls attention to Foxe's self-description.

⁴ See Scala and Federico, 'Introduction: Getting Post-Historical', for an insightful overview of historicism's past and present.

⁵ All references, hereafter cited parenthetically, are from Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online*. Although my paper references elements of other editions (e.g., the title of 1563, or the calendar of 1563 and 1583), all citations are from the 1570 edition, hereafter cited parenthetically by volume and page number. Betteridge, 'From Prophetic to Apocalyptic', calls Foxe's 1570 edition the 'apocalyptic' edition, mostly based on its presentation of the Marian era.

⁶ Strohm, 'Historicity without Historicism?', p. 384; Nolan, 'Historicism after Historicism'.

just use form to organize the past: he also uses affect, or the intensity of feelings (physical and emotional) produced by putting different bodies into contact with one another, in unexpected temporal encounters. This aspect of Foxe's method is also gaining critical attention in medieval literary studies. In their analyses of enchantment and invention in medieval literary productions, Tara Williams and Nicholas Watson have begun to address the multivalent expressions of feeling that formalize historical desires.⁷ And although it would be an exaggeration to suggest Foxe is a post-historicist ahead of his time, his Chaucer offers significant insights for the future of medieval literary scholarship in the wake of new historicism: as I shall suggest, his discontinuous treatment of Chaucer demonstrates history's dependence on a deliberate conjunction of form and affect.

In particular, John Foxe's Chaucer calls attention to the affective connections discrete literary modes establish between historical periods. Paying attention to form as a means to appreciate the multiplicity of history is incomplete without an accompanying consideration of affect. For modern theorists, affect is a non-rational, bodily force that contests individualist accounts of human intentionality.⁸ Affect is not emotion, as Charles Altieri insists, but can better be described, according to Brian Massumi, as an 'intensity' that informs experience before we have formalized it into socially recognizable meanings.⁹ If we agree that affect is 'pre-ideological', as some of its current proponents maintain, this does not mean these corporeal intensities remain extrinsic to convictions or commitments.

Strohm draws on Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, p. 106: 'Any historicism needs to confront the difference between historicity and historicism — that is to say, the difference between the material, institutional forces it is interested in and the modes and protocols of knowledge by which those materials are disciplined, by which they are given form.' Nolan invokes Wolfson, 'Reading for Form', to develop a historicism attentive to form.

⁷ Williams, 'Enchanted Historicism', and Watson, 'The Phantasmal Past'. Also see Watson, 'Desire for the Past', which assesses affect's role in late medieval literature.

⁸ Some of the most important voices in affect theory are included in Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*. Also see Clough and Halley, *The Affective Turn*. In his foreword to the latter, Michael Hardt suggests one of the things affects are 'good for' is their ability to 'illuminate [...] both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers' (p. ix).

⁹ Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture*, p. 2, insists that affect is not reducible to emotion (Altieri's four basic categories — feelings, moods, passions, and emotions — seek to account for the cognitive, somatic, psychic, and quasi-spiritual dimensions of affect). Emotions are often treated as forms of affect by affect theorists: Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual*, is probably the most influential modern account of affect for the social sciences and humanities. For Massumi's discussion of emotion's relation to affect, see pp. 27–28.

Rather, in an even stronger claim, affect is posited as the bodily force that informs our affiliations without, or sometimes even in opposition to, our rational consent. As William Connolly argues, '[C]ulture involves practices in which the porosity of argument is inhabited by more noise, unstated habit, and differential intensities of affect than adamant rationalists acknowledge.'¹⁰ Elsewhere, Sara Ahmed calls affect 'sticky', and in her analysis, affect creates bonds across times, places, and texts.¹¹ In the *Actes and Monuments*, affect not only animates form but also reforms the temporal threads of Foxe's grand narrative.

As a consequence, a major task of post-historicist criticism should be to analyse the historical and formal connections that affect makes culturally intelligible. As I shall suggest in the first part of this essay, Foxe's history requires a distinctive form of temporality, what a number of thinkers, following Friedrich Nietzsche, call an *untimely* conception of the past.¹² For Foxe's historical project to succeed, certain figures defy temporal boundaries, undoing what we might think of as time-bound divisions to establish lasting affinities. By examining the oft-overlooked portions of Foxe's project, those earlier centuries that lead up to his cultural present, I mean to show that Foxe is invested in cultivating what he describes as a 'godly' reading community that crosses all temporal periods. In the second part of this essay, I argue these connections are primarily formal, posited using commonly recognizable literary *topoi*. Literary forms mark some expressions as part of the past, but they also affect the present and its possible outcomes. Most importantly, they forge connections between different temporal moments, allowing past and present to coexist without eliding their differences for the

¹⁰ Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, p. 44. Ruth Leys, whose recent critique of affect studies, 'The Turn to Affect', drew my attention to this passage in Connolly, takes issue with the neuroscience upon which affect theory relies. And, while I am certainly not qualified to assess the scientific evidence pro or con, here is where a historicist turn to affect is useful. Whether or not affect stands outside meaning in human psychological processes, there are certainly historic accounts of affect that describe a passionate frenzy, more bodily than mental, that shapes reactions to experience beyond rational control. For thorough accounts of what we now call 'emotions', see Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*; Meyer, *Le Philosophe et les passions*; and Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, esp. pp. 1–61.

¹¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 44–49. See also Ahmed, 'Happy Objects'.

¹² Nietzsche, 'On the Utility and Liability of History', trans. by Gray. See also, Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, p. 11, where she most clearly theorizes the untimely in terms that galvanize my argument: 'The untimely is that which is strong enough, active enough, to withstand the drive of the present to similarity, resemblance, or recognition, for the untimely brings with it the difference that portends the future.' Harris, *Untimely Matter*, surveys competing early modern historicisms in relation to notions of the untimely in a litany of theorists.

future. It is no accident, therefore, that some of the most mobile figures in the *Actes and Monuments* have more to do with poetry than history.

Chaucer moves, moreover, in ways that illuminate the emerging formal debates that define both literary and political expression in sixteenth-century England. Instead of the Chaucer whose rhetorical poise and dynamic erudition was magnificently affirmed by the masterful *Troilus and Criseyde*, Foxe promotes a reformist Chaucer, a religious writer who employs literary form to obscure the political dangers that accompany institutional critique.¹³ And, although Foxe privileges simplicity and immediacy, his treatment of Chaucer advances a formalism that moves beyond the plain letter of the text. In the third part of my essay, I argue Foxe relies upon affect to foster a readership for his formal expressions, especially his Chaucer. Relying on the power of the early modern 'affections', the *Book of Martyrs* explicitly asks readers to feel their way through this meandering collation.¹⁴ With a firm awareness that 'form is inevitably a relationship', Foxe uses irregular temporal trajectories to consolidate an emotional community for his ecclesiastical history.¹⁵ Readers without reformist affinities cannot even read, for they are blind to the meanings of Chaucer's ingenious literary forms. In acknowledging the dangers of this exclusively cultivated formalism, my argument draws parallels between Foxe's use of Chaucer and our own critical moment in post-historicist medieval studies. Foxe's Chaucer ultimately stands as a warning to later readers, a timely caution against using exclusive and adversarial poetic constructions to posit authentic, 'heartfelt' connections to the past.

¹³ For important analyses of Chaucer's renovation for the Renaissance, see Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer*; Krier, *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*; Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII*; Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*; Swart, 'Chaucer and the English Reformation'; Patterson, 'Reforming Chaucer'; and, most central to my early thinking about this topic, Georgianna, 'The Protestant Chaucer'.

¹⁴ Following Foxe, I rely on the constellation of terms that derive from the Latin verb *afficere*, including the *affectiones* and the *affectus*, to capture a range of emotional dispositions. See Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson's introduction to *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, p. 2, which explain the shift that emotive language has undergone since Foxe's day: 'The Renaissance words that most closely approximated what we call emotion were "passion" and "affection".' Throughout this paper I prefer the modern cognate 'affect' because it is not as easily confused with the modern (exclusively positive) meanings of 'passion' and 'affection', and because it retains the prefix *af-*, which, by signaling movement toward or against, expresses our ability to move or be moved by the worlds we inhabit.

¹⁵ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 187.

History

Through the reliquary structure of the *Actes and Monuments*, Foxe exhibits a fervent conviction that the recollection of the past not only remakes the present but also shapes the future. His confidence notwithstanding, Foxe's apocalyptic vision of history has a deeply unsettling effect on the timeline he constructs. On the one hand, history is relentlessly teleological, ever progressing to a final reckoning in the Last Judgement. On the other, history is radically belated, already suspended by its predetermination. Because the grand arc of eschatology is fore-known, fragments of the past are simply an assembled testament to the age that awaits. But what a testament Foxe assembled! Even if we ignore the most famous part of Foxe's martyrology, which contains an interested account of the century that culminates in his Elizabethan present, the *Actes and Monuments* is a *wunderkammer* of medieval fragments. By the time he compiled his 1570 edition, Foxe and his collaborators had amassed six volumes and more than nine hundred pages of materials recounting the early history of the true church, from its initial persecutions after Christ's nativity to its ultimate corruption in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Unlike those Christian historians who preceded him, including Eusebius, Augustine, and Bale, Foxe sought to bring together as many documents, testimonies, and reports as possible to present his long view of the Christian church.¹⁶

In Foxe's rendering, Protestant reform was not a new movement; instead, it was the outgrowth of a prolonged struggle that centrally unfolded in the period we think of as the Middle Ages. In order, he says, to 'serue to the profit of the reader of his history' (I.1), Foxe provides a periodic guide that supposedly reflects the work's temporal organization. The true church, after its apostolic establishment, enjoyed a millennium of peaceful rule. Growing ecclesiastical corruption, however, gave occasion for the 'loosing out of Sathan' (I.1), or a four-hundred-year reign of Antichrist over the faithful. It was only with the fourteenth century, and really only with John Wyclif's challenge to papal authority in the 1380s, that the Antichrist's power on earth was curtailed. After Wyclif, there began a period of 'reformation and purging of the Church of God [...] the durance of which time hath continued from. 260. yeares hetherto, and how long it shal continue more, the Lord & gouvernour of all times onely knoweth' (I.1). As schematic as this temporal organization appears, Foxe cannot maintain its teleological impe-

¹⁶ Although it has been criticized for its anachronistic and overbearing thesis (two Foxean habits, to be sure), Haller, *The Elect Nation*, remains invaluable to any account of Foxe's intellectual influences. For a discussion of Foxe's view of history, see, pp. 130–86 in particular.

tus without significant departures. In Foxe's initial periodization, Wyclif marks the beginning of the church's reformation in the late fourteenth century; later, however, Foxe positions the Oxford theologian's struggle squarely within the era of Antichrist's ascendancy. The title of Volume IV of the *Actes and Monuments*, which covers the years from William the Conqueror to John Wyclif (the eleventh to fourteenth centuries), announces this temporal overlap: 'vherin is described the proud and misorderd raigne of Antichrist, begynnyng to styrre in the church of Christ' (iv.222). Despite its surplus, this organization of period at least remains consistent with Foxe's initial temporal scheme, which makes Wyclif the primary figure in the changing course of the church's corruption.

Volume v departs altogether from this orderly yet overlapping procession, causing a gap that requires a great deal of historical explanation, even temporal backfill, for Foxe to reconcile. Recording 'the last 300. yeares from the loosyng out of Satan' (v.493), Foxe admits that he has missed the moment at which he should have transitioned between periods in his story:

Thus hauing discourses in these former bookes, the order and course of yeares, from the firste tyeng vp of Satan, vnto the yere of our Lord, 1360. I haue a litle ouer passed þe stinte of tyme in the Scriptures appointed, for the loosyng out of him agayne. (v.493)

As Foxe recognizes, he muddles what we call the Middle Ages. Rather than correcting these lapses in time, Foxe completely abandons his initial outline of ecclesiastical periods. Book I divides history into:

1. Period of peace from Christ's death to *c.* 1000; this period included three ages, of approximately three hundred years each:
 - a. Period of suffering.
 - b. Period of flourishing.
 - c. Period of backsliding.
2. Period of Antichrist, stretching until *c.* 1380.
3. Period of reformation, reaching to 1560 and beyond. (i.1)

Foxe's main challenge is to reconcile his ages of the church with the three temporal divisions set down in the Book of Revelation. Book v provides the following organization:

1. First, the beyng abroad of Satan to deceaue the worlde.
2. The byndyng vp of hym.
3. Thirdly the loosyng out of hym agayne, after a M. yeres consummate, for a tyme. (v.493)

While it might seem logical for Foxe to overlay these eras, in Book v he redefines his chronology in ways that are incommensurate with the period divisions of Book i.

Indeed, he resists the wisdom that would set Satan's binding at Christ's nativity, going to some lengths to dispute this date, even though he ends up contradicting the timetable he originally conceives as a consequence. With his suggestion in Book v that the thousand years of peaceful Christian rule began with the crowning of Constantine (fourth century), rather than Christ's birth, Foxe reassigns the date for the breakdown of the church's order to some time around the ascension of Edward III, or 1327. With this shift, Foxe collapses the unleashing of Satan and the period of reformation, eliminating the boundary between Wyclif's England and his own through shifting temporal breaks. Yet this historical reorganization has its benefits. Using his first schema, which marks the loosing of Satan around the year 1000, Foxe characterizes 1215 as a point when 'altogether was turned vpside downe, all order broken, discipline dissolved, true doctrine defaced, Christen fayth extinguished' (Preface, p. 0004). Later, however, Foxe uses the events of 1215 to support his claim that the church became corrupt over time, for this was the year when 'Transubstāiation [was] first brought in'. (iv.324). According to his later timeline, 1215 is fully within the millennium of ecclesiastical peace; in this revision, then, the introduction of transubstantiation signals the decay of virtue that allows the Antichrist to gain ascendancy over the true church. Foxe therefore sustains contradictory accounts of time in order to prepare the historical ground for the unleashing of Antichrist and the reform of the true church.

Both timelines make the fourteenth century into an epochal hinge in a history of the church's transformation, which is informed by the roundabout ways in which Foxe unfolds time across his history. In Foxe's initial chronology, reform begins in 1380; but in his later revision, the loosing of Satan begins in 1327. With this change, corruption and resistance coincide. As these limited examples demonstrate, Foxe maintains only a vague sense of temporal continuity across his sprawling chronicle. Time folds back on itself, or fails to keep pace with the events recorded. Happenings do not follow a linear order, and figures cross back and forth across the divides that Foxe otherwise strictly delimits. Foxe's timeline is simultaneously unwavering and meandering, allowing him to revisit events he has already presented, or to pursue a thread past the limit of time he is strictly representing. It is not, however, that Foxe is simply unable to keep the myriad strands of his story straight as he spins out their various trajectories. Rather, Foxe deliberately crosses streams of time in his voluminous rendering, using particular dates, events, or figures to make connections across the

divides of time he erects. While using the succession of English kings as a guide, Foxe departs from this unyielding framework when events warrant a more fluid form of temporal organization.

Indeed, the occasion that would seemingly garner protracted attention — the crowning of Henry VII as the founding of the Tudor dynasty — merits only an elegantly triumphal paragraph. Instead, the discussion gathered under Henry's reign mostly features other threads of history, including Foxe's most ostentatious break with a linear logic of time. Before returning to the troubles that beset England early in the sixteenth century, and after an account of the emperor Maximillian's exemplary struggles on the Continent, Foxe provides a comprehensive history of the Turks. Because he delineates their fortunes from their founding to the present, this narrative comprises a parallel history to Foxe's long view of the Christian church. Foxe thus positions an alternate view of the medieval past squarely at the beginning of the age he characterizes as his own present. Once again, Foxe mixes our Middle Ages, illuminating the stark differences between his form of history and that which moderns profess to prefer. Foxe's account of the Turks is not prompted by a meditation on the fall of Constantinople, as modern readers of the period would perhaps expect. When Foxe reports Constantinople's humiliating defeat, he sees it just as much as an example of Christians betraying one another, since many of those in the Turkish forces hailed from locales that 'had þe name yet of Christians' (VI.838). Simply put, Constantinople is important because its demise reflects upon Rome's failure.

As his account insists, the Roman church is a historical outlier, a newfangled usurper that deters the true church from its proper course. Yet the church of Rome is simultaneously represented as ancient in Foxe's account, for in reporting the fall of Constantinople in 1453, he warns that 'olde Rome may learne of new Rome, to take heede and beware by time' (VI.839). Foxe does not relate the fall of Constantinople 'to set forth the barbarous crueltie of these fylthy rakehels and mercyles murtherers' (VI.839). Rather, he sees the fall of this 'New Rome' as a warning to the rest of Christendom, 'that we being admonished by þe dolefull ruine & misery of these our euenchristened, maye call to mynde the plagues and miseries deserued, which seeme to hang no lesse ouer our own heades' (VI.839). Foxe is aware of the dangers accompanying such temporal infidelity, worrying about the ruptures that historical excess might introduce into his neat schematization of England's ecclesiastical history. Offering an apology as a way of introduction — 'IF it were not that I feare to ouerlay this our volume with heapes of foreine histories, whiche haue professed chiefly to entreat of Actes and monumes here done at home' — Foxe presents a six-fold justification for including a history of the Turks within his description of the reign of Henry VII (VI.871).

Foxe indulges in what he describes as a temporal 'digression' to stress the mounting urgency of change demanded by history. Treating time as a discontinuous flow of events that can be connected with disparate cultural moments, Foxe jumps in and out of chronology with deliberate and declared purpose. Having made his point, that papal power is insufficient to face down a continuing Turkish threat (which he demonstrates through a successive history of failure against the Turks), he returns to his main concern: 'Wherfore after the story of the Turkes thus finished, now to reenter agayne there, where as we left, in describing the domesticall troubles and persecutions here at home vnder the Byshop of Rome' (vi.917). Conceiving of time as a coursing stream that he, who 'onely write the hystorie, and the Actes of them both', can separate himself from for strategic goals, Foxe insists that different histories have continued vitality within the present, since past and present are important components of the future (vi.917). The history of the Turks does not merely bear upon the present. Far more important, it ushers in the future that Foxe and his collaborators envision.¹⁷ Through its figurative association of old and new Rome, past and future meet in a present that simply announces what is to come. Yet, if it is fair to say that Foxe saw the future coming, in his view, he was not alone.

Foxe sees the past as a shared experience, a bond of commitment with others who were endowed with similar prophetic powers. The fourteenth-century mystic Bridget of Sweden, for instance, is invoked as a visionary who foretold the destruction the Turk would inflict against Western forces. Together with thirteenth-century visionary Hildegard of Bingen and the French 'Bardi', Foxe uses Bridget's mystical writings to warn that the Turks are likely not just to conquer Cologne but also 'geue some attempt agaynst England by the seas' (vi.913). These forward-looking figures move across temporal divides, defining the struggle for church reform as a connected and continuing battle against the enemies of God. And, although the Turk poses a more direct threat to the Christian church, the Antichrist poses a more lasting one. Because the (papal) Antichrist uses the folds of time to cloak his corrupt practice, there is a dire need for those who can see through the ruses of history to unveil the genuine story of Christ's true believers. Here it is clear that prophesy, as a vital part of history that touches the future,

¹⁷ Though Foxe's vision of the past has much in common with Walter Benjamin's, Foxe differs in a deliberate respect. The 'Angelus Novus' Walter Benjamin borrowed from a painting by Paul Klee in his enduring essay, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (Thesis IX, pp. 257–58), is transfixed by the wreckage of the past that continuously accumulates at his feet. Although Foxe clearly shares this fascination in many respects, he piles up the detritus of time with a steady gaze trained on the future he envisions.

holds together the threads of Foxe's expansive narrative. Yet, as Foxe's treatment of medieval writers attests, prophesy is important more for its formalizing function than for its truth content.

We might associate the writings of Hildegard of Bingen with astonishing achievements in music, theology, and medicine, but for Foxe, her visions have an exclusively political charge.¹⁸ In her own historical moment, Hildegard is notable because she anticipated the decline of the Roman church based on the corruption of the begging friars. Her futuristic insight into the time in which she lived reduces the dazzling variation of her expressive output to a single, historically portable, politicized form. Through her singular vision, however, Hildegard makes contacts across time. As a consequence of her purported anti-fraternalism, Hildegard is allied with Geoffrey Chaucer, whom Foxe transports into the thirteenth century as the attributed author of the apocryphal *Jack Upland* in Volume IV of the 1570 *Actes and Monuments*.¹⁹ Chaucer, like Hildegard, finds a place in Foxe's history due to the fixed political form of his satirical writing. It is not that Foxe thinks that Chaucer, or Bridget of Sweden for that matter, belongs to the same century as Hildegard; yet they find alliance, in spite of anachronism, because they share a vision of the future. Chaucer's ability to see religious truth despite church corruption makes him a historically mobile poet. Over six hundred pages and three centuries later, Foxe expands upon his reformist rendering of Geoffrey Chaucer; but by taking him out of temporal context in two different instances, Foxe affirms that Chaucer's status as untimely author depends upon the ideas he can authorize for the reformed religious cause consolidated in the *Book of Martyrs*.

In short, Foxe does not see Geoffrey Chaucer as a poet who hails from a former age. Chaucer is connected to the century before his own in the same way that he is related to Foxe's cultural moment, forming part of a unitary vision of religious history that defies temporal divides. If Chaucer's was a 'time of Antechrist, reigning in the Church of God by violence and tyranny,' Foxe's is a time for 'the reformation and purging of the Church of God, wherein Antichrist beginneth to be reueled, and to appeare in his coulours, and his antichristian doctrine to be detected, & the number of his church decreaseth, and the number of the true Church increaseth' (I.1). Thus, while it is accurate to say that revolution-

¹⁸ Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*.

¹⁹ *Jack Upland*, written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, was printed in a blackletter edition in 1536 and included in Thomas Speght's second edition of Chaucer's *Works* (1602).

ary reformers destroyed 'the very past [they sought] to recuperate,' Foxe certainly does not see his relation to the preceding centuries in the period-specific terms delineated here by James Simpson.²⁰ Instead, Foxe works to form a temporal continuum, using figures like Bridget, Hildegard, and Chaucer to suggest the persistence of truth during an age of corruption within the Christian church. To Foxe, the consolidation of the Tudor dynasty simply marked another point in the progression toward the triumphant reformation that would be ushered in with Christ's second coming. As his series of alternative histories affirms, the reign of Henry VII is only interesting because it demonstrates the 'state of the common wealth doth commonly folow þe state of the Church' (VI.921). One form informs another, across times, across histories, and across texts.

Form

This expansive sense of connection only follows: Foxe was not as clairvoyant as he believed, so he could not have anticipated that the century in which he lived would be differentiated from the Middle Ages by later scholars seeking to demarcate the emergence of a shift toward humanist production in arts and letters. Nevertheless, the *Book of Martyrs* uses poetic form to distinguish reformist belief from its corrupt opponents, differentiating the ornamental duplicity of Roman doctrine from the plain simplicity of reformed faith. This formalist distinction is not new with Foxe, but Foxe uses it with a comprehensiveness that expands its reach across temporal periods. According to the *Actes and Monuments*, there has always been an unadorned mode of Christian expression, which was effaced by the gaudy trappings of the Roman church. This formal definition of 'true' Christian discourse collapses times, remaking authors in the wake of its expansive sweep across the periodic divides Foxe stipulates. Indeed, the gathering of faithful authors in the *Book of Martyrs* reshapes those very writers, often by focusing on one aspect of a writer's work to the exclusion of all others. Hildegard of Bingen, as previously noted, becomes an anti-fraternal visionary. Here we see that the content of Hildegard's writing aligns it with the formal grouping of true Christian expression, but Foxe also uses stylistic features in order to include other writers. John Gower, for example, merits mention in relation to the reformist cause based on the 'studie and learnyng' his works display, notwithstanding the 'barbarous rudenes of that tyme' (VII.965).

Foxe uses both stylistic elements and narrative purpose to consolidate the form of reformist writing, but he mainly explores these expressive aspects in isolation

²⁰ Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, p. 17.

from one another. His presentation of Chaucer's work is different insofar as it merits two extended, mutually exclusive treatments: in the first instance, Chaucer is represented only as an anti-fraternal satirist; in the second, Chaucer is lauded only as a proto-reformist stylist. That these moments are separated by three centuries, and that neither is located in Chaucer's own age — the fourteenth century —, affirms Chaucer's status as an untimely author in a formal sense. Indeed, Foxe's temporally discontinuous deployments of Chaucer equally rely on explicitly formal connections between reformist authors. His comments on Chaucer's style conversely allow Foxe to sustain temporal connections between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. So if Foxe breaks time through his ordering of historical events, he remakes it through his assemblage of formal affinities. Chaucer's style also illustrates the importance of the *Book of Martyrs* to the aesthetic debates over poetics in the sixteenth century.²¹ Although he makes no sustained, formal argument, it is clear that John Foxe was of two minds about the artistry of Chaucer's writing, and it is clear that he was not alone in this line of thinking.

When Foxe initially presents Chaucer, he is a relic of an antique past, separated from Foxe's moment by his archaic form of writing. Yet as Foxe explains, a common affinity of ideas brings Chaucer's work to bear on matters of the thirteenth century: 'as I have done in Hildegardis before: so now to annexe also to the same, a certayne other ancient treatise compiled by Geoffray Chawcer' (iv.335). Chaucer's language is estranging, yet Foxe urges his audience to work through the 'same olde English, wherin first it was set forth' (iv.335). By contrast, the form of Chaucer's work is quite simple, consisting of 'a Dialogue or questions moved in the person of a certain vplandish and simple ploughman of the countrey' (iv.335). Even if his audience has no experience with late medieval reformist satire, Foxe presents the text's formal arrangement as straightforward and accessible to all true believers. By taking up the stance of a 'simple ploughman', Chaucer's text shows 'the blynd ignorance and variable discord, of these irreligious religions, how rude & vnskilful they are in matters and principles of our Christian institution' (iv.335).

From the thorough-going characterization Foxe provides, it seems completely possible for readers to skip the actual text. Or, as happens elsewhere, it seems completely possible for Foxe to omit this narrative satire altogether. Yet, despite this prose treatise's declared difficulty, Foxe goes to some effort to include the work in full. Although he also calls his Chaucerian visitation a 'digression', he sees no little worth in presenting *Jack Upland* as a text that touched the future in its critique of fraternal corruption. Chaucer's text is thus more valuable as a relic

²¹ King, 'Literary Aspects of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*'.

from the past, since its historical separation from Foxe's era reveals a temporal continuity: 'Wherin also þu mayst see, þt it is no new thinges þt their blasphemous doings hath by diuers good men in the olde time bene detected as there are many and diuers other olde bookes to shewe' (iv.335). As one of many antique artefacts establishing reform's historical authority, Chaucer's anti-fraternal critique is worth a read by the faithful audience of the *Book of Martyrs*. But the documentary significance of *Jack Upland* is not all that Foxe emphasizes: indeed, his exposition and inclusion of Chaucer's satire evinces several features of reformist aesthetics that Foxe uses his Chaucerian attribution to explore.

Most basically, including the Chaucerian treatise in its entirety is fundamentally an aesthetic choice: by putting the full text before his audience, Foxe enables readers to engage Chaucer's vernacular for themselves, without mediation. Giving an audience the text diminishes the importance of the speculative imagination, for individual readers can engage the particular figures that *Jack Upland* uses to critique fraternal abuses. Furthermore, in privileging the immediacy of the written word, the Chaucerian text that Foxe bothers to include in the *Book of Martyrs* makes a sustained argument against the ornamental devotions of the fraternal orders. *Jack Upland* eschews a narrative sequence of events, instead posing a series of questions, most of which are purely rhetorical staging grounds for embedded critiques. Because the narrator is a familiar, 'vplandish' figure, the treatise expends no effort in characterizing the brusque interlocutor. His is the voice of righteousness, which loudly and vigorously proclaims the shortcomings of the church, whether Foxe positions him in the thirteenth or the sixteenth century. Foxe assumes readers know this figure, and with good reason. Besides the widespread reification of medieval satire for Protestant purposes, the figure of the simple, plain-speaking plowman was also a contemporary representative of religious conviction.

If readers were unfamiliar with *Piers Plowman*, *Pierce the Plowman's Crede*, or *Mum and the Sothsegger*, they were still likely to associate the figure of the plowman with reformist discourse, since Hugh Latimer assumed this persona in his influential 'Sermon on the Plowers' of 1548.²² Yet, by associating Chaucer with what has been characterized as the 'Plowman tradition', Foxe and his collaborators do more than simply 'Protestantize' Chaucer. Instead, the *Actes and Monuments* uses Chaucer to historicize an aesthetics of reform. It does so, moreover, by emphasizing those aspects of Chaucer's writing that made him less ame-

²² Lawton, 'Lollardy and the "Piers Plowman" Tradition'; Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities*, chapter 2; Kelly, 'Hugh Latimer as Piers Plowman'; Morey, 'Latimer's "Sermon on the Plough"'; Scanlon, 'Langland, Apocalypse and the Early Modern Editor'.

nable to stylists seeking to formulate an English poetic tradition connected to classical models of expression. Philip Sidney's *An apologie for poetrie* (c. 1583) is memorable for its deferential dismissal: 'Yet had [Chaucer] great wants, fitte to be forgiven, in so reverent antiquity.'²³ But a host of other sixteenth-century writers struggled to exalt the dark, alienating archaism of Chaucer's language. Peter Ashton, writing around 1546, puts the matter plainly when he accounts for his own expressive choices:

I studyed rather to vse the most playn and famylier english speche, then ether Chaucers wordes (which by reason of antiquitie be almost out of vse) or else ink horne terms (as they call them), whiche the common people, for lacke of latin, do not vnderstand.²⁴

Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorike* (1563) also associates Chaucerian language with a host of obscurantist trespasses against plain speech, claiming: 'The fine Courtier wil talke nothyng but Chaucer.'²⁵

These writers suggest that Chaucer's antiquity resists his assimilation into a vivacious tradition of English poetry, since his arcane style was incomprehensible to all but a cultivated few. And, although Foxe's Chaucer certainly was not deployed to consolidate a coterie of Cambridge wits who continued to appreciate the full originality of that 'father' of English poesy, there is a strong sense that the Chaucer of the *Book of Martyrs* is directed to a select few.²⁶ Chaucer's antique expression lends authenticity to *Jack Upland*, but it also (un)veils the simple, plain, and relentless truth that galvanizes the treatise as a whole. Even if Chaucer uses 'olde English', the message his text carries is so immediate to the faithful that they can access his difficult meaning without mediating guidance. And, whether he is castigating friars for child theft, accusing friars of corrupting sacramental marriage, or critiquing friars for their luxurious living, Jack's many questions amalgamate to affirm the treatise's major premise: the friars are minis-

²³ Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie*, fol. I4^r. Writing c. 1583, it is a serious question as to whether writers such as Sidney were negatively impacted by the nativist vulgarity of the 'reformist' Chaucer. At any rate, as John N. King notes in his magisterial study *English Reformation Literature*, p. 11, the late sixteenth-century distaste for Chaucer was born from a cultivation of Continental tastes in literature.

²⁴ Ashton, 'Chaucer's Words out of Use'.

²⁵ Wilson, *The arte of rhetorike*, bk III, fol. 83^r (L2^r).

²⁶ See Brewer, *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 9–13, who suggests Chaucer's appeal to scholars studying at Cambridge during the sixteenth century.

ters of Antichrist who undermine the true Christian church.²⁷ Those whom Jack calls ‘Popis freris’ are not only guilty of social abuses; they also ‘defamen trewe preestis of erisie and letten the sowynge of Goddis worde’ (*JU* 305–06).

This comparison is not obscure in *Jack Upland* but is set forth in a long, figuratively rich preamble to the ensuing questions. The Antichrist has servants in all estates — from priests, to lords, to commoners — who corrode the social order from within. All these are at least governed by some structure, however residual. The most dangerous agents of Antichrist, Jack makes clear from the outset, are those without established boundaries or settled loyalties:

Thei ben not obediente to bissophis ne lege men to kyngis, nether thei tilien ne sowen, weden ne repen, nether wede, corn ne gras, ne good that men schal help but oonli hem-silf [...]. Thes ben the flatering freris of al the five ordris, falsest founden in oure feith, and first schulen be distried. (*JU* 58–60; 68–69)

Jack Upland’s line of attack, then, neatly aligns with the Joachimist narrative that Foxe pieces together in the *Book of Martyrs*. That Chaucer did not actually write the alliterative prose treatise that Foxe attributes to him matters little: Foxe’s Chaucer forms part of a long line of authors who expressed the need for ecclesiastical reform with simple urgency. For audiences who understood this central truth, Chaucerian expression would have been plain as day. But not all reformers, much less audiences, saw Chaucer in this way.

Perhaps more familiarly, Chaucer was considered by many sixteenth-century writers to be an erudite poet, whose figurative mastery eluded all but a select elite. On account of his *Troilus and Criseyde*, the long narrative poem that extended poetic continuity from classical Troy to medieval London, Chaucer is frequently singled out for praise by those seeking to formulate an English tradition of expressive achievement. And, though I will not rehearse the many testaments to Chaucer’s versifying skill, suffice it to say that when Roger Ascham calls him ‘oure Englysshe Homer’, his comment stands for a larger literary movement, which relates Chaucer to a different poetic lineage than Foxe seeks to recover.²⁸ Ascham and writers like him sought to connect Chaucer to a classical tradition of letters through frequent comparisons to Greek and Roman writers. Even those who criticized Chaucer, most notably Philip Sidney, were willing to allow Chaucer

²⁷ See *Jack Upland*, ed. by Dean: all further citations are to this edition (as *JU*), cited by line number. See Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*, pp. 135–78, for a consideration of *Jack Upland* as it relates to its late medieval textual community, particularly its situation within an exchange of ‘Upland’ tracts that debated clerical abuses.

²⁸ Ascham, *Toxophilus*, fol. E2^v.

poetic priority above all else his age had to offer.²⁹ But others, such as George Puttenham, made a stronger case for Chaucer's technical mastery: 'His meetre Heroicall of *Troilus and Crisseid* is very graue and stately, keeping the staffe of seuen, and the verse of ten.'³⁰ For these writers, Chaucer promised to maintain English poetry's ancestral relation to classical letters.

As a result, many reformers found Chaucer's writing to be an affront, particularly his *Troilus and Criseyde*. William Tyndale (c. 1535) is most strident in his condemnation, for he argues that the reading of vernacular literature, including Chaucer, leads to moral decay:

Fynally that this thretynge and forbiddinge the laye people to reade the scripture is not for love of youre soules (which they care for as ye foxe doth for ye gysse) is evident & clerer then the sone | in as moch as they permitte & sofre you to reade Robyn hode & beuies of Hampton | Hercules | hector and troylus with a tousande histories and fables of love & wantones & of rybaudry as filthy as herte can thinke to corrupte ye myndes of youth with all | clene contrary to the doctrine of Christ & of his apostles.³¹

As this extended passage demonstrates, Tyndale puts vernacular literary expression at the centre of the debate over Englishing the Bible in the early part of the sixteenth century. In fact, he suggests that such works as Chaucer's are a dangerous substitute, a corrosive distraction from the pure form of reading that the English Bible would allow. Although this concern had institutionally evaporated by the time Foxe was compiling his vast compendium, reading Chaucer continued to be viewed as a frivolous pastime that detracted from Bible reading.³² More particularly, reading *the sort of Chaucer* that might be grouped together with other romances, chronicles, or fables — whether their subject matter was classical or English — troubled reformists such as Tyndale.

As Tyndale's remarks further reveal, the type of history these stories record — the doings of great men from great cultures — detracts from a focus on the singularly true source of human history, the Bible. As Chaucer's own *Retraction* anticipates, there is no room for those works that 'sownen into synne' in a reformed culture of English letters (*CT*, x.1085).³³ Indeed, the central focus on the Bible

²⁹ Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie*, fol. I4^r: 'I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumbling after him.'

³⁰ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 127.

³¹ Tyndale, *The obedience of a Christen man*, 'To the Reader', fol. XX^r.

³² See Brewer, *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, no. 31, p. 102.

³³ *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, p. 328.

threatened to portray all other forms of literary expression as competitive threats to true devotional practice. History, at least as it had been written, had a bad name. This form of writing was itself in need of reform, for it needed to convey the importance of human dealings as these related to Biblical truth. Following John Bale's *Image of Both Churches*, which seized upon history as a fit vehicle for advancing the cause of religious reform, Foxe expands the possibilities of history by including literary expression in its domain. As the use of *Jack Upland* makes plain, part of this process involved simple annexation, collecting writers dispersed across time to speak with one voice against ecclesiastical abuses. It also involved an intense engagement with literary stylistics, since Foxe not only accommodates but also develops a reformist aesthetics that moves beyond the literal sense.³⁴

Departing from the spare prose austerity that he praises in *Jack Upland*, Foxe also makes room for a Chaucer who is widely admired as a consummate English poet. Foxe engages Chaucer's artistic skill as a literary maker, and, by so doing, he fashions a reformed poetics for the true Christian community, past, present, and future. Foxe's return to Chaucer is at least somewhat familiar to many, for it includes his famous characterization of Chaucer as a 'right Wicleuian' (VII.965). Despite this polemical move, Foxe's engagement with Chaucer is a marked departure from his earlier treatment. In probably the most visible difference, Foxe does not include material from a single Chaucerian text to substantiate the claims he makes. Using a series of broad strokes, Foxe depicts Chaucer as a masterful poet, only mentioning individual works as these lend details to the grander portrait he paints. Chaucer's status as a poet, it is worth emphasizing, does not simply rely on his ability to convey a reformist message. While Foxe argues forcefully for Chaucer's status as a proponent of radical reform, he does so based on Chaucer's unsurpassable abilities as a poet. If the particular importance of *Jack Upland* rests on content, Chaucer's greater importance derives from form.

On account of his formal virtuosity, Foxe acknowledges Chaucer as one of the great writers of the English language, using his reputation for literary excellence to establish the sophistication of sixteenth-century luminaries:

I thought it not out of season to couple also some mention of Geffray Chaucer [...]. Whiche although beyng much discrepant from these in course of yeares,

³⁴ King, *English Reformation Literature*, pp. 138–60, discusses the development and deployment of the Protestant 'plain style' in sixteenth-century reformist circles. Holsinger, 'Lollard Ekphrasis', demonstrates the stylistic complexity of the supposedly 'artless' late fourteenth-century poem *Pierce the Plowman's Crede* and, in so doing, illustrates the figurative originality inherent to literalist poetics.

yet may seme not vnworthy to bee matched with these forenamed persons in commendation of their studie and learnyng. (vii.965)

Foxe is interested in Chaucer because he simultaneously forms a part of and stands apart from any historical milieu. He is no more consigned to a past time than the sixteenth-century personages Foxe chronicles. Chaucer does provide historical grounding for excellence in English expression, however, by fulfilling the prescriptive expectations of a writer such as Peter Betham, who advises contemporaries to 'folowe Chaucer, and other olde writers, [...] whan they endeavoure to brynge aganye to his owne clennes oure englysshe tounge'.³⁵ Though Edmund Spenser was too late to have influenced Foxe's presentation, the praise reserved for Chaucer in Volume VII of the *Actes and Monuments* equally treats Chaucer as a 'well of English vndefiled'.³⁶ Foxe's enthusiasm derives from the fact that style enables the substance of reform in Chaucer's work. In other words, Foxe realizes that successfully forwarding any form of reformist polemic requires poetic skill.

Chaucer's lasting ability to move an audience using formal dexterity is the ultimate source of his mastery, at least according to the *Book of Martyrs*. Although the works Foxe credits Chaucer with writing are once again apocryphal, the characterization of Chaucer's literary method is of a piece with other established works. Chaucer conveys his message 'in myrth, and couertly', hiding the objectionable parts of his religious outlook 'vnder shadowes couertly, as vnder a visoure' (vii.965). It might seem surprising for a writer who extols plainness and simplicity to commend Chaucer for his ability to 'suborneth truth, in such sorte' (vii.965), but, with this remark, Foxe reveals his view of plain expression is not as simple as it initially appears. He credits Chaucer with stylistic clarity, asking 'what tale can bee more playnely tolde, then the talke [sic] of the ploughman?' (vii.965). That both texts he attributes to Chaucer are densely figurative allegories seems unimportant to Foxe. The *Testament of Love* is as simple in its treatment of the Eucharist as the *Plowman's Tale* is plain in its identification of the pope as Antichrist.³⁷ Like *Jack Upland*, the message of each text is clear to 'the godly minded' (vii.965). But these texts are not meant for everyone, a point Foxe makes even more forcefully in Volume VII's treatment of Chaucer.

³⁵ Brewer, *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, no. 28, p. 98–99.

³⁶ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, iv.ii.32.

³⁷ The *Plowman's Tale*, c. 1360, was prepared for insertion into the 1532 edition of Chaucer's *Works*, but it was omitted, some believe for its antipapal attitudes. It was, however, printed in a separate edition by Thomas Godfray (1532–36), and it appeared in William Thynne's second edition of Chaucer's *Works* (1542). The *Testament of Love* was included by Thynne in his 1532 edition of Chaucer's *Works*.

Indeed, my abridged presentation of Foxe's praise somewhat obscures the political urgency of Foxe's aesthetic outlook: in a community where religious expression is dangerous, matters of style are vital both to creating and protecting dissident ideas, as well as the groups they consolidate. If Foxe's Chaucer was not meant for everyone, this exclusiveness follows partly because the views Chaucer expresses in Foxe's rendering were politically contentious, even in their own day. Chaucer hides his meaning in order to preserve it, so that 'takyng hys workes but for iestes and toyes, in condemnyng other bookes, [religious authorities] yet permitted his bookes to be read' (vii.965). The comic lightness of Chaucer's verse, according to Foxe, allowed him to convey religious truth to those in need. Yet Chaucer's poetry is also interventionist: 'As also I am partlye informed of certeine, whiche knewe the parties, which to them reported, that by readyng of Chausers workes, they were brought to the true knowledge of Religion' (vii.965). Foxe vouches for this account's credibility, suggesting that clarity emerges from a careful practice of selective reading:

And [this story is] not vnlike to be true. For to omitte other partes of his volume, wherof some are more fabulous then other [...] what finger can pointe out more directly the Pope with his Prelates to be Antichrist, then doth the poore Pellycan reasonyng agaynst the gredy Griffon? (vii.965).

It may be the case that certain of Chaucer's works are more reformist than others, yet the entirety of the Chaucerian corpus lends cover to those works whose contents might make them more susceptible to centralized suppression. Love's frivolity in *Troilus and Criseyde* makes way for a more serious intensity of devotion in the *Testament of Love*. While those who see Chaucer's great Trojan romance as a searching exploration of human mutability might quibble with this reductive interpretation, Foxe at least grants Chaucer's poetry comprehensive respect on account of its diverse formal achievements. Foxe does more, however, than differentiate between kinds of Chaucerian works based on particular contents. Foxe's exposition of Chaucer's method equally relies on discrete rhetorical figures: 'Vnder whiche Hypotyposis or Poesie, who is so blind that seeth not by the Pellicane, the doctrine of Christ, and of the Lollardes to bee defended agaynst the Churche of Rome?' (vii.965). Leaving aside Foxe's allegorical association of the righteous pelican, Christ's sacrifice, and Lollard persecution, Foxe's question, itself an homage to the form of *Jack Upland*, suggests that certain, well-defined poetic figures make the religious truths of Chaucer's writing accessible to the faithful.

The choice of *hypotyposis*, in other words, is deliberate because it reveals the continuity that exists between form and content in Foxe's formulation of a reformist aesthetics. Related to an array of figures used for amplification and

description in classical rhetoric, *hypotyposis* involved visual animation through language. What Cicero characterized as 'ocular demonstration' was elaborated by Quintillian in his *Institutio oratoria*: 'This comes into play when we do not restrict ourselves to mentioning that something was done, but proceed to show how it was done, and do so not merely on broad general lines, but in full detail.'³⁸ This figure uses language to appeal to the eye, not the ear. Departing from reformist iconoclasm, Foxe annexes this form of writing for the reformist cause. Rather than a visual lure, the type of 'vivid description' that *hypotyposis* involves is directly connected to the textual immediacy that Foxe promotes in his presentation of *Jack Upland*. Here too Foxe puts a fictive scene before his readers' eyes, though in the former case he does so literally, and in this instance he does so figuratively. Foxe works to capture the imaginative powers of his readers — in effect shaping what they see — to such a vast extent that Chaucer can only be viewed from the singular 'godly' perspective that Foxe constructs. When Foxe asks 'what tale can bee more playnely tolde?' it is, in every way, a rhetorical question.

The figure of *hypotyposis*, as writers from Quintillian to Puttenham agree, is a form of intense vivification designed to bring images to life in the mind of the audience. We might suppose that Foxe would not have approved of the 'counterfeit representation' that *hypotyposis* involved since, as Henry Peacham later pointed out, such rhetorical stratagems could cause damage, leading audiences astray with false images.³⁹ Foxe seemingly recognized, however, that poetic devices of this sort were also powerful tools to guide the faithful. As his praise of Chaucer demonstrates, Foxe uses *hypotyposis* to connect with a reading public accustomed to putting faith in things that could not literally be seen. Indeed, Puttenham's description in the *Arte of English Poesie* suggests that *hypotyposis* encourages an audience to believe in the figurative image as if it were actually at hand: 'It should appeare they were truly before our eyes though they were not present, which to do it requireth cunning.'⁴⁰ Although Puttenham viewed poetics quite differently than Foxe, he also uses Chaucer's verse to elaborate upon the forms of vivid description associated with *hypotyposis*. With Puttenham, Chaucer's powers of representation are worthy primarily for their ornamental achievement: 'No prettier examples can be given to you thereof, than in the Romant of the rose translated out of the French by Chaucer, describing the persons of avarice, envie,

³⁸ Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. by Rakham, III.iii.202; Quintillian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by Butler, IX.2.40–44.

³⁹ Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, ed. by Crane, fol. O2^r.

⁴⁰ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 245.

old age, and many others, whereby much moralitie is taught.⁴¹ With Foxe, perhaps unsurprisingly, Chaucer's vivid figures point directly to the spiritual meaning they simultaneously convey and protect:

Agayne what egge can be more lyke, or figge vnto an other, then þe words, properties, and conditions of that rauenyng Griphe resembleth the true Image, that is, the nature & qualities of that which we call the Church of Rome, in euery point and degre? (VII.965–66).

Passages such as these affirm the *Book of Martyrs*'s deep involvement in formulating a poetics capable of defining England's identity as Foxe and his reformist contemporaries foresaw it. Like so many other writers of the sixteenth century, Foxe embraces literary form as a primary means to cultural reform. Unlike others, he does so by appealing deliberately to the affective potential of allegoresis: by suggesting that the truth of Chaucer's text lies behind the ornamental figures, Foxe affiliates the reformist cause with the tradition of exegetical reading that Augustine invests with full affective force in *De doctrina Christiana*.⁴² In its high medieval form, associated primarily with the twelfth-century schools of Chartres, the surface figures, which taken together constituted the *integumentum* or 'veil', cover the more significant truths of a text.⁴³ It becomes the task of the reader to uncover those truths, usually through a detailed exposition of both the surface figures and the deeper meanings of a written work. This type of reading is intensely active, for the reader is not simply responsible for finding the pre-existing truths of a text based on its ornamental figures. Rather, as Rita Copeland and Stephen Melville explain, 'Here the interpreter in effect activates a system of tropes, or reads in such a way as to produce tropes, which are then to be explicated'.⁴⁴ Most famously — or infamously — it was by means of this form of reading that many pagan texts were annexed into the Christian fold.

So it was with Foxe's Chaucer. As Foxe's exposition demonstrates, in allegories the reader holds a great deal of autonomy over the text. Indeed, it seems fair to say that Foxe's Chaucer can be absent and present at once, if for no other reason, because he is a rather explicit product of the *Book of Martyrs*.⁴⁵ Foxe's interest in

⁴¹ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 246.

⁴² Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by Robertson, III.27.

⁴³ Weatherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 36–48.

⁴⁴ Copeland and Melville, 'Allegory and Allegoresis'.

⁴⁵ Simpson, in 'Chaucer's Presence and Absence', suggests that Chaucer moves from one model to the other in the sixteenth century; he does not, however, consider Foxe, who clearly entertains both notions of Chaucer over the course of his book.

Chaucer, and more particularly, in the formalism he uses Chaucer to define, has a great deal to do with his vision of history as a series of impassioned commitments across time. That the works Foxe uses to affirm Chaucer's value are not actually Chaucer's own reveals the importance of affect in sustaining relations between historical time and literary form. Serving as a point of continuity between past and present, Foxe stakes the future of his reformist enterprise on the Chaucer he makes his own: '[Chaucer] (no doubt) saw in Religion as much almost, as euen we do now' (vii.965). Although Wyclif is a far more important historical figure, Chaucer is central to the connection Foxe seeks to forge between earlier and later reformers in the *Actes and Monuments*. Much of this is due to Chaucer's poetic familiarity: 'Chaucers woorkes bee all printed in one volume, and therefore knowen to all men' (vii.965).⁴⁶ Through his Chaucer, Foxe is able to assert the universal valence of certain prized values, even if they emerge from historically disparate circumstances. Chaucer's relation to history is, therefore, decidedly more formal, less concrete, than those figures who died for the cause Foxe propounds in the *Actes and Monuments*.

As previously mentioned, Chaucer is not included in Foxe's account of the fourteenth century; instead, he makes appearances in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. In his extended collation of late medieval materials, John Wyclif takes his place in a line of 'valiant soldiours of Christes church before him' (v.523). The Oxford cleric fulfills the legacy of other intellectual greats, seeking 'to reuoke and call backe the church from her idolatrie to some better amendment, especially in the matter of the sacrament of the bodye and bloud of Christ' (v.525). Yet, in the tumultuous struggle against the church's corruption, Chaucer is markedly absent. There seems to be no occasion for poetry in the heroic narrative pitting a few true believers in the Church against those many fraudulent officials of the pope. And, although we might readily observe that Foxe presents Wyclif's brave confrontation in typological terms, poetry's formation is completely secondary to history's unfolding in the central story of the *Actes and Monuments*, of which 'the whole course and state of the Church may well be comprised' (i.1). Chaucer only becomes important because he transmits the ideas that Wyclif so courageously forwards in his battle against the errors of papal authority. Foxe is uninterested in Chaucer's historical connections, to court, to church, or to his culture more broadly rendered. Because Chaucer stands outside of the temporal fray, he can legitimate the enduring ideas of his reformist counterpart using untimely poetic forms.

⁴⁶ See Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, pp. 187–206, for a meticulous account of Chaucer's reformist construction through print.

Affect

I linger over Chaucer's temporal displacement in the *Actes and Monuments* because it reveals a great deal about the formal dimensions of Foxe's historiography. Foxe's treatment of Chaucer illustrates the meticulous rhetorical handling involved in sustaining the historical connections he attempts to forge. Yet Foxe's rendering also illuminates the importance of affect, both to literary forms and their historical importance within and across different times. Indeed, as an amalgamation of historicism, formalism, and feeling, Foxe's Chaucer can show us a great deal about reading communities, those of the early modern period and those of our own cultural moment.⁴⁷ Besides demonstrating the ways in which a rendering of Chaucer consolidates a 'godly' readership for the *Actes and Monuments*, Foxe's Chaucer equally sheds light on current critical unease with Chaucer's central presence in medieval literary studies. To focus on this more modern point, Chaucer's dominance over the medieval canon is troubling to many scholars because it obviously and deliberately rewrites history. Ralph Hanna articulates this anxiety in terms that are plain, simple, and moving:

Indeed, Chaucer's modern canonical centrality in many ways badly skews approaches to Middle English literature. Our modern enthusiasm for the Chaucerian imagination marginalizes many of the texts I will treat here. Just as neocolonialist critics argue that forming the nation is an act of forgetting, medievalists need to recognize that the construction of the national literary canon c. 1580 was a similarly 'forgetful' act. In forming the canon, critics like Puttenham and Sidney suppressed the variousness of medieval literature in favor of Chaucer, perhaps especially the Chaucer of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Yet it is simultaneously indisputable that our recovery of a historical sense of vernacular written culture in the Middle Ages depends heavily on rediscovering the connection of more minute works with what one is conditioned to admire as 'canonical Middle English literature.'⁴⁸

Hanna's Chaucer, maybe it should go without saying, is not Foxe's Chaucer.

Nevertheless, in a critical era deeply concerned with the historical particulars of late medieval English culture, our Chaucer looks a great deal like John Foxe's. He is a poet of his time, but he is also a poet out of time, strangely separate from the significant events of his day. And, although scholars have done an admirable job of tracing connections between Chaucer and royal power, Chaucer and the rise of parliament, or Chaucer and the Rising of 1381, these links always

⁴⁷ Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, pp. 88–92.

⁴⁸ Hanna, 'Notes toward a Future History', pp. 279–80.

remain somewhat oblique, since Chaucer was a decidedly minor player on history's stage.⁴⁹ When it came to negotiating the major religious controversies of late fourteenth-century England, Chaucer was patently uninvolved. More disturbing than the fact that Chaucer didn't do very much within his own cultural era is the fact that he didn't write very much that was relevant to anything socially relevant, either. Chaucer makes his most direct foray into contemporary politics with a passing characterization of barnyard noise, comparing the rising of 1381 — the most unsettling urban event of Chaucer's lifetime — to a gaggle of villagers chasing a impoverished widow's filched cock ('Jakke Strawe and his meynee' (*CT*, VII.3394, p. 260)).⁵⁰

Even if we feel that Chaucer was wise to keep himself aloof from the dangers of late Ricardian political squabbles, it is a hard historical fact that no one took up a piece of his writing, or took on one of his characters, as a social rallying point. Or, if they did, as Foxe demonstrates, such interventionist appropriations were based on texts that were not actually Chaucer's. Wasting lovers, impoverished writers, or imperiled go-betweens gained more lasting cultural presence as a consequence of Chaucer's poetic making. But Chaucer is, by and large, a historically insignificant poet. Chaucer is a poet of intense feeling, who seeks to mobilize the affects of his audiences through a body of work that is formally variable. That Chaucer managed to master as many poetic genres as he did without venturing into political complaint suggests to many, I think rightly, that Chaucer was not invested in such forms of expression. Why that was the case, however, is less interesting than why that continues to bother many modern readers. It is very possible that Foxe was right about Chaucer — he veiled the social criticisms latent in his poetry to protect himself from the consequences of overt political critique. Indeed, there is much in Chaucer's poetry to indicate disaffection with church corruption in particular. But there is also much to suggest his sympathy with cultural hierarchy, his fascination with institutional authority, and his affiliation with centralized rule.⁵¹

Chaucer's feelings — preserved through the ages like a grand literary inheritance — make many readers uncomfortable. They seem to be out of place, out of step with the times. Not only does his verse drastically sweep between the contrasting formal poles of heroic and naturalistic expression, Chaucer's poetry also threatens to obscure the socially serious, politically urgent, historically truthful

⁴⁹ Some of the finest of these studies include Strohm, *Social Chaucer*; Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature*; and Hanawalt, *Chaucer's England*.

⁵⁰ Travis, 'Chaucer's Trivial Fox Chase'.

⁵¹ Carlson, *Chaucer's Jobs*, pp. 5–10.

contents of medieval literature. It is not much of an exaggeration, in fact, to suggest that Chaucer functions for many medieval literary scholars as an *integumentum*, an ornamental surface that covers the genuine substance of medieval vernacular literary expression. Yet this duality obtains only if we assume that we fully know the broader stuff of which medieval literature truly consists. Arguments like Hanna's above seek to head off such a comprehensive settlement by resisting the long-standing attitude that regards Chaucer as a universal stand-in for all Middle English writing worth reading. In a sense, then, the call to pay careful attention to the historical specificity of medieval literary making in all its expressive variety refuses the practices of someone like Foxe, who uses Chaucer as a catch-all for every medieval idea he would like to recuperate for the sixteenth-century reformist position. Undoubtedly, greater immersion in Middle English expressive culture is more true to history.

Yet the schismatic form this resistance takes — 'Chaucer vs. Middle English literature' — partakes of the same affective methods of reading that Foxe uses to construct his Chaucer.⁵² It does so, I feel, in ways our contemporary critical community would do better to avoid. As his reading of Chaucer demonstrates, Foxe assumes that interpretive perspective works in formally oppositional terms: there are two churches, one visible and one invisible. From the reformist view, one is either blind or envisioned: one can either see the light of truth, or remain in sightless error. Perspective's exclusiveness, moreover, manifests itself through acts of reading. Referring to the misattributed *Testament of Love*, Foxe distinguishes members of the true church by their ability to read this form of Chaucer: 'Wherin, excepte a man be altogether blynde, he may espye him at the full' (vii.965). How one reads Chaucer, in short, indicates one's ability to perceive truth. The plain presentation of the literal sense so central to reformers' views of reading was just as much a means to consolidate and differentiate 'the elect' from others. 'Lecture,' as James Simpson wittily puts it, 'presupposed election.'⁵³ But the putatively plain truth derived from reading also served as a way to divide and damn, leaving those who were not part of a privileged community to suffer in hapless ignorance.

In Chaucer's case, according to Foxe, God almighty made the poet's works illegible to those unworthy to receive his reformist message: 'So it pleased God to blinde then the eyes of them, for the more commoditie of his people, to the entent that through the readyng of his treatises, some fruite might redounde therof to his Church, as no doubt, it did to many' (vii.965). For those open to the truth,

⁵² Bowers, *Chaucer and Langland*, surveys this opposition from its earliest instances.

⁵³ Simpson, *Burning to Read*, p. 135.

Chaucer's meaning could not be more transparent: 'what tale can bee more playnely tolde?' I return to this passage because it demonstrates Foxe's basic assumption, that understanding Chaucer requires a pretextual, affective, affiliation. In discussing William Tyndale, Simpson attributes the formation of a readerly elect who may grasp the simplicity of the literal sense to what he describes as 'an anterior text, written in and on the heart itself'.⁵⁴ In closing, I want to consider this ability to read from the heart, and not just in sixteenth-century reformist England.⁵⁵

Affect does not merely influence our responses to poetic works; rather, as Foxe recognized, it shapes the very histories we write, the very ways in which we formalize time:

For as ther neuer happened greater perturbations, tumults and dissentions, among al the Monarchies that haue bene, since the first constitution of publicke regiment, then hath bene seene in our church men [...] so writers commonly in taking partes eyther with one or other, as they inclined their affection, so framed their stile. (1.1)

Here Foxe condemns affect as a disorderly, chaotic force that allows personal feeling to colour what should be an objective, rigorous form of writing. Elsewhere, however, Foxe affirms the value of affect, for he justifies his entire project by appealing to the bonds of community that cannot be explained in simple or plain social terms. As Cynthia Marshall, James C. W. Truman, and Ryan Netzley have demonstrated, Foxe uses the power of feeling — finely calibrated representations of bodily pain — to animate the martyrdoms that constitute his own vexed time.⁵⁶ Foxe realizes that the events he pieces together, and the forms he figures thereby, are products of affect. Taken together they constitute what Teresa Brennan calls a 'line of the heart'.⁵⁷

The problem is not, then, that Foxe's history, or that any history, relies on affect. What is troubling, rather, is Foxe's attempt to deny affect in his own work, even as he condemns it in his opponents' writing. Quite obviously, the history that Foxe promotes, like the history he denounces, is galvanized by intensities of feeling, whether by love, fear, or the myriad passions articulated during the early modern period.⁵⁸ There is no little worth, therefore, in expending greater critical

⁵⁴ Simpson, *Burning to Read*, p. 139.

⁵⁵ Travis, 'Affective Criticism'; Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.

⁵⁶ Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self*; Truman, 'John Foxe and the Desires of Reformation Martyrology'; Netzley, 'The End of Reading'.

⁵⁷ Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, p. 75.

⁵⁸ Gail Paster's work is foundational for the florescence of this line of inquiry in early modern studies. See Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*; and Paster, *Humoring the Body*.

time and care upon the construction of affect within and across different spans of history. Because, to be sure, the *Book of Martyrs* is designed to create intense reactions across time: with its woodcuts and paratexts, Foxe's history of the true church is one with which readers are supposed to feel an enduring and impassioned connection. Yet, despite all the attention to creating, shaping, and managing readers, the very logic of participation that this form of 'heartfelt' reading encourages often exceeds the limits that the page and its controls would set.⁵⁹ In extreme cases, the literalism that Foxe encourages works to destroy even the book itself: defacing the text becomes a way of affirming passionate connection to the invisible truths conveyed by the reading experience.⁶⁰ Perhaps ironically, then, readers who damage the *Actes and Monuments* show themselves to be more in tune with the truths on display than those who quietly handle its pages. Marking up books, as even modern readers will admit, becomes a way of connecting with the ideas contained therein.⁶¹

Nonetheless, the destructive zeal with which early readers of Foxe engage the affective dimensions of his martyrology also reveals one of the key reasons why critical communities have paid less attention to affect. Affect can be excessive, and it stubbornly resists traditional forms of critique.⁶² Even so, I suggest the major

⁵⁹ See Slights, *Managing Readers*, especially pp. 223–58, where he analyses the marginalia of polemical religious texts.

⁶⁰ King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'*, p. 276, accounts for the dearth of parish copies of the *Book of Martyrs* by suggesting 'that members of the parish read chained copies to pieces rather than that copies never existed in parishes'. See his final chapter, 'Reading the Pages', pp. 243–320, which suggests the myriad ways in which readers interacted with the text, both by adding to and taking from its pages.

⁶¹ See Sherman, *Used Books*, for a comprehensive study of book-marking practices in the early modern period and beyond.

⁶² Charnes, 'Styles that Matter', charts a potential path to a mode of critique that considers affect; Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', suggests critique has run aground because it does not account for 'matters of concern', or those constructions of value that give facts reality. Bruno Latour's recent essay, 'An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto"', develops *compositionism* as a means to attend to matters of concern. There he claims *everything is composed*, which means that the salient distinction to be drawn is between how things are assembled (well, badly, affirmatively, perniciously, and so on). Following this logic, Latour's compositionism issues a challenge to affect theorists: even if affect is a pre-cognitive intensity that arises from bodily reactions, its composition does not stand outside the specific signifying practices that formalize its comprehension. Ronald Reagan's political appeal may have been affective, as Massumi argues (*Parables for the Virtual*, pp. 39–65), but this does not mean that Reagan's success was not composed from a variety of recognizable cultural tropes (most clearly, images from Hollywood cowboy films), that might be evaluated for their purpose, quality, and efficacy.

task of post-historicist criticism is to confront affect's historical and formal influence over the production and reception of medieval literature. As Foxe's Chaucer attests, affect is not just latent; it is not impervious to mobilization in a specific historical moment by means of a deliberate artistic mode. Across the larger arc of the *Actes and Monuments* affect is formalized to promote an explicit cultural goal in a particular historical context. Most importantly, Foxe is not alone in his use of affect, for, as Barbara Rosenwein maintains, the cultivation of particular feelings is important for the emergence of different identities in medieval culture.⁶³ And, as Gail Kern Paster was the first to argue in systemic fashion, the 'passions of the mind' are essential to representations of early modern experience.⁶⁴ Depending on the specific circumstances, then, we might describe affect's effect as pernicious or affirmative; it might build communities or destroy affinities.⁶⁵ Given affect's mobility and utility, however, we should no longer ignore its centrality to pre-modern literary studies. As Foxe's Chaucer attests, it is better to confront affect than to let it run an unchecked, invisible course to a final and exclusive reckoning. I suggest that attending to the anterior text of the heart — not just its existence, but also its historic and poetic formation — will enable us to avoid the exclusionary, we might even say apocalyptic, reading community that Foxe's Chaucer consolidates.⁶⁶

⁶³ Rosenwein, in 'Worrying about Emotions in History', initially articulated the theory that social identities are consolidated via 'emotional communities'. She expansively demonstrates this claim in *Emotional Communities*. Although her work is associated with the 'history of emotions' rather than affect theory, as Leys, 'The Turn to Affect', points out (p. 440 n. 17), her work issues an important challenge to the affect theorists' separation of feeling from its cultural formalizations.

⁶⁴ Gail Kern Paster's work, which relies on the humoral theories articulated in Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), has galvanized an entire sector of early modern studies. In particular, see Paster, *Humoring the Body*, and Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson, *Reading the Early Modern Passions*. Also see Mullaney, 'Affective Technologies', which calls for greater attention to the social and spiritual aspects of early modern passions.

⁶⁵ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, pp. 123–52, chart affect's ability to form affinities through what Ahmed calls 'sticky' associations. McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, shows the generative relation between constructions of compassion and femininity in medieval devotional culture. Crocker, 'Affective Politics in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*', demonstrates affect's importance to distinguishing and ranking different groups of men in Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*.

⁶⁶ See Smith, 'The Application of Thought to Medieval Studies', p. 87, which cautions us that 'the danger of valuing affect so highly is that doing so attributes to it an epistemological and even ontological difference so radical as to exclude other categories of representation'. This does not mean that we should not study affect; on the contrary, it suggests that we should take affect's

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THE ETHICS OF ELECTION IN THE *QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL*

Lucas Wood

‘Galaad [...] choisit le bien sans avoir même l’air de choisir, et comme par le mouvement spontané de sa belle âme. Bref, c’est, plus qu’un saint, un être de raison; l’allégorie en lui a tué l’homme.’¹

‘Man moves on a precarious knife-edge where he can project himself at any moment into an absurd parody of genuine freedom in the effort to extend his humanity.’²

I.

Near the end of the thirteenth-century French prose *Queste del Saint Graal*, after the trio of elect Grail knights has set sail for the mystic East and the final revelation that awaits them there, their self-guided boat makes a stop so that something unprecedented may happen. At a castle called Carcelois, somewhere in the marches of Scotland, Galaad, the perfect knight and superlatively signifying ‘sainte chose’ (holy thing),³ discovers doubt for the first time. Ignoring repeated

¹ Pauphilet, *Études sur la ‘Queste del Saint Graal’*, pp. 140–41.

² Eagleton, *The Body as Language*, p. 7.

³ *La Quête du Saint Graal*, ed. by Bogdanow, §41.7 (subsequently cited parenthetically). English translations are my own. Here, Galaad is addressed as ‘sainte chose’ by a devil; in

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Abstract: Galaad (Galahad), the saintly hero of the thirteenth-century Old French *Queste del Saint Graal*, is from one perspective an abstract Christ-figure whose actions and meaning are predetermined by divine providence and allegorical interpretation. However, throughout Galaad’s Grail quest, the romance also cultivates an antithetical resistance to totalizing allegoresis. It insists that the hero’s exploits and their sacred significance are contingent on his ethical agency and therefore on a personal virtue that remains constantly at stake, especially in the readerly activity of negotiating between the material surface of the world (and the text) and its possible meanings. The *Queste* thus uses Galaad to emplot, in a way characteristic of fictional romance narrative, the theological aporia of divine grace’s coexistence with human free will.

Keywords: Vulgate Cycle, Grail, quest, Galahad (Galaad), grace, free will, predestination, allegory, Bernard of Clairvaux, Christology.

warnings that the inhabitants of the castle hate King Arthur and will attack any of his household without provocation, the companions enter the castle yard upon Bohort's assurance that God will protect his own. The violence of the ensuing bloodbath contrasts shockingly with the relatively placid tone of the knights' earlier adventures. Galaad, Perceval, and Bohort storm through the castle, massacring half-armed opponents 'ausi come bestes mues' (like dumb beasts; §276.6) and driving the rest out the windows to their deaths. But rather than rejoicing in their victory, the questers are horrified by the slaughter they have committed and take themselves for great sinners because of this gory work.

There follows this exchange between Bohort and Galaad:

Certes, fet Boorz, je ne quit mie que se Nostre Sires les amast de riens, que il fussent si martirié com il sont. Mes il ont esté par aventure aucune jent renoïee et malooite et ont tant mesfet vers Nostre Seignor qu'il ne voloit pas que il regnassent plus. Por ce, si nos i envoie ça Nostre Sires por els destruire. Vos ne dites mie bien, fet Galaaz. Por ce, s'il mesfient a Nostre Seignor, n'en estoit mie nostre la venjance a prendre, mes a Celui qui tant atent que li pechierres se reconoisce. Por ce vos di je que je ne serai ja mes aese devant que g'en sache veraies noveles de ceste ovre que nos avons fete, s'il plect a Nostre Seignor. (§276.18–29)

('Indeed,' said Bohort, 'I really don't think they would have been massacred like that if Our Lord loved them at all. Perhaps they were cursed apostates who had sinned so greatly against Our Lord that he did not want them to reign any longer. That's why Our Lord sent us here to destroy them.' 'That was ill spoken,' said Galaad. 'If they did sin against Our Lord, the vengeance for it was not ours to take; it belonged to Him who stays his hand until the sinner recognizes himself as such. Therefore I tell you that I will have no peace until I know the truth about this deed we've done, if it please Our Lord.')

As part of its programmatic substitution of a new *chevalerie celestiel* (celestial or spiritual chivalry) for the old Arthurian *chevalerie terriene* (earthly chivalry), the *Queste* devotes a great deal of effort to teaching both its heroes and its readers how to interpret adventures correctly, and Bohort's hypothesis is backed up by well-established hermeneutic principles. Although the text does not maintain a consistent language of symbolic equivalences, it does limit the arbitrariness of the allegorical sign to the extent that semiotic values always respect moral values: good characters never represent evil principles or personages, and vice versa. Bohort himself, for example, has already done battle on behalf of an honorable young lady against the champions of her disinherited elder sister, only to

Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, the hermit who turns out to be Perceval's uncle describes the Grail itself as a 'sainte chose' (Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, ed. and trans. by Méla, v. 6351).

discover later on that he was unwittingly supporting Holy Church against the usurping Old Law (§211–13; 225–26). And the pattern holds good at Carcelois, as the text soon affirms through one of the religious *prodomes* whom it frequently enlists to elucidate the *senefiances* — the allegorical or figural second senses, or sometimes the historical explanations — of the *semblances* constituted by enigmatic events.⁴ According to the local priest, Galaad and his companions have carried out ‘la meillor ovre que onques chevalier feissent’ (the best deed ever done by knights; §277.21–22): the prophesied and divinely ordained punishment of a band of apostates guilty of razing churches, murdering priests, raping and killing their own sister, trying to kill their father, and, failing that, imprisoning him for life; in a word, ‘païor que Sarrazin’ (worse than Saracens; §277.28–29)!

To be sure, Bohort’s hypothesis that the inhabitants of Carcelois were evildoers whose destruction was desired by the Lord is not overtly allegorical in any of the ways that the hermits’ elaborate tropologies frequently are. In fact, the whole discussion of the meaning of the Carcelois episode is remarkable for how closely it hews to the historical level of the adventure-text. Rather than adducing theological meanings for the episode’s concrete elements, Bohort contrives, and the priest confirms, a set of supplementary literal details that recontextualize the massacre as a praiseworthy defense of Christianity. As his other adventures indicate, Bohort lacks the imagination to be much of an allegorist. His is a firm-principled, pedantic piety, the dogmatic conviction of a ‘saint laborieux’⁵ who rejects the advances of the Demon, often without recognizing them as such, because they contravene basic tenets of the moral code in which he has been thoroughly catechized.⁶ Bohort’s exegesis nevertheless borrows its underpinnings

⁴ The complex discourse(s) of *semblance* and *senefiance* in the *Queste* are analysed in Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, pp. 269–90; see also Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*, and Poirion, ‘Semblance du Graal dans la *Queste*’. Broadly speaking, ‘le terme de *semblance* désigne [...] tout élément discursif susceptible d’engendrer une interprétation de type parabolique, d’être perçu comme signe d’autre chose, d’être lesté et doublé d’une *senefiance*’ (Baumgartner, *L’Arbre et le pain*, p. 76).

⁵ Pauphilet, ‘Introduction’, in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. by Pauphilet, p. xi.

⁶ See, most memorably, the episode in which a demonic lady and her handmaidens threaten to commit mass suicide if Bohort does not grant the lady his sexual favors. Clinging firmly to the *prodomes’* refrain that *luxuria* is a mortal sin, Bohort decides — not without some regret — that he would prefer ‘qu’eles totes perdent lor ames qu’il seus perdist la soe, et lor dit qu’il n’en fera rien’ (that all of them should damn their souls rather than that he alone should damn his, and he told them that he would do no such thing) (§222.24). When the ladies leap from their tower and Bohort crosses himself in dread, both ladies and tower disappear in a puff of sulphurous smoke, to the knight’s surprise and immense gratification.

from the logic of allegoresis so relentlessly modelled by the *Queste*'s hermits. It extrapolates from a known characteristic or relationship — here, the piety and virtue of the Grail trio and especially of Galaad, 'li Buens Chevaliers' (the Good Knight; §38.17) — an otherwise unknowable interpretive context that provides a rationale for apparently random or disconcerting events, in this case the appalling violence enacted by the heroes-elect despite the fact that, as another *prodome* has put it, 'cez aventures qui or corent' are emphatically not 'de chevaliers ocirre et mehaignier' (these adventures now underway [are not] about killing and maiming knights; §195.37–38), at least not without good reason.⁷

But why, then, is Galaad so unwilling to accept Bohort's interpretation of the slaughter at Carcelois, and what does his reluctance say about the romance as a whole? This essay will argue that the brief glimmer of doubt kindled in Galaad by the sight of his butchered foes illuminates several problems fundamental to the project of Grail writing in the *Queste del Saint Graal*. Galaad's doubt hints at a larger, self-conscious textual resistance to allegorical interpretation, or rather to allegoresis as a totalizing, inevitable, and prescriptive process. This resistance, and the renewed attention to the literal sense of romance narrative it entails, is centred on a rereading of the character of Galaad himself. As Grail hero, perfect

⁷ The point of this admonition, addressed to Gauvain, is that meaningless violence (i.e., the futile exercise of martial prowess for the sake of earthly fame) plays no part in the ethos of *celestiel chevalerie*. The *Queste* certainly endorses the idea that violence is sometimes warranted, but its general predilection is for pacifism whenever it is feasible. Notably in this regard, Lancelot, taking to heart the last divine admonition he receives before his partial Grail vision, 'remet s'espee el fuerre et dit que par lui n'en sera ja mes ostee, ainz se metra en la merci Nostre Seignor' (put his sword back in its sheath and said that he would never again draw it thence, relying instead on the mercy of Our Lord; §304.1–3). The legitimization of the slaughter at Carcelois should not be taken for a wholehearted vindication of holy war of the sort found, for example, in the *Perlesvaus*, even if one of the figural roles Galaad assumes toward the end of the quest is that of a 'justicier de Dieu, sinon [...] ange exterminateur' (Dubost, *Le Conte du Graal*, p. 103; compare Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, pp. 65–66). I agree with Nievergelt that the *Queste* is principally an 'inward crusade [...] aimed towards the purification of the heart of each individual Christian' and perhaps of Christendom as a whole, although I am not persuaded that the *Queste* author has the problem of Catharism in view (Nievergelt, 'The Inward Crusade', p. 1). In some ways, the *Queste* is best taken at face value. Its spiritual message is addressed specifically to a chivalric elite — Baumgartner rightly calls the romance 'un évangile de classe' (Baumgartner, *L'Arbre et le pain*, p. 146), although this phrase requires considerable unpacking — inextricable from its literary representation in romance. Accordingly, the principal sins decried by the text are concupiscence and vainglory, or, from a secular perspective, love and honour: the worldly concerns that conventionally orient both historical and literary chivalry away from God.

knight, and Christ-figure, Galaad seems to proceed mechanically along a path predestined for him both by God and by the narrative and allegorical structures of the *Queste*, if indeed the two can be distinguished. However, theology and romance alike paradoxically predicate the meaningfulness of Galaad's quest, and therefore of the *Queste* as a whole, precisely upon the Grail knight's freedom from determinisms both semiotic and providential. Read, admittedly against the grain, as a free human agent and a subject of ethical — which also means readerly — experience, Galaad is a key piece in the *Queste*'s play to create a kind of romance writing capable not exactly of containing sacred truth so much as of setting in motion a spiritually significant interpretive activity attuned to and based on the open-ended modes of meaning-making proper to romance itself.

II.

Bohort tries to reassure Galaad in terms markedly similar to those used by Bernard of Clairvaux to rationalize the violence of the Crusades, with which the Carcelois episode is overtly aligned (even down to the renegade Christians' identification with Saracens).⁸ This is only one of many ways, some of which we will have reason to examine in more detail, in which the *Queste* reflects the undisputed influence of Cistercian thought. In his powerful vindication of the Templar order, *De laude novae militiae*, Bernard asserts that 'the knights of Christ may safely fight the battles of their Lord, fearing [no] sin if they smite the enemy [...] since to inflict death [...] for the Lord is no sin, but rather, an abundant claim to glory'. As the minister and instrument of Christ, if the *miles Christi* 'kills an evildoer, he is not a mankiller, but [...] a killer of evil. He is evidently the avenger of Christ toward evildoers'.⁹ Homicide is not really homicide because what matters is that good

⁸ R. A. Bartoli has argued that a consistent program of implicit *senefiances* makes the whole *Queste* a work of Crusade propaganda; see Bartoli, 'Galaad *Figura militis christiani*', trans. by Hüe-Giraud. Arguments for and against identifying the *Queste*'s 'chevalerie celestiel' with the Templar order are considered in Girbea, *La Couronne ou l'auréole*, pp. 426–42. On Grail literature in the context of the Crusades, see Knight, 'From Jerusalem to Camelot'. Nicholson suggests that the *Queste*'s celestial chivalry is actually a reformation of the Templar ideal, one that 'represents the fulfilment and completion of knighthood' by doing away with the need for an administrative order and hierarchy and replacing it with 'a personal relationship between the knight and his God'; Galaad at Carcelois would thus be acting less like a Templar bound by the rules of earthly obedience than like a renegade Templar such as Humbert of Beaujeu, whose return to France to fight 'bandits and lawless men [...] worse than Saracens' was defended by the Cluniac abbot Peter the Venerable (Nicholson, *Love, War and the Grail*, pp. 169–71).

⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood', trans. by Greenia, p. 134.

has crushed evil; it is the abstract version of the event, its overriding allegorical status, that counts. Bernard, however, emphasizes that violence in Christ's name is sanctioned only to the extent that Christ is in the warrior's heart and, complementarily, that the Saracens to be slain are actual evildoers and not just convenient placeholders for 'Evil'. Bernard's concern, of course, is that the allegorization of real violence can all too easily become tautological and thus illegitimate. In order for Good to slay Evil when a material hand swings a material sword, the 'avenger of Christ' must be a genuinely devout Christian with solid grounds for believing that his victim has merited the wrath of God. This is also one reason why Bernard, a scathing critic of 'worldly knighthood, or rather knavery',¹⁰ so ardently champions the Templars, hybrid monk-knights whose ascetic lifestyle and probity guarantee their qualification to act as holy signs in the sacred script of history.¹¹

Bohort evinces none of Bernard's qualms about complacently deducing a deterministic cause from its putative effects, in this case only two indisputable facts (the rest is pure supposition, true only *par aventure* until confirmed): he and his companions are, or try to be, virtuous, and their enemies are undoubtedly dead. Since the dead men succumbed to the questers' assault, they must have been evil, for only those hated by God could perish so easily, and God hates only sinners. Furthermore, if the dead deserved their fate, and it was meted out to them by the questers, then Bohort, Perceval, and Galaad must be the blameless, predestined instruments of divine will (Q.E.D. and amen). It is with this last leap of logic that Galaad finds fault. Like Bernard, Galaad refuses to let the specific reality of narratable history be attenuated, to let the *semblance* of events be reduced to the illusoriness of a mirage, by the allegorical interpretation that Bohort's deceptively literal conjectures constitute. Bohort wants to reduce personal identities to abstract identity positions in a metaphysical tug-of-war between Good and Evil, effacing and overwriting human agency and choice with a story of providential design. In applying this interpretive procedure to the literal level of history without postulating another order of reality, an analogous but distinct narrative *senefiance* whose internal coherence explains and justifies the often implausibly arbitrary configurations of the romanesque *semblance*, Bohort inadvertently lays

Bernard also writes that the the righteous confidence of the *milites Christi*, their sure sense that they act for God at once semiotically and historically, makes them 'fall violently upon the foe' even when vastly outnumbered, 'regarding them as so many sheep' (p. 140) — or, in the words of the *Queste*, 'ausi come bestes mues'.

¹⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'In Praise of the New Knighthood', trans. by Greenia, p. 132.

¹¹ On hybridity in Bernard's thought, see Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, pp. 113–62.

bare the drive of allegorical reading toward self-vitiating totalization. If, therefore, Galaad is for once not content to move blithely on from the Carcelois adventure with the bemused observation 'que molt i a greignor senefiance qu'il ne quidoit' (that there was much more meaning in it than he had thought; §45.1–2), this emphatically does not mean that Galaad (any more than Bernard) questions the truth, the often all-important existence, of the spiritual senses allegorically inscribed into the fabric of the everyday world. It does mean that the hermeneutic practice responsible for disclosing such significance encounters its limit where it threatens to make the allegorical sense wholly determinant of the literal, negating the urgency of ethical personhood by making men mere caricatures of freedom.

III.

In Galaad's case, the attenuation of ethical personhood under the pressure of semiotic determinism is a threat that strikes especially close to home. Unlike his father Lancelot, whose poignant struggle to reconcile faith with consciously sinful and yet unquenchable love is exposed in dramatic detail, or even his companions Perceval and Bohort, who respond individually to the different temptations through which they must stumble toward virtue, Galaad has no personality and little discernable self-awareness. His character is by all accounts defined by infallibility, perfectly but bleakly commensurate with the narrative function he ineluctably performs. Small wonder, then, that the Carcelois episode has elicited little surprise or even interest from Arthurian scholars. It is simply another routine exercise in holiness accomplished by 'the world's most boring knight, Galaad — the "robot-knight"',¹² involuntary linchpin of the semiotic and, ultimately, theophanic mechanism that forms the endoskeleton of a literary universe designed 'par la volenté au Criator a cui totes choses sont obeissanz' (by the will of the Creator whom all things obey; §254.27–28). From this perspective, is Galaad's fleeting uncertainty about the justification of his actions not an edifying reminder that God works in mysterious ways, the character's doubt not patently a rhetorical device designed to accentuate the sureness with which the *conte* and its spokesman, the priest, authoritatively eliminate all confusion?

The Grail Knight incarnates the principle of certainty itself: he is the pawn of what Tzvetan Todorov has called the *Queste's* 'ritual logic'. This logic drives toward semantic totalization and tautology, resisting romance storytelling insofar as the production of plot is 'un aiguillage, le choix d'une voie plutôt que d'une autre; or

¹² Berthelot, 'The Atypical Grails', pp. 209–10. Cf. Berthelot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 116.

avec Galaad, l'hésitation et le choix n'ont plus de sens'.¹³ What choice is open to the chosen knight, the romance messiah-elect, 'le Chevalier Desirré [...] par cui les merveilles de cest païs et des estranges terres remaindront' (the Desired Knight [...] by whom the marvels of this country and of foreign lands will be put to an end; §10.29–32)? His destiny is known in advance not only to an omniscient God but also to everyone in Logres, where prophecies have long circulated concerning his advent and its precise outcome. 'C'est cil que nos atendons,' King Arthur joyfully exclaims upon his arrival at court, 'a achever les aventures del Saint Graal' (He is the one we have awaited to fulfill the adventures of the Holy Grail; §11.4–5). In Galaad, as the king tells Gauvain, Camelot has found 'le buen chevalier parfet que [...] cil de la Table Roonde ont tant desirré a vooir' (the good, perfect knight whom the companions of the Round Table have so desired to see; §14.6–7).

These successive articulations of the Grail Knight's identity increasingly imbricate his narrative function with a perfection more symbolic than ethical, and thus with the fundamental exteriority of his character. Being good is for Galaad an ontological quality, a nature 'donnée—et non construite—par [le] roman',¹⁴ rather than a moral activity: he is *buen* in an absolute sense, *parfet*, sublimely incapable of sin. Since he neither must nor can be changed by anything he might learn about God or himself, he is essentially an object and not a subject of experience, a catalyst for epiphanies addressed primarily to others. For the other knights of the Round Table, this also makes him the object of a desire that is above all a desire to see. Conventional secular curiosity to behold the beauty and prowess of 'li meudres chevaliers del monde' (the best knight in the world; §8.15–16) — a formula that formerly designated Lancelot, as Galaad's escorts pointedly remind the unseated paragon of chivalry and the reader — initially prompts Arthur to organize a tournament as a pretext for watching Galaad perform. However, this interest in 'si buens chevaliers' (so good a knight; §18.14) as Galaad is reputed to be quickly becomes a quasi-religious and then explicitly spiritual desire to behold 'li Buens Chevaliers' (the Good Knight; §38.17), a personification of virtue as such. A sighting of Galaad is a good in itself, akin to a vision of the Grail (although lower in the hierarchy of revelation),¹⁵ and connected to it insofar as unworthy sinners can no more stay on Galaad's track than they can

¹³ Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 148.

¹⁴ Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*, p. 123

¹⁵ In fact, 'all the knights engaged in the quest [...] seek [Galahad] with a fervour scarcely accorded to the Holy Grail', prompting Matarasso to invoke the passionate yearning for Christ stressed in mystical interpretations of the Song of Songs (Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 62).

find the sacred vessel, while more righteous knights' proximity to him correlates with the degree of Grail experience allotted to them. To the reader, too, Galaad appears almost exclusively as a signifying surface that refers to the various regimes of spiritual meaning in which it operates to the near-exclusion of a human interiority. He alone of Arthur's knights seems to be all text, the perfect sign, a splendidly two-dimensional "être de raison" figé dans la perfection de sa sainteté like a 'figure de vitrail' through whom the light of truth shines for God's greater glory.¹⁶ In a world of readers learning to interpret their lives as texts so as to come to know themselves, the Buen Chevalier stands out as the one man granted the questionable privilege of being viewed and read by others without needing — indeed, exactly because he is gloriously unable — to look into his own soul.

This particularity of Galaad's role in the *Queste* leads Emmanuèle Baumgartner to posit an intrinsic dichotomy between his story and those of the other characters. Bohort, Perceval, and the rest are presented, in the multiple forms of the glossed adventure, with a kind of allegorical mirror in which perceptive exegesis can uncover insights into the ongoing battle between good and evil. These abstract lessons double as occasions for the knights to recognize their own sins and initiate their purification through confession, contrition, and penitence. Such adventures serve as training in understanding the world and the self, parsing right from wrong, and side-stepping the myriad temptations to which chivalry is prey. They do not happen to Galaad, for he is uniquely free of temptation as well as of sin and 'n'a aucun besoin de ce type de savoir. Sa fonction en revanche, son sens moral, est non de prendre connaissance du mal, de l'identifier, mais de l'anéantir, sous toutes ses formes [...] et d'établir ou de rétablir l'ordre divin'.¹⁷ Re-establishing this order means showing it at work, exhibiting the modalities of its pervasive and effective presence, starting with the way it determines Galaad himself as its chivalric manifestation and messenger. Where the other knights' adventures are '*semblances d'une réalité spirituelle*' whose true importance

¹⁶ Frappier, 'Le Graal et la chevalerie', p. 197; Frappier quotes Pauphilet, *Études sur la 'Queste del Saint Graal'*, p. 141. Although Frappier comments that this portrait of Galaad is propagated 'non sans quelque injustice' — 'en vérité,' the critic demurs, 'sa raideur hiératique s'assouplit et s'anime, s'éclaire de quelques sourires, dans la mesure où il conserve la générosité et la courtoisie du chevalier' — he reinforces the image of the chivalric robot-saint more memorably than he mitigates it.

¹⁷ Baumgartner, *L'Arbre et le pain*, p. 105. More or less the same distinction is at stake in Todorov's account of the structural opposition between 'deux logiques[,] la narrative et la rituelle, ou, si l'on veut, la profane et la religieuse,' an opposition whose terms 'sont projetés sur la continuité du récit, de sorte que celui-ci se divise schématiquement en deux parties' (Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 140).

emerges in the decoding of their *señefiances*, Galaad's deeds 'sont ce qui constitue Galaad *en semblance de*, ce qui l'investit et le *demostre* à la chevalerie arthurienne' as the concrete figure of chivalry's own undeniable relationship to the spiritual domain.¹⁸ This bipartition of the *Queste* corresponds to the 'objective' and 'subjective' dimensions of the Cistercian Guillaume de Saint-Thierry's theology of the image. The former is an ontological attribute of man created *ad imaginem Dei* and restored, after the Fall, to this original resemblance by Christ's mediating participation in both human and divine nature; the latter is based on each individual's capacity for progressive development toward perfect likeness to God.¹⁹ Galaad, the *sainte chose*, objectifies the fact of human resemblance to God so that other, imperfect subjects may work to realize it. On the road of the quest, he is no true traveller, but a sure compass built to point the way.

The model is elegantly schematic: the *Queste* is plotted between the axes of two (theo)logical principles and structured by the interlacement of two stories, one about showing, the other about seeing and trying to understand what is seen. Missing, however, is a way of accounting for the text's diachronic trajectory and for the complex way it describes its hero's function within that explicitly unified, not bipartite, narrative. From the beginning, Galaad is not only a *demonstration* but also, and even principally, an agent. 'Por ce vos a Dex envoié entre nos,' King Arthur assures him, 'que vos parfaçoiz ce que li autre ne porent mener a fin' (God sent you to us in order that you should finish what the others could not accomplish; §14.31–32): the Grail Knight is a marvel to be behold largely because he is destined to accomplish, uniquely and yet somehow on chivalry's collective behalf, what all 'the others' of courtly romance have tried and failed to achieve.

Moreover, what Galaad is supposed to achieve is not so much a deed as an *experience*. A sustained vocabulary of exhibition, disclosure and display seems to make Galaad's predestined reward (*voir apertement* the divine *segrez* and *repostailles* identified with the Grail) and the culmination of the quest continuous with the objective dimension of his character. This discourse accentuates the absolute exteriority corresponding to his function as an agent of the exteriorization or manifestation (*demonstration*) of sacred meaning, and hence as a perfect text ready-made for exhaustive exegesis. However, the Grail revelation turns out not to be an apotheosis of literary language, a final leap past 'veiled' meaning to the successful articulation and exposure of truth. On the contrary, it is an entirely absorptive, intensive experience. It is not oriented *defors*, as the paradigmatic pub-

¹⁸ Baumgartner, *L'Arbre et le pain*, pp. 106–07.

¹⁹ Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*, pp. 76–78.

lic *demonstrance*, but always situated *dedenz*: ‘dedenz le saint Vessel’ (within the holy Vessel; §331.1–2), where Galaad’s eyes are directed, but also within Galaad himself, who cannot express the content of his vision except in metaphors and negations — ‘or voi je tot apertement,’ he says, ‘ce que langue ne porroit descovrir ne cuer penser’ (now I see plainly that which no tongue could express and no heart could conceive; §331.7–8).²⁰ This apophatic formula emphasizes that Grail experience not only precludes the normal linguistic means of exteriorizing and disseminating meaning (especially in a written text), but even exceeds conceptualization itself, the degree zero of any content’s possible mediation by any kind of symbolic system whatsoever.

The full realization of Galaad’s signifying exteriority, the accession to truth that definitively reveals him as the incarnation of a redeemed chivalric ideal, thus inverts his relationship to meaning. Far from being incapable of a subjective experience that he exists to engender in others, he becomes the sole subject of the most important experience in the *Queste*.²¹ Instead of unself-consciously bodying forth God’s active presence to others, he is granted a wholly interiorized *visio Dei* inaccessible even to Bohort and Perceval, who are, like the reader, reduced to the status of mere onlookers to an invisible and ineffable event. The exegetical gloss, which functions to extend meaning’s audience and field of accessibility both within and beyond the text, is necessary and legitimate to the extent that fundamentally unreliable *semblances* require language to do away with their ambiguity and define, by articulating, their ‘real’ referents and significance. When it becomes possible for Galaad’s ‘oil [...] terrien’ (earthly eyes; §203.9) or trembling

²⁰ On the theological and literary problematics of speaking the unspeakable and figuring the unfigurable, see Séguy, *Les Romans du Graal*; Dubost, ‘La Pensée de l’impensable’; Combarieu du Grès, ‘Voir Dieu, ou l’apocalypse du Graal’; and Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*.

²¹ It is perhaps a revealing resistance to this fact that leads Baumgartner to end her otherwise illuminating study of the *Queste* with the untenable assertion that after Galaad’s Grail vision and subsequent death, ‘Bohort, le témoin et le garant, rapporte [...] pour la *Joie de la cort*, le secret dérobé à la source de la vie et le livre du Graal’ (Baumgartner, *L’Arbre et le pain*, p. 154). Bohort returns to Camelot with the basis for the ‘livre du Graal’ — the eyewitness testimony that the *Queste* supposedly (but impossibly) transcribes — precisely in lieu of the Grail’s secrets, which he cannot know and the *Queste*, if it knows them, cannot tell. And although Bohort is certainly greeted with ‘grant joie’ (§333.7) by Arthur and his decimated company, the news of the quest’s completion and the Grail’s definitive disappearance from Logres hardly guarantees the untroubled secular *joie de la cort* won by Chrétien de Troyes’s Erec. After the era of *aventures*, the Arthurian world, deprived of meaning and purpose, can expect nothing but internecine violence and self-immolation, guided by the destructive determinisms of human passion and Fortune, or *mescheance*, rather than divine providence, in the *Mort Artu*. See Lacy, ‘The Sense of an Ending’; Greene, *Le Sujet et la mort dans ‘La Mort Artu’*.

'mortel char' (mortal flesh) to 'regarder les esperitex choses' (look upon spiritual things; §331.3–4), referentiality — and along with it the principle of metaphoric substitution upon which verbal signification is based — ceases to be a solution and instead becomes the problem. The narration of transcendent experience as a diegetic event precludes its orientation outward toward the reader, its function as *demonstrance*. Truth's appearance on the surface of the romance plot definitively establishes the *Queste*, at least insofar as its meaning is bound up with that of the Grail, as a story both about and addressed primarily (and, in its fullness, only) to Galaad as a human subject.

The *Queste's* Grail thus materializes the anti-allegorical principle of the non-substitutability of one thing, one sign, one experience for another. Whether or not the anonymous author 'compose [...] dans le plan abstrait et traduit ensuite en langage de roman',²² as has often been surmised, the romance plot is the foundation and guarantor of the contiguous meanings produced through allegoresis. Plot forms the indispensable material support of the layered senses to which it can give rise, and for whose production it must not be seen as an arbitrary pretext. And the subjective interiority persistently ascribed to the *Queste's* human signs, including Galaad, is not other than the inexhaustibly legible 'outside' of a plot that demands to be taken at face value, the resistance to ideological totalization (and to the tautology that results whenever a perfect substitutability of sense for sign or idea for object is assumed) that constitutes precisely the abiding 'interiority' proper to literary narrative's irreducible surface. Todorov famously asserts that 'la quête du Graal est non seulement quête d'un code et d'un sens, mais aussi d'un récit', inasmuch as it presents itself as an interpretable narrative that generates interpretive narratives which, because they are continuous with the diegesis, become interpretable in their turn. Séguéy has extended this idea into a general theory of Grail textuality whereby the Holy Vessel represents the principle of plot-production.²³ To grasp the Grail as an engine of narrative production, however, is not necessarily to concede the agonistic character of the relationship between vernacular fiction and religious writing. In its very capacity as a theological figure that at once demands and defers interpretation, the Grail has, if not a single religious meaning, a vital religious *function* that makes the production of plot — and the letter of romance — spiritually productive as well, precisely by troubling the passage from the particular to the universal, the material to the spiritual, literary *semblance* to theological *senefiance*.

²² Pauphilet, 'Introduction', in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. by Pauphilet, p. xii.

²³ Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 149, and Séguéy, *Les Romans du Graal*, p. 11. See also Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, pp. 136, 145, 154, and Kelly, 'Matiere and genera dicendi'.

IV.

An allegorical reading authorized by the *Queste*'s hermits invites interpretation of Galaad's simultaneous differentiation from and assimilation to the rest of the Arthurian community, which establishes him as the paradoxically inimitable exemplar of celestial chivalry, in terms of the Grail Knight's likeness to Christ. God's only begotten son, the only possible (and predestined, albeit, as Aquinas says, *singulari modo*²⁴) candidate to play the lead in the drama of sacrifice and redemption, nevertheless participates fully in the nature of humanity as a whole, and his salvific significance depends on his unique but universally representative character. The *Queste* explicitly and allusively thematizes the analogy between Galaad and Christ in numerous scenes meticulously catalogued by Pauline Matarasso, for whom the *Queste* is less a romance than a series of vignettes modelled on Scripture and intended to illustrate points of Christian doctrine. However, as Matarasso herself justly insists, 'typological analogy lies not between person and person, but between act and act.'²⁵ In the *Queste*'s own terms, although many adventures' *senefiances* indicate that Galaad 'is' Christ, he is Christ only 'de semblance et non pas de hautece' (in appearance and not in holiness; §43.38–39). In his role as a typological figure of Christ, Galaad mimes the formal gestures of universal salvation history without replicating their genuinely salvific effect, which is of course *sui generis*.

The adventures of Galaad thus contain at least two recurring but inconsistently sustained Christological dimensions — Galaad befigures the risen Christ in his capacities as Redeemer and, less frequently, as avenging justiciar — as well as a 'mystical level on which he embodies the concept of the sponsa Christi, the seeker rather than the sought',²⁶ developed mostly in the later stages of the quest. The proliferation of localized Christological themes and identifications, and indeed of allegorical readings in general, renders them incapable of making narrative sense of the text. For example, in a re-enactment of the Last Supper where the Grail trio stands in for the apostles, Galaad, already both a type of Christ and the

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae: The One Mediator*, ed. by O'Neill, §3.24.1, I, 172.

²⁵ Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 80. The governing idea here is that 'all life, all actions have points of reference outside the here and now; they are reflections of a higher truth, irrespective of the actors' awareness of this fact' — but 'the characters in the *Queste* are never in their own right the equivalent of something else, they assume the extra dimension only through their actions, and when they cease to act the connection also ceases' (pp. 60–61). On the structure of figural thinking, see Auerbach, 'Figura', trans. by Manheim.

²⁶ Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 64.

embodiment of the *sponsa Christi*, receives the Eucharistic body directly from the still-bleeding crucified Christ (who oddly refers to his historical self in the third person) during a mystical mass celebrated by yet another Christ-figure, Joseph of Arimathea's long-dead and now *esperitel* son, Josephé (§320–23).²⁷ The episode is so overdetermined that its 'second sense', if there is one, is indecipherable.

Indeed, the *Queste* uses Galaad to manifest God's saving presence to the people of Logres and to the reader, but also to 'plumb [...] the gulf between the fictional and the historical Messiah' by stressing the Buen Chevalier's almost comical ignorance of his typological role and of its soteriological implications.²⁸ This ignorance, which identifies Galaad with the audience rather than the author of the *demonstrances* he performs, can seem to underscore his status as the docile puppet of a determinism in which providential predestination and the imperious rigour of allegorical composition coincide. From another perspective, however, Galaad's alienation from his own plural meanings works precisely to keep his barely representable free agency and subjectivity intact within the prescribed course of the allegorical logic of substitution. The episodes that most forcefully disclose Galaad's identity as *figura Christi* also qualify his function as an instrument of *demonstrance* in a way that undermines, at least as much as it reinforces, the impression imparted by King Arthur and other characters that Galaad's presence in Logres and in the *Queste* is entirely motivated and exhaustively constituted by his objective fulfillment of a prophecy — essentially a figural schema — that dictates his every move. Representatively, Galaad's adventures at the *Chastel as Puceles* (Castle of Maidens), where he defeats seven cruel brothers and frees the

²⁷ See Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, pp. 80–82, and Pauphilet, *Études sur la 'Queste del Saint Graal'*, p. 102.

²⁸ Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 54. A particularly interesting, because ambiguous, example of this contrast occurs during the interpretation of Galaad's arrival in Camelot offered some time after the fact by Perceval's aunt. Galaad, she says, came in red armour as a figure of the Word that descended upon the apostles in Pentecostal fire; 'en ceste semblance vos vint conforter le Chevalier que vos devez tenir a mestre et a pastor' (in that image there came to solace you the Knight whom you should acknowledge as your teacher and shepherd; §92.19–20). The anchoress seems to be saying that Galaad will literally occupy the role of Christ-like spiritual mentor and guide for the Arthurian community (a claim upheld by Bogdanow, 'An Interpretation of the Meaning and Purpose of the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*', pp. 33–36), but this idea is difficult to reconcile with the consistent representation of Galaad as not only miserly with insightful advice — if he has any to give, which is not at all clear in the text — but in fact perennially unaware of the significance of his own adventures. Everyone tries to follow Galaad, but he is not consciously a leader; he befigures, but does not imitate, the Good Shepherd.

legion of damsels they had held captive before restoring the castle to its rightful heiress, are interpreted by a *prodome* in no uncertain terms as a re-enactment of the Harrowing of Hell:

Par le Chastel as Puceles doiz tu entendre enfer, par les puceles les ames qui a tort i estoient enserrees devant la Passion Jesucrist. Par les .vii. chevaliers doiz tu entendre les .vii. pechiez mortels qui lors regnoient el monde, si que de droit n'i avoit point; que si tost come l'ame issoit del cors [...] de prodome ou de mauvés, tantost aloit en enfer, si estoit iluec enserree si com ci estoient les puceles. Mes quant Dex vit que ce qu'il avoit fet aloit si a mal, il envia son Fil en terre por delivrer les buenes puceles, ce sont les buenes ames. Et tot eini com il envia son Fil [...] ausi envia il ça Galaaz son esleu chevalier et son esleu serjant, por ce qu'il despoillast le chastel des buenes puceles. (§65.1–14)

(By the Castle of Maidens you must understand Hell, and by the maidens, the souls unjustly held captive there before Christ's Passion. By the seven knights you must understand the seven deadly sins that then ruled the world, so that there was no justice at all; for as soon as the soul left the body of a righteous man or a sinner alike, it went straight to Hell, and was imprisoned there just as the maidens were here. But when God saw that things were going so ill with what he had created, he sent his Son to earth to free the good damsels, that is, the righteous souls. And just as he sent his Son [...] so he sent Galaad, his chosen knight and servant, there to despoil the castle of the good maidens.)

After establishing the equivalences that define the terms of the *senefiance*, firmly grounding his interpretation in the literal adventure narrative, the hermit allows the story adumbrated by the figural sense to dominate his discourse. Where at first the literal signifiers were glossed according to how they 'ought to be understood', so that the figural sense seemed to derive from the literal, by the end of the exposition, the Christ-narrative assumes primacy and emerges as the template traced by Providence to produce Galaad's adventure *tot eini com*, in the image of, the original event.²⁹ The same pattern emerges in the interpretation of the earlier episode (§40–44) wherein Galaad must exorcise the demon who inhabits the tomb of a long-dead miscreant. 'Einsi,' concludes the *prodome* on that occasion, 'poez vos voir en ceste aventure la senefiance de la Passion Jesucrist et la sen-

²⁹ It is worth noting in this connection that Gauvain, not Galaad, is the audience for this interpretation, and that the exegesis turns into a homiletic exhortation that applies the moral theme of the *senefiance* to Gauvain's own spiritual state. Christ's story, the story of a real redemption and not Galaad's re-enactment of it, is the one to which the hermit wants to direct Gauvain's attention in the hopes that it will help to free his worldly soul from the dungeon of sin in which it, like the *puceles*, languishes.

blance de son avenement' (Thus you can see in this adventure the sign of Christ's Passion and the image of his advent; §44.9–10).

The *semblance* of the Passion itself, as opposed to the casting out of sin and death it effected, is actually rather difficult to find in Galaad's entirely painless victory over the devil, who flees at his approach. The principle at work here is nevertheless clear: 'Or devons vooir coment ceste senblance et cele de lors s'entracordent' (Now we must see how this adventure's form and that of those bygone events correspond to each other; §44.1–2). Formal correspondences legitimize figural reading as instructive comparison, 'por quoi', the monk tells Galaad, 'l'en doit vostre venue comparer pres a la venue Jhesucrist, de semblance et non pas de hautece' (wherefore one should closely compare your coming to that of Christ, in appearance although not in holiness; §43.37–39). As Armand Strubel comments, not the protagonist himself but the event is compared by analogy — and not said to *senefier*, let alone to 'be' — the sacred archetype.³⁰ What is particularly interesting both here and in the gloss on the *Chastel as Puceles*, however, is that Galaad's predestination is represented neither as the origin nor as the cause of his resemblance to Christ, but rather as part of the narrative *semblance* that makes the comparison possible. In other words, the assumption that Galaad is like Christ because he is the predestined Grail Knight and vice versa is thrown into question by the *prodomes*' suggestion that Galaad's election or predestination is not proper to him as an individual, but instead belongs to an objective regime of *demonstrances* from which Galaad as a subject (and thus precisely as the Grail Knight, the future subject of Grail experience) is emphatically distanced by his dependence upon the monks' instructions during the adventure of the tomb (§42.4–5) and on many other occasions. The historical advent of Christ was, of course, prophesied; in fact, the first miracle in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, to which the adventure of the tomb alludes, directly follows Christ's proclamation in the synagogue that he has come to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah.³¹ Equally definitive of Christ's story on the formal level is his coming as God's chosen deputy and messenger. In order that the *semblances* of Galaad's romance advent(s) *s'entracordent* with the coming of Christ, therefore, 'God' — the intradiegetic architect of history who stands in for the extradiegetic author's prerogative to compose the romance plot, as God did the events of the Old Testament, with figural consonance in mind — presents Galaad, too, as a savior-elect and as the answer to a prophecy:

³⁰ Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, p. 279.

³¹ Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, pp. 54–55.

Ceste senblance que li Peres envia en terre son Fil por delivrer le pueple est ore renovelee. Car [...] vos a Nostre Sires esleu sor toz chevaliers por enviaer par les estranges terres [...]. Car tot ausi com li prophete estoient venu grant tens devant la venue Jesucrist et avoient anoncié la venue de lui et distrent que il delivreroit le pueple des liens d'enfer, tout ausi ont anoncié li saint hermite vostre venue plus a de .xx. anz. (§43.31–43)

(The semblance of how the Father sent his Son to earth to deliver the people is now renewed, for [...] Our Lord has chosen you over all other knights to send into foreign lands [...]. For just as the prophets had come long before the advent of Christ and announced his coming, saying that he would deliver the people from the chains of Hell, so did the holy hermits foretell your coming more than twenty years ago.)

The prophecy that inscribes Galaad's coming into the *Queste's* salvation (pseudo-) history and the strong suggestion that the details of his adventures are in some sense generated by, rather than simply evocative of, figural correspondences — that is, the very two elements most conducive to Galaad's interpretation as a 'chaste robot éblouissant'³² — thus backhandedly avow their own contingency so as obliquely to emphasize Galaad's barely visible, often forgotten, and yet elusively central personal virtue and piety.³³

Equally remarkable is the fact that when the devil flees the tomb *en semblance de* his retreat before the triumphant Redeemer, his fear of Galaad needs a literal cause as well, one that the monk locates in the metonymic rather than metaphoric conquest of sin embodied by the Buen Chevalier's spotless virginity (§44.19–23). The same rerouting of prophesied and predetermined 'ritual' exploits into reminders of Galaad's imprescriptibly free, if necessarily grace-bolstered, fidelity to God's law occurs elsewhere in the *Queste*, most interestingly when Galaad encounters his long-buried but still living and suffering ancestor Symeu near the end of the quest. Here, as in the earlier adventure of the tomb, Galaad need only approach a sepulcher inhabited by evil for its noisome fire to be banished by the force of his virtue alone. Symeu tells Galaad that but for his

³² Roubaud, 'Généalogie morale des Rois-Pêcheurs', p. 246.

³³ Cf. the monk's further assertion that Galaad has been chosen by God to 'fere conoistre coment [les greveuses aventures] sont avenues' (make it known how/why [the dreadful adventures] occurred; §43.37) — which he does not do, any more than he ever delivers 'the people' from the bonds of hell. Christ, however, was an agent of truth's manifestation (see Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 54), and so Galaad must be one too; the point is to flesh out Galaad's resemblance to Christ even at the expense of the *figura's* consistency with the surrounding romance narrative.

coming, he could never have escaped damnation, but now he will be admitted to heaven for Galaad's sake:

Galaaz, serjant Jesucrist, molt devez rendre granz graces a Nostre Seigneur de ce que si bone grace vos a donee, que par la buene vie de vos poez vos retraire les ames de la poine terriene, et metre en la joie de paradis [...]. [L]a grace del Saint Esperit, qui plus ovre en vos que la terriene chevalerie ne fet, m'a regardé en pitié par la grant humilité qui est en vos. (§316.12–23)

(Galaad, servant of Christ, you should give great thanks to Our Lord for granting you such grace that you can, through your own good life, extricate souls from earthly suffering, and send them to the joys of paradise [...]. The grace of the Holy Spirit, which works in you much more strongly than does earthly chivalry, has taken pity on me for the sake of the great humility that is in you.)

Galaad's arrival was a prerequisite for Symeu's salvation — the only literal rather than figurative one with which Galaad, the 'romance Redeemer,' is explicitly credited in the *Queste* — but the Grail Knight's redemptive power is thoroughly mediated. It is not really *his* at all but that of the Holy Spirit, which works 'in' him but not through him, even if it regards him as a kind of saintly intercessor whose credit with God can supplement that of others. Galaad himself wields no redemptive power beyond his *buene vie's* ability to arouse divine compassion for sinful humanity.

V.

The discreet but persistent leitmotiv of Galaad's *buene vie* is a reminder that although personal piety is more prominently thematized in connection with less perfect knights,³⁴ the Galaad who seeks and sees the Grail, and who constitutes along with and in relation to it the most eminently allegorizable of the *Queste's* literary *semblances*, is an individual whose ethical subjectivity subtends all possible readings of the text as a coherent narrative whole. There could be no plot without it, even if the integration of interpretive discourse into diegesis tends to make Galaad's (and the quest's) 'second sense(s)' more readily apparent than the literal quest narrative often veiled, ironically enough, by its conspicuous *senefiances*. Perhaps, then, there is more critical merit than first appears in the creative misprision by Romantic readers that produced 'Galaad and the quest, the defining image for us of the myth of human aspiration to perfection and knowledge

³⁴ See Errecade, 'Piété rituelle et piété personnelle'.

of spiritual secrets'.³⁵ The Grail quest is to an important extent a quest for self-knowledge, albeit in an intellectual context where 'la personne est étudiée surtout en relation avec Dieu [et la] connaissance de soi est supposée conduire vers la divinité', rather than toward any kind of idiosyncratically 'authentic' self-expression. Counterintuitive though it may seem, Galaad must therefore be understood as 'celui qui a le mieux exploré les profondeurs de son propre moi. Il est celui qui se connaît lui[-]même avant d'entreprendre une quête impliquant la connaissance du monde'.³⁶

It is Gauvain who first enunciates the objective of the quest: he will not return to court, he vows, until he has seen the Grail's 'véraie senblance [...] plus apertement que il ne m'a ci esté mostré, s'il puet estre en nule maniere que je le puisse vooir, ne ne doie' (true appearance [...] more openly than it has been shown to me so far, if it is at all possible than I can and should see it; §20.17–23). Unsurprisingly given Gauvain's subsequent villainization as the archetype of chivalric vainglory and pig-headed belligerence, he misses the point in two crucial ways. An old *prodome* soon explains that the real quest is not simply a blind charge after a wondrous material object. It begins within each man — or, more prosaically, at church: no man must set off after the Grail

qui ne soit confés ou qui n'aille a confesse, que nus en si haut servise ne doit entrer devant qu'il soit netoiez et espurgiez de totes vilanies et de toz pechiez mortex. Car ceste Queste n'est mie queste de terrienes ovres, ainz doit estre li encerchemenz des granz segrez et dez grans repostailles Nostre Seignor que li Hauz Mestres mosterra apertement au beneur chevalier qu'il a esleu a son serjant entre toz les autres chevaliers terriens, a cui il mosterra les granz merveilles del Saint Graal, et fera vooir ce que cuers mortex ne porroit penser ne langue d'ome terrien deviser. (§22.28–38)

(who has not been shriven or who does not go to confession, for no one should enter into so hallowed a service before being cleansed and purged of all baseness and mortal sins. For this Quest is no earthly quest, but rather the pursuit of the great secrets and mysteries of Our Lord, which the High Teacher will show openly to the fortunate knight whom he has chosen for his servant from among all other

³⁵ Regalado, *La Chevalerie Celestiel*, p. 110.

³⁶ Girbea, *La Couronne ou l'auréole*, pp. 521, 517. Unfortunately, Girbea does not follow up this suggestive observation, which occurs in the context of a study of the emergence of individual self-consciousness focused on celestial chivalry's moral and epistemological autonomy from ecclesiastical and especially royal power-structures. In *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, Saint Bernard identifies self-knowledge as a first, humbling step toward truth; see Bernard of Clairvaux, 'The Steps of Humility and Pride', trans. by Conway, §4.13–15, pp. 41–44.

earthly knights, to whom he will show the great marvels of the Holy Grail, and whom he will allow to see that which cannot be conceived by mortal hearts, nor spoken by the tongues of earthly men.)

The first part of this admonition clearly emphasizes the 'subjective' dimension of the quest as an inward journey of repentance and self-purification, but there is also a more objective (albeit highly sublimated) component represented by the search for God's 'secrets', which are of course ineffable but seem to involve Trinitarian and Eucharistic mysteries.³⁷ The monk is, however, strikingly forthright about the fact that the outcome of the quest is ordained in advance. It is all very well for Gauvain to seek the Grail, but only Galaad has been chosen to receive the blessings of divine revelation, and the other knights can no more hope to partake of them than the lord's single servant-elect needs to fear failure.³⁸ And yet, even if many are called but few are chosen (§155.38–39), the fact that the quest will culminate in an experience reserved for Galaad alone does not prevent it from constituting an *haut service* for the rest of the Round Table.³⁹ The Grail Knight's stately progress toward his reward is grasped, however enigmatically, as a self-purificatory process that every knight can and should emulate, and Galaad's inimitable and inevitable triumph is also, paradoxically, the ethical and spiritual victory of a chivalric Everyman.

At the end of the quest, Galaad himself ultimately interprets his own path to the Grail in terms, not of destiny or typological meaning, but of steadfast desire. 'Sire,' he prays to God before his soul leaves his body and ascends to heaven with an angelic escort, 'toi aor ge et merci a ce que tu m'as accompli mon desirrier car [...] vos m'avez accomplie ma volenté de lessier moi veoir ce que j'ai toz jors desirré' (Lord, I praise and thank you for fulfilling my desire, for [...] you have granted

³⁷ See Hamilton, 'L'Interprétation mystique de *La Queste del Saint Graal*', and Lot-Borodine, 'Les Grands Secrets du Saint-Graal'. This is not to say that the Grail 'symbolizes' in any straightforward way either the Trinity or the Eucharist, any more than it symbolizes grace or the Pentecost, which are also associated with it. As Strubel has remarked, the Grail as theological signifier (it is also a material relic of the Passion and thus a point of departure for historical narratives) functions as a 'point de convergence et point de fuite' for interpretive discourses, a placeholder for the 'ensemble des *senefiances* et *demonstrances* qui ne se confond pas avec leur somme' (Strubel, *La Rose, Renart et le Graal*, p. 288).

³⁸ Sunderland therefore argues that the role of the other questers is primarily 'to serve the plot in different ways, by providing deferral of closure' (Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles*, p. 64).

³⁹ On the individual and collective dimensions of the quest, see Gîrbea, *La Couronne ou l'aurole*, pp. 520–21, and Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued*, pp. 177–78.

my wish by allowing me to see that which I have always desired; §331.6–13). This glimpse of a Grail experience defined by an emotional plenitude beyond particular doctrinal content, a feeling of ‘grant joie’ (great joy) (§331.13–14) resulting from the fulfillment of a long-cherished *desirrier* or *volenté*, is particularly striking because Galaad has hitherto shown almost no inclination toward affective piety.⁴⁰ It would seem that the critics’ wooden soldier, the wind-up Messiah, had a heart all along. His impassioned final prayer constitutes a carefully positioned revisionary reading of the entire *Queste*, especially in contrast with his original response to Arthur’s effusive greetings: ‘Sire, [...] je i sui venuz, que je le devoie fere, por ce que de ceenz doivent movoir tuit cil qui compaignon seront de la Queste del Saint Graal, qui par tens sera comencié’ (Sire, [...] I came because I had to, because all who will be companions of the Quest of the Holy Grail, which will soon begin, must depart from here; §14.21–24). It retroactively inscribes a willing, striving, desiring, struggling subject, an autonomous — and therefore possibly imperfect — agent, inside the ‘robot-knight’s’ impermeable armour and at the core of the ritual narrative of progressive *demonstrances* privileged by the text’s intradiegetic expositors. At the same time, however, this concluding redefinition of how the *Queste* asks to be read harmonizes with the text’s sometimes latent representation of the quest as a spiritually consequential search for illumination, inextricable from the growing self-awareness and concomitant self-perfection of the human subjects undertaking it. Such a narrative, which forms the literal armature of the romance, can find satisfactory closure only when the Grail manifests itself, *apertement* but indescribably, as the well-earned reward promised to the ‘serjant Jesucrist, qui vos estes traveillié et pené por vooir partie des merveilles del saint Vaisel’ (servants of Christ, who have struggled and suffered to see a part of the marvels of the holy Vessel; §321.28–29; cf. §282.15–17). The affective, and therefore personalized, quality of Grail experience (even if it is best understood as Guillaume de Saint-Thierry’s ‘amour-intellection’ of God⁴¹) demands that it be conceived as the end-point of an individual spiritual trajectory defined by the struggle, the work, of achieving and sustaining virtue in will and act.

Galaad’s place in the precise and predictable ritual order suggested by the theme of predestination and informed by the *Queste*’s various theological influ-

⁴⁰ On the contrary, his holiness — that of a strict but often apparently unintentional or uncomprehending ‘adherence to the moral law’, which is also the law of resemblance to Christ — seems to reveal ‘the inhumanity, the coldness of the holy subject’ (Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles*, p. 76) in the ‘businesslike manner’ with which his exploits are both performed and narrated (Griffin, *The Object and the Cause*, p. 30).

⁴¹ Lot-Borodine, ‘Les Grands Secrets du Saint-Graal’, pp. 157–61.

ences (in their capacity as local or partial allegorical ‘pretexts’⁴²) thus cannot cancel out, although it certainly does complicate, the interiority that makes him capable and worthy of Grail experience. We have already seen that this ‘experience is entirely spiritual [and entirely] personal, unshared by his companions’; in these respects, it corresponds to what ‘one would expect of the “close embrace of mutual love” as defined by St. Bernard’.⁴³ Indeed, this climactic experience, although not the entire romance, is accounted for in universalizable terms by only one allegorical register: the reading according to which Galaad represents the *sponsa Christi*, the human soul on a ‘pilgrimage [...] towards ecstatic union’ with the divine,⁴⁴ which predicates the wider *seneffiance* of the *aventures del Graal* precisely on Galaad’s individuality.

Already in Bernard’s commentary on the Song of Songs, the *sponsa* motif functions less to abstract or schematize the soul’s path to God than to personalize and concretize that theological pattern as a paradigm of and catalyst for affective piety by capitalizing on the arrestingly sensory, even erotic, materiality of the textual letter. As a fictional exemplar of the Christian *sponsa*, Galaad is still more necessarily the metonymic rather than metaphoric embodiment of an ideal that offers itself to all Christians in their capacity as singular subjects of mystical, but still literal, personal experience. Although these subjects’ potential spiritual trajectory, like Galaad’s, may be described in ritualistic, schematic terms, it nevertheless depends for its realization on a ‘perfection’ that can never be taken for granted. God’s grace sustains virtue in the soul, but human frailty puts it always at stake and in process, caught up in a labour of self-refinement that looks effortless — Rupert of Deutz puns, in one of the more extreme orthodox statements on the issue, that the elect are ‘made, nay, perfected’ in ‘God’s image and likeness’⁴⁵ — but does not abso-

⁴² Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory*, pp. 97–98. The ‘pretext’ theoretically precedes allegorical narrative as its origin and guarantor (the ‘treasure house’ of its truth-value), but also proceeds from it as a gloss or supplement, so that the processes of decoding and recoding narrative cannot be held apart.

⁴³ Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 196. As Beckwith remarks, ‘the affective theology of St Bernard involved [...] [a] kind of subjectivity constructed in relation to the reformed Christ — a self whose *love* would be the basis and medium of reform. Henceforth, knowledge of God will be bound up with knowledge of the self, with a radical reflexivity’ (Beckwith, *Christ’s Body*, p. 50).

⁴⁴ Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 38. On the *sponsa* motif and its divergent mystical and corporate (ecclesiological) interpretations, as well as its use by and for men and women, see Bugge, *Virginitas*.

⁴⁵ ‘Ad imaginem autem simul et similitudinem Dei, soli electi facti, imo et perfecti sunt’; Rupert of Deutz, *In Genesim*, §2.5, col. 251a. See Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au douzième*

lutely exclude the possibility of failure, of a *lapsus* into sin.⁴⁶ The warning engraved in Chaldean script on the boat that bears the Grail trio to Sarraz insists on this possibility, which it explicitly extends to every addressee in what the narrator calls ‘une molt dotose parole et perilleuse a toz cels qui dedenz voloient entrer’ (most fearful and dangerous words for all who wished to go on board):

O tu, hom qui dedenz moi vels entrer, qui que tu soies, bien te garde que tu soies plain de foi, car il n’a en moi se foi non. Por ce garde bien, ainz que tu i entres, que tu ne soies entechié [...]. Et si tost com tu guenchiras a creance, je te guenchirai en tel maniere que tu n’avras de moi aide ne sostenance, ainz te faudrai. (§245.11–21)

(O man who wishes to board me, whoever you are, make very sure that you are full of faith, for there is nothing but faith in me. Therefore take care, before boarding, lest you be sullied [...]. And if you ever turn from your belief, I will turn from you so surely that you will get no help or support from me, for I will fail you.)

Stepping onto the holy deck does not mean stepping out of time, beyond testing, into a sanctity literally perfected, achieved once and for all. The waves may roughen and faith may fail; the boat of the human soul, an image familiar from one of Bohort’s theological discussions with a hermit, is a frail bark that can always *guenchir*. Even where the gift of grace seems to become the machinery of predestination around souls ‘en cui virginitez est si durement enracinee [...] qu’il n’ont garde que orguelz se fiert en els’ (in whom virginity is so deeply rooted [...] that they have no fear that pride will take hold of them; §192.12–14), the *Queste* insists on the fact that Galaad’s *buene* or ‘haute vie’ (high/holy life; §167.17) justifies and sustains, as well as results from, his election.⁴⁷

siècle, I, 327–30.

⁴⁶ Talal Asad shows that ‘Bernard set before his novices an authoritative model of virtue towards which they were led to aspire, but he also sought to use concupiscence itself’ — the imperfection built into fallen human nature — as the material or occasion for exercising virtue, ‘*materia exercendae virtutis*’ (Asad, ‘On Ritual and Discipline’, p. 173).

⁴⁷ However, the *buene vie* that undergirds Galaad’s likeness to Christ is not represented as an *imitatio Christi*. Although Matarasso takes it for granted that literary characters who, like Galaad, reproduce ‘in some measure the pattern of Christ’s life on earth [...] are fictional exemplars of the *imitatio Christi*, the professed aim of the Christian life’ (Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry*, p. 18), Galaad never professes such a conscious aim. He certainly displays nothing of the physical or affective ‘sense of self-obliteration, the merging into another body, the annihilation of the self’ (Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p. 319) characteristic of mystical *imitatio* (and especially Eucharistic mysticism, for which the later stages of the *Queste* afford a number of unexploited opportunities).

On the other hand, it is often indisputable that ‘Galaad n’est pas élu parce qu’il réussit les épreuves mais réussit les épreuves parce qu’il est élu’,⁴⁸ so that divine election precedes success in a quest that in turn tautologically proves the excellence of the elect. The ‘Buen Chevalier’ is good because he has been chosen, *esleu*, to be *beneuré*: ‘happy’ in the sense of fortunate or, to put it bluntly, lucky — lucky enough to be the beneficiary of the *grâce efficace* (as opposed to the *grâce suffisante* that makes all human souls capable of a relationship with God) ‘sans laquelle le héros ne pourrait rien faire’,⁴⁹ a grace apparently guaranteed by the hazard of his birth into ‘la prédestination d’un lignage élu’, which founds ‘l’unité structurale du *corpus* entier’ of the Vulgate Cycle.⁵⁰ Pauphilet’s contention that there is in the *Queste* ‘rien qui ressemble à la prédestination’ thus cannot hold water, but this does not mean that Galaad’s predestination is unproblematic. As a number of critics have noted, ‘l’éternel débat du libre arbitre et de l’omnipotence divine’ is anything but marginal to the *Queste*.⁵¹ Micha puts eloquently the question that he identifies as central to the entire Vulgate Cycle: ‘Les personnages disposent-ils de leur libre-arbitre ou sont-ils les jouets, victimes ou favoris peu importe, d’une volonté transcendante?’⁵² The text challenges its readers, as it requires its heroes, to conceive of personal responsibility alongside and within determinism, to pursue a foregone conclusion as though (or because) something essential is at stake. This means actively reading the ethical category *buens* in or into the most unerring of knights errant, the *beneuré chevalier*.

The *Queste*’s engagement with the notoriously thorny issue of grace and free will is generally considered, with good reason, from the perspective of the text’s ‘romancing’ of theological themes and doctrines. Already in Étienne Gilson’s seminal reading, the *Queste*’s heavy reliance on Saint Bernard’s reflections on the problem of grace’s coexistence with human freedom makes it ‘exactement le roman de la grâce ou, si l’on veut, la vie de la grâce dans l’âme chrétienne racontée sous forme de roman.’⁵³ By this, Gilson means that the narrative is organized in rigorous accordance with the mystical theology of grace developed by Bernard in his treatises *De diligendo Deo* and especially *De gratia et libero arbitrio*. Jean-René Valette’s more recent account of the correspondences in question helpfully clari-

⁴⁸ Todorov, ‘La Quête du récit’, p. 139.

⁴⁹ Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*, p. 126.

⁵⁰ Frappier, ‘La Naissance et l’évolution du roman arthurien en prose’, p. 510.

⁵¹ Pauphilet, *Études sur la ‘Queste del Saint Graal’*, pp. 31–32.

⁵² Micha, *Essais sur le cycle du ‘Lancelot-Graal’*, p. 192; see pp. 192–206.

⁵³ Gilson, ‘La Mystique de la grâce’, p. 342; pp. 326–28 summarize Bernard’s theology of grace.

fies what a particularly Cistercian interpretation of grace shares with the *Queste's* interest in the semiotics and ontology of *semblance* and with the dynamics of the questers' progress toward mystical experience.⁵⁴ For Bernard, man is made in God's image but can, in his postlapsarian condition, achieve resemblance to God only by way of a tripartite trajectory made possible by the gift of grace in conjunction with the free will to virtue. The path toward perfect resemblance is an ascent through three graduated 'liberties': *libertas a necessitate* or *libertas naturae*, the inalienable power to govern the instincts and passions that is innate in all men; *libertas a peccato* or *libertas gratiae*, the freedom from sin that defines the virtue of a soul unencumbered by concupiscence and therefore able to direct its desire toward the Sovereign Good; and the transcendent *libertas a miseria* or *libertas gloriae*, wherein man's will coincides perfectly with that of God, a state attained on earth by Christ alone. In Bernard's words: 'in the first place, we were created with free will and willing freedom, a creature noble in God's eyes. Secondly, we are re-formed in innocence, a new creature in Christ[;] and thirdly, we are raised up to glory, a perfect creature in the Spirit.'⁵⁵

It is important to note that 'freedom' or 'liberty', as Bernard conceives it, is distinct from free will. Bernard's key term is not *libera voluntas* (free will) but *liberum arbitrium* (free choice), and he is less interested in painstakingly theorizing what 'willing' entails than in emphasizing man's categorical dependence upon the support and help of grace to progress beyond the first liberty.

God is the author of salvation, the free willing faculty merely capable of receiving it. None but God can give it, nothing but free choice receive it. What, therefore, is given by God alone and to free choice alone, can no more happen without the recipient's consent than without the bestower's grace. Consequently, free choice is said to co-operate with operating grace in its act of consent, or, in other words, in its process of being saved.

The freedom of choice, when used rightly, is thus the capacity for 'voluntary consent' to the operation of grace, which is 'a self-determining habit of the soul'.⁵⁶ This habit of consent is what allows grace to instantiate the desire of the virtuous will — which is distinct from the choice to act, for *velle* and *posse* are different things, as Paul says (Rom. 7. 18; Gal. 5. 17). In fact, because the will is impo-

⁵⁴ Valette, *La Pensée du Graal*, pp. 119–73. The following discussion also draws on Magnard, 'Image et ressemblance', and Vance, 'Le Temps sans nombre', pp. 278–80. See also Javelet, *Image et ressemblance*, on whom Valette relies heavily.

⁵⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Grace and Free Choice', trans. by O'Donovan, pp. 62–63.

⁵⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Grace and Free Choice', trans. by O'Donovan, pp. 54–57.

tent to choose the good without the help of grace, the soul's submission to grace is the condition *sine qua non* of its freedom: the capacity freely to will and act in accordance with God's will, which is the highest and ownmost ability of the human soul, was lost in the Fall and is restored only when the soul relinquishes its fatally impaired autonomy. At the same time, though, Bernard is careful to insist on the paradoxically *total* responsibility of the soul for the saving choice it cannot make alone:

[Grace] it is which arouses free choice, when it sows the seed of the good thought; which heals it, by changing its disposition; which strengthens it, so as to lead it to action; which saves it from experiencing a fall. It so co-operates with free choice, however, that [...] what was begun by grace alone, is completed by grace and free choice together, in such a way that they contribute to each new achievement not singly but jointly; not by turns, but simultaneously. It is not as if grace did one half of the work and free choice the other; but each does the whole work, according to its own peculiar contribution.⁵⁷

To be determined by the Spirit *is* to be free, is the only way to rekindle the spark of freedom in fallen man. Hence the affirmation side by side, in the *Queste* as in Bernard's treatise, of the individual's absolute responsibility for his own failures and of the imperative — an ideological cornerstone, along with virginity, of *la chevalerie celestiel* — to trust unconditionally in the Creator and to credit him with every victory that comes as the reward and consequence of faith. In a dream vision, Lancelot hears Jesus himself declare that he is ready to welcome with open arms whomever chooses to follow him: 'Se tu velz je t'amerai, et se tu velz je te harrai' (If you wish me to love you, I will do so, and I will hate you if you so desire; §160.17). Bohort, however, is warned not to take this doctrine too one-sidedly when his acceptance of personal accountability comes too close to hubris. 'Li cuer de l'ome,' Bohort says to a priest, 'si est l'aviron de la nef, qui le moine quel part que il velt ou a port ou a peril' (Man's heart is the rudder of the ship, which directs it where it will, into either port or peril), but his counselor rejoins that just as every rudder is guided by a steersman's masterful hand, so too is the human heart: 'Car ce qu'il a fet de bien li vient de la grace et del conseil del Saint Esperit, et ce qu'il fet de mal, si li vient de l'atiselement a l'enemi' (For the good it does comes from the grace and counsel of the Holy Spirit, and its transgressions are incited by the devil; §200.18–25).

The influence of Bernard's theology of grace upon the *Queste* is incontrovertible and pervasive, even if it does not always furnish the interpretive master key

⁵⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Grace and Free Choice,' trans. by O'Donovan, p. 106.

for which Gilson takes it. Like Bernard, however, the *Queste* articulates its model of free submission to the divine will in the form of a paradoxical dialectic whose theoretical exposition remains extremely difficult for both the characters and the reader to understand in practice, to translate into experience.⁵⁸ The relationship between predestination, divine omniscience, grace, and free will remains a tangled, self-contradictory knot of circular logic, the stubborn monument to a philosophical contradiction of which 'la *Queste* porte plus que des traces'.⁵⁹ This should not be mistaken for the symptom of a watered-down, 'romanced' treatment of theology, a failure of literary representation to equal the clarity of philosophical exposition, whose rigour it sacrifices to the (however minimized) demands of plot. In fact, the process of romancing theology considerably facilitates the comprehension of Bernard's schema by concretely exemplifying and instructively juxtaposing the steps of liberatory purification, as well as the alternative, the sinner's blind persistence in or relapse into sin. Romance also dramatizes the intellectual and emotional dispositions that correspond to each step, especially in the compelling figures of the fallible but well-intentioned questers, Bohort, Perceval, and Lancelot.

Galaad's status and function within the frame of this narrative theology are harder to evaluate. On the one hand, it is fairly evident that he stands at the top of the Bernardine hierarchy as the representative of the soul restored by freely accepted grace to perfect likeness to God and so destined for glory.⁶⁰ On the

⁵⁸ It should be noted that this is a specific, and not the most common, configuration of the simultaneously theological and narrative problem of free will's compatibility with divine omnipotence. The ancient Hebrew writers of the Old Testament 'seek through the process of narrative realization to reveal the enactment of God's purposes in historical events' despite the apparent tensions 'between the divine plan and the disorderly character of actual historical events' and 'between God's will, His providential guidance, and human freedom, the refractory nature of man', where the latter tension is presumably a, if not the, principal cause of the former (Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 33). Narrative thus serves to show how God's plan is fulfilled despite and indeed through the blindly rebellious gestures of a 'refractory' humanity whose freedom is used essentially (but, fortunately, ineffectually, thanks to divine omniscience) to oppose or deviate from the divine will. Paul Ricoeur discerns the same pattern in the New Testament idea that Christ had to be betrayed in order for his redemptive sacrifice to be possible: the betrayal is at once ineluctably ordained and attributed locally, contingently, to the renegade Judas (Ricoeur, 'Interpretative Narrative', trans. by Pellauer, p. 239). By contrast, the *Queste* seeks to narrate free human *co-operation* with the divine plan, which is in many ways a different theological and literary enterprise.

⁵⁹ Micha, *Essais sur le cycle du 'Lancelot-Graal'*, p. 202.

⁶⁰ Lot-Borodine interprets the *Queste*'s representation of the 'illumination caritative' in which 'la créature est mue directement, personnellement, par le Saint-Esprit' so as to bring about

other hand, a multitude of critical complaints about Galaad's robotic rigidity testify that his perfection is the most imperfectly characterized, the least satisfyingly concretized of Bernard's abstractions. It could hardly be otherwise, since to err is, as Bernard himself says, human, while success in staying on the path of virtue must be attributed to God. It seems inevitable that the Grail Knight should be more readily identifiable as a pawn of providence (which he is) than as a free, fallible subject (which, theoretically, he also is 'simultaneously', according to Bernard's model). In this singularly unappealing and yet supremely 'desired' hero, the *Queste* encounters both its greatest challenge and the possibility most proper to it as a theological fiction. Writing Galaad's story means going beyond the mere transcription or illustration of extratextual doctrine so as to produce a genuine 'roman de la grâce' dedicated to thinking and writing — to thinking in and through writing, along avenues particular to narrative fiction — the aporetic coincidence of human freedom with a determinism at once absolute and absolutely contingent.

VI.

Eugene Vance has observed that 'La doctrine de la prédestination donne lieu, dans la *Quête*, à une conscience du futur non pas chronologique mais modal'. Futurity, in other words, is detemporalized, so that 'les "choses futures" sont en effet des manifestations de la nécessité (devoir), du pouvoir, du croire, de la volonté, ou de la préscience'.⁶¹ For Vance, as for Todorov, predestination as a literary principle is opposed to the temporality of romance narrative. The foreknown future subordinates romance logics of causality and succession to a cyclical reiteration, as though in space rather than time, of recurring, transcendent images or symbols, ultimately oriented toward an essentially synchronic spiritual experience or truth.⁶² By the same token, however, the modality of a future in which 'la chronologie des événements à venir [est subordonnée] aux dispositions d'âme des protagonistes du récit' works not only to foreclose 'la possibilité de futurs contin-

'l'union transformante de la créature humaine avec son Modèle divin' as being more profoundly informed by the writings of Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, whose theology is distinct from, but on the whole compatible with that of his Cistercian superior, Bernard (Lot-Borodine, 'Les Grands Secrets du Saint-Graal', p. 160).

⁶¹ Vance, 'Le Temps sans nombre', p. 275.

⁶² See Todorov, 'La *Quête* du récit', pp. 144–45, and Vance, 'Le Temps sans nombre', pp. 277–78.

gents' but also to reintroduce contingency into every foretold future.⁶³ Prophecy announces what 'must be', but that 'must' marks a moral imperative rather than a mechanistic inevitability. It interpellates the subject and anticipates his compliance, but cannot compel his fulfillment of what was foretold. Hence the consistent representation of prescience as an orientation of desire, whether that of the court for the *Chevalier Desirré* or that of the questers for the unimaginable destiny ordained for them. What linguists have called 'speaker-oriented' (imperative, hortative) modality implies an 'epistemic' modality, a discourse of the possible, which acknowledges the 'agent-oriented' modality of a future traced by non-deterministic volition and obligation.⁶⁴ Soldered in this way to the interior dispositions of the errant human soul, futurity — and meaning — may loosen their ties to the objective chronology of history, but they are bound all the more tightly to the time of at least two concurrent narratives: the pedagogical *cursus* of the quest, which educates and leads the elect toward enlightenment, and the submerged but even more fundamental story of the ongoing decision that virtue constitutes for the fallible sons of man, whose likeness to God is always a 'similitude en devenir'.⁶⁵

Although Galaad himself never fails to bring to fruition the spectral futures called into being by prophecy (but how many of his exploits are revealed to have been foretold only after they are completed?), the glorious destiny predicted for Lancelot in the *Prose Lancelot* furnishes a conspicuous example of a foundered prophecy. As Lancelot is cruelly reminded on various occasions, Galaad's role as the Grail knight should and would have been his, had he not disqualified himself by yielding to love — insistently rewritten as mad lust — for Guenièvre and devoting his life to 'le pechié de la roine' (the sin of the queen; §84.15). It is worth recalling that prophecy's primary function in the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle, as

⁶³ Vance, 'Le Temps sans nombre', pp. 276–77. In fact, the distinction between factual and modal futurity is deeply problematic, if not illusory, because the possibility of each depends on metaphysical premises that preclude the other. 'In a deterministic context, [factual and modal future tenses] are semantically equivalent', while 'in an indeterministic context, factual statements are covertly modal' (McArthur, 'Factuality and Modality in the Future Tense', p. 283).

⁶⁴ Bybee, Pagliuca, and Perkins, 'Back to the Future', p. 23.

⁶⁵ Lot-Borodine, 'Les Grands Secrets du Saint-Graal', p. 159. For Saint Augustine, whose reflections on the problem of grace and free will Bernard continues, the 'perseverance' through time of the will to virtue is crucial — and constitutes one of the cardinal gifts of grace — because if it ever falters, then the good was never truly, resolutely willed (even if it was temporarily possessed) in the first place (King, 'Introduction', pp. xxix–xxx; see, in the same volume, Augustine's letter 'On Reprimand and Grace', pp. 192–95, 204–08, 212–15).

in Robert de Boron's Grail trilogy, is to organize and ensure the coherence of a chronologically and geographically vast narrative. Merlin, the cycle's prophet *par excellence*, acts as a facilitator and shepherd of plot progression, a master of the interlace,⁶⁶ whose omniscience is unlimited by the serial focus of *li contes*. 'Unlike any other character, [he] knows the plot, all the plot, and this knowledge is a burden to him: his job is to make sure that things happen as they are supposed to', guiding Arthur's military strategies, chivvying the other characters through their appointed performances, and even forestalling problems by leaving instructional letters on the trails of potentially confusing adventures. As Luke Sunderland writes: 'The future is thus for Merlin both absolutely predetermined and contingent at the same time. Paradoxically, he has to ensure that events *do* occur precisely as they inevitably *will* occur.'⁶⁷ In the *Queste*, Merlin drops out of the plot and loses much of his prestige along with his monopoly on prophetic insight, which is distributed to various *prodomes* who foretell the fulfillments of particular adventures. Indeed, Zumthor suggests that the *Queste* can dispense with Merlin because its Cistercian ideology does not require the cyclical — that is, literary, 'historical', and aesthetic, as opposed to doctrinal — unity whose guarantor the prescient *enchanterres* is.⁶⁸ However, what seems to be common knowledge regarding the structure of the Grail quest and Galaad's central role within it is still attributed to 'a prophecy' explicitly identified on several occasions as Merlin's.

⁶⁶ On the compositional technique of *entrelacement*, see Chase, 'Sur la théorie de l'entrelacement'.

⁶⁷ Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles*, p. 77. Perhaps the most interesting image of prophecy's functionalization as a mechanism of plot production, however, does not involve Merlin at all. When Gauvain first comes upon the magical 'future cemetery' of the Dolorous Guard, the prophetic inscriptions that designate each tomb's still-living future inhabitant — legitimate prophecies, at least one of which (concerning Lancelot) is fulfilled in the *Mort Artu* — are intermingled with new, bogus inscriptions forged by the inhabitants of the castle, who want to trick Arthur into coming to put an end to the evil customs that plague them. These new inscriptions are in the present tense, and announce (falsely) that knights have *already* been buried in 'their' tombs. Gauvain is taken in: 'Il quide bien [...] que che soit voirs, et si estoit de tex i avoit, et de tex i avoit il menchoigne dont les lettres estoient faites la nuit devant' (He believed [...] that it was true, and indeed it was in some cases, but in others they were lies whose letters had been carved the night before, *Lancelot*, ed. by Micha, 7.XXVa.8). Real possible futures thus commingle with false presents posing as fulfilled prophecies so as to provoke premature (but also legitimately proleptic, since all men will die) retrospection and grief, which in turn act on the present to produce the future (the transformation of the Dolorous Guard into the Joyous Guard) desired by the 'prophets' — but *not* inscribed on the tombs. For an interesting Lacanian reading of the Saint Cimetièrre, see Griffin, *The Object and the Cause*, pp. 24–29.

⁶⁸ Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 181n.

It is in one of these instances that the *Queste* imagines what its critics are so hard pressed to conceive: the possibility of Galaad's failure.

Et quant il avra tant fet qu'il ne sera pas terriens, mes esperitex, il lessera le terrien abit, si entrera en la celestiel chevalerie. Einsi dist Mellin de [Galaad], com cil qui molt savoit des choses qui estoient a venir. Et neporquant, tot soit il verité que plus ait or cil chevaliers en lui proece et chevalerie que autres n'ait, sachiez de voir que s'il se menoit jusq'a pechié mortel — dont Nostre Sires le gart — il ne feroit en ceste Queste ne plus que .i. autres simples chevaliers. (§140.21–30)

(And when he has achieved so much that he is no longer earthly, but rather spiritual, he will abandon his earthly garb [of flesh] and enter into celestial chivalry. So said Merlin concerning [Galaad], and he knew a great deal about things to come. But it is nevertheless true that although that knight may now have more prowess and chivalry in him than any other, you should know that if he should fall into mortal sin — from which God protect him — he would achieve no more in this Quest than any other simple knight.)

Much might be said about this projection of Galaad's hypothetical fall,⁶⁹ especially with regard to its concrete realization in the person of Galaad's father, Lancelot. What I want to emphasize here is that in the story of Galaad's quest, the exigencies and antinomies involved in shaping a romance plot converge with those entailed in affirming human freedom in a world 'ordered,' like the affections of the Bernardine soul,⁷⁰ by rectifying grace. Like God's will, the intentional design of *li contes* is a determinism that is not one. It is, paradoxically, fully effective only where its authority is placed in doubt, in the balance.

As Madeleine Blaess comments, 'if we take predestination in its lesser meaning of 'fate', then [...] the theme of predestination is dominant in the [Vulgate] romances. Nor could it be otherwise. The author has a story to tell.'⁷¹ To be the

⁶⁹ The possibility of a similar nonfulfillment of divinely appointed destiny is pointed out to Perceval by his anchoress aunt, who reiterates the prophecy concerning the election of Perceval, Bohort, and Galaad before admonishing Perceval not to falsify it by foolishly attacking Galaad (whom Perceval is unwittingly pursuing) and prematurely getting himself killed (§86.26–34). Again, however, the *Queste* provides a counter-example: the laudable, because faith-inspired, self-endangerment of Bohort, who spends the five years preceding the end of the quest roaming 'en forez sauvages et en montaignes estranges ou il fust morz de faim plus de .c. foiz, se ne fust la grace del Saint Esperit qui l'a recomforté et peu en totes ses meseses' (in wild forests and distant mountains where he would have died of hunger more than a hundred times if the grace of the Holy Spirit had not comforted and nourished him in all his distress; §317.21–24).

⁷⁰ See Bernard of Clairvaux, 'On Grace and Free Choice', trans. by O'Donovan, pp. 72–73.

⁷¹ Blaess, 'Predestination in Some Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances', p. 5.

subject of narrative is to have a destiny, to be caught up in the orderly unfolding of an artificial reality. This is particularly clear in the case of medieval romance, which does not scruple to give away its endings in advance or to avow its adherence to the predictable narrative structures that often undergird its intertextual networks. The canons of secular chivalry, too, produce heroes in the image of their plots and vice versa, telling stories of deeds that are to an important extent consubstantial with doers who are often, significantly, the eponyms of their tales. Blaess contrasts the *Queste*'s atmosphere of election and predestination with the more naturalistic determinisms of nature and nurture, personality and passion, that dominate the *Lancelot* and the *Mort Artu*,⁷² but these causes, when deployed in romance, are also mechanisms whose functioning owes little to chance. Conventional romance determinisms may seem to be inherently more 'realistic' because they are commoner and less total than the providential apparatus of the quest, but such a judgement, stemming from the anti-theological bias of modern criticism, risks misrepresenting the way medieval Christian readers evaluated and responded to literary 'realism'. It may be more fruitful to emphasize that romance readership requires, and involves training in, the delicate practice of the partial suspension of certainty, of reading in simultaneous knowledge and ignorance of what happens next.

Romances, and especially Grail romances, habitually forecast their own ends so as to generate the 'anticipation of retrospection' (of plot's 'larger hermeneutic structuring by conclusions')⁷³ identified by Peter Brooks as a key part of 'that which makes a plot "move forward", and makes us read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress toward meaning'. The result is what Brooks, borrowing the terminology of Roland Barthes's *S/Z*, calls 'an "overcoding" of the proairetic by the hermeneutic': a synchronization of the desire to learn what happens next (the radically contingent consequences of an event, an 'origin' whose sequels cannot be predicted with certainty) with the drive to structure a narrative sequence so as to articulate its meaning, something that becomes possible only once the narrative is finished or at least proleptically grasped in its totality.⁷⁴ This is particularly evident in the *Queste*, of which Todorov writes that 'l'intérêt du lecteur

⁷² Blaess, 'Predestination in Some Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances', pp. 11–17. Cf. Micha, *Essais sur le cycle du 'Lancelot-Graal'*, pp. 194–95.

⁷³ The continuity between the romance tradition and the Vulgate's themes of prophecy and predestination is highlighted by Frappier, 'La Naissance et l'évolution du roman arthurien en prose', pp. 508–10.

⁷⁴ Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, pp. 23, xiii, 18.

[...] ne vient pas [...] de la question qui provoque habituellement cet intérêt: que se passe-t-il après? [...] L'intérêt naît d'une toute autre question, qui est: qu'est-ce que le Graal?'⁷⁵ Todorov, however, too readily reads the overcoding of the proairetic by the hermeneutic as a wholesale effacement and replacement. Hence, perhaps, his unhesitating assumption that the text's hermeneutic code is centred on the question of what the Grail is — a question whose answer must in principle precede and predetermine the form of the whole narrative — when in fact it is nothing of the sort. The quest for the Grail's *segrez* or *repostailles* is not the search for a definition but rather the pursuit of an understanding whose value is essentially experiential. The process of coming to terms with the *Queste* must likewise be oriented toward an understanding of *how* and *why* this unrepeatable experience comes to pass, and therefore of what it means to be Galaad, to be one of the elect. This understanding encompasses the allegorical dimensions of the Grail Knight's character, which tend to resolve his story into the timeless image of a doctrinal truth, but is also antithetical to them insofar as they preserve the palimpsestic relation between the hermeneutic and proairetic codes that makes the narrative meaningful *qua* narrative. The time of reading persists within synchronic interpretation and persistently temporalizes it by marking it as posterior to a sequence of events whose eventual resolution in and into a finished structure — a structure identifiable, in theory and often in practice, with an authorial plan that precedes and produces the narrative much as an allegorical 'pretext' generates its integument (plot, writes Brooks, is what 'demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, orders'⁷⁶) — does not nullify the contingency built into each link of the chain as it is experienced sequentially by the reader.

In this respect, the *Queste*'s romance nature is pernicious to its allegorical interpretation, but furnishes an indispensable resource for the theological work undertaken by the text. As Ricoeur reminds us, 'the juncture between exegesis and theology, before being a work of interpretation applied *to* the text, already functions *in* the text' of 'interpretative narratives [whose] ideological interpretation [...] is not superimposed on the narrative by the narrator' (and we have seen that the hermits' glosses should not be mistaken for such an authoritative superimposition) 'but is, instead, incorporated into the very strategy of the narrative' — and 'this type of narrative is not just limited to the Gospels'.⁷⁷ The habitual principles and constraints of romance readership provide a model for concretiz-

⁷⁵ Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 143.

⁷⁶ Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Ricoeur, 'Interpretative Narrative', trans. by Pellauer, p. 237.

ing, as a narrative reality and object of experience, the paradoxical truth of divine predestination's simultaneity with human freedom. There is after all, then, an unexpected and probably inadvertent weight to Pauphilet's dismissive assertion that the *Queste* is unconcerned with the problem of free will because 'si au point de vue philosophique les deux idées [du libre arbitre humain et de l'omnipotence divine] exprimées [dans la *Queste*] se concilient assez malaisément, en revanche elles conduisent, dans la pratique, à des résultats analogues'.⁷⁸ Romance makes palpable, natural, and even obvious, if on a theoretical level no less paradoxical, a concept of non-deterministic predestination whose acceptance requires — in traditional romance as in Bernard's theology — a leap of faith 'que cuers mortuus ne porroit penser ne langue d'ome terrien deviser' (that cannot be conceived by mortal hearts, nor described by the tongues of earthly men; §22.37–38). The romance aesthetics of election thus reopens the possibility, and the question, of an ethics of election focused on the space that reading, as practiced both by the characters and by us, discovers between or within determinisms: the autocracy of the divine plan, but also the tyranny of the allegorical 'pretext', whose totalization equally threatens to suppress the legibility of Galaad's saintly interiority, of the *buene vie* reciprocally related to, rather than ineluctibly (and superficially, vacuously) produced by, his *senefiance*.⁷⁹

VII.

How, then, does the ethics of election play out as an ethics of reading in the Carcelois episode with which this essay began? By insisting that the right to kill sinners belongs only to a merciful God who 'tant atent que li pechierres se reconnoisse' (stays his hand until the sinner recognizes himself as such; §276.26–27), Galaad's reply to Bohort confronts the fact that when 'Good' smites 'Evil' — and in the world of the *Queste*, it does so regularly — a man is always also attacking his fellow men. 'Sire,' Galaad subsequently tells the priest who arrives with *veraies noveles* about the adventure, 'je me repentoie molt de ce que j'avoie esté a els ocirre, por ce que crestien me resenbloient' (My lord, [...] I repented greatly for having killed them, for they seemed to me to be Christians; §277.30–32).

⁷⁸ Pauphilet, *Études sur la 'Queste del Saint Graal'*, p. 32.

⁷⁹ 'Si Galaad, dans la surabondance des charismes reçus, se présente devant nous comme l'*image* du Sauveur, en même temps que celle du Consolateur, il reste aux yeux de Dieu le fils de notre race qui doit vivre en homme sa destinée personnelle jusqu'à l'assomption finale' (Lot-Borodine, 'Les Grands Secrets du Saint-Graal', p. 162) — and he must be so in the eyes of the reader as well.

Imagining his adversaries' possible Christianity brings Galaad face to face with the fact of their humanity and with the contingency of his own relationship to meaning, a readerly relationship conditioned by the ambiguity of *semblances*. The dead men might have been Christians, might have signified something more or different than unadulterated evil, because the passage from appearance to truth is uncertain in a way forcefully displayed by this episode's entirely literal, historical gloss, consisting only of the litany of the dead men's sins. The arbitrariness of allegorical reading, usually masked by the algebraic equations of exegesis (the verb *être* links the phenomenon to its significance; sign equals sense), emerges clearly when the human signifier's meaning depends wholly on its history. The sinners' past is a distinct narrative no longer even structurally analogous to their immediate *semblance*, from which it cannot legitimately be inferred. '[N]'estoit mie nostre la vengeance a prendre' (Vengeance was not ours to take; §276.25–26) because we, unlike God, inhabit a radically legible domain of possible signifiers. This is especially true because human history is always unfinished: it continues into a still unknown future that might see the most hardened sinner find grace and melt in the fire of God's love, just as Galaad might, unthinkable, stumble into mortal sin. Interpretation, then, does not serve to obviate the need for ethical decisions by revealing divine determinisms at work. On the contrary, it discovers the model of ethical engagement precisely where such engagement seems unnecessary or even impossible. Resisting the semantic totalization that obliterates the opaque letter of the material world-text involves preserving the essential function of the discourse of *senefiance* as the production of a correspondence, a bond between sensory and spiritual experience. The work of reading thus affirms the truth and value of both the literal and the spiritual sense, and this work is indispensable to the quest to become what Christ himself calls 'mi chevalier [...] qui de mortel vie estes devenu esperitel' (my knights [...] who have become spiritual beings while still alive; §322.8–9).

Galaad's principled determination to linger with the literal sense, at least until 'veraies noveles' from on high allay his misgivings *ex cathedra*, must therefore be distinguished from the incurably secular instinct to take adventures at face value for which the *Queste* criticizes less worthy knights. Lancelot, for example, is chastised by a disembodied voice for attempting to do physical battle with the (mystic) lions guarding the Grail Castle: 'Hé! home de povre foi et de povre creance, por quoi te fies tu plus en t'espee que en ton Criator?' (O man of paltry faith and small belief, why do you trust more in your sword than in your Creator? §303.10–11). Galaad's concerns about the moral legitimacy of his actions at Carcelois do not merit similar censure because the Buen Chevalier has not lost his faith so much as brought it full circle. This helps to dispel the otherwise perplex-

ing impression that Bohort, the least perfect of the Grail trio, has a thing or two to teach his mentor about trusting in God. Bohort has learned from his adventures that since *semblances* are usually misleading and *señefiances* are far from easy to decipher, it is best to keep a firm heart and chalk up whatever is not readily comprehensible to the Lord's mysterious ways. This is enough to deliver him from temptation and assure his place among the Grail elite. But Bohort's faith can seem dangerously close to complacency, and to the 'ritual logic' whose invariable rhythms hold in abeyance the more fraught logic of individual decision.⁸⁰ Insofar as it is founded upon the assumption of Bohort's own unimpeachable rectitude, his reading also smacks of the overvaluation of personal virtue, bordering on the sin of pride, against which he was cautioned earlier by the hermit. Galaad, reading reflexively rather than by reflex, resists the idea that interpretation simply involves looking past the letter to what it 'must' really mean: he seeks God in the particular, not in place of it, even when that involves considering the possibility of his own moral failure. By arresting the leap to abstract meaning where it would neglect the uncertainty engendered by meaningful particulars, Galaad calls the truth revealed by events back into contact with narrative time. The Carcelois episode slows and distends the centripetal hermeneutic circuit of adventure and gloss that has been accelerating over the course of the romance, bringing *señefiance* closer and closer to the surface of *semblances* until it almost occludes them completely. Galaad's hesitation foregrounds the lag, the gap, between event and interpretation, which is brought back into focus as the space within which reading happens — or rather, within which *readings* happen when the world of *semblances* asserts itself as a medium of meaning open to multiple compossible supplementary senses.

After the truth of Bohort's assumptions has been confirmed, he cannot help needling Galaad for withholding judgement: 'Sire, [...] je vos disoie bien que Nostre Sires nos i avoit envoieé por prendre sa venjance d'eus' (My lord, [...] I told you that Our Lord had sent us there to take his vengeance upon them). Galaad good-naturedly agrees that 'certes, se Deu ne pleust, ja tant d'omes n'eussons ocis en si po d'ore' (Indeed, if it had not pleased God we would never have slain so many men so quickly; §279.7–10). But the hesitation that briefly held narrative apart from its allegorization, choice, too, persists precisely where hermeneutic

⁸⁰ Invariability is one of six defining characteristics of ritual activity (along with formalism, traditionalism, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance) proposed in Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, pp. 138–69. Although Todorov does not use 'ritual' in a technical sense when writing about the *Queste*, these elements do seem to delineate the narrative mode he describes.

indecision interrupts ritual logic. The time of a doubt that can be resolved only by the introduction of new information (and therefore by another event, the fullest realization of Todorov's principle that every gloss is a new *récit*) derails the machinery of allegorical determinism in a way that exorcises the demon of historical determinism as well. Predestination would establish the meaning of the person — his essential, and thus symbolic, moral character, declined in every one of his actions — in advance. Conversely, the ambiguation of the singular action entrains that of the agent it defines and so reveals the indefinite or unfinished quality, the literal im-perfection belonging to the legible letter, that constitutes him as an ethical being whose final significance remains at stake. 'The indeterminacy of "all that is written,"' as J. Allan Mitchell has said regarding Gower's moral rhetoric of exemplarity, 'far from undermining meaning, is constitutive of any ethical response.'⁸¹ To think that the perfect knight might err, that his sure steps might stray from the true path, is to write, within the story of his foretold and apparently effortless adventures, the possibility of their being, and of his meaning, otherwise. Amid so many indications that 'il est impensable que Galaad échoue',⁸² sincerely thinking this unthinkable failure is a central challenge of the *Queste* and the condition of the Grail Knight's significant success. To undertake this task is to confront the text's break with allegory or, better, the constitutive break within the text's allegoresis that engages it, its characters, and its audience in the work of perpetual reading. Such an openness is a success and not an ironic failure because it is really an *opening* that inaugurates the communion of worldly and spiritual experience, the becoming of a textual transcendence that never quite transcends the text, but rather instills in its still-concrete material, its mortal flesh, the desire to *devenir esperitel*.

Perhaps, then, the Carcelois episode suggests that the true gift reserved for the elect is not an unqualified certainty about the meaning of the world and the self, but a capacity for faithful and faith-affirming questioning. This pious uncertainty contains the possibility of consciously living the paradox of predestined self-determination in the space of disjunction between the human *buene vie* and its allegorical mirror, which thereby remains its confirmation and not its impoverishing origin. The mode of reading foregrounded at Carcelois interrupts the circular temporality of ritual logic's 'éternel retour' to rediscover within it a 'présent "pur" ou "authentique", que l'on ressent pleinement comme tel'.⁸³ In other words,

⁸¹ Mitchell, 'Gower for Example', p. 205.

⁸² Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 139.

⁸³ Todorov, 'La Quête du récit', p. 141.

both the narrative present and the narrative's presence as a substantial reality rather than an allegorical integument are sustained by the contingency of interpretation. Contingency must not be confused, however, with the impossibility or invalidity of interpretation. It belongs, on the contrary, to the *potentiality* of interpretation, to the radical and inalienable *possibility* that any given meaning and, ultimately, any meaning whatsoever can be found in the letter of the event. As Giorgio Agamben writes, potentiality is necessarily non-totalizing because, 'in its originary structure, *dynamis*, potentiality, maintains itself in relation to its own privation', its own impotentiality or non-being, and 'this relation constitutes the essence of potentiality'.⁸⁴ At Carcelois, Galaad experiences his own legibility, that is, his potential to signify, as its correlative negation, the possibility that he signifies nothing other than his historical self in its unsubstitutably specific context — a self that would in that case be guilty of mortal sin, which would in turn imply the collapse of all the meaning-systems that ramify around his significant perfection over the course of the romance.

The *Queste* thus turns inside out the typical structure of interpretive narratives, whose comprehensibility presupposes a hidden code or key reserved for the cadre of what Frank Kermode calls 'insiders' to whom alone the truth of the text is addressed. Only the elite, the elect, possess (or purport to possess) 'immediate access to the mystery', the obscure organization of the sensible world. Of course, as Kermode points out, there is always the risk that 'being an insider is only a more elaborate way of being kept outside'. If decoding is not really the unveiling of truth so much as the imposition of an 'outside' meaning on the narrative, then the elect are simply idolaters who have agreed to believe in the 'spiritual' rather than 'carnal' character of their particular golden calf. This risk is built into the nature of textuality, which is itself formed in the image of historical reality: 'world and book, it may be, are hopelessly plural, endlessly disappointing'.⁸⁵ The *Queste*, however, makes this possibility for disappointment into the basis of election itself, and of a means of scripting election in romance narrative. Interpretation, Galaad shows at Carcelois, is the act whereby readers become insiders by becoming aware of the extent to which they must remain outsiders, must imagine their exclusion from the allegorical script of transcendent *senefiance* so as not to lose touch with the troublesome but fecund letter whose meaning they may already know in its abstract outlines, but which they can discover and experience as *their own meaning* only by putting it, and their relationship to it, in question, humbly awaiting the *veraies noveles* that the letter rarely fails to provide.

⁸⁴ Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. by Heller-Roazen, p. 182.

⁸⁵ Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, pp. xi, 27, 145.

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‘BYCAUSE THE REDYNG SHOLD NOT TURNE
HEM TO ENOYE’:
READING, SELECTIVITY, AND *PIETATIS*
AFFECTUM IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

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At the end of the eleventh century, Saint Anselm of Canterbury wrote the *Orationes sive meditationes*, a collection of prayers and meditations that influenced generations of later authors of devotional and mystical literature through its effusive, personal language and its imaginative effort to recreate and encourage participation within the events of Christ’s Passion. Thought to have been written at the behest of one or more of Anselm’s acquaintances, this work attracted sustained interest throughout the late medieval period, and it served as one of the foundational works for late medieval authors who promoted affective

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Abstract: Saint Anselm of Canterbury’s *Orationes sive meditationes*, written in the late eleventh century, influenced generations of later authors of devotional and mystical literature, and the prologue to the *Orationes*, in particular, was repeatedly translated and reworked by vernacular authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in England. This essay examines the textual and codicological contexts in which this prologue occurs in four late medieval manuscripts, and situates Anselm’s prologue within broader theoretical conversations regarding the respective values of indexical and affective modes of reading. Although selective modes of reading are at times perceived as being less sophisticated than those that engage with written works more comprehensively, the late medieval interest in translations of Anselm’s prologue indicate that reading selectively could be seen as a sophisticated method for engaging the reader’s emotions so as to propel him or her towards a more devout and pious lifestyle.

Keywords: Affective piety, reading practices, selectivity, manuscript studies, *mise-en-page*, Saint Anselm, *Orationes sive meditationes*, devotional literature, Eleanor Hull, *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*.

habits of devotion.¹ The *Orationes* proved popular among both religious and secular audiences, with some later authors writing Latin meditations in the style of Anselm that were gradually added to the corpus of meditations attributed to the author himself.² Anselm's *Orationes* was also translated into European vernaculars, and excerpted translations of his work in Middle English can be found in four manuscripts, with the table of contents of the Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a.1) additionally indicating that a translation of at least a portion of Anselm's work was once a part of that large compilation.³

While individual prayers and meditations from Anselm's work were influential, the prologue to the *Orationes* also attracted notable interest among vernacular authors and audiences in late medieval England, several of whom appended his prologue, both with and without attribution, to the beginnings of their own works. The variety of circumstances to which Anselm's prologue was adapted indicates the relatively broad and enduring appeal this text had among writers of devotional literature — an appeal that is, at times, unexpected, since the style of reading that Anselm advocates (selectively and affectively oriented) does not always appear to correspond to the manner in which these works might otherwise be expected to have been read.⁴ This essay explores why Anselm's prologue attracted the interest of late medieval authors and translators by reconsidering the textual and codicological contexts in which this prologue occurs in four vernacular works, and by situating Anselm's prologue within broader theoretical conversations regarding the respective values of indexical and affective modes of reading. Both of these approaches indicate that Anselm's prologue presents a more sophisticated mode of reading than has tended to be acknowledged by recent critics. The varied placements of late medieval vernacular translations of Anselm's prologue imply that a range of late medieval authors and compilers perceived value in the selective mode of reading promoted within that prologue

¹ See Bestul, 'Antecedents: The Anselmian and Cistercian Contributions', esp. pp. 4–10.

² Dom A. Wilmart identified three meditations and nineteen prayers as authentically Anselmian in origin: Wilmart, *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots*, pp. 162–72. For a discussion of early manuscript circulation, see Pächt, 'The Illustrations of St. Anselm's Prayers and Meditations'.

³ See Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 212. On the Middle English circulation of excerpts of the *Orationes*, see Hauwaerts, 'The Middle English Versions'.

⁴ Recent notable works on late medieval reading practices include: Sargent, *De cella in seculum*; Stock, *Listening for the Text*; Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*; Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*; Raven, Small, and Tadmor, *The Practice and Representation of Reading*; Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness*; Bryan, *Looking Inward*; McNamer, *Affective Meditation*.

— value that I propose resides in the ability of selectivity to heighten a reader’s affective response to a work, and thus increase the potential devotional and ethical benefits derived from its text.

The Orationes sive Meditationes and its Vernacular Descendants in England post-1300

In the prologue to the *Orationes*, Anselm takes the time to instruct readers in how to progress through his work, as if he anticipated that readers might be unfamiliar with the style of reading he expected them to employ as they navigated his compiled prayers and meditations. Anselm states that:

Orationes sive meditationes quae subscriptae sunt, quoniam ad excitandam legentis mentem ad Dei amorem vel timorem, seu ad suimet discussionem editae sunt, non sunt legendae in tumultu sed in quiete, et cursim et velociter, sed paulatim cum intenta et morosa meditatione. Nec debet intendere lector ut quamlibet earum totam perlegat, sed quantum sentit sibi Deo adiuvante valere ad accendendum affectum orandi, vel quantum illum delectat. Nec necesse habet aliquam semper a principio incipere, se ubi magis illi placuerit. Ad hoc enim ipsum paragraphis sunt distinctae per partes, ut ubi elegerit incipiat aut desinat, ne prolixitas, aut frequens eiusdem loci repetitio generet fastidium, sed potius aliquem inde colligat lector propter quod factae sunt pietatis affectum.

(The prayers and meditations written below, since they are intended to excite the reader’s mind to the love or fear of God and are uttered in conversation with him, are not to be read where there is noise but in quiet, nor superficially and at speed but slowly, with intense and profound meditation. Nor is a reader to think to read any of them all the way through, but only as much as, with God’s help, will do to kindle a longing for prayer, or as much as is satisfying. Nor need anyone always begin at the beginning but wherever suits best. For this reason, the prayers are subdivided into paragraphs, so that one may begin or end where one chooses, in case too many words or frequent repetition of the same section should lead to boredom. Let the reader take from them instead what they were meant to provide, the warmth of devotion.)⁵

Although this prologue has been labelled as being ‘for its time, revolutionary’ due to the contrast that it makes with some strategies of monastic *lectio*, Anselm’s reading instructions nonetheless contain many features that are

⁵ Anselm, *Orationes sive meditationes*, ed. by Schmidt, p. 3; translated in Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 212–13. Rachel Fulton notes similarities with two earlier letters of Anselm on the reading of prayer: Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, pp. 170–74.

unsurprising from an author within the Benedictine Order.⁶ Readers are asked to read not ‘in tumultu sed in quiete’, not quickly but ‘paulatim cum intenta et morosa meditatione’. Monastic readers were trained to see reading, prayer, and meditation as vitally interrelated with each other, and Anselm does not deviate far from the practices of *lectio divina* or, better yet, *lectio spiritualis* (a related form of monastic reading that was applied to non-scriptural texts) when he advocates that reading should serve ‘ad accendendum affectum orandi’.⁷ Monastic *lectio* used reading as a pathway to meditation and prayer rather than seeing reading as being an end in itself, and, as Duncan Robertson points out, readers were encouraged ‘to remain open at all times to the unforeseeable interventions of the Spirit’.⁸ Anselm displays this openness to divine intervention in the movement between reading and prayer when he states that reading should result in prayer by the aid of God’s assistance (‘sibi Deo adiuvante’).

Despite the evident correspondences between the reading methods recommended by Anselm and monastic *lectio*, this prologue signals several divergences as well, and it is within these divergences that the impetus behind the sustained late medieval interest in Anselm’s prologue can best be perceived. While monastic *lectio* encouraged a comprehensive, if not necessarily continuous, engagement with a work, Anselm welcomes audiences to engage selectively with his text, with the intent of stirring within readers a heightened, affective response. He invites readers to stop reading, as they desire, once they have attained an ‘affectum orandi’, or a more general pleasure, with what they have read (‘vel quantum illum delectat’). This state of longing or enjoyment should ultimately inspire the reader to experience *pietatis affectum*, and, as the incitement of *pietatis affectum* is Anselm’s explicitly stated goal, the method of reading he presents thus downplays the chronological and narrative structures of his text. Readers are told that they need feel no compulsion to read his work continuously (or even to read specific prayers and meditations all the way through in a single sitting) and are free to navigate the page as they wish, as long as — crucially — their reading inspires devotion and a desire for prayer. Anselm additionally specifies that his work’s

⁶ Bestul, ‘Antecedents: The Anselmian and Cistercian Contributions’, p. 7. On monastic *lectio*, see Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, trans. by Misrahi, esp. pp. 76–93; Gill, ‘Monastic Murals and *Lectio*’; Greatrex, ‘The Scope of Learning within the Cloisters’; Robertson, ‘*Lectio Divina*’.

⁷ For a conservative reading of Anselm’s conformity to the tradition of *lectio divina*, see Ward, “‘Inward Feeling and Deep Thinking’”, esp. p. 179. For a discussion of *lectio spiritualis* and its relationship with *lectio divina*, see Stock, *After Augustine*, esp. p. 107.

⁸ Robertson, ‘*Lectio Divina*’, p. 32.

mise-en-page is intended to facilitate this selective style of reading by providing textual divisions indicated by *paragraphis* that will enable a reader to locate a desired starting or ending point, thereby allowing him or her to avoid *fastidium* whilst reading.⁹ *Fastidium*, or boredom, is emphasized as that which is to be most shunned in the reading process, as it is antithetical to the heightened emotional state that Anselm hopes that his *Orationes* will produce in the reader. He is careful to point out that with the appropriate type of engagement with the text, boredom should not occur.

Late medieval translations of Anselm’s prologue evince a continuous interest in both the devotional and ethical value of reading selectively, and scribes and compilers, in a complementary fashion, appear to have recognized the importance of paratextual markers in facilitating such a mode of textual engagement as they crafted the *mise-en-page* and decorative schema of these works. In light of the welcome that Anselm’s prologue extends to readers to approach his work selectively, it seems appropriate that later vernacular authors in England engaged in the extreme excerption of portions of his text. In addition to the borrowing of the prologue by later vernacular authors, the manuscript record of the Middle English translations of the body of the *Orationes* is defined by its fragmentary nature, as if late medieval scribes and authors took to heart Anselm’s exhortation that reading must avoid boredom by choosing only those prayers and meditations that they found most engaging to include within their respective volumes. London, British Library, MS Harley 535 preserves the most complete Middle English translation of the *Orationes*, including three meditations and one prayer. Two other manuscripts contain singleton meditations, and one manuscript includes the end of a meditation.¹⁰ While some of this drastic excerption from Anselm’s work might indicate the simple recopying of a previously excerpted *exemplum*, it is notable that no complete copy of the *Orationes sive meditationes* translated into Middle English has survived to this day.¹¹ The handful of extant

⁹ On the *paragraphus* symbol, see Parkes, ‘Layout and Presentation of the Text’, at p. 68; and Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, p. 43.

¹⁰ Singleton meditations can be found in Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, MS Eng. 1 (*Deploratio virginitatis male amissae*, fols 132–34) and Oxford, University College MS 97 (*Meditatio ad concitandum timorem*, pp. 310–16); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C.209 contains a fragmentary copy of the *Meditatio ad concitandum timorem* (fols 21–22). The opening index of the Vernon manuscript also includes an entry that indicates that some of Saint Anselm’s *Orationes* were once included within that compilation, but those folios have unfortunately been lost. See Hauwaerts, ‘The Middle English Versions’, esp. pp. 260–61, and Lagorio and Sargent, ‘English Mystical Writings’.

¹¹ While the three meditations identified by Wilmart as authentic are grouped together in

manuscripts preserving singleton meditations or a small grouping of meditations indicate, at a minimum, that at some point during the circulation and translation of that work, there were compilers, authors, or scribes working in the vernacular who embraced Anselm's invitation to begin and end where they desired within his work, electing to include only select portions of the text in their codices.

Several late medieval translations of Anselm's prologue, in French and English, can be found in England, either positioned before or incorporated into the prologues of at least four works during the period: the *Manuel de péchés*, *A Talking of the Love of God*, a series of meditations written by Eleanor Hull, and the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*. The earliest of these vernacular translations of Anselm's prologue can be found in London, British Library, MS Arundel 288, where it is the second item in the manuscript and is situated just before one of the earliest surviving copies of the *Manuel de péchés*, a penitential work composed by William of Waddington around 1240 that offers instruction on the tenets of the Christian faith through both sections of didactic verse and narrative *exempla*.¹² This translation occurs on a small quire of four folios appended to the rest of the manuscript; it is not clear when this quire became a part of the manuscript, but it is written in a mid-fourteenth century hand later than that of the scribe of the *Manuel de péchés* and subsequent works, which are dateable to the third quarter of the thirteenth century.¹³ The initial positioning of the translation of Anselm's prologue suggests that it was included as a general introduction to the

BL Harley MS 535, only one of Anselm's nineteen prayers is included. See Wilmar, *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots*, pp. 170–71. Margaret Healy-Varley has recently noted the tendency for Anselm's works, in general, to be excerpted by later readers, arguing that 'the excerpting that fragmented Anselm's literary corpus is evidence of its high adaptability': Healy-Varley, 'Anselm's Afterlife', at p. 257.

¹² On dating, see Arnould, *Le Manuel des péchés*, p. 373. The early provenance of BL MS Arundel 288 is not known, but the manuscript was in the possession of John Parker, the son of Archbishop Matthew Parker, by the end of the sixteenth century: Strongman, 'John Parker's Manuscript', at p. 21.

¹³ To the best of my knowledge, no other copies of the *Manuel* have Anselm's prologue preceding their texts. Alexandra Barratt identifies four other manuscripts (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Kk.1.6; London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 182; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 374; and BL MS Cotton Vitellius Fvii) that contain a longer work that could be related to the translation of Anselm's prologue found in BL MS Arundel 288. It should be noted, however, that Lambeth Palace MS 182 begins imperfectly and TCD MS 374 and BL MS Cotton Vitellius Fvii do not include the work's prologue; I will discuss CUL MS Kk.1.6 below. See Barratt, 'Dame Eleanor Hull', at p. 279.

manuscript's contents, most of which are religiously oriented and range from the *Manuel* to Passion meditations, sermons, and a debate poem.¹⁴

The Anglo-Norman translation of Anselm's prologue acknowledges its source, stating that it is taken 'partye de seynt Anselyn', and instructs the reader that 'ces oreysons e ces meditacions':

ne sunt pas a lire en tumulte mes en quyeté ne nye encorant ne en trespas ; mes petit od grant demurance e od grant entente de corage . Ne ne deyt pas mettre entente cele *que* ces oreysons dit ; kele chescune par lise tut outre . mes tant *cum* il sent ke valer ly puet ad laye dieu a espandre en luy bone talent de orer . v tant *cum* il delyte . Ne pestoiet pas ky le comence chescune foys a commencement . mes la v plus ly plaire kar pur coe *sunt* eles departies par *lettres* enlumines. *que* len puisse comencer e finier la ou len vodra . e ke lorison ne puisse torneer a ennui par trop grant luygur . v par sonent rehercier meismes luy mes *que* celui qil puisse coiller ceo par quei eles furent faytes ceo est pite de corage e talent de dieu amer.¹⁵

The encouragement to readers to read in silence ('en quyeté') and only as much as is useful or desired ('tant cum il sent ke valer' and 'tant cum il delyte') closely translates Anselm's invitation for audiences to focus on their own devotional needs while navigating the text. Instead of paragraph divisions, however, readers should use the 'lettres enlumines', illuminated initials, as visual aids alerting them to where they might start and stop their reading according to their desire; readers are to use this mode of reading to avoid 'ennui' and to inspire a pity, or piety, of heart ('pite de corage') and the desire to love god ('talent de dieu amer'). Although the placement of this prologue alongside the *Manuel* could be the result of chance (in that the addition of the small quire to this manuscript could merely coincidentally have placed Anselm's text right before the *Manuel*), it is also possible that a later owner of BL MS Arundel 288 found Anselm's reading instructions a useful guide to how he or she might navigate the rest of the material within the manuscript. The quire, after all, could have been placed at the rear of the manuscript, as an addendum, but was instead placed prominently

¹⁴ The contents of BL MS Arundel 288 are, as follows: fols 1^r–3^v, a poem on the Passion ('Ave mun tres duz Seignur'); fols 3^v–4^r, excerpt from Anselm's *Orationes sive meditationes*; fols 5^r–83^r, *Manuel de péchés*; fols 84^r–91^r, A sermon on Purgatory, translated from *De poenis Purgatorii*; fols 91^v–96^v, A sermon on Christ's Passion ('Seynt Pol lui apostle dit'); fols 97^r–102^r, a poem on the love of God ('Seynt Pol lui apostle dit'); fols 103^r–122^r, an Anglo-Norman translation of the *Speculum ecclesiae*; fols 122^r–123^r, 'Les ix paroles que Mestre Auners, Erceveske de Coloyne dyst'; fols 123^v–126^v, 'Dialogue entre l'âme et le corps'; fol. 126^v, short, five-stanza devotional poem ('Niule pechere ne pout faire peché si ord').

¹⁵ BL MS Arundel 288, fol. 3^{vb}–4^{ra}.

at the manuscript's head. This placement ensures that — at the very least — the appended introductory quire had to be flipped past, even if not read, in order to get to the other material that forms the manuscript's core. It is notable, however, that although this prologue instructs readers to make use of illuminated initials as they navigate the work, no illuminated initials exist within this manuscript. Flourished initials do occur throughout the *Manuel*, as do alternating red and blue paraphs, perhaps indicating that the compiler who added this French translation of Anselm's prologue to BL MS Arundel 288 considered those markings similar enough in function to obviate the need to alter the text in order to reflect more accurately the paratextual markers used within this particular manuscript.

Whether this placement of Anselm's prologue just before the *Manuel* was coincidental or not, the reading instructions included within the latter's own prologue suggestively echo elements of Anselm's text. Waddington's prologue to the *Manuel* also highlights a paratextual marker — the paraph, which occurs frequently within the manuscript — as the most important visual and structural element of his work. He specifies that '¶Par peregraf est destinctez | Ke nus mustirent diuers pechez | *Pur* nule lire dei hastiement | Cest escrit nomeement | Dis fiez le dert rehercer | Si sa alme uodra amender' (By paraphs it is made clear | that we show diverse sins | By these neither read too hastily | this writing nor [read] by naming (or listing) | Many times [one] ought to enumerate [these sins] | If [one] wishes to amend one's soul).¹⁶ Readers are advised to use the paraphs as they read, but not to increase their speed of reading or necessarily to read the text out of order. These paraphs are instead said to have been included to guide readers to the descriptions of sins that are most useful to them in correcting their own souls at any given time. The desire to be reformed is highlighted in this passage as being a necessity for penance and correction since one must wish 'to amend one's soul', hinting at the emotional prerequisite for effective compunction and penance, as envisioned in this work.

Similar to Anselm's specification that reading can kindle a longing for prayer as a result of 'God's help', the *Manuel*'s prologue in BL MS Arundel 288 also goes on to specify that God's assistance is needed to reject sin fully. The prologue continues by asserting that 'Si acun del oir seit amende | Deux de ceo sert gracie' (If any that hear [of these sins] is amended, | for that God should be thanked).¹⁷ The reader is warned that he should not take credit for this liberation from sin,

¹⁶ BL MS Arundel 288, fol. 5^{rb}. For an edited version the copy of this passage found in Harley MS 273 and Harley MS 4657, see William of Waddington, 'Manuel des Pechiez', ed. by Furnivall, ll. 71–76.

¹⁷ BL MS Arundel 288, fol. 5^{rb}. Later versions of the *Manuel* do not include this passage.

'Kar de deu sul ert le loer' (because to god alone belongs the praise).¹⁸ Echoing Anselm's prologue, which specifies that readers should remain open to moments of divine intervention during the reading process, the *Manuel's* prologue likewise encourages readers to remain humble as they seek penance, following their desire to rectify their souls as they navigate the work, and attributing any successes that they attain in self-reformation to the grace of God. Although Anselm's prologue, then, highlights the importance of affectivity in the reading of his work and the *Manuel's* prologue does not do more than hint at the role of emotion in the reading process, the *Manuel's* prologue nonetheless shares Anselm's interest in the value of paratextual markers in allowing readers to tailor their navigation of the text to their own personal needs, and in the recognition that the benefits gained from reading must be derived through divine grace.

Another vernacular adaptation of Anselm's prologue, albeit a loose one, can be found in *A Talking of the Love of God*, a late fourteenth century work found in both the Vernon and Simeon (BL MS Additional 22283) manuscripts. This composite work weaves a free translation of portions of Anselm's *Orationes* together with reworkings of two additional texts, *An Orison to God Almighty* and *The Wooing of our Lord*. The purpose of this work is declaredly affective, as the author states in the prologue that the work is intended to 'sturen . hem þat hit reden ; to louen him þe more . And to fynde lykyng . and tast in his loue'.¹⁹ In order for readers to increase their emotional engagement with the text, the prologue nods to Anselm and specifies that the work should be read 'esyliche and softe . So as men may mest in Inward felyng . and deplich þenkyng . sauour fynden . and that not beo dene . But biginnen and leten in what paas so men seop . þat may for þe tyme yiuen mest lykyng'.²⁰ This loose borrowing from Anselm's prologue emphasizes the importance of reading the text 'esyliche' (slowly) and 'softe'. The adverb 'softe' could have several significations, ranging from indicating that the work should be read with affection, little-by-little, silently, or in a low voice.²¹ Despite the condensing of the passage, readers are still told to begin and end where they like, though they are not instructed to use any paratextual markers to guide their selection of beginning or ending points. Alternating red and blue paraphs, however, do occur with regularity throughout the text, sometimes coming as fre-

¹⁸ BL MS Arundel 288, fol. 5^{va}.

¹⁹ Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. a.1, fol. 367^{vb}. A modern edition of this text can be found in Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 223. On the passage's promotion of devotional interiority, see Bryan, *Looking Inward*, pp. 118–20.

²⁰ Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. a.1, fol. 367^{vb}.

²¹ S.v. *Softe*, adv., *Middle English Dictionary*.

quently as every two lines; this decorative apparatus could easily have facilitated a reader's beginning and ending at those moments 'þat may for þe tyme yiuen mest lykyng'.²² Readers are also informed that, if they correctly engage with the text through 'redyng . Inward þenkyng . and deoplich sechyng', they will be '3iuen inward sizt and felyng *in soule* . And swetnes wonderful . 3if preyere folwe'.²³ This work thus closely follows the stated goals of Anselm's prologue by emphasizing that reading the text selectively could help the reader attain a heightened affective response and the incitement to prayer: two responses intended to increase the devotional efficacy of the work and result in 'inward sizt and felyng *in soule*'.

CUL MS Kk.1.6, a fifteenth-century manuscript containing primarily devotional verse, includes a text entitled 'Meditacyons vpon the vii dayes of the woke' that also begins by borrowing Anselm's prologue. This collection of devotional material is attributed to 'Alyanore Hull' who drew 'out of ffrensche all this before wreten in this lytyll booke', and the 'Meditacyons' that she produced is a unique compilation of texts by a variety of authors, the primary ones being 'Seynt Austyn [...] Seynt Ancelm [...] [and] Seynt Barnard'.²⁴ Hull's translation of Anselm's prologue opens her work and remains relatively faithful to the original Latin text, specifying that her work is intended

To enflawme the hert & the corage of hem þat redyn it in the love of god & for to make a man to know hymself | Thei be not to be red in noyse but in quyetie | not lyghtly & corantly but lytell & lytell in gret abydyng & *with* grete entent of mynd | Ner þo þat redyn this sholde not set ther ententes for to rede hem all ouer at onys | But to take at onys as moch as thei felyn þat awaylyth hem *with* the helpe of god for to encrese in hem gode will & devocoun for to pray | ner it nedyth allweys to begyn at euery tyme at the begynnyng herof but þer as hym best lykyth & hath most devocoun to rede & for þat cause thei ben demed by captell *lettres* þat þei may begyn wher them lust & leve when þem lust Bycause the redyng shold not turne hem to enoye for to long redyng But for the reders shold gadre & kepe tho thinges wherfor þei ware made | þat is Pyte of hert & will to love god & for to knowe him self.²⁵

As in Anselm's original passage, the reader should again withdraw from others, away from 'noyse', and devote sustained attention (a 'grete entent of mynd') to

²² Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. a.1, fol. 367^b.

²³ Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. a.1, fol. 367^b.

²⁴ CUL MS Kk.1.6, fols 179^v and 148^r. See also the unpublished edition of this work: 'Dame Eleanor Hull's *Meditacyons*', ed. by Conard, p. 1.

²⁵ CUL MS Kk.1.6, fol. 148^r.

reading these meditations. The meditations are not to be read all at once but in reader-selected segments; warning against reading too much at once because this can 'turne hem to enoye', the narrator instructs that readers instead pick and choose passages of the text to which they are most drawn ('as hym best lykyth & hath most devocoun to rede'). The decorative schema is once more positioned as a primary method by which the reader can identify transitions and important moments in the text. 'Captell lettres', here doubtless referring to initials rather than to in-text majuscules, are singled out as the signs by which the readers may decide to 'begyn wher them lust & leve when þem lust' so that they only read 'at onys as moch as thei felyn þat awaylyth hem'.

It is not clear whether the *exemplum* Hull used for her translation had already adapted the passage to place emphasis on 'captell lettres' serving this function, or if Hull herself made this alteration to the original passage to reflect the *mise-en-page* of her manuscript.²⁶ An examination of the layout of CUL MS Kk.1.6 shows a relatively simple presentation of Hull's work. A six-line-high blue initial surrounded by red flourishing (now quite smudged) begins the piece, and smaller, two-line blue initials with similar flourishing occur throughout the text to provide visual cues of major textual divisions. These two-line initials are spaced at variable distances from each other, with some occurring every page and others being divided by many pages of uninterrupted columns of prose text.²⁷ The prologue of Hull's text, when paired with the scribal presentation of her work found in CUL MS Kk.1.6, would seem, then, to encourage readers to meander amongst the larger segments of the text, to read, perhaps, Tuesday's meditation without reading Monday's meditation, or to read the meditation on 'þe blessyd name mary' before reading the meditation on 'þe name of Ihesu'.²⁸

²⁶ Alexandra Barratt, however, has suggested that Eleanor Hull translated and adapted a work that compiled excerpts from a range of devotional sources (and from which was excerpted the Anglo-Norman prologue to Anselm's *Orationes* found in BL MS Arundel 288) for a portion (13 per cent) of her 'Meditacyons'. Although the Arundel manuscript includes only a small portion of the longer Anglo-Norman work, Barratt suggests that it and Hull's manuscript (CUL MS Kk.1.6) are the only two that preserve its original prologue. More complete copies of the work, all of which nonetheless lack the prologue, can be found in (Lambeth Palace MS 182, TCD MS 374, and BL MS Cotton Vitellius F.vii). See Barratt, 'Dame Eleanor Hull', pp. 278–81.

²⁷ The 'Meditacion for þe Satyrday' is the longest of the included meditations, covering fols 166^r–175^r. A reader of this meditation is presented with seventeen pages of text that offer no visual relief in terms of subdivision by two-line initials.

²⁸ See CUL MS Kk.1.6., fol. 152^r and fol. 150^v, for the meditations on Mary's name and Christ's name, respectively.

While the incitement to a reading practice that jumps between and amongst the structural units of a work might make sense in the passage's original Anselmian context, it initially appears counterproductive to the basic structure of the 'Meditacyons vpon the vii dayes of the woke' that links its meditations to the consecutively unfolding days of the week. The entire basis of this work and others like it, such as the *Hours of the Cross* or Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, is often argued to be the guidance of readers through meditations on the Passion that unfold in a linear, chronological fashion over the course of a day or week. And yet, in Hull's work, she opens the door for readers to reject such strict chronology in their own reading practices: they do not always have to begin at the beginning when reading the text. Readers are encouraged, instead, to search for those segments of the text that might best incite their devotional fervour, self-knowledge, and 'pyte of hert', a state of compassion that hints at the ethical benefit of this mode of reading.²⁹ That even such a seemingly chronologically structured text could recommend a more selective mode of textual consumption implies the prevalence of, and a comfort with, the perceived benefits of this style of reading. And the instruction that the reader should return as desired to the most devotionally powerful moments suggests that Hull encouraged a reading experience guided by the search for those scenes which inspire the most intense emotional reaction — a reading experience punctuated by short bursts of devotional fervour, rather than a steadier engagement with the text.

The final example of a Middle English translation of Anselm's prologue to be discussed here can be found at the start of the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*. Two Middle English copies of the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies* survive, one found in Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, MS Richardson 22 (c. 1400–25) and the other in BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix (c. 1450–1500), but the prologue to this work, containing a translation of Anselm's text, has only survived in the latter.³⁰ This translation directs that

These meditacyons or prayers that bene written with in this boke suwyng . bene made to exite and stere the mynde of the reder to the drede of god . and to the loue

²⁹ Cf. McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, esp. pp. 159–73.

³⁰ On the manuscripts, see Sturges, 'A Middle English Version of the Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies*'; and Sturges, 'The Middle English Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies* and its Anti-Wycliffite Commentary', esp. pp. 41–47. The Middle English translation of the Latin *Soliloquies* was derived via an unknown French version, by an anonymous writer. If a prologue to the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies* was originally included in the copy found in Houghton MS Richardson 22, it has not survived due to the loss of a quire. See Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 224.

of god . and to verey knowyng of hym silfe. // And therfor thei be not to be radde in grete hast . and in grete tumultuosite but in quyettesse . not *with* gret swithenesse and hastenesse . but moderately and easely . and with amoureuse . and a wise entent . and a bydyng meditacion . Ne the rather schall not entende . þat he rede eche of hem all ouer . but as muche as he may or kan goostly feele or so muche þat he may þrongli goddes grace and helpe awayle . and inflawme his affeccions to prayer . or to swete meditacions . or els as moche as for the tyme may be delyte hym to stere his soule to the loue of god.³¹

Readers’ emotions (‘affeccions’) are, once more, to be inflamed by the reading process so that they can better engage in prayer and ‘swete meditacions’, and can inspire themselves to divine devotion (‘to the drede of god . and to the loue of god’) and ethical reform brought about by increasing self-awareness (‘verey knowyng of hym silfe’). The reader is invited to engage with the text selectively, not reading each section of the work ‘all ouer’ but only reading ‘as muche as he may or kan goostly feele’, and beginning and ending where desired.³² In order to assist readers in locating potential beginning points, the prologue specifies that ‘euery chapeter is distincte wyth paraphes, that where it lyketh hym he may begynne and also ende. Ne lest often repeticion of one thing schulde make heuenesse’.³³ Readers are again encouraged to use the *mise-en-page* of the work to navigate the text, thereby allowing them to avoid ‘heuenesse’ while reading so that their emotions can be appropriately aroused, and enabling them to reap the full devotional and ethical benefits promoted by the work as a whole.

The presentation of the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies* in BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix again reveals how such reading advice might not match precisely with the scribally produced *mise-en-page*. Although the prologue of the *Soliloquies* specifies that paraphs are at the head of each chapter, paraphs are not used for this purpose in this copy.³⁴ Blue paraphs appear briefly within the text of the first

³¹ BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix, fol. 3^{r-v}.

³² The passage continues by asserting that ‘ne allwey it is not nede to begynne at the begynnyng, but where it plesith hym best’ (fol. 3^v).

³³ BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix, fol. 3^v.

³⁴ The interpretation of how the included paraphs — and those whose absence is implied by two diagonal slashes — were to be used would seem to hinge on the word ‘distincte’ in the prologue’s instruction that ‘euery chapeter is distincte wyth paraphes’. This designation might refer to the distinguishing of the chapters themselves or of the subdivision of chapters into argumentative units (which appears to be the more probable reading in this manuscript context). While Anselm appears to have envisioned that readers might use paraphs to stop and start at chapter beginnings and endings, the *mise-en-page* of BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix suggests

chapter, but, after this section, there are no paraphs until the second scribe's stint (beginning on fol. 83^r).³⁵ Two diagonal strokes, however, do occur throughout the text to indicate where a rubricator should have added paraphs once the copying of the text was completed, and M. B. Parkes has suggested that, in the absence of completed paraphs, these two diagonal strokes functioned effectively in their place.³⁶ Despite the lack of correspondence between the prologue's designation of the paraph as the primary paratextual marker and the actual occurrences of paraph markings within the manuscript, BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix nonetheless appears to have been structured throughout by its scribes and rubricators to facilitate a selective, affective mode of reading, as is promoted within Anselm's prologue — a mode of reading intended to incite the reader's 'goostly feel'.³⁷ In the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies* and the subsequent two works in the manuscript, Richard Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion* and an anonymous work whose incipit is 'The consailes of the wordes of seint Illdre to enforme man how he schulde fle vice and folowe vertues', the reader is confronted by a consistent *mise-en-page* that includes relatively short chapters introduced by flourished initials, a general lack of chapter numbers that might have helped to orient a reader in his or her perusal of the text, in-text paraphs or spaces marked with double slashes that appear to have been left for paraphs, and literary structures that are comprised not of narratives but of short prayers, meditations, and devotional instruction. The chapters of the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*, for example, are

that paraphs could also be used to stop and start reading within the chapters themselves — a more extreme type of textual subdivision.

³⁵ When looking through the entirety of the first chapter of the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*, for example, fol. 5^v has four blue paraphs added to the text and two additional spaces that are marked with two diagonal strokes. The subsequent leaves lack paraphs but include spaces marked with two diagonal strokes where paraphs were to be added: fol. 6^r has four such spaces, fol. 6^v has four, fol. 7^r has three, and fol. 7^v has five. Folio 8^r then has three completed blue paraph markings and two additional spaces marked with two diagonal strokes. The final folio of the first chapter, fol. 8^v, has four spaces marked with two diagonal strokes.

³⁶ Parkes, 'Layout and Presentation of the Text', p. 69, and Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, p. 305. It is rare, by the fourteenth century, for individual chapters to be highlighted within a work with paraph markings. An initial of some kind, whether rubricated, flourished, or illuminated, would have been the much more common option, as is found here. The chapters of BL MS Cotton Titus C.xix are introduced by four-line (and, in rare instances, three-line) blue flourished initials. These initials are competent and practiced, resembling those found in other devotional and religious manuscripts produced during the mid-fifteenth century.

³⁷ For a contrasting view of the text's underlying unity see Sturges, 'The Middle English Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies* and its Anti-Wycliffite Commentary', p. 43.

not numbered (except for the final chapter) and are of relatively limited lengths, ranging from two to five folios in a manuscript whose layout condenses the text block and leaves generous margins.³⁸ These well-defined chapter divisions thus create short chunks of text that could each easily be read at a slow pace in ten or fifteen minutes, offering audiences the option to consult a limited section of the whole work, as desired, as they read.

In the subsequent work, Rolle's *Meditations*, the layout on the page also offers audiences easy starting and ending points via two-line flourished initials, as if continuing to welcome readers to engage with only those desired segments of the work at any one time. None of the meditations is numbered, and there is thus no explicit structural attempt to fit these meditations into a linear sequence that should be read in a particular order. The opening folios of the work (fol. 92^v–93^r) show the frequency of the text divisions with flourished initials: four are evident on these two pages alone.³⁹ These initials immediately offer the visual suggestion that this work is divided into independent textual units, and alert the reader to the brevity of Rolle's meditations on the Passion, a brevity emphasized by the instruction to pause after each has been read and offer up several prayers to God (a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave Maria*). The final work of the manuscript, 'The consailes of the wordes of seint Ilidre', possesses a layout that visually mirrors that of Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion*, except that its short segments of text are made distinct with short titles in addition to two-line blue flourished initials. Each textual segment (some only two sentences in length) provides pithy advice on how its (primarily religious) readers were to lead virtuous lives, and this work, again, appears to have been formatted to facilitate a selective style of reading, as if each chapter might offer a daily life lesson upon which one could meditate.⁴⁰ The *mise-en-page* of these two subsequent works, then, appears consciously intended

³⁸ Chapter 32 is given a rubricated chapter number at its head (fol. 87^v), an alteration from the prior chapters that appears to be the result of the change in scribes that occurs on fol. 83^r. The relatively short chapter lengths are maintained throughout the work. The first chapter, for instance, begins on fol. 5^r and ends on fol. 8^v; the second chapter then spans from 8^v–12^v, third from 12^v–17^v, and the fourth from 17^v–21^v.

³⁹ A five-line blue flourished initial opens the work as a whole, an additional two-line flourished initial occurs on fol. 92^r, and then two two-line flourished initials occur on fol. 93^r.

⁴⁰ A range of various topics are discussed in turn within this work, as can be seen in the opening folios during which the following topics are covered: 'Chastite' (fol. 129^v); 'Praier', 'Drinke', and 'Ffasting' (fol. 129^v); and 'Lokyng' and 'Ffelowshipe of wymmen' (fol. 130^v). The intended audience of this work was apparently expected to have been male, since readers are instructed to eschew the company of women, here referred to as 'serpents': 'sitte besides a serpent & thou shalt not longe be vnhurte' (fol. 130^v).

to facilitate a selective mode of reading, a mode that aims not to comprehend the entirety of a work but rather to dwell upon its parts as desired.⁴¹ Anselm's appended prologue thus seems an equally fitting introduction to the later works, as their *mise-en-page* suggests, implying that the compiler of this manuscript found Anselm's suggested selective mode of reading applicable to a range of works of differing genres.

Between these four vernacular translations of Anselm's prologue to the *Orationes*, much remains the same. All the passages instruct readers to withdraw from noise while reading, to read slowly rather than with haste, and to stop and start reading based upon their affective response to the text; they all also indicate that they seek to stir the reader's devotion to God. Small differences emerge between these versions, though, suggesting that the translators or scribes consciously adapted Anselm's text, even if only slightly, to ensure that it fit its new contexts more smoothly. One of the main differences between the versions is the disagreement over which decorative element a reader should use to start or leave off reading, as readers are directed to use illuminated initials, capital letters, paraph markings, or none of the above to navigate the associated works. Although the paratextual markers referenced within these translations do not always match those used by the scribes of their respective volumes, the altering designation of what marks the reader should use to help navigate a text implies that some translators or scribes, at some point, did attempt to match the prologue's reading instructions to the *mise-en-page* of the text they were writing or copying out. That not all translators and/or scribes did so could be the result of discomfort with altering the words of an *auctoritas*, evidence that some marks were considered interchangeable, or an indication that not all translators or scribes felt that these marks were as crucial as the prologue suggests them to be.

Each of these passages additionally emphasizes that selective reading is merely an initial movement toward a higher level of devotion. Just as Anselm's prologue references the tradition of monastic *lectio* when associating reading closely with prayer and meditation, so too do the translated prologues maintain the view that reading selectively should be the first step toward engaging in those

⁴¹ It must be acknowledged that the content of this work is more indexical. While a reader might be able to selectively dip into the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies* or Rolle's *Meditations* and emerge with a general sense of that work's whole, a reader who dipped selectively into this final work might emerge with a more defined sense that they had only read some part of the whole, that they were missing some information. The textual and narrative structures of these works inspire different approaches to their text, but nevertheless, they are all provided with a layout that facilitates a selective approach.

actions. Selective reading is intended to instigate, to stir up, to inspire an affective response that will, in turn, produce devotional — and even ethical — benefits for the reader. Two translations emphasize that pity should be fostered by selective and affective modes of reading; three indicate that these modes will increase the reader’s love of God. Hull’s translation and the translation at the head of the *Soliloquies* suggest that self-reflection and self-knowledge also increase when one reads to foster affective piety. *A Talking of the Love of God* conforms the least to Anselm’s original text, as it specifies that the affective response engendered by reading should lead to meditation, additional feeling within the soul, and an experience of wonderful sweetness. In each of these vernacular versions, and in Anselm’s original, however, reading to develop affective piety is not an attempt to promote stasis, to promote feeling as an end in itself. These passages each envision selective and affectively focused reading practices as inspiring readers to engage in other devotional activities — to *do* something with the feelings they have aroused.

*Promoting Pietatis affectum:
Reconsidering the Sophistication of Reading Selectively*

The inclusion of translations of Anselm’s prologue at the start of a several fourteenth- and fifteenth-century vernacular works of devotion has not gone unnoticed by modern readers, but there has been tentative scepticism expressed regarding how much credence should be given to the selective and affective reading methods espoused by Anselm. In the *Idea of the Vernacular*, for example, the authors suggest that Anselm’s prologue appears to downplay the complexity of the reading strategies which Anselm’s *Orationes sive meditationes* as a whole requires. They further argue that, when attached to some late medieval vernacular works, translations of this prologue present a less intellectually rigorous, more affectively focused model of reading than those vernacular works would otherwise seem to demand from their audiences.⁴² It is assumed that selective modes of reading must have been geared towards less-learned audiences — audiences that would not have been capable of fully engaging with the intellectual demands of the *Soliloquies*, in particular, in its entirety. The disjuncture that the authors of *The Idea of the Vernacular* perceive between the lack of sophistication of reading selectively and the intellectual demands of certain texts leads them to assert that the

⁴² Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 214. See also Sturges, ‘The Middle English Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies* and its Anti-Wycliffite Commentary’, p. 43.

inclusion of the prologue, at times, 'looks very like an attempt to package an intellectually demanding vernacular work as though it were a purely affective text'.⁴³

In our present moment where to read a work is to read it (assumedly) continuously, from its start to its finish, selective practices of reading are often considered to be short cuts, convenient ways to 'read' works without really *reading* them.⁴⁴ It can be tempting, then, to dismiss the selective and affective modes of reading advocated by Anselm and by other late medieval authors of devotional literature as strategies of textual interaction that were promoted amongst female religious and the devout laity as a less demanding alternative to monastic *lectio* that was typically associated with consecutive modes of textual engagement. In her recent study of the late medieval culture of compilation and the *ordinatio* of Julian of Norwich's works, for example, Elisabeth Dutton remarks that selective models of reading might function as 'concessions, recognizing that outside the cloister *lectio divina* is an impractical ideal'.⁴⁵ While it is certainly true that the vast majority of late medieval lay readers, engaging in active lives rather than contemplative lives, would have not had the same amount of time specifically set aside for reading as was found within monastic contexts, it should be noted that selective modes of reading were not uniformly directed at less-learned audiences, and that affective modes of devotion could be seen to serve sophisticated ethical and intellectual purposes.

There have recently been several scholars who have called into question the assumption that selective modes of reading were primarily employed by unsophisticated or unlearned audiences, with many pointing towards scholastic readers who made use of tables of contents and indices to navigate works selectively.⁴⁶ As a vocal advocate for the need to recognize the widespread use of selective or, as he terms them, discontinuous reading practices, Peter Stallybrass writes that the codex manuscript has always demanded to be read discontinuously and that 'to imagine continuous reading as the norm in reading a book is radically reactionary'.⁴⁷ Reading discontinuously, he suggests, enabled codices to function

⁴³ Wogan-Browne and others, *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 214.

⁴⁴ Today, selective reading is, in particular, associated with digital reading practices, and with damaging results. Nicholas Carr, for example, describes the online presentation of text that 'fragments content and disrupts our concentration': Carr, *The Shallows*, p. 91.

⁴⁵ Dutton, *Julian of Norwich*, p. 170: though she also notes that academic readers employed selective reading practices.

⁴⁶ See Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*', and Gillespie, "'Lukyng in Haly Bukes'".

⁴⁷ Stallybrass, 'Books and Scrolls', p. 48.

as ‘indexical computers’ that allowed readers to find and collate desired information quickly, a function that he claims was a primary motivation behind the late medieval and early modern practices of selective reading.⁴⁸ While such criticism highlights the sophistication of the indexical strategies of selective scholastic *lectio*, Anselm’s prologue displays a marked lack of interest in the indexical purpose of selective modes of reading. Instead, Anselm offers a devotional model of selectivity defined by the piecemeal consumption of a text and the associated goal of inspiring a productive affective emotional response within the reader.

While selectivity, when employed for indexical purposes, tends to be discussed approvingly, selective modes of reading that are paired with affective goals continue to be seen as a means of allowing readers to avoid the challenging intellectual work that a text might otherwise demand.⁴⁹ Attending to the persistent modern assumption that affective piety was non-intellectual and of limited cognitive value, Sarah McNamer notes that ‘in a formulation often taken as axiomatic in the scholarship on religion in late medieval England, to feel was not to think.’⁵⁰ McNamer then queries this axiom, suggesting that

the performance of compassion, through reading Rollean affective meditations and the *Mirror* as well as other iterations of the genre, did indeed produce something new in late medieval England: a widespread ‘upheaval of thought’, to use Martha Nussbaum’s vivid phrase, relating not so much to vernacular theology as to what I will call vernacular ethics.⁵¹

This ‘vernacular ethics’, McNamer continues, manifested itself through the widespread emphasis on the importance of charitable works and the creation of charitable institutions in late medieval England.⁵² While Anselm was writing over two centuries before Rollean affective meditations became popular amongst vernacular audiences, the continued interest in Anselm’s prologue towards the end of the Middle Ages suggests the resonance between Anselm’s affectively engaged reading practices and the potential perception of the ethical benefit of this mode of

⁴⁸ Stallybrass, ‘Books and Scrolls’, p. 74.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Dutton, *Julian of Norwich*, pp. 33–34; Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, esp. pp. 157–65; and Taylor, ‘Into his Secret Chamber’, at p. 44.

⁵⁰ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, p. 147.

⁵¹ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, p. 149. Rebecca Krug offers a complimentary perspective on the perceived sophistication of affective works in late medieval England: Krug, *Reading Families*, p. 174. See also Gillespie, “Lukyng in Haly Bukes”, p. 123.

⁵² McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, pp. 150–51.

reading among late medieval authors.⁵³ The heightening of one's emotions during the reading process could (and, indeed, ideally should) serve as the impetus for readers to engage in devotionally and morally beneficial activities, to *do* something — whether it be to engage in prayer and penance, or to enact strategies for living virtuously and learning how to know one's self. Reading selectively with an eye towards reading affectively might not have facilitated the indexical accumulation of information, but it could be seen as beneficial to the readers' devotional and ethical development and thus as a valuable reading strategy for readers of all educational backgrounds.

*Appealing to Reason vs. Appealing to Affect:
Two Paths to Knowledge*

During the interval between Anselm's composition of the *Orationes sive meditationes* and the vernacular translations of its prologue, scholastic modes of reading, with their 'more ratiocinative scrutiny of the text and consultation for reference purposes', influenced the presentation and layout of works intended for academic readers.⁵⁴ Several twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians responded to the increasing variety of reading practices being employed by attempting to categorize the potential benefits and uses of these practices, and they often did so by dividing the goals of reading into two categories: reading to attain information, and reading to inspire affective piety. It is important to emphasize that one category is not privileged over the other, as both are suggested to have their own respective rhetorical strategies and resultant benefits. A brief examination of this commentary, in light of the inclusion of translations of Anselm's prologue before a range of late medieval works of devotion and religious instruction, illustrates the perceived sophistication of both of those modes of reading.

The division between works that appeal to the reason and works that attempt to foster a 'pious disposition' can be seen, for example, in Alexander of Hales's *Sum of Theology* (c. 1186–1245), a work begun by Alexander but completed by his students after his death. Alexander writes that 'there are two methods of achieving knowledge, one which operates through the understanding of the truth by human reason, while the other operates through the inculcation of a pious disposition (*affectus pietatis*) by means of divine instruction'.⁵⁵ Each method

⁵³ As Vincent Gillespie has shown, Rolle viewed the affective response as intimately associated with the intellect: see Gillespie, 'Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity', esp. pp. 254–60.

⁵⁴ Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*', p. 35.

⁵⁵ Alexander of Hales, 'Sum of Theology', ed. by Minnis and Scott, at p. 214. For a discussion

is described as having its own characteristic presentation within a work. The method that appeals to reason depends upon 'definition, analysis, and deduction', since 'the apprehension of truth in accordance with human reasoning is unfolded through analyses, definitions, and logical arguments'.⁵⁶ The emphasis on the importance of logic and human reasoning as a reader interacts with a text recalls M. B. Parkes's work linking twelfth- and thirteenth-century practices of manuscript *ordinatio* (such as the more frequent insertion of running chapter headings, marginalia, rubrication, and paraph marks) with developments in scholasticism and with the rise of universities as centres of learning.⁵⁷ The *ordinatio* of scholastic *lectio* investigated by Parkes conforms to Alexander of Hales's understanding of how knowledge is created through man's analytical engagement with a work, since Alexander encourages readers to 'unfold' the truth within complex arguments through the use of their own reasoning. A *mise-en-page* that segments and organizes an argument into its constitutive parts would considerably aid such a logical, reasoned approach to a work.

The method that appeals to the reader's *affectus*, however, relies upon 'precept, example, exhortation, revelation, and prayer, because those methods are appropriate to a pious disposition'.⁵⁸ Reading to promote *affectus pietatis* does not require a similar deployment of logical analytics: it relies instead upon heightening the readers' emotional state to prepare them to receive 'divine instruction'. Alexander of Hale writes that this mode of reading is similar to 'the mode of Holy Scripture', thereby bringing to mind the strategies of monastic *lectio* that I have discussed in relation to Anselm's prologue.⁵⁹ This reading method does not convey specific information so much as it prepares the emotional ground, so to speak, within readers that readies them to receive knowledge from God. Although reading to inspire affective piety does not adhere to the indexical goals promoted by scholastic *lectio*, Alexander of Hale still asserts that it results in the achievement of knowledge, thereby affirming the validity of both modes of reading.⁶⁰ One mode

of Alexander of Hale's contributions to theological discussions of affectivity, see Gillespie, 'Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity', pp. 243–76.

⁵⁶ Alexander of Hales, 'Sum of Theology', ed. by Minnis and Scott, p. 214.

⁵⁷ Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*'.

⁵⁸ Alexander of Hales, 'Sum of Theology', ed. by Minnis and Scott, p. 214.

⁵⁹ Alexander of Hales, 'Sum of Theology', ed. by Minnis and Scott, p. 214.

⁶⁰ Jean Leclercq analyses the role 'played by religious experience and knowledge through love' in several other medieval theologians, such as Thierry of Chartres and St Bernard, and links these twelfth- and thirteenth-century views back to the writings of Origen, St Gregory, and St Benedict (p. 213). See Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, trans. by Misrahi, esp. pp. 213–18.

depends upon man's reasoning, and the other mode requires readers to prepare themselves emotionally to receive divine instruction, but both can yield equally valuable results.

Subsequent authors continued to debate these two methods of attaining knowledge, and Bonaventure, one of the most influential voices to promote affective styles of devotion, similarly notes that works that intend to convey information and works that intend to inspire audiences to 'become good' should have different narrative and generic structures. In the *Breviloquium* (1254–57), Bonaventure states that Holy Scripture

exists in order that we should become good and be redeemed, and this is not achieved by deliberation alone, but rather by a disposition of the will. Therefore, Holy Scripture had to be handed down to us in whatever way would dispose us best [to goodness]. Our affections are moved more strongly by examples than by arguments, by promises than by logical reasonings, by devotions than by definitions. Scripture, therefore, had to avoid the mode of proceeding by definition, division, and inferring to prove the properties of some subject, as do the other sciences. It had rather to adapt its own modes to the various dispositions of men's minds which incline those minds differently.⁶¹

Although Bonaventure specifically discusses the value of affective piety when inspired by reading Scripture, this passage also highlights the perceived ethical benefit of evoking an affective response that can be extrapolated to other literary contexts. To become good, one must be disposed to act accordingly: one must first have the desire to be good. When the affections of readers are roused, Bonaventure suggests that they are more inclined to translate those emotions into spiritually beneficial actions. Works that engage man's reason and demand his logical engagement with their arguments might provide a reader with information, but Bonaventure implies that those works cannot move men as effectively toward ethically appropriate behaviour, since they only engage the mind and fail to rouse one's emotions.

Near the beginning of *De regimine principum* (c. 1285), Giles of Rome contrasts even more starkly those works that intend primarily to inform and those that inspire the affections to motivate ethical and morally-beneficial actions. Giles bases his commentary on the moral value of affective modes of reading in a discussion of Aristotle's *Ethics*, and he suggests that 'moral study' is undertaken 'not for the sake of abstract contemplation, nor to gain knowledge, but in order

⁶¹ Bonaventure, 'Breviloquium', ed. by Minnis and Scott, at pp. 235–36.

that we may become good'.⁶² In contrast to Alexander of Hales, Giles does not consider divine instruction to be the goal of reading that promotes an affective response. He writes that 'subtle arguments [...] are more effective in illuminating the intellect, while those that are superficial and broad are more effective in stirring and firing the affections (*affectus*)'.⁶³ The same dichotomy between engaging the intellect and engaging the affections is still maintained in this passage, but Giles more overtly links the 'firing of affections' with the moral and ethical training of readers. He continues by stating that

in the speculative sciences, where the main aim is the illumination of the intellect, one must proceed by way of proof and in a subtle manner, but in moral matters, where the goal is an upright will and that we should become good, one must proceed by way of persuasion and the use of figures.⁶⁴

The inciting of a reader's emotions is conducted through the use of broad arguments and figurative language. Once those emotions are evoked, Giles suggests that readers should not consider their reading complete; instead, they must use these emotions as the motivation to foster an 'upright will' and to take steps toward leading a moral and ethical life.

These three theologians divide reading into two primary modes, one focused on attaining information (indexical) and one focused on inspiring an affective response that will encourage readers to lead a good life (devotional and ethical). While Alexander of Hale and Bonaventure are specifically interested in how Scripture promotes affective piety that can lead to ethical improvement, Giles of Rome does not limit the ethical and moral benefits of affective modes of reading to biblical texts. In each of these passages, the spurring of the reader's affections is not described as a goal of the reading process that should be inherently subordinate to the acquisition of information. Returning to Anselm's prologue, it is clear that Anselm similarly views the inciting of the reader's affect as a valuable goal. While affective piety can enable higher levels of devotion, there is also the suggestion that this heightened emotion can compel readers to engage in actions, particularly prayer and devotions to God, that will increase their knowledge of

⁶² Giles of Rome, 'On the Instruction of Princes', ed. by Minnis and Scott, at p. 249. The original passage can be found in *D. Aegidii Romani [...] De regimine principum libri III*, lib. I, cap. 1: *Quis modus procedendi in regimine principum* (Rome, 1556), fols 2^r–2^v. Saint Bernard makes a similar point, commenting that 'instruction makes us learned but feeling makes us wise' (quoted in Gillespie, 'Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity', p. 246).

⁶³ Giles of Rome, 'On the Instruction of Princes', ed. by Minnis and Scott, p. 249.

⁶⁴ Giles of Rome, 'On the Instruction of Princes', ed. by Minnis and Scott, p. 249.

the divine and of themselves, and position them more effectively to pursue ethically beneficial activities in other arenas.⁶⁵

While reading selectively is not referenced specifically by these theologians, Anselm's prologue and its late medieval vernacular progeny indicate that this mode of reading is ideally suited to inspiring the reader's affect. If one is reading to generate an emotional response, then one must, above all, avoid *fastidium*, 'enoye' and 'heuenesse', as Anselm's text and its vernacular translations clearly instruct, since these are non-productive emotions that mute one's affective response. Reading selectively allows one to focus only on those examples, prayers, and instances of figurative language that one finds most appealing and immediately useful. Since the location of information or the pursuit of argumentative clarity is not the end-purpose of this mode of reading, the order in which one reads matters less than the response evoked by that reading. While those works intended to be read affectively (and selectively) might not need the complex *ordinatio* of works designed for twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholastic audiences who sought knowledge through indexical avenues, they needed enough paratextual apparatus to ensure that readers had clear beginning and ending points they could use to structure the process of their reading. The *ordinatio* could still structure the reading experience but not through systems of glossing or by identifying the stages of a work's argument. Instead, as seen in the *ordinatio* of the vernacular works introduced by translations of Anselm's prologue, the paraph mark and the coloured initial function as the primary paratextual markers provided to readers, and these marks serve a dual function: to identify structural divisions within the works, and to be used by readers in idiosyncratic ways, so that they could navigate the text in the most affectively beneficial, individually directed manner.

By way of conclusion, I would like to turn to a work that loosely alludes to the content of Anselm's prologue, even while emphasizing the perceived sophistication and potential ethical benefits inherent in selective reading practices that I have proposed above. Around 1430, Symon Wynter, a brother of the Briggittine house of Syon, wrote out a prose life of St Jerome, an adaptation of the life of St Jerome found in the *Legenda aurea*, to which he attached a description of Jerome's posthumous miracles.⁶⁶ Wynter's prologue to the prose life of St Jerome

⁶⁵ Cf. Gillespie, 'Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity', pp. 248–49.

⁶⁶ Extant in four manuscripts: Cambridge, St John's College, MS N. 17 (c. 1430–40), Lambeth Palace MS 72 (c. 1450–75), Lambeth Palace MS 432 (c. 1450–75), and Beinecke Library MS 317 (late fifteenth century). In 'Serving the Needs of Readers', Keiser notes that Wynter 'adapted a portion of the *Legenda aurea* and a collection of pseudographs describing posthumous miracles performed by Jerome' (p. 212). See also Keiser, 'Patronage and Piety',

demonstrates how reading selectively could be seen to encourage readers to learn — and enact — ethical strategies for living well and dying well. Early in the prologue, Wynter asserts that within his work 'þere is matere þeryn full nedfull to be knowe', and he asks

what is more necessarye to eny man or woman yn erthe ; þan to kunne lyve & dye.
 Sothly all folke lyue & dye. & euery man þat lyueth wot wele þat he shal dye . But
 full few þer be þat kan lyve & dye. What is to con lyve & dye. but to lyve so þat be
 alwey redy to dye.⁶⁷

While there is an indexical goal proposed here, the teaching of how to always keep death in mind, Wynter's goal is also an ethical and moral one, as he goes on to state his desire to incite his readers' emotions so that they will embark on the path of right action. As seen in Alexander of Hales's assertion that the emotions are stirred by examples rather than by reasoning, Wynter suggests that through Saint Jerome's life 'we may lerne & take ensample to lyve a crysten mannys lyf yn penawnce & streytness'.⁶⁸ Wynter's work attempts to instruct readers in how to lead a spiritually pure and moral life, by providing them with affectively powerful examples taken from Saint Jerome's life that will serve as models for them as they seek to learn, more fully, how they might both live and die well.

Wynter's prologue then continues by suggesting that a selective mode of reading is an effective method for conveying this kind of knowledge to readers, ensuring that reading does not bore his audience and also encouraging readers along the path of right action. Wynter begins his discussion of reading practices by referencing the usefulness of his chapter divisions for potential readers, stating that

Thus is þis werke dyuydyd ynto xx chaptres ; þat ye sholde not be ouer wery to rede
 hit . while ye may at eche chaptres ende haue a restyng place. And oo tyme rede
 oone . Anopir tyme anopir . yef ye haue leyser rede no moo at oonys.⁶⁹

Just as can be seen in Anselm's prologue and its vernacular translations, Wynter's prologue emphasizes the value of paratextual markers, in this case chapter divisions, for providing readers with places to stop reading. Wynter makes no refer-

in which Keiser writes that descriptions of Saint Jerome's posthumous miracles come from Wynter's translation of 'an apocryphal correspondence between St. Cyril and St. Augustine' (p. 39). Excerpts from this work have been edited from the St John's manuscript by in 'The Life of St. Jerome', ed. by Walters.

⁶⁷ Beinecke Library MS 317, fol. 5r.

⁶⁸ Bodleian Library, MS 317, fol. 5r.

⁶⁹ Beinecke Library, MS 317, fol. 5r. Cf. Keiser, 'Serving the Needs of Readers', pp. 213–14.

ence to the potential usefulness of chapters as finding tools, instead only describing them as convenient places at which one might take a rest so as not to become ‘ouer wery’ of reading. This description implies that Wynter did not envision audiences approaching his prose life of St Jerome purely for information; he assumes that readers would search this work for their ethical and moral benefit as well — and these goals could be undermined if the reader became too weary. In no way does Wynter imply that pausing between chapters or reading one chapter at one time and another at a later time would hinder readers from learning and taking ‘ensample to lyve a crysten mannys lyf yn penawnce & streytness’; reading selectively, Wynter suggests, would only assist the reader in acquiring this ethical and moral knowledge that his work seeks to convey.

This essay has sought to reexamine the assumption that several late medieval authors and readers appended Anselm’s prologue to their works because it offered a simplified approach to their texts which otherwise would have demanded more strenuous intellectual effort. The encouragement to read with the intent of fostering *pietatis affectum* could instead be seen, as Alexander of Hale and others demonstrate, as an alternate route to gaining knowledge, and as a method for challenging readers to engage with a work in an ethically beneficial manner. The vernacular works that append translations of Anselm’s prologue (and other vernacular works that encourage selective modes of reading, such as Symon Wynter’s prose life of St Jerome) welcome a selective and affective mode of reading that consistently recognizes the value of inciting readers’ emotions as a way to propel them towards a more devout and pious lifestyle. By encouraging readers to attend to their emotional reactions to a work, these authors and compilers ask for the readers’ affections to be engaged so that divine inspiration and increased self-awareness could guide their acquisition of spiritual knowledge and an understanding of how to live well. Reading with the intent of inspiring *pietatis affectum* was not just an attempt to stir up one’s emotions for stirring’s sake: in its ideal manifestations, it asked that readers translate their newly acquired affective piety into devout as well as moral and ethical actions.

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ROMANCE, AFFECT, AND ETHICAL THINKING IN A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HOUSEHOLD BOOK: CHETHAM'S LIBRARY MS 8009

James Wade

It was at Rievaulx Abbey, late in the year 1142, when a young novice-master named Aelred sat down with a troubled new initiate. The novice was confused and embarrassed because he found that pious emotion came to him far less readily in Rievaulx than in his former secular life. As a monk, he found it difficult to squeeze out even a single tear when listening to sermons on the life of Christ, but as a layman he was easily moved to weeping when reading fables about King Arthur. His new cloistered life was certainly much more agreeable to God, so why had all the religious tears dried up, and with them intense feelings of divine love?¹ Aelred's answer will occupy us later, as it is deeply embedded in medieval understandings of the moral emotions, but I register this incident here to make an important observation: that medieval fables of Arthur were seen to hold tremendous affective potential, even moving audiences to open weeping. The point is stressed by Peter of Blois, at one time the secretary to Eleanor of Aquitaine. Drawing directly from the account of the troubled novice, Peter broadens Aelred's range of reference to include other characters from chivalric fiction, and, in doing so, he suggests that compassion was a common response

¹ Aelred tells of this encounter in his *Speculum caritatis* (at II.17.51), which was completed before the end of 1143. See Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis*, ed. by Hoste and others, 1.90; also, Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. by Connor, p. 199.

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Abstract: Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS 8009 is a late fifteenth-century London household book containing a diverse range of works, including saints lives, ballads, prayers, husbandry texts, and romances. This essay looks to Chetham's 800 as an artefact of vernacular literary consumption in the fifteenth century, and as a representative witness to horizons of literary knowledge in the period. In using this manuscript to trace the affective potential of Middle English romance, this piece considers how emotions are linked to the various forms of ethical thinking that such miscellanies might activate.

Keywords: Middle English, romance, saints lives, miscellany manuscripts, affect, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Torrent of Portyngale*, St. Katherine, St Dorothy.

not only to stories of the legendary British king but also to the heroes of romance more generally:

Sæpe in tragoediis et aliis carminibus poetarum, in jocularum cantilenis describitur aliquis vir prudens, decorus, fortis, amabilis et per omnia graciosus. Recitantur etiam pressuræ vel injuriæ eidem crudeliter irrogatæ, sicut de Arturo et Gaugano et Tristanno, fabulosa quædam referent histriones, quorum auditu concutiuntur ad compassionem audientium corda, et usque ad lacrymas compunguntur.²

(Often in tragedies and other compositions of poets, [as] in the songs of minstrels, a man is described who is prudent, comely, brave, loveable, and gracious in every way. The poet tells of the oppressions or injuries cruelly inflicted on him, as in some of the fictions that performers relate of Arthur and Gawain and Tristram, at hearing which the audience's hearts are excited to compassion, and moved even to tears.)³

The work of this article will be to interrogate this affective potential of medieval secular literature, especially insofar as this potential might help elucidate the ethical dimensions of these writings. I will do so, though, not with a focus on the Arthurian tales Aelred's novice might have heard in the twelfth century, but on the inheritance of that tradition in the fifteenth century. This was a time when Middle English romance had reached maturity both as a narrative form and as a mode of popular literature, and it was a time, too, when it was thought that the laity could profit by the 'ensaumples' of famous men. In some important respects, though, the intervening centuries saw little fundamental change in the reception of these tales. As one vernacular homilist describes in London, British Library, MS Harley 7322 (fifteenth century), a parishioner who was left unmoved by accounts of Christ's Passion was moved to tears when the life of Guy of Warwick was read aloud to him.⁴ This article, then, will be especially concerned with show-

² Peter here echoes Aelred's *Speculum caritatis* at II.17.50: Peter of Blois, *Liber de confessione sacramentali*, col. 1088D. That tragedies incite emotions of pity and fear is central to Aristotle's definition of the form, though Peter of Blois could not have known the *Poetics*. See Aristotle, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Barnes, II, 2320 (6.1449b24–28).

³ Translated in Dronke, 'Peter of Blois and Medieval Poetry', p. 198. Aelred's discussion mentions live performance but not specifically minstrel's songs (*jocularum cantilenis*). There will not be space in this article to discuss the emotional effects of performance or gestures, even though household books may well have been read aloud to assembled family members. George Shuffelton argues for such practices with reference to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61: Shuffelton, 'Is There a Minstrel in the House?'

⁴ London, British Library, MS Harley 7322, fol. 49^v; cf. MS Harley 2276, fol. 55^r. See the discussion in Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp. 10–16 (p. 14 n. 2).

ing how English romances popular in the fifteenth century provide generically and historically specific contexts for considering the relationships between ethics and affect. The following discussion will take seriously, then, the notion that in later Middle English romance the ethics of reading is intimately connected to the ethics of feeling, and it will take seriously, too, the idea that romance is a medieval form with tremendous potential for ethical thinking.

To work through these ideas I will focus on a single medieval book: Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS 8009.⁵ This is a late fifteenth-century miscellany of the kind now commonly referred to as a 'household book'.⁶ It was professionally produced, most likely in London, and most likely for a bourgeois family.⁷ Its fourteen items include three romances (*Sir Torrent of Portyngale* (item 6), *Bevis of Hampton* (item 9), and the tail-rhyme *Ipomadon* (item 10)), along with a smattering of saints' lives, instructional texts, prayers, laments, and even a satirical ballad.⁸ While it contains a unique combination of texts, and sole surviving copies of individual texts, such as *Torrent*, as an artefact of late medieval reading habits and tastes, it is fairly representative in its eclecticism and its mixture of secular and religious items. Of course, there has been considerable debate as to how such miscellanies were assembled and how they were consumed, but, at the very least, Chetham MS 8009 provides a witness to a particular milieu of vernacular literary consumption in fifteenth-century England, and to its according horizons of literary knowledge. In the following discussion of ethics and emotions, it will be pro-

⁵ The manuscript has been digitized and is available online. See the John Rylands University Library Image Collections website at <<http://enriqueta.man.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet>> [accessed 27 May 2014].

⁶ Julia Boffey and John Thompson first coined the term 'household miscellany' in Boffey and Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies', p. 294; see also, Boffey, 'Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B. 24'.

⁷ Rhiannon Purdie has argued that it was designed for a female reader, though she also admits that many items would have been intended for family consumption, as other scholars have maintained: Purdie, 'Sexing the Manuscript'. On its provenance and early ownership, see also Sánchez-Martí, 'Reconstructing the Audiences'.

⁸ The full contents (with editorial titles italicized): 1. *Life of St. Dorothy*; 2. 'Assumptio sancte marie'; 3. 'Lyff of Seynt Anne'; 4. 'Lyf of Seynt Katherin'; 5. 'Liber Catonis'; 6. *Torrent of Portyngale*; 7. *A Lamentation of Our Lady*; 8. 'a prayr of Oure Lady'; 9. *Beves of Hamptoun*; 10. *Ipomadon*; 11. 'A Good Boke of Kervyng and Nortur'; 12. *The Book of the Duke and the Emperour*; 13. 'The Namys of Wardeyns and Baylyffs' of London, 1189–1217; 14. *Ballad of a Tyrannical Husband*. For descriptions of the manuscript, see Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*, pp. 238–40, and *Ipomadon*, ed. by Purdie, pp. xviii–xxiii.

ductive to think of the possibilities of what has been called the ‘whole book’.⁹ In particular, I will focus on two romances, *Bevis* and *Torrent*, and two saints’ lives, *Katherine* and *Dorothy*, all of which use shared representational vocabularies to prompt ethical thinking through felt response. By working across different forms of popular vernacular literary production within a particular codicological context, I hope to gain purchase not only on the historical and generic contexts of Middle English romance in the fifteenth century, but also on how miscellaneous combinations of literary writing in specific manuscript environments participate in shaping the affective and ethical relations of the texts they contain.

I. Reading with Feeling

At the core of the link between ethics and affect in both romance and hagiography is sympathy or compassion, so that in feeling for or feeling with characters in these texts the reader is prompted to a fundamentally ethical relation with the imaginary other in the text’s fictional world. Part of the ethical value these texts confer on emotional response, therefore, lies in the encounter with alterity that they bring to the reader.¹⁰ Put another way, rhetorically prompted associations with imaginative others in descriptive literary narrative allows readers to experiment with recognizing and harnessing their own moral emotions.¹¹ Of course, the imbrications of moral thinking and felt experience have a long history in both medieval moral philosophy and medieval literary theory (ethical *utilitas* being a key word in medieval defences of secular fiction),¹² but crucial to my argument is

⁹ There has been no critical consensus as to the level of cohesion in Chetham MS 8009, though it is generally considered one of the more tightly knit miscellanies. Most recently, Sánchez-Martí has argued that the manuscript ‘is a clear example of careful organization, conceived as a family library *in parvo*’: see Sánchez-Martí, ‘The Middle English Versions of *Ipomedon*’, p. 90. But see Derek Pearsall, who is highly sceptical of the idea that ‘late medieval English manuscripts of apparently miscellaneous content are somehow the product of unifying controlling intelligences’: Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book’, p. 17.

¹⁰ For recent work on medieval compassion, see McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, and Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment*. The ethical implications of compassion or sympathy have also been considered widely in post-medieval criticism. See especially Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, and Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*; also, Hale, ‘Aesthetics and the New Ethics’; Hale, ‘Fiction as Restriction’; Ratcliffe, *On Sympathy*; Harpham, *Shadows of Ethics*, esp. p. 37. Eagleton, *Trouble with Strangers*, esp. pp. 47–48, 54–55, 67.

¹¹ See Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, esp. pp. 3–4, 53, 175.

¹² For instance, see the collection of Aristotelian prologues in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Minnis, Scott, and Wallace.

the notion that the connection between ethics and affect takes on a particular colour in late medieval vernacular fiction. What emerges out of the development of secular fiction in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is a fundamental investment in the individual — the hero or heroine of romance — and out of that preoccupation comes a sustained attention to mimetic interiority. An investment in psychological realism, then, can be understood as one of the distinguishing features of romance throughout the Middle Ages, and it is the readerly apprehension of this psychology in complex narrative contexts that colours the generically and historically contingent ethical dimensions of affective response these texts promote.

This uptake of textual psychology, moreover, relies on the conditions of readerly psychology that was, in the Middle Ages, understood to be both cognitive and affective. Out of the universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries came an Aristotelian conception of natural understanding, which later came to be appropriated in vernacular and extra-clerical contexts as ‘kynde’ knowing.¹³ As Nicolette Zeeman says, natural understanding is dependent on the sensible body or ‘available via the surface appearance of things’. But what those surfaces reveal are ‘innate’ structures or dispositions — ‘innate’ here contrasted with that which is learned or otherwise acquired. As Zeeman further says, ‘the psychological tools for apprehending and experiencing the natural are “inside” human beings’. As medieval theorists linked emotion closely to the body, so too was the body linked to knowledge and knowledge to emotion. Central to the Middle English word ‘kynde’ are affective relations, and through these relations ‘kynde knowing’ takes on its ethical dimensions.¹⁴ The view in the Middle Ages was that ethics is natural, and that its apprehension is experiential, grounded in the potential for the outer senses to move the inner feelings.¹⁵ This is one of the reasons the poor novice at Rievaulx Abbey mourned the loss of the ‘sweet’ (*dulcis*) tears he had once

¹³ On the influence of the Aristotelian tradition on vernacular literature in mid-fifteenth century London, see Campbell, *The Call to Read*; on its influence in medieval Europe more broadly, see Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment*, esp. pp. 1–13. The Aristotelian understanding of the crucial role of emotion in the procedures of reason was also well established in the Middle Ages. On the reception of the *Ethics*, see Wieland, ‘The Reception and Interpretation of Aristotle’s *Ethics*’. On Aquinas’s reception in particular, see Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, and also Carruthers, ‘On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument’.

¹⁴ In this passage I am following Zeeman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the Medieval Discourse of Desire, p. 160. On the link with the emotions she cites the MED, s.v. *kinde*, n., 2–7, 13–15; ‘kind(e)’ adj., 1; ‘kindeli’ adj., 1–2. See also, Davlin, ‘*Kynde Knowyng* as a Major Theme’ (esp. pp. 6–19).

¹⁵ Davlin, ‘*Kynde Knowyng* as a Major Theme’, esp. pp. 6–19, and Zeeman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the Medieval Discourse of Desire, p. 171.

shed for Christ, the paradoxical sweetness of the salty tears alluding to the pleasing affective experience of divine intimacy.¹⁶ In such expressions of affective piety, Aelred goes on to tell the novice, the moral emotions act as a spur to promote both right thinking and right action. A person may 'grow rich with the fatness of tears', Aelred finally says to the novice, 'so that once the fire of charity is lighted on the altar of your heart, it may give off a sweet scent'.¹⁷ That is, emotional experience generates internal change that then leads to outward action — this external display of love, or charity, being the main point of his *Speculum caritatis*.

As a form of experience or a habit of mind affective piety became one of the most significant and popular modes of ethical orientation and internal reform in the Middle Ages. It was, though, a mode whose internal dynamics relied heavily on external stimuli. This is why, for instance, Margery Kempe's tears are provoked by images or reminders of divine things, and why Aelred's novice is moved to tears on hearing the stories of Christ's life and Passion.¹⁸ Turning to Chetham MS 8009, the Marian lament following *Torrent of Portyngale* on fol. 119^v offers another example of a text that prompts moments of natural knowing by utilizing the particulars of affective stimuli. The poem stages a dialectic between female readers with healthy children on their knees and Mary herself, who observes her son's wounds while holding his crucified body in her lap (fol. 119^v, ll. 5–8). At the poem's centre and graphic apex, Mary considers Christ's feet:

But the moste finger of my hand
Thorough my sonnys fete I may put here
And pull yt oute sore bledand. (fol. 120^r, ll. 45–47)¹⁹

¹⁶ On the importance of tears in the monastic devotional tradition, see Carruthers, 'On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument', esp. pp. 7–8; on the devotional significance of sweetness, see Carruthers, 'Sweet Jesus'; and on sweetness as an aesthetic indicator referring to a definable sensory category, see Carruthers, 'Sweetness'.

¹⁷ 'Deuotissimorum affectuum suauitate pinguescat [...] ut in ara cordis igne caritatis admisso suaue redoleat' (II.20.63): Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. by Connor, p. 207; Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis*, ed. by Hoste and others, 1.95.

¹⁸ Like the novice, too, Margery's tears lead to intense feelings of sweetness. At one point, 'sche had so gret compassyon and so gret peyn to se owyr Lordys peyn that sche myt not kepe herself fro kryng and roryng, thow sche schuld a be ded therfor', though such outbursts were followed by 'passyng gret swetnesse of devocyon and hey contemplacyon'. Clearly Margery's capacity for such extraordinary outbursts, sometimes occurring fourteen times a day, was seen as a condition of her divine gift, though ordinary laypeople were also encouraged to shed tears for their religious improvement (see below). *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, pp. 163, 165. See discussion in Saunders, 'The Affective Body', esp. 98–99.

¹⁹ The text in Chetham MS 8009 has been edited in Förster, 'Kleinere Mittelenglische

The thought-experiment Mary performs here, in which she pushes her largest finger all the way through the nail holes in Christ's feet and then pulls it out covered in blood, offers an example of a focused description intended to generate compassion in the reader. Certainly, part of this passage's pathetic register comes out of its borrowings from the Pietà trope, with the reinforcement of the familial relationship in line 46 functioning as the hook that leads to the poem's eventual call to affective performance:

Wepe with me, both man and wyffe:
 My child is youre and lovith you wele.
 Yf youre child had lost his liffe,
 Ye wold wepe at euery mele. (fol. 120^v, ll. 65–68)²⁰

This tradition of affective piety relied on the humanity of Christ — that he, too, was a mother's son — just as it relied on the affective power of the body, the adverb 'sore' in line 47, for instance, operating within the mutually reinforcing semantic halos of both severity and pain, of the abundance of blood and the agony associated with it. But the affective piety that Mary models and to which readers are called in this passage is also closely linked to an increased interest in individual interiority in the later Middle Ages, and it is this same attention to the interior self that becomes characteristic of romance.²¹ Indeed, the power of images to elicit emotional responses was not confined to the strictly pious or religious, though it is likely that such responses were largely reared and fostered in those domains. Just as Aelred's novice can weep on hearing of the life of Christ, so too can he weep on reading of the life of King Arthur, and just as Margery Kempe can feel 'so gret compassyon and so gret peyn to se owyr Lordys peyn', so too can medieval audiences shed tears of compassion over the fictitious accounts of Arthur, Gawain, and Tristram.²²

Texte', pp. 167–72.

²⁰ Similar calls to 'wepe with me' at lines 63–64 and 73–76.

²¹ I am indebted here to the discussion in Saunders, 'The Affective Body', pp. 96–97.

²² Compassion, 'sharing of suffering with another, commiseration' (*MED* n. 1), is for Nussbaum one of the central moral emotions, and integral to the affective experience of literature. As Sarah McNamer points out, though, Nussbaum's most sustained discussion of the 'cognitive structure of compassion' in *Upheavals of Thought* skips from ancient Greek literature to David Hume in the eighteenth century, when she believes the emotion was 'revived'. See Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, pp. 297–441; also Nussbaum, 'Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion'. See the discussion in McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, pp. 5, 11, 212 n. 43.

In all of these instances, it is worth stressing, the particulars of representation are key. The richness of an imagined textual world, the specificity of its details, creates the conditions for compassionate response, and then, through that relation of sympathy, the possibility of playing out imagined ethical encounters. When it comes to ethical questions, the complications of even ordinary human life are best articulated in fictions that are also attentive to the sophistication of their psychologically mimetic details. What literature can teach us, or, rather, how it makes us think, can in this sense be understood as the difference between didacticism and imaginative experience. Another way of putting this is to say that the difference is between definition and example, or, more broadly, between *auctorial* knowledge (aligned with clerical learning) and natural knowledge (derived from experience).²³ Such natural knowledge has a long history in medieval theories of exemplarity, whether ‘lived’ or written,²⁴ and indeed in the Middle Ages the exemplum was understood as a particular form of knowledge, whose ethical power, as Zeeman notes, ‘resides in its simulation of the particularity of actual experience.’²⁵ But here we can identify an aspect of literary ethics that is particularly medieval, a particularity that lies in the difference between seeming and being.

For modern ethicists, as Daniel Schwarz says, ‘Literature provides surrogate experiences for the reader’, or as Derek Attridge says, the imagined world of literary fiction can generate real emotion because it provides an experience that ‘rep-

²³ Of course, much auctorial teaching employs examples to simulate natural knowing; indeed, the natural is not always antithetical to but interlaces with the clerical. On these two forms of knowledge in scholastic theology, see the fourth chapter of Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 118–59. On the tensions between experiential knowledge and authorial knowledge in the context of affective piety, see Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, pp. 23–24, and also Zeeman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the Medieval Discourse of Desire.

²⁴ The *Liber Catonis* of Chetham MS 8009 urges readers to make a ‘myrroure’ of other people’s lives. The instruction concludes: ‘In all that apperteyneth to thy teching | Make other men a rewl for thy lyvyng’ (fol. 66^v). Any life, however well conducted or otherwise, could be turned into an *exemplum* or exemplary text.

²⁵ Zeeman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the Medieval Discourse of Desire, p. 180. Also, Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, pp. 33–34. Giles of Rome, Aristotelian ethicist and student of Aquinas, was influential here. He became known in vernacular contexts through John Trevisa’s late fourteenth-century translation of his *De regimine principum*. Judson Boyce Allen paraphrases his key articulation of the exemplary mode: ‘what [Aegidius] seems to say is that one cannot deal with moral questions simply by describing what happened; one must also make comparisons (*figuraliter*), and bring to bear examples which imply or seem to embody a definition (*typo*)’. See Allen, *The Ethical Poetic*, p. 17.

licates modes of thinking and feeling in the non-literary domain.’²⁶ However, the shift from medieval to modern has less to do with the degree of mimetic artistry and representation than with the issue of surrogacy. For medieval psychologists, the inner senses processed data from the outer senses into *imagines* (images), or the likeness of an idea or concrete picture formed in the mind, which became the material on which reason worked. The process of comprehending texts worked the same way, except that textual figures simply bypassed the outer senses. Hence the unstable distinction between real life and textual life, since the ‘imaginative’ inner senses did not categorize cognitive content based on the origins of the *imagines* they processed. According to this theory, fictional texts do not mimic the sensory structure of the actual world but in fact recreate it. This is not necessarily a theory of mimetic representation but rather a ‘psychological theory about how the mind works in relation to simulated sensory experience’, what Zeeman calls ‘natural’ textuality.²⁷

For an example of how natural textuality might be understood to work in romance, consider the opening lines of the mid-fifteenth-century romance *Partonope of Blois*, in which the poet stresses how literature teaches us to separate good from evil:


Eke euery man may at the eye see
 The fly wyche ys callud the bee,
 Hys hony he draweth be hys kynde
 Off bytter erbes, and the wyse can ffynde
 In folys tales sum-tyme wysdame. (ll. 50–54)²⁸

Just as bees get honey from bitter herbs, in other words, so can wise men obtain wisdom from foolish tales. Romance in the fifteenth century may not necessarily be any more morally or socially instructive than earlier romance, but there is much

²⁶ Recent work in the tradition of analytic aesthetics has considered the question of whether or not literature can provoke real emotions or just the simulacra of real emotions. For Derek Attridge, the determining factor for how literature prompts emotions is form, not fiction. This is a question taken up in a recent special issue of *Textual Practice*, 25.2 (2011), edited by Alex Houen. See especially the introduction, Houen, ‘Affecting Words’, and Attridge, ‘Once More with Feeling’, p. 333 (from which the above quotation is taken). Attridge also considers the connection between feeling and form in Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, pp. 56–62. See also Schwarz, ‘A Humanistic Ethics of Reading’, p. 5.

²⁷ This discussion draws heavily from Zeeman, ‘*Piers Plowman*’ and the Medieval Discourse of Desire, pp. 178–80; see also Carruthers, ‘Thinking with Images’.

²⁸ *Partonope of Blois*, ed. by Böttker, p. 2.

more at stake in selling itself as though it is. With the death of the first Lollard martyr in 1401 and the publication of Arundel's Constitutions in 1409, secular fictions were enjoying a bubble of high status amongst those who would normally be inclined to condemn them. Indeed, in fifteenth-century England ecclesiastical moralists began to promote romance over the new Wycliffite translation of the Bible as the lesser of two evils. As  Hoccleve says, John Oldcastle need not climb so high in holy writ, since all he needs for good living-in-the-world can be found in 'folys tales' and the like. Put another way, a knight in the fifteenth century should learn how to act from romance, and leave the work of teaching 'Crystes lore' to the priests.²⁹ Those who traded in secular fictions, it seems, were more than willing to ride this wave of moralizing endorsement, hence the apology for 'folys tales' in these opening lines of *Partonope*.


Exactly how, though, does one extract wisdom from foolish tales? For the author of *Partonope*, romance is not ethically instructive in its exemplarity but rather in its experiential capacities. After citing the common Pauline dictum that all is written for our doctrine, he explains:

For thorowghe scrypture men deuyne
To parte the goode fromme the ille;
Thys preueth he wyth many a skylle.
For be the sentence neuer so lewyd,
Yet þer-in moste nedes be shewyd
Good and euell bothe in ffere. (ll. 35–40)

The 'he' in this passage is St Paul, and what he supposedly proves is that through 'scrypture' (secular literature/writing, as opposed to 'holy scrypture'; line 28) readers can learn to distinguish between right and wrong. It is essentially an attempt to understand literature as a moral training ground in which narrative *must* show both good and evil, and through the experience of reading we learn or 'deuyne' how to separate the two. Romances and other foolish tales do not give us exemplary characters to emulate, but rather broaden the moral horizons of our world:

And yeff all scrypture were hyd in mewe,
Men shulde haue full lytelle knowynge
Off goode and euell the trew departynge.
The fole of byrth can no wytte ffynde
But that he hath by taste of kynde. (ll. 43–47)

²⁹ See Hoccleve, 'The Address to Sir John Oldcastle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz (esp. pp. 14–15).

In other words, literature confers ethical knowledge not didactically, but through the experience of encountering the text's multifarious demonstrations of good and evil. What is more, one's natural knowledge needs this rich imaginative literature  it provides the diet of images and experiences on which one's ethical character can feed and grow. Without literature, the *Partonope*-poet says, our natural knowledge can extend only as far as our own limited experiences allow. Furthermore, it is perhaps not too much of an over-reading of this passage to understand 'taste of kynde' as both experiential and affective. If natural knowing is dependent on the sensate body, and medieval understandings of the physiology of cognition destabilize the distinction between experiences 'real' and 'textual', then the sensory metaphor of sweet honey and bitter herbs points readers to the affective experience of ethical learning. And it does so in a way similar to the paradoxical sweet tears of Aelred's novice, as the process of separating good and evil involves the strange alchemy of not only turning bitter herbs into sweet honey but also base sensory affects into epistemological gold.³⁰

Granted this, what exactly counts as 'goode' and 'euell' in this process is never spelt out, and it is risky business indeed to level the process of 'divining' the separation of these qualities to some transhistorical constant — or perhaps equally dangerous, to some contemporary clerical paradigm of moral exactitude. Taking the good and leaving the evil, which the *Partonope*-poet understands as the end-point of readerly endeavour (ll. 61–62), is connected to the experience of compassion guided by the particulars of the text itself, and thus to historicize this compassion is to come to terms with a text's rhetorical investments. The work that remains in the second half of this article will be to contextualize the romances of Chetham MS 8009 in this way, to show what connections between ethics and natural knowing have to do with *Bevis of Hampton* and *Torrent of Portyngale*, and the lives of Katherine and Dorothy.

II. Exemplary Lives: *Bevis and Torrent, Katherine and Dorothy*

Ralph Hanna calls *Bevis of Hampton* a romance of 'ebullient narrative inventiveness and profusion', containing as it does a dense texture of colourful adventures structured around the most enduring of romance motifs: exile and return (used twice), imprisonment and escape, the trials of romantic love, the troubles of

³⁰ For an extended discussion of exemplarity and the cognitive potentialities of taste, see Walter, 'Books and Bodies'.

dynastic security, and the conflict between Christians and pagans.³¹ It also contains a richly imagined giant, Ascopard; an active and intelligent heroine, Josian; and, most memorably, a series of adversaries against which Bevis can prove his chivalry: Saracens, the emperor of Almaine, and the people of London, not to mention a wild boar, two lions, and a venom-spitting dragon. Such varied and densely packed narrative action, which Corinne Saunders calls 'robust rather than intellectual',³² will be important in a discussion of experiential and ethical knowledge, but first I would like to explore two rhetorical strategies that promote sympathy for the romance's hero and all those on his side.³³

The first strategy might be called the narratorial 'alas', in which the narrative action is punctuated with explicit emotive expressions, typically with reference to some sort of event that brings hardship to the hero. For instance:

Alas, that he ne had be warre
Of the Enemys that be thare (fol. 124^r, ll. 165–66)

Alas, his horse was slayne that stounde (fol. 124^v, l. 201)

Alas, why nold he not hym sloo (fol. 134^r, l. 834)

Alas, that he ne wiste ryght nought
Of all the treason that was wrought (fol. 137^r, ll. 1017–18)³⁴

These interjections work to calibrate the text's moral universe for the reader, providing direct examples of appropriate emotional response that guide readers in separating 'goode' from 'euell', as the *Partonope*-poet says; or, as articulated in *Bevis of Hampton*, to distinguish between those on the side of 'riȝt' and those opposed to it.³⁵ Bevis's murderous mother and stepfather most often find them-

³¹ Hanna, *London Literature*, p. 133.

³² Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom', p. 161.

³³ *Bevis* was extremely popular throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The earlier Anglo-Norman original survived to the twentieth century in three manuscripts, and its various Middle English versions survive in six more, not to mention its long history in early English print, beginning with Richard Pynson sometime before 1498 and running in a series of twenty-two additional prints up to 1711. For a useful guide to the manuscripts and early prints, see the appendix to Fellows, 'The Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*', pp. 104–13. On the Anglo-Norman manuscripts, see *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic*, trans. by Weiss, pp. 9–10.

³⁴ For all references to this romance, I will give Eugen Kölbing's line numbers, both when he gives the Chetham MS 8009 reading directly and when he gives it as a variant in his apparatus. See *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. by Kölbing.

³⁵ The English versions inherit this rhetoric from their Anglo-Norman original. For

selves on the wrong end of these interjections, though presumably because their treachery constitutes the romance's foundational crisis, and it is at the beginning of the romance that the poet is most concerned with establishing an affective relationship between the audience and those characters whom the audience should associate with and feel compassion for. In all, the romance contains eight of these narratorial 'alases', with seven of them occurring within the first thousand lines. But later episodes also contain narratorial interjections intended to direct or condition a reader's moral sympathies. In the London battle episode, for instance, Bevis's opponents are not 'hethyn hounds' (first used, fol. 103^r, l. 566) or 'Oncristoned dogges' (fol. 103^r, l. 567),³⁶ but people who had once lived just down the street from this manuscript's first London home. The geographical proximity and specificity of the toponyms — 'Bredstrete', 'Chepe', 'Temmus', 'Ludgate' — exposes the absence of what ethical cushion there might be with a hazy Eastern setting and barely sketched pagan adversaries, and for this reason, it seems, the poet is especially at pains in this episode to include ethical signposts for the audience. Of Sir Brian, who instigates the fight, the narrator says plainly 'foule myst he fall | He was the moste ffoo of all' (fol. 183^r, ll. 4045–46). Of Bevis, when he asks the people of Cheapside to unlock the gate, just before he 'bathid Morglay in theire blood' (fol. 184^v, l. 4126), the narrator notes that Bevis is 'hend and good' (fol. 184^v, l. 4117). And at the end of the battle, just to be absolutely clear, the narrator tallies up the thirty thousand dead 'Thorouȝ the fals stywardis rede' and concludes with a moralizing comment: 'Of falshede comyth never good ending' (fol. 186^v, ll. 4229, 4232).

This kind of ethically calibrated rhetoric appears in *Torrent of Portyngale* as well. Like *Bevis*, *Torrent* is a romance that throws the kitchen sink at the romance form. There are magic swords, magic horses, and token rings; lions, griffins, leopards, bears and apes; two child abductions, three rudderless boats, three fights between father and sons, so many dragon fights that at one point *Torrent* loses count (fol. 113^v, l. 2300), and so many giants that *Torrent* does not even bother keeping count (fol. 113^v, l. 2301).³⁷ Despite all its secularism and extravagance,

instance: 'allas, quele destiné!' (l. 29); 'Jhesu la confounde, ke tot le mound fit!' (May Jesus, creator of all the world, destroy her!) (l. 36); 'ore li seit deu garaunt! (Now God protect him!) (l. 469). *Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by Stimming, pp. 4, 19; *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic*, trans. by Weiss, pp. 25, 34.

³⁶ 'Oncristoned dogges' appears only in Chetham MS 8009.

³⁷ *Torrent* survives only in Chetham MS 8009 and two early print fragments: one by Richard Pynson, c. 1505 (*STC*, 24133), and one by Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1510 (*STC*, 24133.5). It was most recently edited in *Torrent of Portyngale*, ed. by Adam. Line numbers will follow

however, it also maintains a strong pious and ethical undertow. Like *Bevis*, *Torrent* makes clear early on which characters audiences should sympathize with — namely, Torrent, an earl's son who is 'Dowghtty', 'bold', and the 'feyerest þat on fot myght gon' (fol. 76r, ll. 11, 17, 20) — but the text is also persistent in its attempts to maintain that sympathetic posture throughout the narrative. There are no less than fifteen instances when the narrator pauses to direct the reader's moral sympathies; for instance, 'Gret Ruthe yt wase to se' (fol. 87r, l. 617) when the giant Rochense captures Torrent's squire, quarters him, and hangs the quarters in a tree, presumably to tenderize the meat for a later meal. Or nearly the same line, 'Gret ruth it was to be hold' (fol. 113r, l. 2272), when Torrent's men abandon him, and he is finally captured near Jerusalem. Perhaps, one might argue, this kind of emotional signalling is a bit heavy-handed when describing slaughtered squires and captured heroes. However, medieval texts that were intended to promote affective piety were at least as unsubtle in their emotional engineering. Take the Marian lament that immediately follows *Torrent* in the manuscript, which explicitly calls upon the reader to weep for the crucified Christ — in both cases 'ruth' or compassion being the principal emotion guiding moral response.³⁸ For late medieval audiences reared on sermon exempla and other pious and devotional texts, the habit of reading for the moral, as J. Allan Mitchell puts it, might be partially understood as reading for the emotional prompt, a turn of mind all the more likely for readers when romances like *Torrent* are encountered in the contexts of miscellany manuscripts.³⁹ Indeed, in a codicological context such as that of Chetham MS 8009, which gives witness to an environment of secular literature wherein forms of secular entertainment sit alongside the pious and devotional, romances such as *Torrent* and *Bevis* begin to look not so very distinct in their exemplarity. The frequent use of emotionally charged ethical signposting, in other words, suggests that romances were not so distant from religious modes of thought that they would discount such a powerful and culturally embedded rhetorical strategy.

What's more, *Torrent of Portyngale* is a romance that is unusually rich in its use of religious language, as Roger Dalrymple's study of language and piety in

citations to this edition. Roger Dalrymple seems to be the only modern scholar to have given it much attention. See Dalrymple, 'Torrent of Portyngale and the Literary Giants'.

³⁸ On such emotional 'excess' in Middle English Marian laments, see McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, pp. 150–73, and Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, p. 259.

³⁹ See the discussion of 'reading for the moral' in Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative*, pp. 8–21.

the Middle English romances makes clear.⁴⁰ Indeed, many narratorial comments express some hope for divine assistance:

Now god that Dyed appon a Rode
Strengithe hym bothe bone and blod
The fyld for to haue. (fol. 77^v, ll. 112–14)

I pray God hyme schyld. (fol. 79^v, l. 216)

Iesu hys sole fro hell shyld. (fol. 87^r, l. 587)

Cryst hym saue and see. (fol. 88^v, l. 683)

Thus helpe hym god of myght. (fol. 93^v, l. 1046)

God, that died vppon the Rode
Yff grace that she mete with good.
Thus disparlid are thay. (fol. 109^r, ll. 2008–10)

As this incomplete list shows,⁴¹ many of these interjections are expressed in tail-lines, most of these coming at the end of their twelve-line stanzas. So while it might be easy enough to dismiss these interjections as limp fillers to fit the rhyme scheme,⁴² their cumulative effect seems to encourage a stanza-by-stanza, retrospective moral calibration, whereby readers follow the narrator in associating with the protagonists who operate on the right side of good and evil: just as on fols 119^v–120^v, where readers follow Mary in adopting the appropriate affective posture in relation to the crucified Christ. As in *Bevis of Hampton*, too, the *Torrent*-narrator wraps up ethically complex episodes with moralizing commentary. When the treacherous king of Portugal is finally caught out, for instance, *Torrent* unmercifully denies him final communion and confession before casting him adrift in a rudderless boat full of holes — the refusal of the sacraments being a poignant and significant element in such revenge plots. Moreover, one might surely think that drilling holes into your rudderless boat would be tantamount to playing God's hand for him, but, as in *Bevis*, the narrator provides straightforward interpretive guidance.⁴³ The king drowns, of course, and the episode ends

⁴⁰ Dalrymple, *Language and Piety*, esp. p. 188.

⁴¹ For a complete list, see the appendix to Dalrymple, *Language and Piety*, p. 188.

⁴² Some lines might be more susceptible to this critique than others; for instance, 'Now, Iesu, that made hell | Send me on lyve to Desonell' (fol. 104^r, ll. 1702–03).

⁴³ On rudderless boats see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, esp. pp. 106–36. Chetham MS 8009 readers would have found an unusual use of this motif in *Ipomadon*, in which the

with a moral comment essentially identical to that given by the *Bevis*-narrator at the end of the London battle episode:

Loo, lordys of euery lond:
 Falshode wyll haue a foule end
 And wyll haue euermore. (fol. 111^r, ll. 2152–54)

Thus at the end of this episode Torrent's rough treatment of the deposed king is given a retrospective ethical gloss, the king's unshriven death, followed by rejoicing at Torrent's ascension, shows just how foul such 'foule' ends can be — in this world and presumably the next. Here the life of the king of Portugal essentially becomes a negative exemplum for all people and for all time, its affective relations indicated by the sensory trope not of tasting, but of looking (*OED*, s.v. *lo*, int. 1b).⁴⁴ In this reading, Torrent is essentially an instrument of providential justice, and just as readers have been encouraged throughout the romance to associate with the hero, so too should they 'reioyse' with all those who welcomed the king's death.

The other major rhetorical strategy used in *Torrent* and *Bevis* to prompt affective links with the protagonists takes the form of divine aid. Torrent prays for help before nearly every major battle or adventure he undertakes, with the implication (sometimes made explicit) that his success can be chalked up to God's favour. Take Torrent's first dragon fight, for example, in which his prayer before the battle takes up an entire twelve-line stanza (fol. 85^r, ll. 528–39). During the fight itself, he cuts off the dragon's tail 'Thurrow the grace of god almyght' (fol. 85^v, l. 557), and, when he finally slays the dragon, the narrator concludes that it was God who kept him safe (fol. 85^v, l. 578). Later, **in one of the romance's more sophisticated metaphors**, God sends the battle-weary Torrent 'a schowyr of Rayne' (fol. 88^v, l. 676) when he prays for refreshment; and in response to a prayer before his battle with the Norse giant, an angelic voice from heaven tells him to 'Be blith' since God will send him 'mede' (fol. 102^r, ll. 1569–73). Similarly, the English version of *Bevis* largely alters its Anglo-Norman source through its new emphasis on Christianity and by highlighting Bevis's role as a crusading knight. Like Torrent, Bevis prays for divine aid before nearly every major adventure, and

heroine considers casting herself adrift as a form of pseudo-suicide, rather than being married to the hideous Sir Lyolyne, who has besieged her castle: 'I se it may no better bee | Make us redy to the see | Lett God do what He will' (fol. 324^r, ll. 8177–79).

⁴⁴ 'Lordys' is commonly used in oral tags, not to be taken literally. It is used earlier in *Torrent* ('Lordys, and ye liston wold'; 'And listonyth, lordis, of a chaunce'; fol. 94^v; 1089, 1104) and in many other English metrical romances.

it is clear that God is on his side: 'He thankyd god omnipotent | That hym helpe ffro hevyn sent' (fol. 186^r, ll. 4209–10) is a common sentiment in the romance. Much like narratorial interjections, such demonstrations of divine favour provide ethical direction for the audience, showing who is unambiguously on the side of 'rizt' and who (or what) they are up against. But perhaps more so than the narratorial comments, expressions of divine endorsement and divine aid are affectively loaded, since they often take place in moments of heightened vulnerability and emotional tension. Compassion, as the central emotion of affective piety, is crucial to the process whereby readers are prompted to associate with textual others, and in romance that connection will often occur in moments of crisis, which in *Bevis* and *Torrent* nearly always trigger prayers for divine help.⁴⁵ Thus, if answers to prayer reveal whose side God is really on, the prayers themselves realize that moral calibration in terms of felt experience. One form of ethical knowledge relies on logic, the other on affect.

Another feature of the way prayer operates as an emotionally conductive mechanism in these romances has to do with its potential to expose interiority, an exposure analogous to the affective moments in devotional and hagiographic literature. Most critical attention to romance's investments in the inner selves of its characters has focused on questions of courtly love, though there is also much room for consideration of non-erotic emotional suffering. A revealing moment occurs early in *Bevis's* seven-year stint in prison. Facing no conceivable possibility of escape, *Bevis*

But thankyd god that all can wyne
Of the sorow that he was ynne,
And thankyd god of all his care. (fol. 142^r, ll. 1333–35)

Compare the prayer of *Desonell* in *Torrent*, who finds herself lost and alone in a forest after her first infant child had been abducted by a griffin:


Vp she rose ageyn the rough
With sorofull hert and care Inough
Carefull of blood and bone [...].
She sye, it myght no better be.
She knelid down vppon her kne,
And thankid god and seynt Iohn. (fol. 107^r, ll. 1879–84)

And again after her second child is taken by a leopard:

⁴⁵ See n. 30 above; Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment*, pp. 135–59. See also, McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, pp. 150–73.

She thankid god there
 And his moder Mary bryght.
 This lady is lefte alone ryght:
 The sorow she made there [...]. (fol. 107^v, ll. 1887–90)

Despite the incomplete stanzas in this section of Chetham MS 8009, the survival of what amounts to a rough sketch of repeated abductions drives home the powerfully affective psychological complexity of Desonell's plight. The counter-intuitive logic of thanking God for her 'sorow' and 'care' is not simply a technique to show just how pious Desonell really is (taking to the literal extreme the Pauline call to give thanks in all things);⁴⁶ it also, as in Bevis's prayer, exposes the psychological trauma of experiencing radical contingencies in a Christian paradigm. Fortunate, indeed, is the survival of line 1882 ('it myght no better be'), which appears to operate as a kind of cognitive fulcrum in Desonell's movement from lament to thanksgiving, making the following prayer all the more psychologically sophisticated, desperate, and accordingly pathetic. Similarly, by juxtaposing a recognition of God's omnipotence in a providential universe ('god that all can wyne') with an apparent understanding and acceptance of his divinely ordained 'sorow', Bevis's prayer of thanks would seem almost stoic if it was not so chivalric. As Jill Mann says with reference to Malory: 'The knight does not try to close the distance between himself and events by fitting them to himself'; instead, he responds to the enigmatic call to responsibility, not understanding but accepting events by matching himself to them.⁴⁷ If we accept this as a common paradigm of chivalric *aventure*, then what the prayers of Bevis and Desonell reveal is not only that heroines are as capable of matching themselves to contingent events as heroes, but also that the exposure of the interior trauma that attends this sort of chivalric acceptance holds tremendous affective potential.

The energy of its emotional power, however, obtains not strictly from mimetic representations of psychological anguish but also from the experience of cognitive disruption. In other words, these episodes become ethically charged  that the performative responses to distressed emotional experiences only correlate along a vertical axis of reference, from the temporal to the spiritual, from the human to the divine. For Bevis and Desonell, emotional suffering becomes the precondition for the performance of right action in a Christian context; for the audience, understanding these seemingly counter-intuitive progressions requires

⁴⁶ See 1 Thessalonians 5. 18; Ephesians 5. 20.

⁴⁷ Mann, 'Taking the Adventure', p. 90; on the ethics of contingency see also Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness*.

vertical thinking. Here, emotional upheaval harnessed for spiritual direction disrupts the generically expected linear frame of romance. Bevis's final prayer in Brademond's dungeon also places him in a Christian referential frame. Following six lines unique to the Chetham's version, which recall the seven years of 'sorowe' and 'woo' that has left him on the brink of death, Bevis cries out to God:

What haue I so moche gilte
 That thou thus soferist and sofer wilt,
 That the jewis that be thy fone
 To sle me and mysdoun? (fol. 145^r, ll. 1581–84)

To which compare, the Auchinleck version (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1):

What haue ich so meche misgilt,
 Pat þow sext & þolen wilt,
 Pat þe weþerwines & þe fo,
 Schel þe seruauant do þis wo? (fol. 184^v, ll. 1581–84)

Ralph Hanna has identified the language of Bevis's prayer in the Auchinleck manuscript as strikingly Davidic, being a cry for help from the depths of the dungeon and from despair itself.⁴⁸ But unlike the Auchinleck version's reference to generic enemies ('weþerwines') and foes, the unique language and rhetoric of the Chetham's version prompts readers to recall not only the Psalms but also the crucifixion.⁴⁹ Illogically, since of course Brademond is a Saracen king, the Jews here emerge as both Christ's foes and Bevis's, their attempts to slay Bevis becoming a kind of repeat of Calvary itself. But if the allusion here seems audaciously messianic, consider Torrent's dramatic prayer in his own prison episode: 'God, hast thou forsakyn me?' (fol. 113^v, l. 2296), he cries, recalling perhaps the most affective moment in Christian history. Indeed, evoking Christ's own spiritual and psychological anguish at the crucifixion may seem like a rather overzealous attempt to whip up compassion for the hero, but as I have been suggesting, the power of images to elicit emotional responses was not confined to the strictly pious or religious. Just as Aelred's novice can weep on hearing of the lives of both Christ and King Arthur, readers of this manuscript — with, if nothing else, the example of

⁴⁸ Hanna, *London Literature*, pp. 138–39. This section of the prayer does not appear in the Anglo-Norman version.

⁴⁹ Chetham MS 8009 and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175, from the latter half of the fourteenth century, are the only two that preserve a mention of Jews in this passage.

Mary's Pietà close to hand — can respond in kind to the Christological allusions these secular romances invoke.

Prison breaks through divine aid might also recall the later careers of Peter and Paul, though the most immediate referents for early readers of Chetham MS 8009 might have been the lives of Katherine and Dorothy. Both of these virgin martyrs spend time in Saracen prisons 'withoute mete or drinke', Dorothy for nine days, Katherine for twelve (fols 1^{r-v}; fols 44^{r-v}).⁵⁰ Both saints, of course, are comforted with divine favour, Dorothy is 'norishid and ffedde with gloriouse angelis' (fol. 1^v), and Katherine is similarly given 'hevylny mete' by angels sent from God (fol. 44^v). The proof of this favour, and thus the usefulness of these starvation ordeals in terms of intra-narrative exemplarity, is that they appear even more beautiful when they are released than when they were first imprisoned, much to the amazement of the pagan mobs witnessing the trials and the consternation of their respective judges. Indeed, both texts work hard to show the extraordinary potential of a single exemplary life, with Katherine converting the emperor's queen and two hundred knights whilst still in prison, and Dorothy converting 'many thousand of paynyns' (fol. 1^v) through the destruction of 'Idolis', among many other conversions they each initiate. But just how exemplary were these saints in a late fifteenth-century household book? How were their examples understood beyond their narrative frames?

Recent scholarship has emphasized some of the challenges saintly exemplarity posed for prevailing social ideologies, not least in the virgin Martyrs' radical independence from the wills of fathers, brothers, and husbands, as Christina of Markyate's and Margery Kempe's imitations of the virgin martyrs bear out.⁵¹ Here I want to consider how much more complicated ethical thinking becomes for late medieval laywomen when examples of strong and venerable women include the likes of Josian and Desonell alongside Katherine and Dorothy.⁵² As Judith

⁵⁰ Chetham MS 8009 preserves the earliest recension of Katherine's prose life (Version a), written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. On the texts and versions of *Katherine*, see Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, pp. 20–25; on the versions of *Dorothy*, see Wolf, 'The Legend of Saint Dorothy'.

⁵¹ For instance, Winstead, 'Saintly Exemplarity', pp. 336, 341. On Christina's imitation of Cecilia and Kempe's imitation of Katherine and female saints more broadly, see Sanok, *Her Life Historical*, pp. 18–19, 116–44.

⁵² Chetham MS 8009 had at least one active female reader, the 'elysabet' who autographed the foot of fol. 334^v. It may well have been this same Elizabeth who struck out misogynistic comments in the *Liber Catonis*, which recommends to 'yeve no credence alway to thy wyffe', referring to 'here ire' and 'here unsapience'. The word 'unsapience' is clearly crossed out, just as further down the page the word 'hate' is struck through in the line 'thy wyffe woll hate and

Weiss makes clear, Josian is less the courtly lady than the 'wooing woman' commonly found in Anglo-Norman romance and *chanson de geste*, and, as Corinne Saunders notes, her empowerment through virginity and chastity recalls the legends of holy women.⁵³ For Helen Cooper, actively 'desiring' heroines of this sort are closely correlated to the virgin saints, not only in that they frequently have to repulse rival suitors but also in that those suitors often turn out to be pagan tyrants.⁵⁴ Whereas heroines as strong as even the Fere of *Ipomadon* (the other romance in Chetham MS 8009) may need military defence to fend off the heathen kings who would marry them by force, Katherine and Dorothy, like Josian, keep their virginity intact through their own ingenuity and steely resolve.

As Cooper also remarks, however, Josian plays more of an active role in the maintaining of her chastity than her counterparts in hagiography. Though pursued by the Saracen kings Brademond and Yvor, most striking is her escape from the clutches of Earl Miles. Alone in Miles's bedchamber after her enforced marriage, she strangles him with her girdle (a symbol of her chastity)⁵⁵ and hangs him on a beam:

There Iesyan made with her hond
On her gurdill a knott rennand;
Aboute his nek she it threwe
And over a rayler she it drewe.
By the nek she up him twight
And let hym ride there that nyzt. (fol. 168^{r-v}, ll. 3219–24)

That murder is licensed to preserve the heroine's chastity is part of romance's secularism, as is the poetic justice of the girdle-noose and the mocking pun in the word 'ride'. While Katherine and Dorothy, both wedded to Christ, are explicitly given the choice of either submission to their pagan suitors or torture and death, Josian, betrothed to Bevis, turns this binary inside out. In romance there is a third option for such desiring women who find themselves in a tight spot, an option with possibilities for a happy ending on earth as well as in heaven. While it may be theologically significant that late hagiography is not read simply as another

cause eke forto smert | Often hym that her housband lovys in hert' (fol. 50^v). On the female readership and possible ownership of Chetham MS 8009, see Purdie, 'Sexing the Manuscript', and Sánchez-Martí, 'Reconstructing the Audiences', p. 169.

⁵³ See Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman', and Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom', p. 162.

⁵⁴ Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, esp. pp. 247–49.

⁵⁵ In the Auchinleck manuscript it is simply a 'towaile' (l. 3220).

form of romance, Josian's murder of Miles, I argue, is a striking example of why it is ethically important that romance does not become hagiography.⁵⁶

How this romance makes readers think ethically, in other words, has to do with the way it plays out the consequences of ethical decisions in manners that are both affective and natural. This works in concert with the rhetorical strategies of narratorial direction and divine aid discussed above. While these strategies work to direct moral sympathies, the particularities of narrative action provide readers with the opportunity to situate these sympathies within the context of specific narrative examples. The complexity of readers' feelings and understandings here plays off the complexity of the unique possible world the text creates. In *Bevis of Hampton*, indeed, virginity is not an abstract ideal but a moral absolute with real consequences in the here and now.⁵⁷ In what would otherwise be a narrative non sequitur, for example, Bevis visits the patriarch in Jerusalem who tells him he must marry only a 'clene mayden' (fol. 150^v, l. 1969), an injunction Bevis repeats to Josian when they next meet, at which point she has been married to Yvor for seven years (fol. 153^v, ll. 2196–97). The moral complexity of Josian's decision to strangle Miles thus deepens when audiences understand that what is at stake is any possibility of her desired future with Bevis and her role as the matriarch of a successful dynasty, nothing less than the happy telos of the romance.⁵⁸

Put another way, romances may direct moral sympathies in certain instances and episodes, and with particular characters, but unlike hagiography the form itself does not have what Jocelyn Wogan-Browne calls a built-in vertical differentiation, or a rigid classification of spiritual referents. Thus by metaphor and metonymy Katherine and Dorothy can only ever be signs of and contacts with the divine, while Fabricius and Maxentius can only be their opponents, for and with the devil. This superordinate level of reference works to create stable moral

⁵⁶ On the dangers of reading late hagiography as a form of romance, see Wogan-Browne, *Saint's Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, esp. pp. 91–122.

⁵⁷ The Anglo-Norman version is perhaps even more exacting than the English texts in terms of appropriate erotic conduct, as, for instance, Boeve's imprisonment is explicitly understood as the result of his earlier kiss with Josian: 'Par mult grant amour se sunt entrebeisé | Mes mar le besa Boefs le sené | Ke il se repentí, ainz ke l'an fu passé' (They kissed each other most lovingly. But the kiss that wise Boeve gave her brought him misfortune; he regretted it before the year was out) (ll. 772–74).

⁵⁸ Josian also preserves her virginity by cleverly infecting herself with an herb that makes her appear to have leprosy. Exemplary stories of self-mutilation to deter would-be rapists were well known in the Middle Ages, though, as Wogan-Browne notes, none are known to have been written by women. See Wogan-Browne, *Saint's Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, p. 116.

binaries, and the choices and actions of Katherine and Dorothy are always good within the extreme conditions of their narrative frames, though such exemplarity may have been considered more theoretical than practical for women living out ordinary lives in fifteenth-century England.⁵⁹ For romance, then, what makes the ethics of compassion all the more complicated is that characters cannot maintain such absolute moral roles, even in romances like *Bevis* that end with strong hagiographical overtones. This is not so much an argument that *Bevis* and *Torrent* purposefully engineer readerly sympathy in order to complicate ethical dilemmas, as some romances clearly do, but a more holistic reading of the comparatively indeterminate particularity of medieval secular fiction. For early readers of Chetham MS 8009, sexual ethics in the lives of Katherine and Dorothy would have ultimately referenced ecclesiastical truths. As with the Marian lament on fols 119^v–120^v, the particulars of suffering and torture prompt a felt engagement with the texts, the cognitive content of that affective experience reinforcing the truths those lives demonstrate.⁶⁰ In *Bevis*, however, while certain emotionally charged moments might prompt vertical thinking, the ethical knowledge of virginity has no superordinate frame of reference above its own rhetoric, the high premium this romance puts on virginity being by no means generically assumed. Such contingent ethical knowledge thus accumulates in narrative particulars, including Bevis's conversation with the patriarch and the strangling of Earl Miles, and thus a reader's moral calibration relies more on natural than on received knowledge. In this sense, romance makes readers think ethically by making them think in contingent particulars.

That romances do not maintain any strict vertical differentiation, and that sexual ethics is not generically constant, is perhaps best witnessed in the case of *Torrent* and *Desonell*. As with *Bevis* and *Josian*, there is a considerable narrative gap between when they profess their love for each other and when they are

⁵⁹ See Wogan-Browne, *Saint's Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, esp. p. 108.

⁶⁰ Consider Julian of Norwich's revelation on hearing the life of Cecilia, which bears witness to the notion that bodily suffering in hagiography can be both affective and epistemologically productive: 'I harde a man telle of a halye kyrke of the storye of Saynte Cecylle, in the whilke schewynge I vnderstode that sche hadde thre woundys with a swerde in the nekke, with the whilke sche pynede to the dede. By the styrrynge of this I conseyvede a myghty desyre, prayande oure Lorde God that he wolde grawnte me thre woundys in my lyfe tyme'. The three 'wounds' she asks for are appropriately affective: contrition, compassion and wilful longing. As with Christina and Margery, Julian might also be entered as an example of how hagiographic exemplarity could be socially problematic. While anchorites certainly fulfilled useful social functions in their communities, Julian's career path could not have been an approved model for broad swaths of young women. *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Windeatt, p. 183.

actually married, but, unlike in *Bevis*, this does not stop them from having sex. As is usually the case, the sex itself is heavily veiled — ‘he dwelled all nyȝt | With that lady gent’ (fols 98^v–99^r, ll. 1365–66) — but that it really happened eventually becomes clear. Months later, when Desonell finally hears news of the long-departed Torrent, she swoons before the court:

As she sownyd this lady myld
Men myȝt se tokenyng of her child
Steryng on her right syde.
Gret Ruth it was to tell
How her maydens on her fell
Her to couer and to hide. (fol. 105^v, ll. 1783–88)

Once again, the narrator offers an emotional signpost (l. 1786), directing readily sympathy toward the heroine in this moment of shameful exposure. Despite protests from the earls and barons, the king condemns Desonell to be cast adrift in a rudderless boat, so that

Euery kyngis doughter ffer and nere
At the shall they lere
Ayen the law to do (fol. 106^r, ll. 1816–18)

Thus, the king attempts to cast Desonell herself as a negative moral exemplum, the ethics of which are firmly rooted in practical dynastic concerns: ‘Spousage wyll thou none bide’ (fol. 105^v, l. 1791) he says when he first discovers she is pregnant. But the king’s attempt to control interpretation is no match for narratorial rhetoric and narrative action. ‘Gret ruth it was to se’ (fol. 106^r, l. 1819) the narrator says when Desonell is cast adrift, and the entire twelve-line stanza that follows is dedicated to showing just how much grief the onlookers made, culminating in the collective swooning of one hundred people (fol. 106^r, ll. 1829–30).⁶¹

Once again there are real-world consequences for improper — and unlawful — sexual activity, though here these consequences are presented not so much as examples of the wages of sin than as the twisted last resort of an overbearing father and unjust king. That the text licences and attempts to control this interpretation is made clear in the mirror episode that follows, in which Torrent sets the king adrift in his own rudderless boat, though this one filled with holes. As discussed above, the narrator concludes the episode with the construction of the


⁶¹ On medieval swooning, the increased acceptability of extreme emotional behaviour from the twelfth century onwards, and medieval understandings of the physiology of such extreme emotions, see Weiss, ‘Modern and Medieval Views on Swooning’.

king's life as a negative exemplum — that falsehood will always have a foul end — a rewriting of the king's own attempt to make a negative exemplum out of the life of his daughter. But there is something more cumulative at work here too, in that these moments of exemplary fashioning become enmeshed in the texture of the romance's complex particularity. Along with the other forms of ethically calibrated rhetoric discussed above, the intra-narrative jostling over interpretive control activates both readerly sympathy and contingent ethical thinking.

How exemplarity works in romances such as *Torrent*, then, has to do with how the experiential capacities of secular fiction prompt readers to consider their own sympathies in relation to complex imaginative worlds. And how romance might be especially suited to this exemplary role has to do not only with the religious or devotional halos of late medieval miscellany manuscripts, but also with how deeply these romances have absorbed the conventions of affective response and reshaped them for their own secular purposes, though of course, of the kind all the more apprehensible in the environments of their miscellaneous codicological contexts. If, therefore, fiction can be thought of as providing a training ground for readers to play out ethically responsible emotional encounters, then here romance's secularism is deeply important. In having no fixed superordinate frame of reference above their own rhetoric, romances like *Torrent* and *Bevis* crucially differ from saints' lives such as *Katherine* and *Dorothy*, in that they make readers think ethically not by exemplifying moral truths or moral behaviour good or bad but by showing both together in densely structured particulars, and leaving the audience with the messy business of separating the two. In this reading, romance therefore emerges as a medieval literary form with unique potential for ethical thinking precisely because it does not try to teach its audiences *about* ethics, the imaginative engagement with romance being not just training for some future ethical life but an ethical act itself.

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HETEROSYNCRASY AS A WAY OF LIFE: DISABILITY AND THE HETEROSYNCRATIC COMMUNITY IN *AMIS AND AMILOUN*

Tory Vandeventer Pearman

The fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Amis and Amiloun* (c. 1330) is a little-studied account of a great friendship between two men.¹ The two men — who are born on the same day, grow up together, die on the same day, and are buried in the same grave — are virtually identical to one another. Notably, though versions of this tale exist in Latin and French, the Middle English version is the only text to directly describe and emphasize a ‘trewþe-plizt’, or pledge of fidelity, between the two men that, as Dean Baldwin has found, emphasizes ‘the absoluteness of [the men’s] vow’ in a way that allows the Middle English poem

¹ The Middle English version exists in four manuscripts: the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, c. 1330); London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862 (c. 1400); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 326 (c. 1500);, and London, British Library, MS Harley 2386 (c. 1500). I will be referring to Edwin Foster’s TEAMS edition, which is based on the Auchinleck manuscript and is supplemented by the beginning and ending of the Egerton: *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. by Foster, pp. 10–79. All subsequent citations will be cited parenthetically in the text of this essay.

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Abstract: The fourteenth-century *Amis and Amiloun* emphasizes the oath of fidelity between two nearly identical male friends. Their ‘queer’ relationship is compounded by the diverse and pleasurable alliances they share with others, including Belisaunt and Amoraunt, thus making their relationships more akin to Karma Lochrie’s heterosyncratic than modern notions of queerness. Amiloun’s disabled body serves as the crux that forges these alliances, demonstrating that heterosyncrasy depends upon disability. Despite the poem’s tragic end, which at first glance appears to ‘prostheticize’ the deviances produced by the text’s non-normative bodies and unions, *Amis and Amiloun* aligns the queer/disabled with a pleasurable excess that promises a world-making both within and without the text that positions the heterosyncratic community as a valued and valuable way of life for people of all genders, sexualities, and abilities.

Keywords: *Amis and Amiloun*, crip theory, disability, heterosyncrasy, leprosy, pleasure, queerness.

to set up a series of situations meant to test the men's vow.² Traditionally, studies of the text focus on the relationship between the two men as exemplary of chivalric male friendship and monastic or saintly brotherhood.³ Recent queer scholarship, however, has focused on the possible homoerotic undercurrents in the same-sex union between Amis and Amiloun.⁴ While these studies focus on the complex relationship between Amis and Amiloun, little work has considered the women of the text, Belisaunt and Lady Amiloun, let alone their sexualities.⁵ Moreover, scholarship on the text has not actively considered Amiloun's disabled body in connection to the poem's platonic and erotic relationships.⁶ By explor-

² Baldwin, 'Amis and Amiloun: The Testing of *TreuBe*', pp. 357–58. Though the tale exists in multiple versions, I focus here on the Middle English romance because of its emphasis on the *trewBe-plizt* made between the two men. Moreover, its romance elements, as I will show, play a large part in the text's portrayal of a heterosyncratic community that is not as strongly present in the more hagiographical versions of the text.

³ See, for instance, Baldwin, 'Amis and Amiloun: The Testing of *TreuBe*'; Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 92–133 and Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, pp. 16–54; and Stretter, 'Engendering Obligation'. For male-male friendship in the Middle Ages more generally, see Haseldine, *Friendship in Medieval Europe*; Bray, *The Friend*; Clark, *Between Medieval Men*; and Claussen, 'Introduction: The Quest for a Human Ideal', pp. 18–30.

⁴ My use of the phrase 'same-sex union' here reflects a turn in medieval queer scholarship to properly historicize non-heterosexual relationships in the Middle Ages. As Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, and Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, argue, the phrase 'same-sex union' or 'same-sex love' is more representative of relationships between people of the same sex in the premodern period than the modern construct of 'homosexuality'. While I share Boswell's and Frantzen's desire to better historicize non-normative relationships, my essay hopes to call into question the hetero/homosexual divide that these studies sometimes uphold by also challenging heterosexuality's status as the undisputed norm by which all other sexualities are measured.

See Ford, 'Merry Married Brothers'; Zeikowitz, *Homoeroticism and Chivalry*, pp. 36–37, 51–54; Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union'; and Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, pp. 101–22. Johnson, *Once There Were Two True Friends*, pp. 9–48, focuses on the Anglo-Norman *Ami et Amile* and considers their relationship in both platonic and erotic terms. Bray's *The Friend* briefly discusses the Latin version of the romance in his larger study of the history of friendship in England.

⁵ For example, only one full-length article by Jean E. Jost considers the two women, finding that they transgress male patriarchal control through their subversive gazes and voices: Jost, 'Hearing the Female Voice'. Though Jost mentions Belisaunt's voracious sexual appetite at the beginning of the poem, she does not offer a concentrated account of her sexualiti(es). I follow Jost's lead in calling Amiloun's unnamed wife 'Lady Amiloun'.

⁶ Though most scholars mention Amiloun's leprosy, none examines it in relationship to disability or sexuality. Yoon, 'Leprosy, Miracles, and Morality', considers Amiloun's leprosy through the text's hagiographical elements.

ing how disability serves as the crux upon which the female-male and male-male relationships in *Amis* and *Amiloun* are produced and maintained, I will show how the poem articulates what queercrip theorists Robert McRuer and Abby Wilkerson call a 'queercrip consciousness' that 'resists containment and imagines other, more inventive, expansive, and just communities.'⁷ Such communities, or alternative worlds, are created when the disabled and the queer are brought from the margins to the centre, vexing standard notions of both able-bodiedness and sexuality. *Amis* and *Amiloun*'s tragic end at first glance appears to 'prostheticize' or resolve the excesses produced by the text's non-normative bodies and unions. As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder note, prostheticization occurs when a narrative attempts to resolve or 'fix' the textual deviance of disability in literature. Strategies include cure, extermination, and social revaluation of the bodily difference.⁸ Though *Amiloun*'s cure from leprosy and the resurrection of *Amis*'s children suggest such a resolution, I contend that the romance's depiction of a heterosyncratic community aligns the queer/disabled with a pleasurable excess that proliferates fantasy in productive and imaginative ways.

By ignoring the text's multiple sexualities and their connections to the disabled body, the criticism on *Amis* and *Amiloun* ultimately constructs hetero/homosexual and able-bodied/disabled divides that present able-bodied heterosexuality as the norm and the queer/disabled as deviant, and my reading of the text seeks to recuperate the queer/disabled body from readings that would position it as deviant and/or pathologized. As Karma Lochrie argues, the hetero/homosexual divide simplifies 'the complexity and plurality of sodomy as a category' while also 'flatten[ing] and fold[ing]' female sexuality 'within a heterosexual norm in medieval scholarship.'⁹ Upholding heterosexuality as the norm by which other sexualities are measured, according to James Schultz, 'fosters the belief that, while

⁷ I take this phrase from McRuer and Wilkerson, 'Introduction', p. 7. The term 'queercrip', which I use throughout the essay, brings together queer theory and disability studies in order to reveal the shared historically and socially constructed natures of the heterosexual/homosexual and able-bodied/disabled binaries. McRuer and Wilkerson explain that a 'queercrip consciousness' surfaces when the disabled and the queer are interwoven, instead of reproduced as distinct categories. As a result, texts exhibiting a queercrip consciousness create 'another world' wherein 'an incredible variety of bodies and minds are valued and identities are shaped, where crips and queers have effectively (because repeatedly) displaced the able-bodied/disabled binary' (p. 14). As my essay will show, *Amis* and *Amiloun*'s heterosyncratic community participates in this process of queercrip world-making. For more on the 'queercrip', see McRuer, *Crip Theory*.

⁸ See Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 53.

⁹ Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xx.

homosexuality might be a recent invention, heterosexuality is a universal given. [...] But heterosexuality is not a given. [It is] a product of history — and a relatively recent one at that.¹⁰ As Lochrie more bluntly asserts, 'Heterosexuality did not exist in the Middle Ages.'¹¹ In order to restructure the ways in which medieval scholars construe sexuality in the Middle Ages, Lochrie proposes the notion of the 'heterosyncratic', which 'opposes a unified, monolithic, and presumptive understanding of heterosexuality in favour of a more idiosyncratic, diversified, and even perverse take on heterosexuality.'¹² Keeping the heterosyncratic in mind, my examination of the sexualities of Belisaunt and Lady Amiloun in relation to the same-sex unions of Amis and Amiloun and Amiloun and Amoraunt reveals that the text presents what I will term a 'heterosyncratic community', wherein a diverse group of people express and experience various pleasures with one another regardless of gender, sexuality, or ability. Furthermore, I propose that the text's status as a romance that includes both secular and hagiographic elements opens a queer/disabled space that allows for same-sex unions and different-sex unions (which are not necessarily sexual) to flourish in tandem with one another; in other words, the text depicts a realm in which friendships between and among multiple partners become 'a way of life'.¹³

While Lochrie focuses primarily on female sexuality in her project, I will be expanding her notion by examining female social and sexual alliances to men in relation to male social and sexual alliances to other men in *Amis and Amiloun* and how the seals of those alliances often rely on the disabled body.¹⁴ I will also be considering these pleasurable alliances in relation to Foucault's notion of

¹⁰ Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness*, p. 62. Like Lochrie, Schultz criticizes queer readings of medieval texts that continue to uphold a heterosexual/homosexual binary. See also Lochrie, 'Heterosexuality'.

¹¹ Lochrie, 'Heterosexuality', p. 37.

¹² Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xix. I echo Lochrie's use of the heterosyncratic 'to include the diverse forms of desire, sexual acts, medical technologies, and attendant theologies represented in a variety of texts that are not contained in the procreative model of heterosexuality also found in medieval texts. It will also include those instances of same-sex desire that fall into the sprawling categories of disorderly desire, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual by modern judgments' (p. xix).

¹³ This phrase is taken from an interview with Michel Foucault (Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life'). While Foucault uses the phrase in relation to specifically male-male friendships, I want to open up Foucault's notion to include multiple genders, sexualities, and abilities.

¹⁴ Lochrie admittedly leaves out the heterosyncrasy of male sexuality in her book, opting to concentrate solely on women (Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xxv).

'friendship as a way of life'. As Foucault explains, the modern tendency to equate homosexuality with 'immediate pleasure' ultimately 'cancels everything that can be troubling in affection tenderness, friendship, fidelity, camaraderie, and companionship, things that our sanitized society can't allow a place for without fearing the formation of new alliances and the tying together of unforeseen lines of force'.¹⁵ Consequently, Foucault proposes that 'the homosexual mode of life' disrupts the norm because it 'introduces love where there's supposed to be only law, rule, or habit' and 'can yield to a culture and an ethics'.¹⁶ This way of life demands not the instant sexual gratification imagined by the association of homosexuality with deviancy, but a giving and receiving of pleasure that is rooted in a practice and that is not predicated on an individual's supposed social identity. Pleasure, he insists, is an essential part of a homosexual 'mode of life' based on friendship, with friendship being 'the sum of everything through which [people] can give each other pleasure'.¹⁷ While Foucault uses the phrase 'friendship as a way of life' in relation to specifically male-male friendships, I want to expand it to include multiple genders, sexualities, and abilities. The disabled body is often omitted from — read, 'ignored in' — discussions of pleasure; or, perhaps it is more apt to say that discussions of pleasure immediately exclude any body whose very material experience may be one of pain.¹⁸ Yet, the constant undulation between 'wele' and 'wo' in *Amis and Amiloun* intricately ties Amiloun's disabled body to the main characters' pleasurable experiences. By considering Foucault through a 'crippled' reading of Lochrie,¹⁹ I will demonstrate that the diverse and pleasurable social alliances present in *Amis and Amiloun* reveal that a heterosyncratic way of life operates in the poem, and that this heterosyncrasy depends upon disability. My use of the term 'crip' here demonstrates my desire to 'crip the Middle Ages' and examine medieval literature and culture through the lens of disability theory,

¹⁵ Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', p. 136. Bray, *The Friend*, though it does not reference Foucault, similarly examines the complexities of same-sex friendship through an ethics that includes sexuality without placing it at its centre.

¹⁶ Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', pp. 137, 138.

¹⁷ Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', pp. 137, 136.

¹⁸ See Siebers, 'Disability in Theory' (esp. pp. 176–78), and Wendell, *The Rejected Body*, p. 167. While I agree that the emphasis on the pleasures of the 'indeterminate' or 'plastic' body in postmodern theories excludes the disabled body's material experience of pain, I believe it is important to discuss the disabled body's ability to experience pleasures, whether they be social or sexual. The reclamation of the pleasure of the disabled body is essential to upending common stereotypes that construe those with disabilities as infantilized, asexual, or even sexually deviant.

¹⁹ See Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 4.

as Edward Wheatley has called for. Similar to 'queering' the text, 'cripping' the text questions normative subject positions and subverts assumptions that would render non-normative positions as deviant. By 'cripping' Lochrie's theory, I hope to push Lochrie's analysis to consider not just sexuality but also ability.

As stated above, most studies of the text focus on the relationship between Amis and Amiloun as either an ideal, exalted male friendship or a same-sex union. Undoubtedly, the poem does emphasize the vow between the two men. In fact, as Baldwin has posited, the entire poem elevates the men's 'trewþe-þliȝt' above all else and proceeds to test each man's ultimate adherence to the vow. As a result, religious, moral, and familial ties fall to the wayside. However, during the course of the two men's relationship, each man makes other social and sexual alliances that, though they may be secondary to the relationship that Amis and Amiloun share, are still sources of pleasure.

Queer scholarship, in addition, has done much to open up readings of *Amis and Amiloun* by drawing attention to the nuances of the men's friendship. However, queer theory can sometimes be problematic when used to examine the texts and peoples of a time period that existed 'before the closet', as Allen Frantzen has noted.²⁰ Because modern notions of homosexuality often rest on a hetero/homosexual binary, however, they inadvertently can establish heterosexuality as monolithic and homosexuality as deviant; in this sense, heterosexuality becomes equated with heteronormativity.²¹ In particular, this divide, which is

²⁰ Instead of imagining same-sex love and heterosexuality using the 'closet' metaphor, Frantzen proposes the metaphor of the shadow: 'If we imagine the heterosexual system ('the' sexual system) as a contoured field or ground, we can imagine same-sex relations as shadows on that field. [...] I propose that same-sex relations are as closely attached to heterosexual relations as shadows are to their objects, and indeed that same-sex relations are indispensable to culture.' However, Frantzen's 'shadow' can be problematic in its reliance on a hetero/homosexual divide. Schultz, who strongly criticizes Frantzen's work, notes that, if scholars 'keep *consolidating* same-sex relations and then *juxtaposing* them to heterosexual patterns, then it won't take long before [...] readers conclude that "same-sex" *really* is opposed to "heterosexual"' (author's emphasis). See Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, p. 15, and Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness*, p. 54.

²¹ See Warner and Berlant, *The Trouble with Normal*. See also Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, pp. xi–xviii, 1–25. Lochrie explains that statistical analyses of the nineteenth century worked to produce heterosexuality as the norm: 'One does not become heterosexual until the norm exists to define the normal and abnormal, nor does society become heteronormative until the statistical system is in place that produces heterosexuality as the practice of the largest number of people and, therefore, both the majority sexual act and the ideal directing social policies, politics, and institutions' (p. xxiv). Lennard Davis similarly sketches the connection between the rise of the statistical norm and notions of disability in his work: see Davis, 'Bodies of Difference', pp. 103–05, and Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, pp. 23–49.

present in both the general field of queer theory and medieval queer theory more specifically, ignores the nuances of premodern sexualities and ultimately erases the particularities of female sexualities. For instance, 'sodomy' in the Middle Ages could refer to a number of sexual acts ranging from heterosexual sex in the non-missionary position to same-sex sex between men and women.²² The modern tendency to equate sodomy with male-male anal sex disregards the complexity of the term in the premodern era. As a result, some queer scholarship on medieval texts propagates the notion of a heteronormative Middle Ages with the disastrous result of ignoring or erasing female sexuality altogether.

Lochrie's heterosyncratic works to undo the normalizing effects of using modern notions of normativity and sexuality in studies of medieval sexuality by '[d]islodging the queer from our own presumption of heteronormativity and looking beyond sodomy and misogyny to recognize the permutations of female sexual desires, bodies, and acts.'²³ The critique of the presumption of ability in the recent conjunction of queer theory and disability theory is complementary to Lochrie's goals for the heterosyncratic. Though Lochrie does not specifically engage disability theory in her book, many of the women in her study — the Wife of Bath and the one-breasted Amazons, for instance — feature embodied differences that directly affect their sexualities. Moreover, examining what Robert McRuer calls 'queer/disabled existence' is particularly apt for my discussion of heterosyncratic sexuality in *Amis and Amiloun*: for, as we will see later, the heterosyncratic community shared by Amis, Amiloun, and Belisaunt hinges upon Amiloun's disabled state that results from his contraction of leprosy. As McRuer argues,

the system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense, produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness: that, in fact, compulsory heterosexuality is contingent on compulsory able-bodiedness, and vice versa.²⁴

²² See Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*: '[Sodomy] has connoted in various times and places anything from ordinary heterosexual intercourse in an atypical position to oral sexual contact with animals. At some points in history it has referred almost exclusively to male homosexuality and at others almost exclusively to heterosexual excess' (p. 93 n. 2). Since Boswell's work, there has been extensive scholarship on sodomy in the Middle Ages, including Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy*; Frantzen, *Before the Closet*; Lochrie, *Covert Operations*; Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*; and, more recently, Mills, 'Homosexuality: Specters of Sodom'.

²³ Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. xxv.

²⁴ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, p. 2.

Heterosexuality and able-bodiedness are similarly normalized and thus illusory identity categories that result in both gender trouble and what McRuer calls 'ability trouble'.²⁵ Expanding Judith Butler's exposure of the inevitable breakdown — and, therefore, infinite repetition — of the performance of heterosexual hegemony, McRuer claims, 'Able-bodied identity and heterosexual identity are linked in their mutual impossibility and in their mutual incomprehensibility'.²⁶ He adds

Compulsory heterosexuality is intertwined with compulsory able-bodiedness; both systems work to (re)produce the able body and heterosexuality. But precisely because these systems depend on a queer/disabled existence that can never quite be contained, able-bodied heterosexuality's hegemony is always in danger of collapse.²⁷

Crip theory, then, disempowers compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness by exposing their linked and illusory qualities; in effect, like Lochre's heterosyncratic, it asks us to shift our critical focus onto the norm itself, thereby questioning how its unattainability marks deviant those bodies and sexualities that do not live up to it.

Before further discussing the heterosyncratic alliances in *Amis and Amiloun*, I will first offer a brief summary of the romance. Amis and Amiloun, two identical friends, vow a 'trewPe-plizt' with one another, and grow up serving a duke. Amiloun leaves the court after the death of his parents and exchanges identical gold cups with Amis as a token of their vow to one another. While away from the court, Amiloun marries. During Amiloun's absence, the duke's steward offers his companionship to Amis. Amis rejects him and is pursued by the duke's daughter, Belisaunt. Belisaunt threatens to accuse Amis of rape if he does not return her advances. Jealous, the steward spies on Belisaunt and Amis and witnesses them having sex. He promptly tells the duke, and the duke orders a duel. Amis travels to Amiloun's home and asks him to take his place in the duel. Despite a divine warning against his actions, Amiloun agrees and wins the battle and the hand of Belisaunt for Amis. He is later stricken with leprosy. His wife soon kicks him out of his home, and Amiloun must beg for food, with only a faithful servant, Amoraunt, by his side and his golden cup in hand. The two men arrive at Amis's court; Amis recognizes Amiloun because he possesses the golden cup, and he and Belisaunt take him in. Amis hears a divine message that declares that only the blood of his two children will cure Amiloun. On Christmas, Amis kills his chil-

²⁵ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, p. 10.

²⁶ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, p. 9.

²⁷ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, p. 31.

dren and cures Amiloun. The children miraculously survive. Amiloun punishes his wife for her actions. The two men remain together and found an abbey. They die on the same day and are buried in a single grave.

As the summary indicates, Amis and Amiloun share multiple social alliances in addition to their explicit vow to one another. Amiloun promptly marries a woman after making his 'trewþe-plizt' to Amiloun. The ease with which Amiloun marries indicates that this different-sex union does not conflict with his vow to Amiloun. As such, Amiloun is free to share a social (and possibly sexual) alliance with Amis and a sexual alliance with his wife. Though the text never explicitly declares that Amis and Amiloun engage in sex, evidence of homoerotic desire occurs in the romance. Sheila Delany ties these queer moments to the text's hagiographic elements, as paired male saints in hagiography are often-cited examples of same-sex relationships.²⁸ I find, in addition, that Amis's encounter with the steward reveals that erotic tensions may exist between Amis and Amiloun and that the steward may have erotic feelings for Amis. Upon Amiloun's departure, the steward approaches Amis and states, "Y schal the be a better frende | Than ever yete was he [Amiloun]" (ll. 359–60). The steward asks Amis,

And swere ous bothe brotherhed
And plight we our trewthes to;
Be trewe to me in word and dede,
And y schal to the, so God me spede,
Be trewe to the also. (ll. 362–66)

In his proposal, the steward explicitly seeks to replace and even supercede Amiloun as Amis's companion. Moreover, the wording of the proposal mirrors that of the vow between Amis and Amiloun; the two men promise earlier to "To hold togider at everi need, | In word, in werk, in wille, in dede" (ll. 151–52), a pledge that, as John Ford has found, closely resembles the marriage vow.²⁹ Amis's rejection of the steward's proposal is even more telling. He responds that he is already pledged to Amiloun, explaining, 'Gete me frendes whare y may, | Y no schal never bi night no day | Chaunge him for no newe' (ll. 382–84). Here, Amis clearly differentiates between a 'friend' that one may pick up anywhere and Amiloun; noticeably, though the relationship between Amis and Amiloun may

²⁸ Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', pp. 69–71. See also Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, pp. 218–61, and Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, pp. 69–70, 72–89.

²⁹ Ford, 'Merry Married Brothers'. Bray notes that the Latin version of the romance stipulates that the steward requests that the vow occur in a church, further cementing a tie between the men's oath and the marriage vow (Bray, *The Friend*, p. 17).

not be explicitly sexual, it is definitely something other than casual friendship. Furthermore, the steward's furious reaction to Amis's refusal of him and his jealous response to his tryst with Belisaunt suggest that he may have invested more than platonic feelings in a potential relationship with Amiloun. The steward desires an exclusive relationship with Amis, but Amis rejects the notion of exclusivity, preferring multiple relationships instead.

Though Amis rejects the steward, he finds in Belisaunt another partner that will take part in his and Amiloun's heterosyncratic community. In passing, most critics refer to Belisaunt as an 'aggressive' and 'manipulative' seductress, for it is through her threat to accuse Amis of rape that she secures his love for her.³⁰ A closer analysis of Belisaunt demonstrates that there is more to her than simply filling the 'stock-character role' as 'the wooing woman or Potiphar's Wife'.³¹ That Belisaunt is a sexualized figure is overt: she actively pursues Amis, asks him to pledge his fidelity to her (ll. 583–84), gazes at him erotically during dinner (ll. 694–99), and enters his chamber, seeking sexual intercourse (ll. 724–68). While Belisaunt certainly fills the role of the woman-as-temptress when she threatens Amis with rape, her overt sexuality and her later transformation into a benevolent figure that cares for the disabled Amiloun reveal her complexity and her acute dedication to the practice of pleasure.

Generally, critics argue that Amis must reject the steward because he is a male that threatens the male-male relationship between Amis and Amiloun, while, conversely, Belisaunt and Lady Amiloun do not jeopardize the male-male bond. In fact, the same-sex union ultimately thwarts the heterosexual unions between Amiloun and Lady Amiloun and Amis and Belisaunt.³² However, these readings readily enact the hetero/homosexual binary that closes off readings of premodern sexuality. I instead argue that the steward must be rejected because he desires a monogamous relationship with Amis, whereas Amis and Amiloun desire multiple members in their heterosyncratic community. The similarities between the steward's and Belisaunt's proposals and Amis's subsequent agreement to pledge his fidelity to Belisaunt demonstrate that the relationship between Amis and Amiloun is not exclusive. Belisaunt repeats almost verbatim the exchanges between Amis and Amiloun and Amis and the steward: 'Plight me thi trewth

³⁰ Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 68, and Jost, 'Hearing the Female Voice', p. 119.

³¹ Ford, 'Contrasting the Identical', p. 316.

³² See Ford, 'Merry Married Brothers'; Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 65; and Zeikowitz, *Homoeroticism and Chivalry*, p. 53.

thou schalt be trewe | And chaunge me for no newe' (ll. 583–84). While Amis declines her proposal at first, it is not for the same reasons that he rejects the steward; instead, he explains that his lower social class makes him unworthy of marrying a woman of such high status (ll. 601–13). Whereas the steward wishes to replace Amiloun, Belisaunt does not require him to break his vow. For Belisaunt, both vows can exist simultaneously.

Though Belisaunt does not know about Amiloun when she first propositions Amis, she becomes aware of him and his companionship with her husband before they marry. Amis tells her and her mother, who have offered their own bodies as a guarantee that Amis will attend the duel, that he will ask Amiloun to take his place in the battle; in fact, it is Belisaunt's idea that he contact his friend and request his help. No stranger to getting what she wants through guile, Belisaunt, upon hearing of Amiloun's likeness to Amis, suggests Amis ride to him and ask him to take his place at the duel (ll. 950–51, 961–72). Unlike the steward, who reacts to Amiloun with jealousy, Belisaunt accepts Amis's companion. Moreover, Belisaunt herself shares a special relationship with Amiloun, and the expression of this relationship originates from and is contingent upon Amiloun's disabled body. After Amiloun wins the duel, the duke bequeaths his property and his daughter to Amiloun, thinking he is Amis (ll. 1390–92). Through the gifting of his daughter to Amiloun, the duke essentially establishes a betrothal between the two. Belisaunt acts on this betrothal when she cares for Amiloun after he has been stricken with leprosy and ostracized by his wife. When Belisaunt sees Amiloun's condition, she kisses him and

Into hir chaumber she gan him lede
And kest of al his pover wede
And bathed his bodi al bare,
And to a bedde swathe him brought;
with clothes riche and wele ywrought. (ll. 2179–83)

Amiloun remains in Belisaunt's room for one year, and she and Amis care for him, giving him anything he needs or desires. While this moment is not explicitly sexual, that Belisaunt kisses Amiloun, undresses him, washes his naked body, and carries him into her room is suggestively erotic. At the very least, on the surface of the text, Belisaunt's actions toward Amiloun demonstrate her deep feelings for him: she offers him much-needed comfort. Though the two may not share a sexual relationship, her act of caring for him exhibits her desire to experience pleasure with and give pleasure to others.

In addition to serving as the mechanism through which Belisaunt and Amiloun forge a relationship, Amiloun's leprosy embodies the convergence of

the queer/crip in the text. Though at first glance leprosy may seem to fall under the category of disease rather than disability, I find that this distinction limits our understandings of medieval notions of both disability and leprosy, especially within this particular romance. Disability theorists differentiate between *impairment* and *disability*, noting that the negative social interpretation of an impairment is disabling, not the impairment itself. Though Irina Metzler indicates that disability in the social sense did not exist in the Middle Ages, other medieval disability scholars have refuted that claim, noting the varied responses to people with disabilities in medieval religious, legal, and popular literature.³³ For example, Joshua Eyler suggests scholars ‘remove impairment from the discussion altogether and think of disability in the Middle Ages as something constructed by both bodily difference and social perception at the same time.’³⁴ Leprosy, a condition imbued with multivalent and even contradictory physical and social meanings reflected in *Amis and Amiloun* in particular and medieval culture more generally, aptly demonstrates the efficacy of Eyler’s position. Common effects of leprosy (including facial deformities, weakened and contracted limbs, and visual impairments) were certainly physically and socially disabling, as Amiloun finds.³⁵ When the angel warns Amiloun of his fate should he choose to fight in Amis’s stead, he emphasizes the horrific appearance Amiloun will assume, noting that ‘Fouler mesel nas never non | In the world, than thou schal be!’ (ll. 1259–60).³⁶ The angel continues, chronicling the consequences Amis will endure:

So foule a wreche thou schalt be,
With sorwe and care and poverté
Nas never non wers bigon.
Over al this world, fer and hende,
Tho that be thine best frende

³³ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*. Later scholarship that widens Metzler’s definition of medieval disability include Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*; Eyler, *Disability in the Middle Ages*; Crawford and Lee, *Bodies of Knowledge*; and Pearman, *Women and Disability*.

³⁴ Eyler, ‘Introduction,’ in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, p. 8.

³⁵ For an examination of leprosy as a disability, see Pearman, *Women and Disability*, p. 99.

³⁶ It is important to note that in the Middle English version of the tale, this warning occurs just before the duel, whereas, in all other versions that feature the warning, it occurs just before Amiloun commits bigamy by marrying Belisaunt. See Kratins, ‘The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*’, p. 350. The transposition of the warning to just before the combat removes leprosy as a punishment for multiple marriages and instead makes it an important link between the two men’s ability to uphold their vows to one another.

Schal be thi most fon,
 And thi wiif and alle thi kinne
 Schul fle the stede thatow art inne,
 And forsake the ichon. (ll. 1264–72)

Much of what the angel promises does come true for Amiloun; he loses his looks, wealth, and friends, and the poet emphasizes Amiloun's utterly abandoned state: 'A frendeleser man than he was | Men nist nowhar non' (ll. 1559–60). Lady Amiloun treats her leprous husband the most harshly, banishing him first from their bed and table, then from their home and into a small hut, and finally into the streets after depriving him of food and drink.

In addition to enduring the social effects of disabling from his disease, Amiloun also suffers physically. After being exiled from his home by Lady Amiloun, Amiloun and his nephew Amoraunt wander from city to city, begging for sustenance. While traveling, Amiloun's feet become so sore that he is unable to walk any further, and Amourant builds his uncle a shelter near a market in order to accommodate his inability to walk (ll. 1717–24). As Carol Rawcliffe explains, leprosy could affect one's mobility: 'Once the disease has penetrated the bone marrow, the skeletal frame weakens, becoming liable to fracture', and she frequently documents the consequences of the disease on extremities such as the legs and feet.³⁷ Amiloun's inability to walk continues to be a problem for him as he and Amoraunt resume their travels. After having to sell their mule for food (ll. 1820–21), Amoraunt must carry his immobile uncle on his back (l. 1832). This task proves too difficult for the young man to maintain throughout the winter, however, when slippery paths cause both men to topple into the mud: 'The way was so depe and slider, | Oft times bothe togider | Thai fel down in the clay' (ll. 1843–45). Unable to carry his uncle any farther, Amoraunt uses the pair's last twelve pence to purchase a 'gode croudewain', or pushcart, in which to convey his uncle (l. 1858). Amiloun's leprosy, then, takes him from being a wealthy, handsome, strong, agile man, able to heroically defeat the steward to a poor, unsightly, weakened outcast, unable to even stand or walk. Until he undergoes his miraculous cure at the end of the romance, strangers that encounter Amiloun identify him solely by his leprosy and his wheeled cart: he is called varying versions of 'lazer in the wain' (l. 1985), a label that indicates the compulsory association of leprosy with its concurrent physical disabilities.

Though Amiloun at first appears to be a thoroughly abject character due to the physical and social effects of his leprosy, he embodies the ambivalence of the

³⁷ Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 3, 172 n. 76, 174, and 178.

medieval leper in religious and popular representations of the disease, an ambivalence not unlike that of the medieval notions of sodomy discussed above. Indeed, the disease's connections to lechery in medieval medical and theological views, both as a cause and a symptom of the illness, complicated its significance in medieval society. In particular, Old Testament presentations of leprosy as a divine punishment for sins such as envy, anger, or greed strengthened associations between the disease and sin.³⁸ Regardless of what kind of sin the leper's pustules suggested, lepers were indeed segregated from society, as is exemplified by Lady Amiloun's treatment of her husband. In fact, the Third Lateran Council of 1179 specified that lepers should be separated from the uninfected, and many lepers inhabited *leprosaria* (leper colonies) or spent the rest of their lives begging in the streets, with a clapper or bell to warn others of their presence. Though some studies suggest that lepers underwent a formal process of exclusion that declared them 'dead' to the world, Rawcliffe has found this process to be rare.³⁹

The conflicted medieval understandings of the leper-figure are complicated not only by his or her connections to sin but also his or her status as a Christ-like figure, which made the leper a key participant in the spiritual economy of Christian charity and salvation, a role that many medieval people with disabilities were able to fill. By performing charitable acts for lepers or other people with disabilities, Christians could strengthen their own chances at salvation; for, in serving the poor, the ill, and the disabled, they were effectively serving Christ himself.⁴⁰ Indeed, the leper's biblical associations to Christ heightened his or her role in this spiritual economy. Though, as Edward Wheatley has found, presenting this system of exchange as the primary means through which those with disabilities were understood in the Middle Ages is limiting, it is certainly true for Amiloun's experience with leprosy in the romance, for Amiloun's leprosy is intricately linked to his poverty and reliance on charity from others.⁴¹ After being banished by Lady Amiloun, Amiloun and Amoraunt must beg for food and drink, a task they succeed at for three years at a particular market town, wherein they 'lived in care and poverté | Bi the folk of that cuntré' (ll. 1732–33) until a famine forces the pair to seek charity elsewhere. The poet emphasizes the inter-

³⁸ Scholarship on medieval leprosy is extensive. See Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*; Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*; Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*; Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature*; and Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*.

³⁹ Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 19–21.

⁴⁰ Stiker outlines the 'systems of charity' in the Middle Ages in *A History of Disability*, trans. by Sayer, pp. 65–90, esp. pp. 73–74.

⁴¹ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 14.

twining of Amiloun's disability and poverty in his description of the two men after they arrive as Amis's castle. While Amis and his men of the court are served food and drink in 'riche coupes of gold' (l. 1905), Amoraunt pushes his uncle in his cart to congregate with 'the pover men' (l. 1892) outside the castle walls: 'And he that brought him to that state | Stode bischet withouten the gate, | Wel sore ofhungred and cold' (ll. 1906–08). When two of Amis's men exit the gate, they are taken aback by the stark contrast between the handsome, young Amoraunt and the 'laith' Amiloun (l. 1914). The juxtaposition of Amoraunt and Amiloun undoubtedly calls to attention the gaping differences between the once nearly identical (and attractive) Amis and Amiloun. Furthermore, the gate separating the once indistinguishable friends demonstrates how far from his former self, both physically and socially, Amiloun's contraction of leprosy has taken him.

While on the surface it would seem that the poem presents Amiloun's leprosy as purely negative and a suitable punishment for participating in the duel against the steward, the poem's representation of the heterosyncratic and its reliance on the disabled body troubles such a one-sided view. Most scholars have read Amiloun's leprosy as divine punishment.⁴² Ju Ok Yoon, however, places Amiloun's leprosy within the context of hagiography, noting that the poem positions Amiloun as similar to a saint who patiently endures leprosy rather than a sinner who is punished by the disease. In fact, disability and disabling illnesses are integral to proving a saint's spirituality in hagiography. As Wheatley notes, '[P]roof that a potential saint had performed miracles while alive was integral to the canonization process, and paramount among those was the cure of impairments.'⁴³ Equally important to a saint's ability to miraculously cure the afflicted were his or her contraction and toleration of an ailment that caused suffering, and many hagiographies and other devotional writings feature leprosy in this way.⁴⁴ Yoon notes that Amiloun never bemoans his fate but instead humbly submits to it and then patiently bears it in order to spare the lives of Belisaunt, her mother, and Amis, going so far as to identify his ailment as a 'sond', or blessing sent from God (l. 1620). Yoon links the text's revaluing of Amiloun's leprosy as a blessing to its Christian moral core as a hagiographical romance. This revaluing, she argues, clears up the text's presentation of system of ethics that modern reads

⁴² For instance, Kramer, 'Structural Artistry in "Amis and Amiloun"', p. 114; Hume, "'Amis and Amiloun" and the Aesthetics of Medieval Romance', pp. 28–29; Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 65; *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. by Foster, 'Introduction', p. 6; and Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature*, pp. 87–95.

⁴³ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 59–60.

may deem distorted. Viewing Amiloun's leprosy as divine punishment 'inevitably privileges the moral stance of the evil characters [Lady Amiloun and the steward] that the romance denounces,' while recasting the ailment as a blessing from God allows the poem's two miracles — Amiloun's cure and the resurrection of the sacrificed children — to demonstrate the all-powerful grace of God.⁴⁵ When examining the poem's representation of the queer/disabled, I find that the revaluing of Amiloun's disability as a blessing falls in line with the poem's overall challenge to institutionalized notions of morality and its defense of the perverse. The poem's positioning of Amiloun's leprosy as a blessing allows that which is usually associated with the abject to be the object of desire and pleasure. Indeed, Amiloun's abject body itself enables the heterosyncratic bonds that Belisaunt forges with her husband and his friend.

As noted above, Belisaunt tenderly cares for Amiloun when Amis brings him into the castle. Importantly, after Amis reveals his friend's identity, she greets him with a kiss:

As foule a lazer as he was,
The levedi kist him in that plas,
For nothing wold sche spare,
And oft time sche seyde, 'Allas!
That him was fallen so hard a cas,
To live in sorwe and care. (ll. 2173–78)

According to Julie Orlemanski, the leper's kiss is an 'interface' that 'disrupt[s] quotidian practices of recognition, defamiliarizing the face-to-face encounter and inciting new perceptual and intersubjective possibilities.'⁴⁶ In bringing together disgust and desire, the leper's kiss produces 'a kind of affective heat fueling [...] spiritual transformation.'⁴⁷ The interface of the leper's kiss is transformative both corporeally and spiritually. In kissing Amiloun, Belisaunt places herself within a saintly tradition meant to elicit miraculous cure of the infected and demonstrate the saint's spiritual prowess. Moreover, by kissing the abject figure of the leper, saints could participate in an act of self-mortification that led them to greater spiritual reward. Though male saints participated in leper-kissing, Belisaunt identifies with a distinctly female tradition of bodily piety that included saints and mystics such as Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena, and Margery Kempe, who

⁴⁵ Yoon, 'Leprosy, Miracles, and Morality', pp. 38, 51–52.

⁴⁶ Orlemanski, 'How To Kiss a Leper', p. 143.

⁴⁷ Orlemanski, 'How To Kiss a Leper', p. 151.

cared for and kissed lepers.⁴⁸ Though Belisaunt's kiss does not cure Amiloun, it aligns her with the saintly, a tenuous alignment given her aggressively sexual pursuit of Amis earlier in the romance. The seemingly discordant association of the very sexual Belisaunt with the saintly illustrates the poem's alternative system of ethics, a system we might call queer and that we might say is crippled by leprosy. By bringing together disgust and affection, the interface between Belisaunt and Amiloun merges bodily, sexual, and spiritual difference. Intensifying the disruptive nature of Belisaunt's kiss is that her intent is ambiguous. After kissing Amiloun, the poet reports that

Into hir chaumber she gan him lede
And kest of al his pover wede
And bathed his bodi al bare,
And to a bedde swithe him brought;
With clothes riche and wele ywrought;
Ful blithe of him thai ware. (ll. 2179–84)

Because the kiss is followed by Belisaunt's undressing, bathing, and tucking Amiloun into bed, it can be read as simultaneously erotic, spiritual, and even motherly.

Medieval saints frequently cared for the sick and impaired in order to demonstrate their spiritual singularity. Women religious in particular nurtured the infirm in order to emphasize their ability to withstand the threat that their procreative — and, therefore, prone to sexual temptation and tempting — bodies represented. St Elizabeth of Hungary, for instance, abandons her own children but devotes the rest of her life to caring for the sick and impaired. The act of caring for those with bodily ills allowed women religious to supplant physical motherhood with spiritual motherhood, a patristically accepted containment of female sexuality. Margery Kempe, specifically, uses her spiritual mothering of those with impairments in order to redefine her experience with childbirth and motherhood in spiritual terms.⁴⁹ Belisaunt's affectionate care of Amiloun implies that Belisaunt is part of this female spiritual convention. Her motherly kindness toward Amiloun forms a bond that usurps that which she shares with her own children. Like St Elizabeth — and even Margery Kempe, whose fourteen children are seldom mentioned in her *Book* — Belisaunt abandons her own children

⁴⁸ On the leper's kiss, see Peyroux, 'The Leper's Kiss'; Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 144–46; and Orlemanski, 'How To Kiss a Leper'. For the leper's kiss and female same-sex desire, see Hsy, "Be More Strange and Bold".

⁴⁹ See Pearman, *Women and Disability*, pp. 113–50.

in favour of nurturing Amiloun. However, Belisaunt's forsaking her children reaches incredulously epic proportions when she forgives her husband for killing them so that Amiloun may be cured. After Amis tells her of his deed, she replies,

God may sende ous childer mo,
Of hem have thou no care.
Yif it ware at min hert rote,
For to bring thi brother bote,
My lyf y wold not spare. (ll. 2393–97)

As Jost finds, 'Belisaunt's cold and unimpassioned response to the sight of her blood-drenched babies is incomprehensible, unnatural'.⁵⁰ Such a response reveals that she honours not only her bond with her husband over that with her children but also that which she shares with Amiloun; her feelings for Amis and Amiloun are so strong that she is willing to sacrifice her children and even her own life to cure Amiloun. Thus, while her mothering of Amiloun at first establishes her as a 'spiritual' mother to Amiloun, her easy acceptance of the murder of her own children presents her as a perverse mother, one Jost has described as utterly 'transgressive of motherhood, if not femininity'.⁵¹

Belisaunt is able to be a part of the heterosyncratic community shared by Amis and Amiloun not only through her disavowal of the compulsory demands of gender but also because she is willing to form social and sexual alliances with multiple people, regardless of sex or ability. The 'failure' of Belisaunt's femininity as demonstrated by her perverse mothering of Amiloun is interwoven with the 'failure' of heterosexual hegemony within the relationships shared by the three characters. Indeed, the union between Amis and Amiloun is not as exclusive as it has been previously labelled. Amiloun, just like Amis, actively forms social and sexual alliances with others, and, as with his bond with Belisaunt, Amiloun's disabled body often serves as the catalyst to those alliances. For instance, he shares an intimate bond with Amoraunt, his young nephew who remains his caretaker and companion after Lady Amiloun vehemently rejects him. During Amiloun's forced exile to a small hut far from his home, Amoraunt visits him daily. Amoraunt swears he will never forsake Amiloun (ll. 1651–56), and soon Lady Amiloun refuses to provide food for either one of them, forcing them to beg in the streets. In spite of — or, perhaps *because* of — Amiloun's hideous disease and immense poverty, Amoraunt stays by his side for three years, going so far

⁵⁰ Jost, 'Hearing the Female Voice', p. 122.

⁵¹ Jost, 'Hearing the Female Voice', p. 122.

as to carry Amiloun on his back when he is unable to walk any further (l. 1832) and finally procuring a pushcart in which to push his uncle (l. 1858). Amoraunt's care for the impaired Amiloun mirrors the tenderness Belisaunt exhibits during Amiloun's stay at the castle; thusly, the development of their relationship depends upon his disabled body.

Baldwin claims that Amoraunt's kindness to Amiloun is only a result of his kinship to Amiloun (l. 362). Furthermore, Edward Foster finds the relationship one-sided: 'There is no equal "plighting" here.'⁵² However, Amoraunt's fierce dedication to his poor, sick uncle and his willingness to live in poverty by his side suggest a more multidimensional bond, and his uncle reciprocates his nephew's kindness by bequeathing his property to him at the end of the poem (ll. 2488–89). Again, though this relationship is never explicitly labelled as sexual, Amoraunt and Amiloun share moments that are inherently erotic. Delany claims that the line describing Amoraunt carrying his uncle on his back may serve 'as a submerged but grammatically correct sexual pun.'⁵³ While the line reads 'And at his rigge he dight him yare' (l. 1832), Delany explains that as a pun 'the phrase could read: at his (Amiloun's) back he (Amoraunt) did | serviced him (Amiloun)', noting that the Middle English term 'dight' could mean 'to get ready to use, and to have sexual intercourse with.'⁵⁴ Furthermore, Amoraunt is often described as young and attractive in the poem, thus marking the boy as a sexual object (ll. 1828–30, 1915–16, 1975) and aligning him with Amis and Amiloun, whose 'bond is predicated on male beauty.'⁵⁵ Amoraunt's name is even changed from Owaines to Amoraunt, which derives from the French *amour*. It is evident that a great love (whether platonic, familial, sexual, or all three) exists between the two.

When their love is tested by a knight of Amis's castle, Amourant remains true to Amiloun. The knight, noticing the physical differences between the young man and old leper, asks him to abandon the leper and join him to serve the duke (ll. 1934–38). Despite the knight's promise of riches, Amoraunt refuses to leave Amiloun, swearing to 'never forsake' him (l. 1944). Dumbfounded by the handsome young man's loyalty to the crippled, poor leper 'most fole' (l. 1978), the knight returns inside to tell the duke of Amoraunt's refusal of the offer. The knight's inability to fathom why the attractive 'swain' (l. 1972) would want to remain with 'the lazer in the wain' (l. 1985) is based on the physical discrepancies

⁵² *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. by Foster, 'Introduction', p. 6.

⁵³ Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 69.

⁵⁴ Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 79 n. 20.

⁵⁵ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 105.

between the bodies of Amoraunt and Amiloun. For him, a suitable social or sexual relationship depends upon two things: bodily ability and exclusivity. According to the knight's view of homosocial/sexual bonds, Amiloun's crippled body omits him as an appropriate companion for Amoraunt. Moreover, like the steward who tempts Amis early on, the knight demands that Amoraunt 'forsake' (l. 1985) his bond with Amiloun in order to serve the duke: one bond must replace the other. Amis, however, is able to understand the young man's loyalty, surmising

'Thei his lord be lorn,
Par aventour, the gode man hath biforn
Holpen him at his nede,
Other the child is of his blod yborn,
Other he hath him othes sworn
His liif with him to lede.' (ll. 1993–98)

Amoraunt's ability to uphold his oath to Amiloun marks him as 'trewe and gode' (l. 2000) according to Amis, and he seeks to reward the young man by offering his golden cup full of wine, the act that inevitably leads to his reunion with Amiloun. If we read Amis's cup of wine as symbolic of both his body in general and his shared bodily bond with Amiloun specifically, Amis's offering of the cup to Amoraunt demonstrates his dedication to preserving former bonds and his openness to beginning new bonds with others who share his social and sexual values.

While Amis, Amiloun, Belisaunt, and Amoraunt exhibit social and sexual behaviours that reflect the heterosyncratic, Lady Amiloun, like the steward and Amis's knight, seems to resist such promiscuous alliances, preferring a heterosexuality that depends upon monogamy and able-bodiedness. The first suspicion that Lady Amiloun opposes the heterosyncratic community of her husband and his partners emerges when Amiloun confesses that he has posed as Amis in order to defeat the duke and Lady Amiloun balks at his actions, accusing him of killing an honest man: 'The levedi was ful wroth, yplight, | And oft missayd hir lord that night' (ll. 1489–90). Later, she assumes that his leprosy is the result of his immoral actions (ll. 1561–69) and then shuns him. The poet emphasizes that the revulsion caused by Amiloun's disabled body is what leads Lady Amiloun to shun her husband: '[h]e is so foule a thing' that she and her family cannot bear to eat with him at the same table (l. 1593). Thus, though Belisaunt and Amoraunt accept and nurture Amiloun despite his disability, Lady Amiloun forcefully rejects him. As noted above, Lady Amiloun's actions, although they may seem inordinately vicious to the modern reader, were actually legally sanctioned by medieval law. Despite her adherence to the law, the poet takes great strides to assure readers of Lady Amiloun's depravity, describing her as 'unkende' (l. 1456)

and 'wicked and shrewed' (l. 1561). It is clear that readers should disparage Lady Amiloun's actions and take Amiloun's side even though the man he kills has told the truth.⁵⁶ In this way, the poem propagates an alternative morality wherein traditionally immoral actions, such as killing honest men and sacrificing innocent children in the name of upholding polyamorous pledges of faith, are rewarded and upholding laws and morals is punished.

Perhaps it is Lady Amiloun's resistance to the seemingly perverse that Amiloun punishes. After he has been cured, Amiloun travels back to his home where he discovers that his wife is about to marry another man. He halts the wedding and forces his wife to undergo the same abuses that she has afflicted on him (ll. 2473–84). Ultimately, as Byron Grigsby has noted, Amis and Amiloun 'make her into a kind of leper' by excluding her from society 'for breaking vows between human beings', thereby 'demonstrat[ing] proper social supervision of their community'.⁵⁷ The community that they protect, however, is not society at large, as Grigsby suggests, but the heterosyncratic community. Though Lady Amiloun consistently upholds 'moral' and juridical standards throughout the poem — she criticizes Amiloun for killing the steward, rejects Amiloun's desire to make bonds with multiple partners, shuns him when he is afflicted with leprosy, and attempts to enter into a monogamous, able-bodied, and different-sex union — she is labelled as 'immoral' for not participating in the heterosyncratic community. Ultimately, in the poem's 'messy' world of 'ambiguous logic',⁵⁸ the heterosyncratic, the queer, the disabled are represented as 'normative', while the moral is marginalized. In this fantasy world, which is produced, in part, by the poem's uncertain genre, Amis and Amiloun and their partners are free to enact their heterosyncrasies.

The text's genre has been the topic of debate because of its hagiographical, secular, and folk elements. Ojars Kratins asks whether the text serves as a chivalric romance or hagiography, while Delany finds the debate a 'red herring', noting that hagiography and romance are 'mongrel' texts that reflect a number of elements from different genres.⁵⁹ Tison Pugh agrees, affirming that 'the text

⁵⁶ Indeed, though in the French version Lady Amiloun is the steward's niece, the Middle English version provides no such justification for her emotional reaction to his death and subsequent vicious treatment of her husband. See Jost, 'Hearing the Female Voice', p. 125.

⁵⁷ Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature*, p. 95.

⁵⁸ *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. by Foster, 'Introduction', p. 7.

⁵⁹ Kratins, 'The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*', and Delany, 'A, A and B: Coding Same-Sex Union', p. 67.

occupies a liminal space between these two genres, both celebrating the chivalric world of knights and the heavenly afterlives of saints.⁶⁰ While I agree that coming to a fixed definition of the text's genre is moot, I find that its mixture of hagiographical and romantic elements marks it as particularly able to produce a queer/disabled space that enables the representation of the heterosyncratic community shared by Amis, Amiloun, Belisaunt, and Amoraunt. The indeterminate genre of the poem allows it to function as a space of imagination and desire that operates as a discursive example of what Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner call 'world-making'. The project of 'world-making', or 'queer culture building', Berlant and Warner explain, leads to 'the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or privileged example of sexual culture.'⁶¹ I extend Berlant and Warner here to include disability, changing 'the heterosexual couple' in the previous sentence to 'the heterosexual, able-bodied couple'. *Amis and Amiloun's* mixture of hagiographical and romantic elements marks the romance as particularly able to produce a queer/disabled space that allows for the existence of a heterosyncratic community that I have argued depends upon the disabled body.

Ironically, it is the narrative drive of the poem's indeterminate genre that inevitably shuts down the transgressive excess that the characters' queer/disabled heterosyncrasies introduce. Amiloun's leprosy, which challenges the standards of male beauty in which the poem has superficially invested itself, is cured by the murder of Amis and Belisaunt's two young children, thus restoring him to his previous attractiveness and able-bodiedness:

When Sir Amylion wakyd thoo,
 Al his fowlehed was agoo
 Through grace of Goddes sonde;
 Than was he as feire a man
 As ever he was yet or than,
 Seth he was born in londe. (ll. 2407–12)

Cured of his disfiguring disease, Amiloun's looks, wealth, and masculine prowess are restored. Likewise, Amis's killing of his own children and Belisaunt's cool acceptance of their deaths are forgiven when they walk into the nursery to find the children 'without wemme and wounde' (l. 2419). In effect, the narrative

⁶⁰ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 120.

⁶¹ Berlant and Warner, 'Sex in Public', p. 187.

attempts to prostheticize, to borrow a term from David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, the characters' most deviant qualities.⁶²

The cure of Amiloun's disability and the resurrection of the children signal the inevitable dispersion of the heterosyncratic community that the bulk of the text exhorts as a viable way of life. After punishing Lady Amiloun, Amiloun gifts his land and goods to his nephew (2488–99), whose name has notably changed back to Owaines from Amoraunt, a name that not only 'semantically linked him to his uncle' but that also signified their bond of love.⁶³ Belisaunt, once the formidable female figure within the community, disappears from the text after witnessing the return of her children. The text then ends with Amis and Amiloun's building an abbey and serving God together until their simultaneous deaths. Amiloun's miraculous cure fits within the tale's hagiographical impulses, as the convention was a popular way to illustrate a saint's spiritual abilities. Moreover, it serves as a medieval example of the narrative treatment of disability within literary texts. Mitchell and Snyder, in their theory of narrative prosthesis, have found that bodily difference prompts narrative, and that narrative is then driven to limit the deviance such embodied differences create, often through cure. Though Mitchell and Snyder focus on modern texts, scholars have found elsewhere that this sometimes holds true in medieval narratives as well, as it ostensibly does in *Amis and Amiloun*.⁶⁴ Once Amiloun is cured, the poem quickly busies itself in resolving the other deviancies of the narrative, a task not unfamiliar to the generic narrative structure of medieval romance. Indeed, as Nicola McDonald finds, the narrative drive of medieval romance 'always finds satisfaction. *Aventure*, the essence we are told of romance, presumes in fact an unfolding of narrative that — because it is literally *advenire*, "to arrive at" or "to reach" — is inescapably mindful of its end'.⁶⁵

Although on the surface it would seem that the poem successfully disciplines its queer/disabled bodies, I contend that its drive to limit that which appears deviant, actually results in the dissemination of deviance in productive and imaginative ways. Judith Butler, in her essay on censorship and fantasy, 'The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess', asserts that censorship actually produces that which it attempts to prohibit. She writes:

⁶² Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, esp. p. 53.

⁶³ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 117.

⁶⁴ See Pearman, *Women and Disability*. Though Pearman finds some evidence of narrative prosthesis at work in medieval literature, most of her book examines narratives that resist prostheticization.

⁶⁵ McDonald, 'A Polemical Introduction', p. 13.

I want to suggest that certain kinds of efforts to restrict practices of representation in the hopes of reigning in the imaginary, controlling the phantasmatic, end up reproducing and proliferating the phantasmatic in inadvertent ways, indeed, in ways that contradict the intended purposes of the restriction itself.⁶⁶

Thus, in the narrative's desire to 'reign in' the poem's excesses, or fantasies, lies the proliferation of those fantasies. Pugh roots the poem's desire for an ending that suppresses its 'queer tensions' — and, I would add, its disabled bodies — in its oscillation between romance and hagiography. While the genre of romance would call for 'a heteronormative hero living "happily ever after" with his [female] beloved,' hagiography allows the two men to unite, but only in death and only asexually.⁶⁷ Both genres, then, demand the narrativ disciplining of the men's queerness and disability through their erasure. Though Pugh's study focuses on sexuality, one can easily see how disability connects to what he calls 'compulsory queerness'. He writes:

Because queerness and heterosexuality are constituted within a complex framework of interrelated factors of social identity, they should not stand alone as markers of personal identity. Rather compulsory queerness relates to the ways in which a person's social class, religion, occupation, personal relationships, and other social factors are linked with sexual identity to construct appropriate ideological normativity; it arises in the chasm between personal identity and social ideal in that the failure to embody the ideal necessarily reveals the falsehoods of gender and the ambivalent power of the queer.⁶⁸

Pugh here clearly juxtaposes 'queerness' and 'heterosexuality'. As such, the queer elements of Amis and Amiloun for Pugh do not constitute any sort of sexual resistance; compulsory queerness upholds heterosexuality and the two are left to define one another.⁶⁹ Interestingly, however, the image Pugh uses to illustrate the contained queerness of Amis and Amiloun, the disabled figure of the eunuch, blurs the clear-cut division he draws between the heterosexual and the queer. He writes:

[D]eath castrates Amis and Amiloun such that their queer desire for brotherhood, which trumped all other courtly and sexual desires throughout the romance is contained within the grave where it can retain its spiritual aspects yet be freed from any homoerotic or sexual aspersions.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Butler, 'The Force of Fantasy', p. 187.

⁶⁷ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 185 n. 42, pp. 120–21.

⁶⁸ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 120.

Pugh notes the contradiction inherent in casting the eunuch as the paragon of heteronormativity, remarking that the 'restored yet sexless masculinity of eunuchism' becomes the symbol for sexual normativity.⁷¹ However, it is precisely this figure of the eunuch that calls me to question Pugh's assertion that Amis and Amiloun possesses a 'tame[d] queer potential'.⁷² As a disabled and decidedly queer figure, the eunuch is the embodiment of the queercrip.⁷³ If we are to view Amis and Amiloun as eunuchs in the grave, then the queercrip consciousness of the text, even at its end, resists taming. As eunuchs, their disabled, queer bodies — though enclosed physically in the tomb — inherently resist narrative closure, thereby continuing to expose the failure of, not uphold, able-bodied heterosexuality.

The seemingly neat conclusion of *Amis and Amiloun* does not, then, limit the heterosyncratic that it produces, for its heterosyncratic community both begins and ends with the disabled body. The usually fixed end, or the satisfactory conclusion, of medieval romance is thus troubled by the unfixed bodies of Amis and Amiloun in death, despite death's usually normalizing effects. Instead of bringing the queer/disabled bodies of Amis and Amiloun back to the norm, the poem's conclusion supplants their queerness and disability with the queer/disabled figure of the eunuch. If the disabled body demands narrative, then Amis and Amiloun as eunuchs continue to demand and produce narrative, even in death. As a result, the two men's bodies resist the containment that the narrative's textual drive desires and serve as a spectral reminder of the poem's queer/disabled ethics. McDonald notes that

Popular romance is (despite its predilection for the happy endings that seem to confirm social norms and dominant ideologies) an imaginary space [...] in which the transgression of cultural boundaries is both embodied and explored; this transgression is sometimes punished, sometimes rehabilitated, and sometimes accommodated, but it is never repressed.⁷⁴

The narrative's drive to repress deviancies such as Amiloun's leprosy and the heterosyncratic community shared by Amis, Amiloun, Amoranut, and Belisaunt and its failure at doing so reveals the latent power of such deviancies. As Butler

⁷¹ Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 121.

⁷² Pugh, *Sexuality and its Queer Discontents*, p. 18.

⁷³ To borrow from Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Amis and Amiloun as eunuchs enact an alternative, non-normative male femininity. Thanks to Susan Pelle for helping to refine this thought.

⁷⁴ McDonald, 'A Polemical Introduction', p. 16.

argues, fantasy is the ‘not yet real, what is possible or futural, or what belongs to a different version of the real’.⁷⁵ Ultimately, *Amis and Amiloun* functions as a fantasy space imbued with the possibilities of the ‘not yet real’, or that which may be transformative or subversive, that promises a world-making both within and without the text that positions the heterosyncratic community as a valued and valuable way of life for men and women of all genders, sexualities, and abilities.⁷⁶

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⁷⁵ Butler, ‘The Force of Fantasy’, p. 185.

⁷⁶ I would like to thank Christopher Castiglia, Susan Pelle, and Ann Mattis for their insightful comments on early drafts of this article. I also thank the editors and an anonymous outside reader for their valuable recommendations.

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ANALYTICAL SURVEY: ENCOUNTERING DISABILITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Richard Godden and Jonathan Hsy

Introduction: Recovery and Beyond

The study of disability in the European Middle Ages is a young and burgeoning field. Many of the foundational essay collections and monographs on disability and medieval literature are historicist in approach, seeking to examine representations of — and understand past attitudes towards — people whom we might today identify as disabled. In most cases, disability can denote a fairly recognizable set of physical impairments, such as blindness, deafness, or limited mobility. Groundbreaking works of medievalist scholarship exploring such modes of embodied difference include an early article by Christopher Baswell on mobility and more recent monographs by Edward Wheatley and Julie Singer on blindness; the single-authored study by social historian Irina Metzler entitled *Disability in Medieval Europe* and Joshua Eyer's edited collection, *Disability in the Middle Ages*, encompass representations of people across a spectrum of somatic and sensory capacities, including those who were deaf or mute.¹ In addition to addressing

¹ Baswell, 'King Edward and the Cripple'; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*;

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Abstract: This analytical survey offers an overview of current approaches to disability in medieval literature and culture. The first section traces important medical, social, religious, and cultural models of disability. The second section examines how critical notions of monstrosity and prosthesis inform contemporary analysis of medieval texts. The third section demonstrates connections between medieval literature and activist-oriented criticism. The final section considers cross-historical approaches to disability, including future approaches to disability aesthetics and theory.

Keywords: Aesthetics, disability, deformity, ethics, impairment, monstrosity, prosthesis, theory.

externally evident forms of physical difference, medieval scholarship on disability also attends to inner qualities that resist easy alignment with modern discourses. In *Care and Custody of the Mentally Ill, Incompetent, and Disabled*, for instance, Wendy Turner examines an archive of legal, literary, ecclesiastical, and medical texts, revealing capacious medieval understandings of cognitive faculties, mental states, and intellectual capacities. In its expansive somatic, sensory, and mental dimensions, disability can at times reshape broad conceptions of the body. When disability scholars turn to the historical past, they often suggest new ways of thinking about bodies that are somehow perceived as ‘unusual’ — potentially including (in a medieval context) dwarves, giants, and monsters, but also human bodies that register as nonstandard or abnormal, miraculous or extraordinary, monstrous or deformed. In *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, for example, editors Allison Hobgood and David Houston Wood approach so-called dwarves and giants as well as diseased and ill people as ‘nonstandard bodies’, and the editors build upon the work of medieval scholars to investigate varied facets of embodiment in premodern literature and culture.

This essay opens with a crowded list of disparate studies to showcase just how active the field of medieval disability studies has become in a short amount of time. One factor accounting for such diversity in medieval disability studies — a field that accommodates varied forms of physical conditions and mental states — is the lack of a single definition of ‘disability’ in the Middle Ages. Projects of historicist recovery have varied considerably from one study to the next (and will continue to do so in the future) since neither ‘disability’ — nor even a broad notion of ‘normalcy’ — existed as a fixed term in the medieval West. As prominent disability scholar Lennard Davis has argued, the concept of the normal body in Western culture (and, by extension, the idea of the disabled body as deviation from a norm) was a relatively recent invention linked to the dominance of scientific standardization and spread of statistical analysis in the nineteenth century.² Medievalists who work in eras before the social or political ‘invention’ of disability have a certain degree of flexibility in the issues they might choose to explore under this rubric. This being said, medievalists are also acutely aware of how modern notions of disability and normalcy cannot simply be transported back to earlier historical periods, and scholars have carefully adapted modern vocabularies of disability to provide nuanced understandings of physicality and embodiment in the past.

and Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*.

² Davis, ‘Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power’.

One of the urgent questions that medieval scholarship in this field confronts is how readily the modern term ‘disability’ can be incorporated into historically and culturally disparate contexts. As Metzler notes in her foundational study, there is no ‘umbrella term for “disability” [...] during the Middle Ages,’ and rather than invoke modern terms such as ‘normal’ and ‘disabled,’ she prefers to examine social attitudes toward modes of physical ‘impairment’ instead.³ In a moment of critical self-reflection, she adds that

[one issue] central to my research is the question whether we can at all refer to medieval ‘disabled’ persons, or whether we are dealing historically with medieval ‘impaired’ persons who might not share much of the ‘special needs’ status of their modern counterparts. It is therefore preferable to speak of ‘impairment’ during the medieval period, rather than of ‘disability,’ which implies certain social and cultural connotations that medieval impaired persons may not have shared with modern impaired people.⁴

In this careful parsing of critical terms, Metzler addresses the unavoidable misprision between the modern word ‘disability’ and its manifestations in the medieval past. In a similar vein, Christina Lee’s work on illness and the body in Anglo-Saxon England acknowledges the discursive and conceptual limits to using the term ‘disability’ to refer to all people who are ‘physically different’. As Lee observes, modern disability studies tend not to use the term ‘disabled’ unless a physical difference has a significant effect on how a person is perceived or treated by others, and ‘in some cases [...] no evidence for discrimination against the physically different’ can be discerned from the historical and literary texts we have available.⁵ In the wide-ranging contexts that medievalists have explored, it has become increasingly apparent that medieval contexts can invite scholars to carefully resituate contemporary discourses of disability.

Since notions of ‘disability’ and ‘normalcy’ in the distant past resist easy definition — and perceptions of human physical difference can be so varied, even within any given historical moment — medieval disability scholars have not so much invested in developing a uniform concept of ‘disability’ as much as they have enacted concurrent models for apprehending people whom we would now perceive as disabled. The most widely acknowledged approaches to disability are known in the parlance of the field as the medical, social, and cultural models.

³ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 5.

⁴ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 2.

⁵ Lee, ‘Disability,’ p. 23.

These models have primarily been articulated by contemporary scholars and health care professionals, so medievalists have adapted these approaches for studying the Middle Ages. Metzler, mentioned above, subscribes to the social model to distinguish between ‘impairment’ — that is, a set of physiological circumstances — and ‘disability’, which only applies once an impairment is perceived or experienced as a hindrance. This constructivist model addresses the shortcomings of the medical model, which is an approach — informed by the history of science and medicine — that does not distinguish between impairment and disability; instead, it pathologizes all unusual physical conditions as in need of treatment or cure. Viewing the Middle Ages through the social model often highlights the need to negotiate the very real differences between medieval disability and our modern conceptions of it. Metzler ventures so far to claim there were no ‘disabled’ in the Middle Ages for modern scholars to study — there are only the ‘impaired.’ Such medical and social models have since been nuanced even further (a point addressed below), but these approaches persist insofar as they broadly characterize some of the most important studies of disability in the early twenty-first century.⁶

One noteworthy intervention in the field of medieval disability studies that reforms both the medical and the social model is the so-called religious model: this approach is most clearly outlined by Edward Wheatley in *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, a monograph on blindness in late medieval England and France. Whereas impairment is often understood today in scientific terms established by medical discourse, Wheatley notes that ‘the religious model as a discursive model was the most widely available construction in medieval European culture for recasting impairment as disability.’⁷ In proposing such a model, Wheatley does not assert a necessary relationship between sin and disability (for instance, the notion that blindness could only be understood as divine punishment for one’s wrongdoings or the cure of blindness as a sign of divine presence); instead, he posits that ‘[t]he religious model of disability neither denies medicine its place in medieval society nor asserts that medieval people always viewed impairment as the result of sin.’⁸ His attentive close reading of literary texts, lyrics, and drama — often informed by Foucauldian methodologies — considers religious discourse as one worldly mechanism of discipline and regulation of bodies. Wheatley’s

⁶ For another study of disability along the social model, see Stiker, *A History of Disability*.

⁷ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, p. 13.

⁸ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind*, p. 14.

approach lucidly demonstrates how discourses of blindness can be richly historicized on a local level.

In the same year as Wheatley's study on blindness, an important reassessment of the medical and social models of disability appeared: *Disability in the Middle Ages*, a collection of essays by literary scholars edited by Joshua Eyler. In his introduction to this collection, Eyler advances the cultural model: an approach to the medieval past that does not make discrete distinctions between impairment and disability.⁹ Focusing on literary representations, the contributors in Eyler's collection demonstrate how the social meanings of any given physical impairment are not inherent, and that disability — like gender, race, and other identity formations that align themselves with the body — is constructed through a complex interaction between an individual and his or her environment. As Hobgood and Wood state in their recent essay collection on premodern disability, cultural models seek to balance constructivist understandings with the physicality of embodiment. The cultural model asserts a 'reciprocity between body and culture, between lived corporeal difference and social perception of that lived experience'.¹⁰ Medieval scholars may never reach an agreement on what disabled people actually share across the expanses of culture, time, and space — be it overlapping histories of social marginalization, oppression, or (alternatively) a complex liminality, as Metzler has more recently posited in *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages*. It is perhaps safest to observe that any attempt to reify a medieval collectivity of people as disabled will be provisional at best (one must inevitably take into consideration gender, class, age, health, and profession, to name a few factors).

In an elegant introduction to a cluster of disability-oriented essays, entitled 'Disability and the Social Body', Julie Singer astutely observes that attending to disability in the past does not so much bring scholars closer to a critical consensus but rather provokes a dynamic reinvention of collective norms and perceptions — medieval or modern. Singer asks: 'When we acknowledge the cultural constructedness of disability without insisting on an impairment/disability divide, when we consider that in medieval eyes the "disabled" may have had nothing at all in common (not even "social oppression")', where do we proceed?'¹¹ Each approach to disability effectively 'reconfigures social identities in its own way' and the field as a whole 'points [...] to the value of an integrative, rather than an

⁹ Eyler's cultural model builds upon Snyder and Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability*.

¹⁰ Hobgood and Wood, *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, p. 5.

¹¹ Singer, 'Disability and the Social Body', p. 141.

exclusionary and identitarian, approach to the study of bodily difference in medieval cultures.¹² Contemporary modes of engagement with medieval culture — in all their diversity — demonstrate how attending to disability actively reconfigures all social relations, however scholars may seek to define them.

Since in all likelihood medieval disability studies will continue to reinvent itself, this survey does not establish a definitive or emergent overarching model for scholarly inquiry. Rather, the ensuing sections of this survey highlight some of the most promising approaches that scholars are adopting toward disability and the Middle Ages. Moreover, this discussion focuses primarily on medievalist scholarship that draws upon the critical resources of contemporary theory while also attending to historical difference. One way to put the historical past into dialogue with later disability studies and identities is through what Samantha Bassler has termed the ‘scholarship of advocacy’, or endeavours to address negative attitudes toward people from distant eras who might be grouped as disabled had they lived in the present day. As Bassler states: ‘While the casual observer tends to dehumanize the disabled person *prima facie*, the scholarship of advocacy illuminates the marginalization of the other that results from limited perceptions of disability and impairment.’¹³ While the ‘scholarship of advocacy’ seeks to address the stigmatization or exclusion of people with disabilities, other approaches enact affirmative approaches to disability and activist-oriented literary theory. This vibrant strand of theory enacts self-identified ‘crip’ positions: modes of cultural analysis and literary criticism that urge social change in the present. As Wheatley states:

Like gay activists’ adoption and ironic reinvention of the term *queer* as a sign of power, the term *cripple*, shortened to *crip*, has been adopted by people with disabilities (and those engaged in disability studies) to represent the inversion of earlier disempowerment as they engage in both political and scholarly activism.¹⁴

Moreover, as contemporary disability theorist Robert McRuer asserts in *Crip Theory* (2006), to ‘crip’ as a verb — much as one deploys ‘queer’ as a verb — is to adopt an orientation toward the world that asserts the potential for radical transformation of so-called normative social scripts, desires, and ways of life.

Insofar as ‘crip’ scholarship adopts an identitarian posture that is mindful of contemporary politics and social conditions, it might seem dubious — if not

¹² Singer, ‘Disability and the Social Body’, p. 140.

¹³ Bassler, “That Suck’d the Honey of his Music Vows”, p. 183.

¹⁴ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 4.

anachronistic — to claim that contemporary ‘crip’ approaches might have anything to do with a ‘pre-disability’ Middle Ages. This being said, medievalists have been on the forefront in showing how disability theory can instill more affirming and empowering understandings of disability in the past as well as the present. In 2004 (prior to the publication of McRuer’s *Crip Theory*), a roundtable session organized by Michael O’Rourke entitled ‘Crippling the Middle Ages’ was held at the International Medieval Congress (Leeds, 12–15 July 2004): it set out to explore how an attentiveness to the ‘historical specificity, constructedness, and contingency of [...] bodies’ that are ‘marked’ as disabled might reorient an approach to the medieval past.¹⁵ In his 2010 study, Wheatley — one of the participants in this roundtable — voiced a need for future scholarship to ‘medievalize’ disability theory as much as it ‘crips’ the Middle Ages.¹⁶ Scholars of medieval literature and culture, even if they do not openly admit they are doing so, often work to balance an attention to historical contexts while also enriching modern-day discourses of disability.

Historicist approaches that focus on constructivist ‘recovery’ or ‘uncovering’ of disabled lives in the past are increasingly conversant with contemporary disability theory. Most recently, Hobgood and Wood have urged a form of cross-historical conversation and critical engagement. Drawing upon the influential work of disability theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson — who argues that the ‘stareable body’ can serve as a catalyst for social change in the real world — Hobgood and Wood state that premodern culture and the discipline of contemporary disability studies should ‘generously behold the other’.¹⁷ In making this argument, Hobgood and Wood acknowledge how medievalists have already laid much of the groundwork for scholarship that rethinks both the past and present. For instance, an implicit alignment between monstrosity studies and later contemporary disability studies can be retroactively gleaned from the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, who — over a decade ago — characterized ‘embodiment’ as a ‘corporeal process suspended in a psychical and social matrix’, encouraging a more informed understanding of ‘both the body of the giant and the human body as complex, totalized wholes’.¹⁸ Premodern scholarship has thus already initiated very productive rethinking of embodiment beyond a post-Cartesian

¹⁵ O’Rourke, ‘Re: H-Dis: FINAL CFP: Crippling the Middle Ages’.

¹⁶ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, pp. 1–28.

¹⁷ Hobgood and Wood, *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, p. 10. See also Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*.

¹⁸ Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages*, pp. xvii, xiii.

mind/body split, attending to human subjectivity as a nuanced psychosomatic fullness. The critical insights of Hobgood and Wood, moreover, dovetail quite nicely with what Julie Orlemanski in her work on medieval leper-kissing calls an 'interface' between the vantage points of contemporary culture and a distant past — a dynamic relationality between historical perspectives.¹⁹

The remaining sections of this survey will stress the cross-historical relationality of medieval disability scholarship, attending to some of the contingent alliances between medieval and early modern ('premodern') eras and cross-comparisons between premodern eras and an equally heterogeneous modernity. This survey provides a sense of the scope of medieval disability studies by addressing a few themes that have emerged as key concerns in the field: namely, monstrosity, prosthesis, temporality, and advocacy. Not only does this survey assess how scholars currently discuss these concepts, but it also suggests how medievalist scholarship engages with aspects of contemporary disability theory and identity. Each section considers how modes of cross-historical analysis can yield new configurations of thought, perception, and experience.

Embodied Difference, Monstrosity, and Prosthesis

The lack of a single umbrella term for 'disability' in the Middle Ages has yielded a number of different strategies in medievalist scholarship. In order to avoid an anachronistic imposition of modern frames of reference onto the past, scholars have variously characterized the premodern bodies of the lame, the deformed, and the misshapen through conspicuously flexible adjectives such as 'extraordinary' or 'eccentric'.²⁰ The term 'extraordinary' owes much to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, a fundamental work in literary disability studies. This study develops Mikhail Bakhtin's 'notion that the grotesque body as carnivalesque disrupts the status quo and inverts social hierarchies' and observes that disabled bodies can be similarly disruptive; they do not so much call attention to some idea of physical difference that must be addressed in a text, but 'rather [act] as the entitled bearers of a fresh view of reality'.²¹ For Garland-Thomson,

¹⁹ Orlemanski, 'How to Kiss a Leper', p. 146.

²⁰ On the 'aberrant' body in premodern literature, see Bragg, *Oedipus Borealis* (2004); on 'deformed' bodies across premodern and modern periods, see Turner and Stagg, *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (2006).

²¹ Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 38.

the extraordinary bodies of the disabled 'operate in varying degrees as challenges to the cultural status quo, introducing issues and perspectives with the potential to refigure the social order'.²² Like Garland-Thomson's use of 'extraordinary', Christopher Baswell's employment of 'eccentric' challenges preconceived notions of disability but within a medieval cultural context. In his talk for the Felicity Riddy Lecture at the University of York, entitled 'Kings and Cripples: Royal and Eccentric Bodies in Thirteenth-Century England', Baswell stated: 'Let me add that I am often using the phrase "eccentric bodies", in an effort to circumvent both the concepts of impairment, and of socially-constructed disability'. Where the social model of disability, especially as it has been applied to premodern bodies, has been often 'limited or reductionist', Baswell argues that the eccentric and crippled bodies of the medieval period 'invite an aggressive effort to move past concepts of the body and its roles based on historically local, post-Enlightenment notions of the normal and abnormal'. While Garland-Thomson discusses modern American literature and Baswell examines medieval texts, both scholars attend to how different kinds of bodies — whether they are called extraordinary or eccentric — enact challenges to a perceived status quo or set of cultural norms. This section focuses on how the study of the premodern disabled body provokes a re-evaluation of the crippled and the healthy, of the aberrant and the normal, and of the power structures that attempt to maintain such binaries.

In her introduction to *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe*, Tory Vandeventer Pearman does not choose to frame her discussion in terms of extraordinary or eccentric bodies; instead, she shows how medieval disability studies incorporates and adapts theoretical conceptions of the body.²³ Engaging with work by medievalists Carolyn Walker Bynum, Sarah Beckwith, Steven Kruger, and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, she traces how notions of embodied difference are determined by physical and material conditions as well as ideas about what those differences mean when perceived by others. 'Emerging from this larger discourse on the body,' Pearman observes, 'medieval disability studies [considers] how social constructions of the body merge with the physical conditions of disability, noting how discourses have the power to reduce physical and psychological results'. This 'discourse on the body' reveals what Pearman calls an 'embodied Otherness', where the body becomes a site for making (cultural, gen-

²² Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 38.

²³ See Pearman's 'Introduction' to Turner and Pearman, *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe*, pp. 1–14.

dered, religious, sexual, racial) difference legible.²⁴ In *Women and Disability in the Middle Ages*, Pearman further argues that the discursive construction of the disabled body bears much in common with perceptions of gender and of monstrosity, with all of these categories emanating from the social production of what is regarded as 'deviant or dangerous'.²⁵ Similarly, Derek Newman-Stille's 'Morality and Monstrous Disability in *Topographia Hibernica*' describes the 'syncretising narratives of 'otherness' and difference' at work in Gerald's portrayal of the Irish as not only geographically marginal, but also morally and physically marginalized. Because of how easily 'one form of alterity is written as another', Newman-Stille argues that 'it is therefore not surprising that disability comes to be regarded [in Gerald of Wales] as monstrosity'.²⁶ While monsters and persons with disabilities are not entirely analogous to one another, the 'social construction' of both kinds of deviant bodies share, as Pearman describes it, 'overlapping characteristics'.²⁷ In *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, Lennard Davis describes disability not as a 'discrete object' but as 'a set of social relations'.²⁸ Insofar as Davis and Pearman attend to the role of the body in the construction of social norms, modern disability studies and medieval disability studies find themselves working in tandem. Pearman and Davis come from different vantage points, yet both suggest that bodies that register as disabled or aberrant cannot be understood in isolation: such bodies must be set in the broader context of their interactions with others in a social environment.

One insight that emerges most clearly from the studies discussed in this section so far is that disability, like monstrosity, enacts 'a set of social relations' through which we can observe, describe, and challenge the social processes that produce and attempt to marginalize difference. As many scholars have observed, disabled and the monstrous bodies share a similar function in literature: they exhibit a plot-engendering difference that needs to be confronted and eradicated. What purpose, for example, does a giant in medieval literature serve if not to be destroyed? While the disabled are not always so fully expunged as is the giant, their presence in a narrative often activates a need to intervene and somehow repair the disability (or remove it once again from the story). In their influential

²⁴ Pearman, introduction to Turner and Pearman, *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe*, p. 2.

²⁵ Pearman, *Women and Disability in the Middle Ages*, pp. 23–24.

²⁶ Newman-Stille, 'Morality and Monstrous Disability in *Topographia Hibernica*', p. 257.

²⁷ Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*, p. 24.

²⁸ Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, p. 11.

book *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder explore the dependency of narrative on the idea of deviance and deformity, arguing 'all narratives operate out of a desire to compensate for a limitation or to reign in excess'.²⁹ Narrative structure, then, works to 'prostheticize' some disabling element. Such theoretical understandings of prosthesis have been important not only in literary criticism but disability studies as a whole, in a large part due to the influence of David Wills's *Prosthesis*. For Wills, the prostheticized body, a hybrid assemblage, is the normal one, for the body is naturally incomplete. Mitchell and Snyder develop their own notion of prosthesis to help explain narrative closure.

Pearman has recently adapted Mitchell and Snyder's notion of narrative prosthesis for the study of medieval literature by attending to disability as well as gender. In 'Disruptive Dames: Disability and the Loathly Lady in the *Tale of Florent*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, and *The Weddyng of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*', Pearman traces how the loathly lady, a familiar figure in medieval literature, invokes patristic and Aristotelian medical models that view a woman's body as disabled: inherently faulty and potentially monstrous. In *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*, Pearman examines the intersection of monstrosity, gender, and disability as a result of 'the defectiveness of women in male-authored discourses' of the Middle Ages.³⁰ The loathly lady's extreme ugliness becomes yet another symptom of misogynist thinking, where 'the infertile or postmenopausal woman [is considered] disabled, for she cannot fulfill the socially constructed reproductive duties of her sex'.³¹ A woman such as the loathly lady, then, is doubly disabled due to her sex and her inability to fulfill a social promise. When examined through the lens of narrative prosthesis, the focus of loathly lady narratives shifts from the negotiation of sovereignty and women's bodies to a cure for a woman's disabling lack of beauty. Medieval texts that feature this narrative, such as Chaucer's 'The Wife of Bath's Tale' and *Dame Ragnelle*, transmute the hag from a 'despised object' to one of socially viable beauty. In this process, the masculine and aristocratic norms of Arthur's court are reaffirmed.

Pearman's insightful reading of women's bodies not only exposes the operations of misogynist discourse. It also discovers that '[t]hough the narrative force of each text would seem to demand a closure of the difference each woman introduces, the women resist and even exceed such closure through their bodily

²⁹ Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, p. 53.

³⁰ Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*, p. 24.

³¹ Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*, p. 25.

instabilities'.³² She asks of *Dame Ragnelle*, 'what happens to the disabled body once it has been prostheticized? Surely a somatic memory or specter of disability remains'.³³ Despite the drive toward correction or closure, Pearman argues that the memory of disability persists. For instance, the lady in *Dame Ragnelle* dies abruptly after she transforms into the idealized figure of beauty and health. What is banished by the narrative discourse is less the deformed hag as it is the fantasy of a perfect body. Moreover, the loathly lady's transformation from deformity to perfection belies the natural progression of human aging, which always leads toward debility and not toward perfection. Through her reading of the relation between gender and disability, Pearman 'seek[s] to upset traditional notions of teleological narrative drives'.³⁴ Along these lines, Pearman's analysis of *Amis and Amiloun* (in this issue) attends to both disability and gender as part of a dynamic set of social relations that not only implicates the changing bodies of women but also reconfigures an interdependent network of heterosexual and homosocial relationships. In *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*, disability theorist Ato Quayson observes that the teleological narrative drive to eradicate the troubling difference of disability is 'bound to fail'.³⁵ Like Pearman, Quayson critiques Mitchell and Snyder's notion of narrative prosthesis, asserting that literary closure through cure or neutralization fails 'because the aesthetic domain itself is short-circuited upon the encounter with disability'. What is affirmed in a medieval narrative such as *Dame Ragnelle* or *Amis and Amiloun* is that the disabled body persists and exerts profound transformative effects, regardless of any narrative drive to cure it.

While Mitchell and Snyder's narrative prosthesis is a flexible and useful schema for approaching medieval texts, its view of prosthesis is perhaps not pliant enough to fully encompass the errant and varied bodies of the premodern disabled or the multiple ways in which they are apprehended. In 'The Werewolf's Closet: Clothing as Prosthesis in Marie de France's *Bisclavret*', Gillian Nelson Bauer reads the werewolf Bisclavret's clothes as a prosthetic that allows the socially disabled lord to pass as conventionally human. This view of the prosthesis hews closer to Wills's conception of it as an addition or supplement. Other medievalists posit alternative readings of prosthesis. Marking a departure from the curative or reparative quality of our modern sense of prosthesis, Wheatley (2010) invokes

³² Pearman, 'Disruptive Dames', pp. 292–93.

³³ Pearman, 'Disruptive Dames', p. 307.

³⁴ Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature*, p. 152.

³⁵ Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*, p. 26.

‘the term *excess*’, which ‘intersects with [...] narrative prosthesis at a metaphorical level. A prosthesis is always an addition to the body, an excess.’³⁶ Wheatley reads the depictions of blind characters in Middle Ages as excessive, with that excessiveness often necessary to stage or prove the disability. In contrast to a narrative prosthesis that cures a disability, the witnessing and acknowledgement of excess allows the non-disabled to “fix” the situation, if we can use that term, by simply walking away and leaving the blind character fixed in the social margins where he has proven that he belongs.’³⁷

While the scholars above challenge how the role of prosthesis operates in literary narrative, other medievalists have tested how prosthesis functions in non-narrative genres. Julie Singer articulates the idea of ‘lyric prosthesis’ in *Blindness and Therapy in Late Medieval French and Italian Poetry*. Rather than achieving a prosthetic ‘fix’ through objects or through narrative closure, Singer argues that ‘late medieval lyricists construct an alternative rhetorical system that embodies the written (poetic) word by using rhetorical constructs to supplement or “heal” impaired bodies.’³⁸ The lyric insertions in the works of Guillaume de Machaut, for instance, are less extratextual insertions than they are a method to prosthetically compensate for his blindness by repeated recourse to rhetorical and poetic images and forms that recall a functioning eye. As Singer notes:

The eye is the fundamental unit upon which the *Voir Dit* is constructed. The text’s insistent reliance on round forms — the sun, the wheel of Fortune, and most of all the *rondeau* and other fixed lyric forms — constitutes an attempt to compensate for Guillaume’s disability, to prevent it from becoming a handicap.³⁹

Distinct from but related to a lyric prosthesis that uses linguistic constructs to compensate for physical disability, Singer further proposes a transhuman model of disability studies. This model would view the prosthetic as making the body different, and possibly even enhancing it. Such an approach, Singer argues, allow us to see how some examples of medieval disability prosthetically enhance the afflicted, often through an intellectual or spiritual excellence that obviates a physical impairment. ‘Such a rhetoric of compensation,’ Singer observes, ‘is strongly present in late medieval letters, from Petrarch’s and Oresme’s general remarks on sensory compensation to the “supercrip” phenomenon markedly apparent in

³⁶ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 27.

³⁷ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, p. 28.

³⁸ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, p. 2.

³⁹ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, p. 186.

the accounts in chronicles of physically impaired military and artistic figures.⁴⁰ Prosthesis, as explored by Wills and developed by Singer, challenges binaries of health/illness, ablebodiedness/disability, and self/other. Like the monster who incites 'category crisis' (a threat to rational knowledge and knowable boundaries), the disabled person exposes and reconfigures the limits of bodily coherence and integrity.⁴¹

As noted above, Davis views disability not as some independent object but rather as 'a set of social relations'. The disabled body within this social network can be considered incomplete, dependent upon its relation to other bodies and forces, biological and prosthetic. The 'dismodern' subject, as Davis calls it, offers a more expansive conception of the body-in-the-making: 'As the quadriplegic is incomplete without the motorized wheelchair and the controls of manipulated by the mouth or tongue, so the citizen is incomplete without information technology, protective legislation, and globalized forms of securing order and peace.'⁴² Here, Davis broadens a notion of disability to encompass not just physical or cognitive impairments but also political and social disadvantages. The aberrant bodies of the premodern, figured without current parameters of disability, provide an excellent vantage point for examining Davis's theory of the social and political interrelatedness of all bodies. Informed by the work of Davis, Katherine Schapp Williams's essay 'Enabling Richard: The Rhetoric of Disability in *Richard III*' traces how 'bodily difference' is woven throughout Shakespeare's *Richard III*, in the malformed body of the medieval king Richard as well as metaphorically in other characters and in the body politic. Williams concludes that the play 'challenges a binary of able/disabled bodies by assuming that every body starts from a position of disability, thus dispensing with the narrative of modernity that insists upon an idealized, able-bodied subject whose full independence suggests perfectibility'.

Christopher Baswell's 'King Edward and the Cripple' explores the pivotal position of the disabled in relation to the medieval body politic, and much like Williams's work it adds further texture to Davis's notion of disability as a set of social relations and how disability is implicated in political thought. Matthew Paris's account of the event in his *Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei* sets out to 'construct several kinds of stable body', but instead 'it holds at its miraculous center

⁴⁰ Singer, 'Toward a Transhuman Model of Medieval Disability', p. 4.

⁴¹ On 'category crisis', see Cohen, 'Monster Theory'.

⁴² Davis, *Bending over Backwards*, p. 30.

profoundly if marvelously unstable bodies'.⁴³ At first, the cripple Guil Michel plays a familiar role, not only presenting a negative image of the healthy body (including perhaps of the body politic) but also halting and disrupting Edward's procession in order to ask to be carried to Westminster. Somewhat surprisingly, the King picks up the crippled body of Michel and carries him the rest of the way. When their bodies are so joined in an embrace, a seemingly stable body carrying an unstable one, something miraculous happens. Michel's body transforms, his limbs straighten out, and his body returns to health by the touch of the King. Baswell argues that in this 'transformative encounter', the King's own body becomes abnormal, stained with the fluid that runs from the crippled body onto the royal body. Though he initially played the role of disruptive force, Michel (along with other cripples in the *Estoire*) 'enact[s] Edward's definitive move from corruptible morality to sanctity, yet they embody the insufficiencies, the permanent breakages, and the uncanny, queer affiliations such a move involves'.⁴⁴ Baswell's reading of how 'marvelously unstable' bodies transform one another in the *Estoire* surprisingly resonates with Davis's notion of the dismodern subject in the making. Both the medievalist literary critic and the modern disability historian interrogate the vexed and indistinct relationship between perceived notions of normalcy and disability. Where Davis argues that '[t]he dismodern era ushers in the concept that difference is what all of us have in common',⁴⁵ emerging voices in premodern disability studies would suggest that dismodernism is not something entirely new. The analysis of premodern bodies can provide a provocative and necessary disruption to modern modes of thought that place a healthy, stable individual at the center of literary analysis.

Advocacy and Activism

Attending to monstrosity and disability in literary works reveals the complexity of notions of embodiment in medieval culture, revealing some of the disjunctions between modern categories of difference and those operating in the distant past. Another mode of engaging contemporary understandings of disability with the medieval past takes the form of cross-identification over time. In one strand of

⁴³ Baswell, 'King Edward and the Cripple', p. 28.

⁴⁴ Baswell, 'King Edward and the Cripple', p. 28. For other intersections between notions of queerness and disability, see the section 'Queer/Crip Time' below. See also Wheatley, 'River Runs Through It'.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Bending over Backwards*, p. 26.

medieval disability studies, Bassler's 'scholarship of advocacy', autobiographical writings by medieval people resonate with the concerns of present-day disabled readers, critics, and activists. This area of medieval scholarship — which dovetails with the burgeoning interest in life writing, autobiography, and memoir across disability studies as a whole — offers some of the most intimate and politically charged scholarship on writers in the historical distant past. This section considers, by means of example, some compelling approaches to medieval writers who write in first person about their own blindness or deafness: it explores some of the ways that low vision and hearing impaired medieval writers speak for themselves and for other people who might share similar experiences.

Julie Singer has recently shown how historicist approaches to medieval literature resonate with contemporary disability theory. As mentioned above, Singer's analysis of visually impaired poet Machaut invokes the influential interpretive framework of Mitchell and Snyder: they identify disability as 'narrative prosthesis', a representational device or problem that disrupts and propels narrative.⁴⁶ Singer offers in the place of narrative prosthesis a modified notion of 'lyric prosthesis', a literary strategy of using embodied impairment to facilitate self-expression.⁴⁷ She notes that the poet-musician Machaut incorporates references to his own 'borgne oeil' [blind or impaired eye] throughout his lyrics, and illuminations produced under Machaut's supervision depict the composer as cross-eyed, further perpetuating this physically impaired persona;⁴⁸ such self-representation for Machaut does not serve so much as a problem to be solved but a feature that creatively impacts both 'the form and content of [his] short lyric poems'.⁴⁹ By examining the work of a poet who identifies as visually impaired — and reading his assertions of physical impairment as much more than a poetic trope — Singer not only reveals fascinating possibilities for rethinking the resonance of metaphors of sight and optics in medieval lyric poetry: she implicitly asks how modern critics might approach lyric poetry to speak for, and with, embodied experiences of people in the past.

Medieval writers certainly recognized how writing about their own embodied experiences could enact a strategy of self-expression while simultaneously speaking for a broader community of people. Teresa de Cartagena, for instance, was a nun and writer who identified as deaf. In her learned first-person treatise in the

⁴⁶ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, p. 154.

⁴⁷ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, pp. 154–55.

⁴⁸ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, p. 160.

⁴⁹ Singer, *Blindness and Therapy*, p. 161.

Castilian vernacular, *Arboleda de los Enfermos* (*Grove of the Infirm*) (c. 1475), she writes with great sensitivity about her deafness, and her allegorical narration of movement into a world of silence and social isolation suggests not only her somatic experience but also a transition into monastic life. This deeply meditative text culminates an understanding of the manifold benefits of silence, both spiritual and intellectual. A conspicuous shift in discourse transpires in the work. While the text begins with the use of first-person singular *yo* (I), Teresa transitions into a first-personal plural *nosotros los enfermos* (we the infirm) by the middle of the text, rhetorically calling into being an imagined collectivity of ‘aquellos que en el convent de dolencias tenemos hecha profesyón’ (we who have professed in the convent of afflictions).⁵⁰ The first-person account pivots from an individual experience to a wider meditation on the plight of a whole community of physically impaired people — men and women who are often, she stresses, socially isolated or otherwise vulnerable.

This impulse to balance individual self-expression with a concern for a larger social grouping with shared experiences can be discerned not only in the work of Teresa de Cartagena but also her modern readers. In an essay entitled ‘Deaf, She Wrote’, Brenda Jo Brueggemann — a self-identified hard-of-hearing scholar and disability activist — aligns her own positionality with Teresa de Cartagena and other deaf woman writers in different historical periods. Brueggemann delineates the contours of the identity category of the deaf woman writer across time, stressing that the key components of the phrase — ‘deaf’, ‘woman’, and ‘writer’ — must each be carefully historicized and set in a local context.⁵¹ The ensuing cross-comparison with contemporary deaf woman writers, such as living French actress Emmanuelle Laborit, explores the complications in assimilating a historically distant medieval writer into a modern identity paradigm, and Brueggemann reflects on how studies of autobiographical writing must take into account one’s gender and disability as well as audience (real or imagined). Such an engagement with Teresa de Cartagena asks how readily a single deaf medieval author might communicate across time to modern communities of people who identify as disabled.

In the case of Teresa de Cartagena — medieval nun as well as deaf woman — the notion of a shared disability experience constitutes a powerful connective force across time. Medievalists have shown how the social and historical circum-

⁵⁰ Cartagena, *Arboleda de los enfermos y Admiración operum Dey*, ed. by Hutton, p. 58; Cartagena, *The Writings*, ed. and trans. by Seidenspinner-Núñez, p. 42.

⁵¹ Brueggemann, ‘Deaf, She Wrote’, p. 577.

stances of this writer resonate with aspects of modern cultural identity formations. For instance, Yonsoo Kim and Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez attend not only to this writer's gender and deafness but also to the intricate facets of her ethnic identity and family background (the writer's grandfather converted from Judaism to Christianity, and her parents marked the first generation born into the new faith).⁵² This divergent scholarship on Teresa de Cartagena demonstrates how a writer might be retroactively 'claimed' in any number of ways — as a woman writer (and proto-feminist), as a disabled (Deaf) author, as a member of a prominent *converso* Jewish family.⁵³ Such divergent literary-historical trajectories need not be mutually exclusive, however. Disability — as Garland-Thomson argues — can and should be integrated into interpretive schemas that acknowledge the intersectionality of human experience, including gender, culture, and social class.⁵⁴ In the case of Teresa de Cartagena, the collective category of 'enfermos' — a mixed collectivity of people including so-called 'the feeble, and the blind, and the lame'⁵⁵ (e.g., the paralyzed man in the street⁵⁶), blind men,⁵⁷ and deaf women like herself — would appear to gather together disparate people who do not seem to share much except for their exceptional forms of embodied difference. In its all-encompassing potential, Teresa's term *enfermos* might serve as an ad hoc medieval 'umbrella term' that is functionally (if not politically) analogous to the modern term 'disabled'. Through avenues like these, medieval writers — and their later readers — demonstrate how embodied (and externally perceived) forms of disability comprise but one constitutive aspect of a thick lived experience.

Queer/Crip Time

In considering the shared experiences of disability across time, this essay attends to the many potential temporalities that an apprehension or experience of disability can unfold. While an analysis of the relationship between disability and temporality has not yet been significantly foregrounded in current work on medieval disability, the field of medieval disability studies raises several provocative conceptions of 'crip time'. The articulation of crip time, so far, extends from

⁵² Kim, 'Suffering as Such', and Seidenspinner-Núñez and Kim, 'Historicizing Teresa'.

⁵³ Hussar, 'Jewish Roots', pp. 151–69.

⁵⁴ Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory', p. 2.

⁵⁵ Cartagena, *The Writings*, ed. and trans. by Seidenspinner-Núñez, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Cartagena, *The Writings*, ed. and trans. by Seidenspinner-Núñez, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Cartagena, *The Writings*, ed. and trans. by Seidenspinner-Núñez, p. 40.

a rich exploration of temporality by queer theorists and by medievalists. In the scholarship of advocacy discussed above, for example, affective and political forms of cross-identification exhibit what Carolyn Dinshaw would call a 'queer historical impulse', the desire to touch, to make connections across time.⁵⁸ This section examines how embodied difference affects the individual experience of time, as well as intersubjective modes of encounter in time.

Dominika Bednarska describes the contours of crip time, where disability 'can construct an alternate sense of temporality'.⁵⁹ Such a temporality, which one could also call nonmodern or asynchronous, is significantly dependent upon the pressures that embodied difference would generate for a person with a disability. The ways that the disabled experience asynchronous temporalities are numerous, but one of the more significant manifestations of this includes temporalities of labor. Bednarska discusses how the contemporary disabled worker often needs more time to complete tasks and so finds herself constrained and regulated out of normalized labor rhythms; similarly, Metzler's *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages* explores how an impaired medieval worker might also suffer under the pressures of 'clock-time'. While it has been a common assumption that 'clock-discipline', with its alienating effect on disabled or injured workers, was a phenomenon of the industrial revolution, Metzler argues that such a thesis is already applicable to the Middle Ages. Occupying a temporal rhythm adjacent to, but not overlapping with, expected senses of time, the disabled can experience a fundamentally different temporality that contributes to their social liminality. As Metzler observes elsewhere, liminality is central to understanding the disabled: a person with a disability is caught between health and illness, and between being alive and dead.⁶⁰ This in-betweenness confounds the usual temporal rhythms of life, work, aging, and the several other temporalities with which bodies are enmeshed.

As suggested above, radical queer theory has offered alternate models to a 'straight' or linear unfolding of time. Scholars of contemporary culture — concurrently with medievalists like Dinshaw — have offered many provocative possibilities. Lee Edelman, for instance, has lodged a forceful critique of reproductive futurity fixated on the child; and Kathryn Boyd Stockton posits a notion of 'growing sideways' that evades developmental notions of maturation to adulthood.⁶¹ If

⁵⁸ Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Bednarska, 'Rethinking Access', p. 164. See also Michalko, 'What's Cool About Blindness?'; Titchkosky, 'Not-Yet-Time'; Godden, 'Getting Medieval in Real Time'.

⁶⁰ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 155.

⁶¹ Edelman, *No Future*, and Stockton, *Queer Child*.

queer theory — in all its variety — interrogates the presumed linear directionality of time, then radical crip theory pivots to rethink its pacing. Indeed, crip theory foregrounds the unavoidable mutability of *all* bodies as they shift and change over time. In his 'Compulsory Able-Bodiedness', Robert McRuer considers how we are all 'virtually disabled' because 'able-bodied status is always temporary, disability being the one identity category that all people will embody if they live long enough'.⁶² Disability, then, can be said to always carry a sense of inevitability, a fate and a temporal rhythm that we perpetually defer. The somatic memory of deformity that Pearman explores suggests a similar trajectory: disability lingers, reminding us that it is a *telos* we have not yet arrived at, but will.

Through the temporal pull that it effects on all bodies, the premodern study of disability, carried out from the vantage point of a historically distant era, can register as a profound asynchrony. To analyse premodern bodies through the lens of contemporary discourse directly forces the scholar to acknowledge time itself as a limit or boundary, and to ask whether cross-temporal engagement creates continuity or exposes deep disjunctions across eras. In discussing the historiography of disability, Metzler describes two modes in which the present engages with the past: the optimistic (or progressive) and the pessimistic. The former holds that the treatment and care of the disabled have improved over time, while the latter would assert that our attitude towards deviant bodies is consistent throughout history, and therefore the poor treatments of people with disabilities is inevitable.⁶³ As Eyler puts it, there is the potential here for a 'more damaging stereotype concerning medieval disabilities', which would see a necessary link between disability and sin.⁶⁴ While there is the risk of slippage and anachronism in the use of contemporary disability studies to look at the premodern, Eyler and Metzler demonstrate how a medieval disability studies (historically and theoretically informed) can reveal the complexity of the subject.

In 'How to Kiss a Leper', Julie Orlemanski examines the possibility for 'cross-temporal continuities and identities' to emerge when analyzing a medieval text.⁶⁵ Leprosy, or Hansen's disease, still affects two to three million people worldwide, but as Orlemanski attests, the stigma of leprosy has 'quarantined' the condition as a relic of biblical or medieval times. To confront the leprosy body, she draws on Elizabeth Freeman's notion of 'temporal drag', which stresses the 'retrogress-

⁶² McRuer, 'Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence', pp. 95–96.

⁶³ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, pp. 11–12.

⁶⁴ Eyler, *Disability in the Middle Ages*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Orlemanski, 'How to Kiss a Leper', p. 144.

sion, delay, and the pull of the past on the present'.⁶⁶ The drag of medieval disabled bodies on the present can enact desire, discomfort, and most significantly, as Freeman describes it, 'a *productive* obstacle to progress'.⁶⁷ By turning to queer theorizations of the desire for the past, Orlemanski neatly sidesteps any sort of simple identification that would (perhaps unwittingly) endorse a pessimistic view of medieval disability, and also avoids a disconnect that would further abject the Middle Ages. In focusing so much on the encounter with the premodern disabled, it is important to emphasize how people with disabilities — in the past and in the present — live in webs of interdependent relationships. As Orlemanski powerfully argues, the encounter with disability might be best characterized as an 'interface', a shared and potentially transformative event between two or more bodies — or, to put things slightly differently, this interface opens up a provisional zone of contact, allowing for an intersubjective encounter, through which two modes of temporality flow into one another.

In order to think about how the intersubjective encounter can enrich an understanding of crip time, this section closes with a return to Christopher Baswell's reading in 'King Edward and the Cripple' of Edward the Confessor's meeting with Guil Michel, a cripple who asks to be carried by the King to Westminster. Although Baswell does not explicitly focus on temporality (he gives more attention to the move from public to sacral space), there is a thick temporality to be unpacked. First, the cripple introduces asynchrony, a nonmodern temporality that represents an alternative to and perhaps a challenge of normative time. His request to be carried by the King imposes his need upon the royal body. Michel has also traveled to Rome six times, a surprising mobility for a body such as his, but as Metzler points out, the crippled in miracle narratives are often on the move, visiting shrines as well as physicians.⁶⁸ Initially, Michel's is a temporality dominated by his broken body, one of restless movements yet an obstacle nonetheless. His healing at the hands of the King is miraculous and brings him back to health, but most significantly, as Baswell argues, the curing of this deviant body brings Edward from 'corruptible morality to sanctity'. With the prosthetic help of the cripple that he carries, he leaves the mundane, perhaps arrested, temporality of the flesh and enters the sacred time of his eventual sainthood. The two bodies provide mutual care for each other, and so achieve their own desired *telos* together. In this episode of the King and the cripple, they embody what Janet

⁶⁶ On 'temporal drag', see Freeman, *Time Binds*, p. 62.

⁶⁷ Freeman, *Time Binds*, p. 64.

⁶⁸ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 172.

Price and Margrit Shildrick in their joint essay 'Bodies Together: Touch, Ethics and Disability' would call a 'becoming-in-the-world-with-others', an openness of two bodies to alternate modes of being, and to a futurity promised but not yet apprehended.⁶⁹ What begins as asynchrony, a clash of embodied difference, becomes a new kind of synchrony where the two bodies, in an interdependent embrace, affect each other. In her book *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity, and Sexuality*, Shildrick continues to develop the idea of 'intercorporeality', an encounter where the boundaries of bodily integrity become porous, and where each body 'becomes open to the world of the other'.⁷⁰ Not quite asynchrony or synchrony, the intercorporeal encounter is at once stable and unruly, a heterogeneous temporality that brings two or more bodies together, not into a simple joining but rather an interdependent openness to difference, and an embrace of a more just futurity.

There is a political dimension to this openness, one consonant with the urgency of disability studies, that arises out of a real need to critique and reshape our understandings of institutions of 'care' for people with disabilities. Towards the end of her essay, Orlemanski addresses the problems in putting a presentist and activist scholarship into dialogue with medieval sources. She calls for a medieval disability studies that acknowledges 'the claims that disabled persons in the past, and those in the present, exert upon our scholarship',⁷¹ a call that this essay embraces. Crip time offers an alternative to normative time, just as the crippled body destabilizes received notions of the body, and just as the study of disability in the Middle Ages challenges modern narratives of bodily integrity and autonomy. By attending to the queer temporalities, intercorporeal openness, and temporal drag of premodern disabled bodies, one can begin to frame how disability heralds a futurity that makes possible a becoming-in-the-world-with-others.

Crosstemporal Conversations and Theoretical Interventions

In the above sections, this essay has discussed some of the ways through which scholarship on medieval disability engages with contemporary modes of theory (with interests in concepts as varied as monstrosity studies, activist-oriented disability approaches, and crip/queer orientations). While no unitary model or method emerges from these approaches, it is evident that what makes disability

⁶⁹ Price and Shildrick, 'Bodies Together: Touch, Ethics and Disability', p. 62.

⁷⁰ Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity, and Sexuality*, p. 23. See also Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster*.

⁷¹ Orlemanski, 'How to Kiss a Leper', p. 154.

studies such a thriving and transformative field is precisely its capacity to change and adapt: to invite, accommodate, and sustain concurrent modes of engagement with the medieval past. Future trajectories in disability studies and medieval literature may very well lie not only in identitarian and historicist (recovery) approaches to the past but also in what Orlemanski calls the dynamic 'interface' between past and present that generates unanticipated modes of thought. Thoughtful and deliberately cross-historical modes of comparison can provoke new modes of literary analysis that might not otherwise be explored.

One promising avenue for the field might open up through a new attention to literary aesthetics. In *Disability Aesthetics*, Tobin Siebers argues that disability in historical and contemporary forms of art challenge dominant notions of beauty, taste, and artistic merit, and 'disability operates both as a critical framework for questioning aesthetic presuppositions [...] and as a value in its own right'.⁷² It may very well be that what literary medieval disability studies might offer is an attention to the deliberately crafted quality of medieval literature itself: historical forms of artistic expression not only invite considerations of the politics or ideology of representation but also enrich our appreciation for the very stylistic aspects of a work's operations — its language and very syntax, form, and metre. A turn from 'narrative' prosthesis (plot) to 'lyric' prosthesis (expression) might be further enriched by examining how the style (effect) of a literary work is achieved, how a text's aesthetic qualities might convey lived experiences or local understandings of what we would now call disability.

In gesturing toward how artistic productions (including literary works) might effect social change, Quayson asserts that '[d]isability serves to close the gap between representation and ethics, making visible the aesthetic field's relationship to the social situation of persons with a disability in the real world'.⁷³ This survey of existing scholarship on medieval disability suggests that a nuanced orientation toward disability can not only deepen understandings of particular local medieval literary strategies but also demonstrate how this more informed understanding of the past might transform contemporary discourses of disability as well. Along these lines, future approaches to medieval literature and culture may very well continue to foster Singer's vision of an 'integrative, rather than an exclusionary and identitarian, approach to the study of bodily difference in medieval cultures'.⁷⁴ As it continues to pursue broader horizons, medieval disability studies will certainly demonstrate increasingly manifold and divergent understandings

⁷² Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, p. 20.

⁷³ Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*, p. 24.

⁷⁴ Singer, 'Disability and the Social Body', p. 140.

of disability in the Middle Ages — and, potentially, transform perceptions in the present.

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