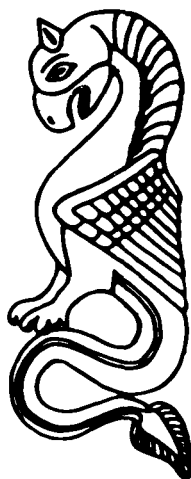


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**A dead killer?
Saint Mercurius, killer of Julian the Apostate,
in the works of William of Malmesbury¹**

Philip Shaw

Saint Mercurius of Caesarea was perhaps best known in the medieval West through his role in the death of Julian the Apostate. Although the narrative appears in numerous differing versions, the broad outline is usually as follows: Julian, on his way to fight the Persians, passes through Caesarea, where he argues with Basil, the bishop of Caesarea, and leaves, vowing to return and destroy the city. Basil and the citizens of Caesarea then pray for deliverance, and Basil is granted a vision of a lady (often identified as the Virgin Mary) sending Mercurius, who is buried in Caesarea, to kill Julian. Basil then finds Mercurius's arms missing from the church where he is buried, but they reappear the next day covered in blood; some time after this, a messenger arrives to tell how Julian has been killed by a mysterious assailant.

This episode reached the West in Latin translations of the pseudo-Amphilochian *Vita Basilii*.² Mercurius was also known in some areas through a Latin version of his own passion, but extant manuscripts of the *Vita Basilii* are considerably more numerous than those of the *Passio Mercurii*.³ The death of Julian also appears as a freestanding narrative, particularly in collections of Marian miracles.⁴ While Mercurius may not have been the object of cult in many areas in the medieval West,⁵ his role in this episode certainly made him a well-known figure. In particular, the dissemination of the narrative through Marian miracle collections—many of which contain versions of the death of Julian—probably made him more familiar to a wider audience. This article will examine the various contexts in which the killing of Julian by Mercurius appears in England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, focusing particularly on the role played by William of Malmesbury in the dissemination of the episode, and on his complex attitude to Mercurius.

For Ælfric, around the end of the tenth century, the *Vita Basilii* belonged amongst the lives of those saints culted exclusively by those in ecclesiastical orders, rather than the population at large:

placuit nobis in isto codicello ordinare passiones etiam uel uitas
sanctorum illorum quos non uulgas sed coenobite officiis
uenerantur

[it has pleased us to set out in this volume the passions or lives of
those saints whom monks, rather than the populace at large,
worship in the offices]⁶

Presumably, then, the death of Julian was not well-known outside monastic circles in Ælfric's day. Yet within a hundred and fifty years, William of Malmesbury was able to claim that the death of Julian was a common theme for popular songs:

Iam uero de Iuliani exitu quid attinet dicere, quod pro
magnitudine calamitatis cantatur in truiis.

[Now indeed what is of importance to say concerning the death of
Julian is that it is repeatedly sung in the streets, on account of the
magnitude of the disaster.]⁷

This alteration in the episode's fortunes coincides with the early development of the Marian miracle collections which were to become so prolific in the later Middle Ages. R. W. Southern established in 1958 that such collections arose first in England in the early twelfth century. In particular, he showed that the earliest collections were produced by Anselm the Younger and Dominic of Evesham, whom he describes as 'men united in admiration for the forms of Anglo-Saxon piety'.⁸ His arguments have never been seriously challenged, and his case is a plausible one.

The suggestion that the Anglo-Saxon spiritual tradition was an important factor in the development of such collections bears further examination. This article does not propose to deal with the complete collections, however, but will restrict itself to examining how the Julian the Apostate episode developed and was used in England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This provides not only an insight into English understandings of, and responses to, Mercurius, but also tends to confirm that this element of the Marian miracle collections was

connected with traditions that stemmed from late Anglo-Saxon England. The popularisation of the episode presents greater difficulties, and will be explored further below. Peter Carter notes in passing William of Malmesbury's comment on the popularity of the Julian the Apostate episode, but does not examine this evidence further.⁹ While attempts to recover the popular, oral dissemination of a story are necessarily fraught with difficulties, in this case it is possible to go some way towards elucidating the growth of this narrative in non-literary contexts.

Before considering the non-literary contexts for Mercurius and the death of Julian, a brief outline of the literary development of this narrative in England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is in order. Perhaps the earliest case in England of this narrative being excerpted from the *Vita Basilii* is not in a Marian miracle collection, but in *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, attributed (though probably incorrectly) to a monk named Hermann.¹⁰ This text appears to have been composed around the end of the eleventh century, and is probably a Bury St Edmunds production.¹¹ It describes the miraculous death of Sveinn Forkbeard at the hands of Saint Edmund, and compares this event with Mercurius's killing of Julian. William of Malmesbury summarises the story—but without the comparison with the death of Julian—in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*.¹² William appears to have used the *De Miraculis* as a source for this narrative.¹³ William may have known an account by John of Worcester, also omitting the explicit comparison with the death of Julian (though, as we shall see, maybe for different reasons).¹⁴

Hermann's *De Miraculis* provided the main source for a later collection of Edmund's miracles, compiled in several stages at Bury St Edmunds over the course of the twelfth century, and also known as the *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*; Arnold attributes the composition of this text to Abbot Samson of Bury St Edmunds, but Samson's work on the collection (if he worked on it at all) was probably one of the later stages in its development, and mainly editorial.¹⁵ This text repeats the story of the death of Sveinn, but, again, does not refer to the death of Julian. Several later authors give accounts of the death of Sveinn, apparently based mainly on William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester and/or Samson's *De Miraculis*.¹⁶ None of them mention Mercurius or the death of Julian.

While this equation between the death of Julian and the death of Sveinn was being written out of accounts of Sveinn's demise, the death of Julian was nevertheless gaining popularity through the early development of Marian miracle collections. Here again, William of Malmesbury was a pivotal figure. Southern has demonstrated that the Marian miracle collection as a genre developed initially

from two texts: a collection assembled probably by Anselm the Younger during the early twelfth century, and Dominic of Evesham's *De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae*, probably composed shortly after Anselm's collection, and possibly drawing on it for one of its miracles.¹⁷ These two texts present significantly different collections of Marian miracles, with Dominic of Evesham alone providing a version of the death of Julian.

William of Malmesbury, according to Southern and Carter, used the works of both Anselm and Dominic in compiling his own Marian miracle collection, *Miracula Sanctae Mariae Virginis*, probably composed towards the end of his life.¹⁸ That William knew both Anselm's and Dominic's work is broadly plausible, but exactly how he used these texts in composing his own requires further research. Carter states that William's version of the death of Julian is dependent on Dominic's.¹⁹ It appears that he based this claim on the overall shape of the collections (William's includes seven of the fourteen miracles recounted in Dominic's), rather than on textual correspondences between these two versions of this particular miracle. The two versions are quite different in content, wording and approach. William presents the narrative briefly, giving the broad outline but removing incidental details, whereas Dominic gives a much fuller version. Hence Dominic provides a detailed description, with direct speech, of Basil's presentation of bread to Julian, and Julian's angry response, which precipitates Julian's threat to destroy Caesarea. William, on the other hand, removes all the direct speech and reduces this part of the narrative to the bald statement that Basil 'Tulianum apostatam seueriori responso in bilem concitauerat' [he had aroused Julian the Apostate to anger by his more stern reply].²⁰ Dominic's account is also distinctive for its use of unusual or recondite vocabulary; *foenifera* [hay-bearing], *farifera* [grain-bearing], *hominifera* [human-bearing], *floccipenderent* [they should care a straw about].²¹ William's version is not lacking in linguistic ornamentation, but it does not reproduce these terms, and generally reads more straightforwardly. As we shall see, Dominic's attitude to the narrative he is presenting also seems to have differed somewhat from William's. While this does not mean that William did not use Dominic's version in composing his own, it is not improbable that he would have had access to a version of the *Vita Basilii*, which could also have influenced his account.²² A detailed discussion of how William uses his sources for each of the miracles he recounts must await a later, and longer, paper; but the foregoing discussion indicates some of the complexities and difficulties of undertaking such an analysis. J. C. Jennings has identified two manuscripts as preserving Dominic's collection more or less in its original form,

while the majority of the manuscripts give abbreviated or expanded versions of the text, or incorporate it into larger collections.²³ William's *Miracula* is one such larger collection, and his use of the death of Julian in this text must have contributed to the wider dissemination of this episode.

This brief account raises a number of problems, not the least of which is why William of Malmesbury makes no mention of the death of Julian in connection with the death of Sveinn Forkbeard, but does include the death of Julian in his Marian miracle collection. Related to this is the absence of the death of Julian from later accounts of the death of Sveinn; William's influence may have been an important factor in this development. We have also to consider how these two contemporaneous traditions relate to one another, if at all; could the use of the death of Julian as a model for the death of Sveinn have encouraged the inclusion of the death of Julian in Marian miracle collections? Or vice versa? The relationship of these textual traditions to oral traditions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries also remains to be considered. In order to understand the overall trajectory of the death of Julian in England in this period, we need first to understand William of Malmesbury's approach to this narrative.

When the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* describes the crusaders besieged in Antioch making a sally which puts the Turks to flight, it states that the crusaders believed that they saw the 'antiquos martires, qui olim milites fuissent quique mortis pretio parassent premia uitae, Georgium dico et Demetrium, uexillis leuatis a partibus montanis accurrere, iacula in hostes, in se auxilium uibrantes' [ancient martyrs who had been knights in their own day, and who by their deaths had purchased the crown of life, St George and St Demetrius, with flying banners come charging from the hill-country, showering missiles on the enemy, and aid upon themselves].²⁴ The choice of martyrs here is significant; in the *Gesta Francorum* and in Guibert of Nogent's *Gesta Dei per Francos* the same saintly helpers are mentioned, but in these texts George and Demetrius are accompanied by Mercurius.²⁵ R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom identify the *Historia Hierosolymitana* by Fulcher of Chartres as the main source for William's account of the First Crusade.²⁶ They also see this text as the source of much of this particular chapter of the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, but they note that 'Fulcher does not tell of the appearance of SS. George and Demetrius during the battle'.²⁷ This leaves a problem; William diverges from his main source here, but he does not quite follow either of the possible sources for the appearance of George and Demetrius. Thomson and Winterbottom hint at an answer by pointing out that George and Demetrius, without Mercurius, 'pursue the Turks after the battle of

Dorylaeum' in the *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem Expugnantium*.²⁸ This is a possible explanation, but it does involve William seriously mis-reading a text which Thomson and Winterbottom consider to be an 'adaptation' of his main source, Fulcher's *Historia*;²⁹ this is a possibility, certainly, but not a very likely one. It is simpler to suppose that William took the episode from one of the obvious sources—the *Gesta Francorum* or the *Gesta Dei per Francos*—either using a manuscript which lacked Mercurius, or deliberately leaving him out. On the whole the latter suggestion seems more likely.³⁰

The question then becomes, why would William leave out Mercurius? The answer lies, perhaps, in his attitude to revenants from the grave. William's description of George's and Demetrius's wild ride is carefully couched to suggest that William is reporting what the crusaders believed, without necessarily confirming its truth. Yet immediately after this, he comments explicitly on the plausibility of the story: 'Nec diffitendum est affuisse martires Christianis, sicut quondam angelos Machabeis, simili dumtaxat causa pugnantis' [nor can we deny that martyrs have aided Christians, at any rate when fighting in a cause like this, just as angels once gave help to the Maccabees].³¹ Clearly, William was decidedly dubious about this episode, and seeks to suggest that there are good precedents for this sort of saintly activity, whilst at the same time stopping well short of claiming veracity for this particular instance. It is in this light that we should assess the absence of Mercurius in this episode.

William expresses considerable doubt about revenants re-animating their bodies. Elsewhere in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* he pours scorn on claims that King Alfred's spirit used to return to his body and walk around in it.³² In making a case for saintly intervention in battles, William chooses angels as his example; these are saints who cannot re-animate their own corpse, because they do not have a corpse. Of course, George and Demetrius do have corpses, but William is careful not to claim that they are appearing in the form of their own re-animated corpses; he simply claims that they appeared. This suggests an interesting reason for William to omit Mercurius. Most versions of the death of Julian present Mercurius—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—as re-animating his own corpse in order to kill Julian. This seems to be how Fulbert of Chartres, in the early eleventh century, understood the story; he writes in his first *Sermo De Nativitate Beatissimae Mariae Virginis* that Mary 'mortuum [Mercurium] suscitavit' [re-animated the dead [Mercurius]].³³ Ælfric's homily on the assumption of Mary, probably written before Fulbert's, seems to have been concerned with exactly how the dead Mercurius, 'ðam deadlican cwellere' [the

dead killer], could kill Julian: 'ða ða seo halige cwen hine asende swa swa we nu hwene ær sædon. þa ferde his gast swyftlice. & mid lichamicum wæpne þone godes feond ofstang' [then the holy queen sent him, just as we have said heretofore. Then his spirit travelled quickly and stabbed to death the enemy of God with a physical weapon].³⁴ Clearly, Fulbert and Ælfric are imagining the miracle in rather different ways; Fulbert appears to be claiming that Mary revived Mercurius bodily from death, whereas Ælfric seems to draw a distinction between Mercurius's actual, physical weapons and the saint himself, who is never re-animated, but goes as a soul to kill Julian. William knew Fulbert's sermon, as he used it as a source in composing the prologue to his *Miracula*.³⁵ Whether or not he knew Ælfric's homily is harder to determine.³⁶ It is possible that William's omission of Mercurius is not a mistake, but a deliberate choice, reflecting his unease with a saint best-known in the West for re-animating his own corpse. Ælfric attempts to present Mercurius not as a revenant, but simply as a soul. Both Ælfric and William are out of step with other accounts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and both, apparently, because of a desire to avoid encouraging belief in bodily re-animation of the dead.

Such a rationale would explain some of William's alterations to the account of the death of Sveinn in his source, Hermann's *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*. Most obviously, it would explain why he excises all mention of the death of Julian from his version. A careful comparison of his version with that in the *De Miraculis* reveals that William does not simply remove explicit mention of the death of Julian—he also presents the death of Sveinn in a way which minimises its similarities with the death of Julian:

Sed non diu propitia diuinitas in tanta miseria siuit fluctuare Angliam, siquidem peruasor continuo ad Purificationem sanctae Mariae, ambiguum qua morte, uitam effudit. Dicitur quod terram sancti Edmundi depopulanti martir idem per uisum apparuerit, leniterque de miseria conuentum suorum insolentiusque respondentem in capite perculerit; quo dolore tactum in proximo, ut predictum est, obisse.

[However, the divine Mercy did not long leave England tossing in this sea of misery, for the invader soon met his end on the Purification of St Mary, by what form of death is disputed. It is said that while he was ravaging the lands of St Edmund, the martyr himself appeared to him in a vision and complained mildly

about the miseries of his community; and when he returned an insolent reply, the saint struck him on the head a blow from the pain of which he shortly afterwards died, as I have said.]³⁷

This account is a great deal shorter than the account in Hermann's *De Miraculis*, and it removes an important character from the narrative. The version in the *De Miraculis* involves a monk, Egelwin, whose prayers on behalf of the oppressed people of a locality from which Sveinn was demanding tribute are heard by Edmund:

Inter hæc præfato monacho querela populi commanentis eo notificata sancto, meruit sincera cordis ejus fiducia juxta quod petierat exaudiri, et ab ingruenti oppressione per opacæ noctis silentia, deditus sopori, ut humanus expetit usus, revelari [sic]. Tunc felix EADMUNDUS suorum misertus, verba cum minis rei Sueyn mittit, dicens, 'In meos quid furis, quid tributarios facis? Cessa, cessa tributum exigere, quod nullo dederunt sub rege, nec requisitum vel persolutum fuit post me eorum aliquorum tempore, quia si te ab hac infestatione non removes, prope cognosces quod Deo michique pro populo displices.'

[Among these complaints of the people remaining with the aforesaid monk, which were made known to the saint, the uncorrupted faith of his heart deserved to be heard according to what he had requested, and to be relieved from the assailing oppression through the silence of the dark night, when he was given over to sleep, as human custom demanded. Then blessed Edmund took pity on his people, and sent words with threats to king Sveinn, saying, 'Why do you steal from my people, why do you exact tributes? Stop, stop demanding tribute, which they have paid under no king, nor has it been demanded or paid after me in the time of the other kings, because if you do not desist from this persecution, you will soon come to know that you displease God and myself by your treatment of the people.']³⁸

Egelwin is a key character in Hermann's *De Miraculis*, fulfilling the role played by Basil in the death of Julian. The narrative—unlike William of Malmesbury's version—is a complex one, in which Egelwin visits Sveinn and is rebuffed. In this

passage, Egelwin appears to be a party to Edmund's exchange with Sveinn through a vision. William, however, states only that Edmund appeared to Sveinn in a vision, giving no indication how anyone could know what passed between the two in this vision. Thus William lessens the similarity between the death of Sveinn and that of Julian by removing the Basil-figure from the former. At the same time, William makes the death of Sveinn seem less credible by presenting it in such a way that the story seems to rely on having access to a vision seen only by Sveinn himself, and which appears to have been fatal. Removing Egelwin as a witness to this vision makes the narrative seem particularly unreliable.

In addition to removing the witness, William also removes the weapon from his account. While William simply states that Edmund struck Sveinn on the head, Hermann's *De Miraculis* twice claims that Sveinn was 'perfossum cuspidē' [run through with a point].³⁹ Here William accurately yet misleadingly summarises his source in order to remove any hint of the spear with which Saint Mercurius kills Julian in the *Vita Basilii*.⁴⁰ This all seems to be consistent with the idea that William was concerned to play down similarities between the death of Sveinn and that of Julian; and it also suggests that Mercurius, as a revenant, was not a figure William wished to propagate. Yet William does exactly that by including the death of Julian in his *Miracula*.

This may seem inconsistent, but a closer examination of William's *Miracula* suggests that this need not be the case. William describes Basil's vision of Mary and Mercurius, and the death of Julian, in the following terms:

Tertia igitur die uidit Basilius in somnis felicissimam dominam in excellenti throno propter templum considerare, caelicolasque ministros, magna frequentia et reuerentia, assistere. Tum illam uocem iocundam pro imperio emittere: 'Vocate mihi Mercurium qui eat interficere Iulianum, in dominum et filium meum anhelō spiritu insanientem'. Illum uocatum affuisse, statimque, nuntio accepto, cum lancea iter adorsum. Is festiuitatis agregiae miles fuerat, et in eadem urbe, gentilium tempore, pro Christo passus, uitam praesentem spe futurae abiecerat. Igitur pontifex, sopore fugato, uno tantum conscio, ceteris dormire permissis, ad sculpendam somni ueritatem, ex monte, nam ibi res agebatur, in urbem ire contendit. Veniensque ad sepulcrum martyris, lanceam, quae ibi ad memoriam seruabatur, non repperit. Consultus aedituus, per quiquid sanctum est, iurat uesperī eam ibi fuisse.

Nec multo post rumore in uulgu effuso, ipsoque populo ad laudes Mariae experrecto, reperta est loco suo lancea, recenti cruore rorans. Satisque constat illa nocte, ut tradunt historiae, inuisibili uulnere uita caruisse Iulianum, ut qui malitia sua turbauerat superos, truci anima grauaret etiam inferos.

[Therefore on the third day Basil saw in dreams a most blessed mistress sitting on an exalted throne before the church, and heaven-dwelling servants, in a great and reverent throng, standing with her. Then she sent forth her delightful voice in command: 'Call Mercurius to me, who may go to kill Julian, who raves against my son and lord with his breathless spirit'. When he was summoned he appeared and, having received the command, he immediately began his journey with his lance. He was a soldier of excellent joy, and in that same city, in the time of the pagans, having suffered for Christ, he threw away his present life for hope of the life to come. Therefore the bishop, when his sleep had been driven away and he alone was awake, allowed the others to sleep, and hurried from the mountain (for there the event happened) into the city, in order to ascertain the truth of the dream. And coming to the martyr's tomb, he did not find the lance which was kept there to serve as a memorial. When he questioned the sacristan, he swore by whatever is holy that it had been there that evening. Not long afterwards, when the rumour had spread among the people, and the populace themselves had been roused to the praises of Mary, the lance was found in its place, dripping with fresh blood. And it is generally agreed that that night, as the histories inform us, Julian was deprived of life by an invisible wound, so that he who, by his malice, threw the upper regions into disorder, might burden hell with his savage spirit.]⁴¹

This treatment of the miracle is strikingly different from that in the *Vita Basilii*. It is also, as mentioned above, quite different from Dominic of Evesham's account. Where William presents the populace's knowledge of the miracle as deriving from 'rumor', Dominic, following the *Vita Basilii* more closely, states that Basil 'evigilavit cunctos, enarrans eis iuxta praelibatam visionem magnalia Dei et celerem misericordiam piissimae matris Domini' [woke everyone up, recounting to them, according to the aforesaid vision, the mighty deeds of God and the swift

mercy of the most pious mother of the Lord].⁴² Dominic claims the authority of the *Historia Tripartita* for his account of how Julian was killed, by a soldier on a white horse, who was invisible to all but Julian himself.⁴³ William, while he may be alluding to Dominic's use of the *Historia Tripartita* by his use of the phrase 'ut tradunt historiae' [as the histories inform us], completely removes the killer from this section of his narrative, by claiming that Julian died not at the hands of an invisible assailant, but 'inuisibili uulnere' [by an invisible wound].

It would appear, then, that William does not simply abridge the story. He quite deliberately reshapes the narrative, undermining Mercurius's role while carefully preserving a miraculous quality in the narrative (the invisible wound remains miraculous, despite the absence of the saint inflicting it). He cannot, of course, remove Mercurius entirely, but by removing Mercurius from the actual act of killing Julian, and by reducing this killing to a brief statement that Julian died from an invisible wound, he avoids dwelling on the gory details of Julian's death (which may have provided much of the episode's popular appeal) and he avoids the issue of Mercurius's re-animation. This reduction of Mercurius's role also serves to highlight and strengthen that of Mary, who is, after all, the key figure in the *Miracula*.

It is initially surprising, then, to find that William includes a brief summary of Mercurius's passion: 'Is festiuitatis egregiae miles fuerat, et in eadem urbe, gentilium tempore, pro Christo passus, uitam praesentem spe futurae abiecerat' [He was a soldier of excellent joy, and in that same city, in the time of the pagans, having suffered for Christ he threw away his present life for hope of the life to come].⁴⁴ Clearly William was not utterly hostile to Mercurius, as this information could easily have been omitted. He may have felt it necessary to provide some sort of basic background information about a saint who was not likely to be very familiar to his audience. This information could also be seen as focusing attention away from Mercurius's role in the death of Julian and onto his passion—which is a not atypical narrative for an early Roman martyr, and one which is unlikely to have troubled William, if he knew it.⁴⁵ At any rate, while William is very happy to edit the death of Sveinn in order to cut out Mercurius entirely, in the rather different context of his Marian miracle collection he is prepared to repeat the story of the death of Julian. He is careful, however, to downplay Mercurius's role as a revenant in this narrative.

The emphasis on Mary's role in the death of Julian in the *Miracula* may also be significant. Hermann's *De Miraculis* does not include Mary (or any comparable figure) in its account of the death of Sveinn; while it has counterparts

for Mercurius and Basil in Edmund and Egelwin, the miraculous element in this narrative is entirely the work of Edmund. If William was averse to the notion of individuals re-animating their corpses, then the idea that Mercurius could be seen as behaving independently in the death of Julian episode would have been problematic for him. If Mercurius were to be seen as paralleling Edmund, then this could cause an audience to believe that Mercurius was the principal miracle-worker in the death of Julian, and therefore that he re-animated his own corpse. William's account of the death of Julian in his *Miracula* avoids this difficulty by presenting the narrative with appropriate emphasis on Mary as performing the miracle. Even if the audience interpreted Mercurius as going body and soul to kill Julian—as they were probably inclined to do—they are still seeing not a revenant from the grave, but an individual miraculously raised from death; something more familiar from scripture, and altogether more palatable for William.

William's response to Mercurius seems atypical. Although Samson's *De Miraculis* and most later texts do not mention the death of Julian as a parallel for that of Sveinn, these texts do not evidence any concern to downplay similarities between the two episodes—quite the reverse. The vagueness of the expression 'perfossum cusvide' [run through with a point] was exploited in a rather different fashion by Samson's *De Miraculis* than it was by William. Where William summarised this so as to make no mention of a weapon at all, the *De Miraculis* echoes its source's turn of phrase, rendering the first instance of 'perfossum cusvide' as 'lancea perfossum' [run through with a lance].⁴⁶ The second instance is treated more freely, making it clear that Edmund is the wielder of the lance: 'sancti Ædmundi lancea rex Swein transverberatus occubuit' [king Sveinn died, pierced through by the lance of Saint Edmund].⁴⁷ No longer do we have Edmund stabbing Sveinn with some indeterminate pointed object; in Samson's *De Miraculis*, Edmund behaves very specifically like Mercurius in the *Vita Basilii*, who uses his lancea to kill Julian.⁴⁸ The description in Samson's *De Miraculis* of the moment of Sveinn's death is much fuller than that in Hermann's *De Miraculis*, and echoes the account in the *Vita Basilii*:

Samson's *De Miraculis*:

intra cubiculum regi adhuc vigilanti subito *miles* astitit *ignotus*,
miræ pulchritudinis, *vibrantibus armis* ornatus. Vocansque
proprio nomine regem ait, "Vis habere tributum, O rex, de terra
sancti Ædmundi? Surge, ecce, suscipe illud." Qui consurgens, in

toro resedit, sed mox conspectis armis terribiliter vociferari cœpit. Quem continuo miles, *impetu* facto, lancea *perfossum abscedens* reliquit.

[Within the bedroom of the king, who was still awake, an unknown soldier of wondrous beauty was suddenly present, adorned with glittering arms. And calling the king by his own name he said, 'You want to have tribute, O king, from the country of Saint Edmund? Lo, get up, receive it.' He, raising himself, sat up in bed, but immediately caught sight of the weapons and began to cry out terribly. The soldier forthwith made his attack and, departing, left him run through with a lance.]⁴⁹

Vita Basilii:

transacta nocte septima militum excubiæ eum custodirent, quidam *ignotus miles cum armis* aduenit, & lanceam valide *vibrans*, *terribili impetu* eum *confodit*, moxque *abcedens* nusquam comparuit: at miserrimus ille horrendum in modum dire vociferans, blasphemansque expirauit.

[When the seventh night had come to an end and a guard of soldiers was guarding him, a certain unknown soldier came with his arms, and, forcefully wielding his lance, pierced him through with a terrible attack, and, departing immediately, was nowhere to be found: but that most wretched man, crying out terribly and blaspheming in a horrible manner, died.]⁵⁰

The shared vocabulary in these passages is marked in italics. While this is clearly not a slavish copy of the account in the *Vita Basilii*—indeed, the incorporation of Edmund's speech precludes such copying—this version of the episode does seem to be quite deliberately modelled after the death of Julian in the *Vita Basilii*.

The same tendency is reflected in some of the other versions of this narrative. Matthew Paris's *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*, for instance, composed between 1236 and 1245, is explicit about the weapon used being a lance: 'La nuit li vint la vengeance / Ke acurez fu d'une launce' [Vengeance came to him during the night, and he was run through by a lance].⁵¹ The account given by John of

Worcester (and followed by Simeon of Durham and Roger of Hoveden) was perhaps influenced by Hermann's *De Miraculis*, as it repeats that text's use of the word *cuspis*; and it may be related to the earliest stage (between c. 1100 and c. 1124) of Samson's *De Miraculis*, which also reports that Sveinn 'vociferari cœpit' when he saw Edmund approaching.⁵² This account also appears to have made use of Dominic of Evesham's version of the death of Julian, or something like it, as it notes specifically that Edmund was visible only to Sveinn, just as Mercurius is visible only to Julian in Dominic's narrative.⁵³ Clearly, John recognised the similarities between the death of Sveinn and that of Julian (or had access to the explicit parallel in Hermann's *De Miraculis*), and was happy to make this parallel more obvious by incorporating elements from a version of the death of Julian. This presents a sharp contrast with William of Malmesbury's evident concern to dissociate Edmund's miracle from the death of Julian. While we cannot demonstrate with any certainty that this literary trend went hand in hand with an oral tradition concerning the death of Julian, the readiness with which these authors incorporated elements of the death of Julian into the death of Sveinn suggests that we can probably trust William's claim for popular dissemination of the death of Julian.

It is striking, however, that explicit references to Mercurius and the death of Julian tend not to return to versions of the death of Sveinn during this period. The relationship between these two miracles seems to have been one which was obvious, and, perhaps for that very reason, not referred to directly. This relationship can perhaps allow us to say something about the way the death of Julian episode spread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and in particular, how it moved out of the narrow context of monastic devotions to Basil of Caesarea and became a popular story. As Mary Clayton has shown, Marian cult was an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon Christianity and especially of the programme of worship in the monastic centres of the Benedictine Reform, in particular Winchester.⁵⁴ The possibilities of the death of Julian as a Marian miracle were exploited in England by Ælfric and on the Continent by Fulbert of Chartres, demonstrating that already in the early eleventh century the episode was beginning to be viewed by some from a Marian perspective. This Marian approach to the episode, already apparent in late Anglo-Saxon England, could have contributed to its ready adoption into the developing genre of Marian miracle collections in twelfth-century England.

This need not indicate a spread of the episode beyond the monastic context within which Ælfric situates the *Vita Basilii*. Fulbert does write of the episode

that 'haec historia notissima est' [this narrative is extremely well-known], but it is not clear whether this refers to the currency of the narrative only among ecclesiastics or also among the laity.⁵⁵ While he (like Ælfric) gives only two examples of Marian miracles—the death of Julian, and the story of Theophilus—he does claim that 'plurima scripta sunt exemplorum argumenta' [several proofs from examples have been written].⁵⁶ We need not suppose that he is referring to a Marian miracle collection, but this does suggest that he was reading existing texts with an eye for the Marian miracles contained within them; and it is plausible that this sort of interest in Marian miracles should have contributed to the development of the early collections.

Ælfric's and Fulbert's interests in Marian miracles are to a large extent the product of their usefulness as arguments for expanding Marian cult. Such arguments are not, however, the stuff of popular culture. The extension of the death of Julian into the popular sphere in England may have had little to do with the monastic-centred expansion of Marian devotion in the Benedictine Reform. By the later eleventh century, devotion to the Virgin may have become more a part of the laity's experience of religion. This is also the period in which Hermann's *De Miraculis* was composed. This text ignores the Marian aspect of the death of Julian, focussing instead on Mercurius as the miracle-worker, and hence promoting Edmund as the key figure in the killing of Sveinn. This rejection of the Marian aspect of the miracle may well have been one of the elements of this account which troubled William of Malmesbury. An account focussing on Mercurius could, nevertheless, have been precisely the sort of narrative which helped to popularise the death of Julian. William's comment on the popularity of the episode refers to it as Julian's *exitus* (rather than a miracle of Mary, or, indeed, Mercurius) and states, not without a trace of disapproval, that it is sung 'pro magnitudine calamitatis' [on account of the magnitude of the disaster]. If the episode is presented in this way, Mary's role can be largely, or even wholly, ignored; but Mercurius still has to kill Julian, and thus Mercurius's role remains central, as in Hermann's *De Miraculis*. As I have discussed, the late eleventh century also saw the spread of a new crusade-miracle involving Mercurius. This narrative would probably also have heightened awareness of Mercurius among the wider population. The death of Sveinn, moreover, links Mercurius and the death of Julian with a popular English saint. These factors seem likely to have contributed to the spread of this episode from monastic devotions and theological arguments into popular, oral tradition. The use of Mercurius as a comparison for

Edmund in Hermann's *De Miraculis* in particular may reflect—or even have contributed to—the episode's popularity as reported by William of Malmesbury.

If English popular culture in the early twelfth century was disseminating a version of this narrative which tended to focus on Mercurius killing Julian, rather than on Mary's role as the miracle's instigator, the Marian miracle collections of this period were taking the opposite approach. These texts may not initially have been widespread or popular. Yet they were disseminated widely in the thirteenth century, and many of the stories contained in them probably became part of popular culture as a result. In the case of the death of Julian, however, there was popular interest in the story already in the early twelfth-century, focussing on Mercurius as the killer of Julian—and this was gradually eclipsed over the course of the twelfth century, largely thanks to Marian miracle collections, by a version of this miracle which instead emphasises Mary causing Mercurius to kill Julian. William of Malmesbury would, no doubt, have been pleased.

NOTES

¹ This article is a much-revised version of a paper delivered at 'Homicidal Tendencies: Murder and Manslaughter in Western Iconography and Literature', Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Leeds, 10 January 2003. I would like to thank all those at the symposium, whose comments and suggestions have been invaluable, and especially Victoria Thompson. I would also like to thank Margaret Cormack, who first got me started on Edmund and Mercurius, Penny Simons for her aid with Anglo-Norman verbs, and Justin Hastings-Merriman, who read and commented on a draft of this piece. Any errors which remain are mine alone.

² For a brief introduction to the *Vita Basilii*, see John Wortley, 'The pseudo-Amphilochian *Vita Basilii*: an apocryphal life of Saint Basil the Great', *Florilegium*, 2 (1980), 217-39.

³ See *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Manuscripta* (<http://bhllms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/>, accessed 27 September 2004), nos. 1022-1024 (*Vita Basilii*) and nos. 5933-5934 (*Passio Mercurii*).

⁴ For a useful survey of the 'miracles of the Virgin' genre, see Guy Philippart, 'Le récit miraculaire marial dans l'Occident médiéval', in *Marie: Le Culte de la Vierge dans la Société Médiévale*, ed. by Dominique Iogna-Prat, Éric Palazzo and Daniel Russo (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), pp. 563-90.

⁵ An exception would appear to be the Beneventan area, as Mercurius appears in the Beneventan liturgy: see the Beneventan antiphons in *CURSUS: An Online Resource of Medieval Liturgical Texts* (<http://www.cursus.uea.ac.uk/>, accessed 27 September 2004), nos. c1410, c1453, c1649, c4070 and c4633.

⁶ *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, EETS, 76, 82, 94 and 114, 2 vols (London: Trübner, 1881-1900), 1, p. 2. My translation.

⁷ From William of Malmesbury's Commentary on Jeremiah, quoted in Peter Carter, 'The historical content of William of Malmesbury's Miracles of the Virgin Mary', in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. by R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 127-65 (p. 139, n. 2), from Oxford, Bodleian MS 868, fol. 105^r. My translation.

⁸ R. W. Southern, 'The English origins of the "Miracles of the Virgin"', *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1958), 176-216 (p. 177). On the authorship of Dominic see pp. 182-83; on that of Anselm see pp. 183-200.

⁹ Carter, 'Historical content', p. 139.

¹⁰ On the authorship of this text, see Antonia Gransden, 'The composition and authorship of the *De miraculis Sancti Eadmundi* attributed to "Hermann the Archdeacon"', *Journal of*

Medieval Latin, 5 (1995), 1-52 (pp. 39-44). Although Gransden's argument against the attribution to Hermann is convincing, for the sake of clarity I will refer to this text as Hermann's *De Miraculis*.

¹¹ On the dating of the *De Miraculis Sancti Eadmundi*, see *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series 96, 3 vols (London: HMSO, 1890-6), 1, pp. xxviii-xxix and 33, note (a). Gransden agrees with Arnold that the author usually identified as Hermann was probably writing shortly after the death of Abbot Baldwin of Bury St Edmunds, in 1097 or 1098, but argues that he may have taken much of the story of the death of Sveinn from 'a now lost work of St. Edmund's miracles and cult composed late in Ethelred II's reign (978-1016)': 'The composition and authorship', p. 26. If she is correct, this would place the origins of this narrative very close to the date of Sveinn's death. See also Rodney M. Thomson, 'Two versions of a saint's life from St. Edmund's abbey: Changing currents in XIIth century monastic style', *Revue Bénédictine*, 84 (1974), 383-408 (p. 386).

¹² *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. by R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998-1999), 1, p. 308. *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, ed. by N. E. S. A. Hamilton, Rolls Series 52 (London: Longman, 1870), p. 155.

¹³ See *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 163.

¹⁴ See *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. by R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995-), 2, p. 476; on the relationship between the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and John's *Chronicle*, see pp. lxxvii-lxxiii in the introduction to this volume. On the possibility of William's use of John elsewhere, see *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, pp. 70 and 93.

¹⁵ See *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, ed. Arnold, pp. xxxix-xl. Arnold's text is taken from a mid-thirteenth-century manuscript, which represents a late stage in the text's development; Thomson, 'Two versions', pp. 385-93, sees this text as one influenced by Samson's editorial activities, as well as some alterations after Samson. Gransden, 'The composition and authorship', p. 5 note 22, states that she does not find Thomson's arguments for Samson's role in the process entirely satisfactory, but gives no reasons for this. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to this text as Samson's *De Miraculis*.

¹⁶ These include Matthew Paris in his *Abbreviatio Chronicorum Angliae*, in *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani: Historia Anglorum*, ed. by Frederic Madden, Rolls Series 44, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1866-1869), and in *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*, ed. by Kathryn Young Wallace (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1983), pp. 6-7; Simeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, in volume 2 of *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series 75, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1882-1885), 2, pp. 145-46; John Lydgate in 'To St. Edmund' in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. by Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS

e.s. 107 and EETS o.s. 192, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1911-1934), 1, pp. 124-27 (p. 126); and at greater length in the collection of Edmund's miracles—in Lydgate's style, but not certainly by him—added to his verse life of Edmund, edited in *Altenglische Legenden: Neue Folge, mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, ed. by C. Horstmann (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1881), pp. 428-440 (pp. 428-33); Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. by Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-1980), 1, p. 156; and Roger Hoveden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. by William Stubbs, Rolls Series 51, 4 vols (London: Longman, 1868-1871), 1, p. 78. The accounts of Roger and Simeon are clearly derived from John of Worcester's, with which they are almost identical. It is surprising, as Bell has remarked, to find that Gaimar, who demonstrates an 'obvious knowledge of St. Edmund materials', makes no mention of this miracle in his brief account of Sveinn's death: *L'Estoire des Engleis*, ed. by Alexander Bell (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1960), p. 254 (note to lines 4157-62; see p. 132 for the text of this passage).

¹⁷ For the development of Anselm's collection, and the period in which it was assembled, see Southern, 'English origins', pp. 198-200. On the date of Dominic's collection and its relationship with Anselm's, see Carter, 'Historical content', p. 137. As Southern points out ('English origins', p. 199), Anselm was for a while abbot of Bury St Edmunds. It would therefore seem likely that he was aware of the earlier *De Miraculis*, although his collection of Marian miracles does not seem to have included a version of the death of Julian.

¹⁸ See Southern, 'English origins', pp. 200-201 and Carter, 'Historical content', pp. 133-37.

¹⁹ Carter, 'Historical content', p. 133.

²⁰ 'El libro De Laudibus et Miraculis Sanctae Mariae de Guillermo de Malmesbury, O. S. B. († c. 1143)', ed. by J. M. Canal, *Claretianum: Commentaria Theologica Opera et Studio Professorum Collegii Internationalis Claretianum de Urbe*, 8 (1968), 71-242 (p. 133). My translation.

²¹ 'El libro "De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae" de Domingo de Evesham (m.c. 1140)', ed. by José-María Canal, *Studium Legionense*, 39 (1998), 247-283 (pp. 269). My translations.

²² Canal does not suggest a specific textual link between William's and Dominic's versions of the death of Julian, instead pointing to the *Vita Basilii* as the ultimate source for both accounts; but he agrees with Carter in believing William to have been influenced by Dominic's work (see 'El libro "De Miraculis"', ed. by Canal, p. 269 (n. 21) and p. 92; Carter, 'Historical content', p. 137). It does not seem likely that William did not know Dominic's work, but further work on exactly how William used this source would be invaluable.

²³ J. C. Jennings, 'The writings of Prior Dominic of Evesham', *English Historical Review*, 77 (1962), 298-304 (pp. 300-301).

²⁴ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 1, pp. 638-39.

²⁵ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 320.

²⁶ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 299.

²⁷ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 320.

²⁸ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 320.

²⁹ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 2, p. 312.

³⁰ The manuscript variants noted in Hill's edition of the *Gesta Francorum* do not include the omission of Mercurius: *The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, ed. by Rosalind Hill (London: Nelson, 1962), p. 69; see also pp. xxxviii-xlii on the manuscripts of this text. Likewise, the edition of the *Gesta Dei per Francos* in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, 5 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1844-1895), 4, pp. 113-263 (p. 206) does not indicate a manuscript variant involving the omission of Mercurius. Of course, this is not proof that a manuscript containing such a variant does not and did not exist—indeed, no proof of this is possible—but it suggests that on the whole it is likely that the copies of these texts available to William would have included Mercurius.

³¹ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 1, pp. 638-39.

³² *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 1, p. 196.

³³ 'Texto crítico de algunos sermones marianos de San Fulberto de Chartres o a él atribuibles', ed. by J. M. Canal, *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 30 (1963), 55-87 (p. 60). This passage can also be found in *Patrologia Latina*, 141, col. 323B. My translation.

³⁴ *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series: Text*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 438. My translation. On the relative dating of Fulbert's and Ælfric's versions, see Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 240.

³⁵ Carter, 'Historical content', p. 133.

³⁶ Ælfric's explanation that Mercurius's spirit undertook the killing, but with a physical weapon, follows a brief explanation of Mercurius's martyrdom. As Loomis has pointed out, a similar explanation of the martyrdom appears in Adgar's mid-twelfth-century Anglo-Norman collection of Marian miracles: Laura Hibbard Loomis, 'The Saint Mercurius legend in medieval England and in Norse saga', in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. by Thomas A. Kirby and Henry Bosley Woolf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1949), pp. 132-43 (p. 135 and pp. 138-139). As we shall see, William of Malmesbury also includes a very brief explanation of Mercurius's passion in his version of the death of Julian in his *Miracula*. It is possible that Ælfric, William and Adgar all had a similar Latin exemplar in front of them; the similarities between these passages are not so striking as to suggest a direct relationship between any two of them, although this cannot be ruled out. If Godden is correct to identify the anonymous *Certamen Sancti Mercurii Martyris* as Ælfric's source for this passage, these three authors may all have had access to versions of this text: M. R. Godden, 'The Sources of Catholic homilies

Saint Mercurius in the works of William of Malmesbury

1.30 (Cameron B.1.1.32)' (1990), *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed 30 September 2004).

³⁷ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 1, pp. 308-9.

³⁸ *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, 1, p. 35. My translation; note that 'revelari' is clearly an error for 'relevari', and has been translated accordingly.

³⁹ *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, 1, pp. 37 and 38. My translation.

⁴⁰ *De Probatiss Sanctorum Historiis, Partim ex Tomis Aloysii Lipomani, Doctissimi Episcopi, Partim etiam ex Egregiis Manuscriptis Codicibus*, ed. by Laurentius Surius, 6 vols (Cologne: Calenius, 1570-1576), 1, 10. A version of the *Vita Basilii* fairly similar to that printed by Surius was apparently circulating in England by the time Ælfric wrote *Catholic Homilies*, first series, number 30: see Godden, 'The Sources of Catholic homilies 1.30 (Cameron B.1.1.32)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>.

⁴¹ 'El libro De Laudibus', ed. by Canal, pp. 133-34. My translation.

⁴² 'El libro "De Miraculis"', ed. by Canal, p. 270. My translation. See *De Probatiss Sanctorum Historiis*, ed. by Surius, 1, p. 10.

⁴³ 'El libro "De Miraculis"', ed. by Canal, p. 270.

⁴⁴ 'El libro De Laudibus', ed. by Canal, p. 134. My translation.

⁴⁵ The brief account of Mercurius's passion given by William does not match anything in the *Vita Basilii*, but anyone with knowledge of other early Roman martyrs' passions could have inferred such a passion from the *Vita Basilii*. On the possible relationship between this passage and similar passages in other accounts of the death of Julian, see note 36 above.

⁴⁶ *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, ed. by Arnold, 1, p. 118. My translation. Also printed in Thomson, 'Two versions', p. 404.

⁴⁷ *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, ed. by Arnold, 1, p. 119. My translation. See also Thomson, 'Two versions', p. 404; the reading printed by Arnold is from London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.viii (Thomson's manuscript T), of the mid-thirteenth century; Thomson notes (p. 404) that New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 736 (his manuscript P) contains a slightly different reading, which Thomson believes to represent the state of the text before Samson edited it in the late twelfth century, while his manuscript T exhibits the changes made by Samson (on the dates of these manuscripts, see Thomson, p. 385). In both this and the previous example, the resemblances with the account of Julian's death in the *Vita Basilii* existed before the alterations which Thomson ascribes to Samson.

⁴⁸ *De Probatiss Sanctorum Historiis*, ed. by Surius, 1, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, ed. by Arnold, 1, p. 118. My translation. See also Thomson, 'Two versions', p. 404; all the vocabulary which this passage shares with the *Vita Basilii* was already present in the first stage of the development of this text, which Thomson places between c. 1100 and c. 1124 (p. 385), with the exception of *abscedens*, which constitutes

one of the alterations which Thomson argues that Abbot Samson introduced (*abiens* being the earlier reading).

⁵⁰ *De Probatis Sanctorum Historiis*, ed. by Surius, 1, p. 10. My translation.

⁵¹ *La Estoire*, ed. by Wallace, p. 7 (lines 217-18); on the authorship and dating of *La Estoire*, see pp. xvii-xxiii. My translation.

⁵² See *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. Darlington and McGurk, 2, p. 476; *Symeonis Monachi Opera*, ed. by Arnold, p. 146; and *Chronica Magistri Rogeri*, ed. by Stubbs, p. 78. Also *Memorials of St. Edmund's*, ed. by Arnold, p. 37 and p. 118. See also Thomson, 'Two versions', pp. 385 and 404.

⁵³ See *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. Darlington and McGurk, 2, p. 476; *Symeonis Monachi Opera*, ed. by Arnold, p. 146; and *Chronica Magistri Rogeri*, ed. by Stubbs, p. 78. Also 'El libro "De Miraculis"', ed. by Canal, p. 270.

⁵⁴ Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, *passim*; see especially pp. 61-88.

⁵⁵ 'Texto crítico', ed. by Canal, p. 60. *Patrologia Latina*, 141, col. 323B. My translation.

⁵⁶ 'Texto crítico', ed. by Canal, p. 60. *Patrologia Latina*, 141, col. 323A. My translation.

Retrospectivity in *Völsunga saga*: The Brynhildr-Story¹

Fredrik J. Heinemann

My purpose in this essay is to demonstrate that the Brynhildr-story in *Völsunga saga* is a well-constructed narrative episode. In light of the many pejorative remarks on the saga as narrative art, my thesis verges on a radical program, for while *Völsunga saga* has long held the status of a canonical work, it is generally regarded as a poorly constructed and thinly motivated prose retelling of several works that make up the poetic *Edda*. One reason why the Brynhildr-story fails to satisfy many readers is that, as numerous literary historians have painstakingly shown,² the saga seems to combine, without harmonizing, many mutually contradictory stories about Brynhildr. Indeed, one astute reader of narrative in all its guises—and he is not alone in his assessment—has written that '[t]here is something very strange about a central aspect of the Brynhildr-story in *Völsunga saga*'.³ By no means the least strange aspect is her initial oath—sworn when Óðinn forces her to give up the battlefield and to take a husband (as reported in Chapter 21, 35)⁴—to marry the man who knows no fear. After Sigurðr's appearance inside her shield-rampart, why does she not then announce her engagement and marry him? Instead, in the course of her story she continues, rather like an insurance company hedging its bets by adding complicating stipulations that absolve it of any and all responsibility, to swear additional oaths which the successful suitor must meet. Brynhildr's ideal suitor, finally, is a composite figure, a man who in addition to being fearless is both physically superior to all other men, the most nobly born, able to ride a horse named Grani through a flame wall surrounding her bower, and to do away with those suitors whom she wishes dispatched. In most fairy tale motifs of this ilk, the prospective bridegroom would be deemed worthy of his bride if he simply conquered the flame wall, which, in any event, most readers seem to regard as designed 'zur Aussiebung des tapfersten Freiers'⁵ or, put less metaphorically, to guarantee 'that

the right suitor will be identified by his ability to cross the flame wall'.⁶ But for some reason Brynhildr never seems satisfied with the form and the substance of her oaths—a consequence of the saga-author's maladroit yoking of sources?—and continues to revise them until her forced marriage to Gunnarr annuls them all.

Most readers find the Brynhildr-story confusing because they assume that she wishes to marry Sigurðr and that her revenge upon him is retaliation for his tricking her into marrying a lesser man. I will argue, however, that Brynhildr neither desires nor intends to marry Sigurðr. In fact, her great passion, even perhaps more intensely felt than her love of battle, is to remain celibate. Her anger originates in being forced into marriage, not in marrying beneath her expectations. The theoretical justification for such a radical reading of the saga is provided by an article by Ruth Waterhouse and John Stephens in which they apply a reading process to *Beowulf* that differs from traditional methods.⁷ Adhering to the most common traditional reading process, we all learn early in school that in reading narrative we are obliged to remember what we have read in moving forwards through the succeeding pages of a story. Waterhouse and Stephens call attention, in addition, to a process of looking backward to what we have read and reinterpreting details and episodes already experienced in light of what we read subsequently. The new insights gained through 'the backward look' are then carried over to any matter just read or about to be read.⁸ Their (hermeneutical) method is not quite so (for some) dauntingly postmodern as it might at first seem, for how many of us restrict our interpretation of any narrative to one reading or in the case of films one viewing or of plays one performance? In fact, what we teach in classrooms or write about in articles and books are readings based upon numerous backward looks even if we do not think of them in this way. That is, we discover (or invent) new interpretations of any scene we encounter on the second or tenth rereading largely on the basis of what we remember from previous readings as to what lies ahead. Similarly, I will argue here that in the course of our (re)readings or backward looks, it is possible, even desirable, to see these oaths in a different light. Much of the apparent disharmony disappears, leaving in its place a well-conceived narrative device. Looked at with these assumptions in mind, the oaths are not strange at all, but rather part of Brynhildr's efforts to avoid the ever-threatening marriage altar. Before examining these oaths in their context, however, I would like to characterise them with some general remarks.

I count twelve references in the saga to the conditions Brynhildr imposes upon the successful suitor. Until we look at these references in their contexts, the

following observations will give us some working assumptions: (1) what I have been referring to as the *oaths* are in fact Brynhildr's additional qualifications of the original oath—to marry only a fearless man—that her prospective husband must meet; (2) four characters, Brynhildr, Buðli, Heimir, or Sigurðr, report the oath(s) as having been uttered; (3) it follows, therefore, that they are not (illocutionary) speech acts⁹—that is, we never witness Brynhildr actually saying something like, 'I hereby swear to marry a man who knows no fear'—a distinction whose importance will be apparent later;¹⁰ (4) the clauses specify, as stated above, that a successful suitor come equipped with fearlessness, martial superiority and a noble birth, and be able to ride Grani through the flames and be capable of, and willing to, eliminate her unsuccessful suitors; (5) we can think of the oaths as the computer language of the programme that operates the flame wall. That is, we can imagine that Brynhildr invents the flame wall and then specifies by means of the oaths that the suitor who conforms to all of the conditions will get through, but that those who do not will be repelled (and perhaps eliminated). In order to understand the function of these clauses on the plot level we need to see each of them in their narrative contexts, for it is only then that we will come to recognise that their sometimes contradictory character is a result of Brynhildr's adding parts to the oath as the story develops and her inventiveness in avoiding the conjugal bed is further taxed. We will also see that their enigmatic quality is not accidental, for, after all, they are intended to fool the three men (Óðinn, her father Buðli, and her brother Atli) who pressurise her to marry. The difficulty we have in understanding the clauses results also from the saga's indirect method of presenting them. For the narrative is itself a riddle that poses and solves a riddle by providing us with information that culminates in a solution. Let us examine how this complex narrative method is worked out.

In order to give a framework to these oaths we need to have the narrative elements of the Brynhildr-story in mind. While not an exhaustive catalogue, the following units comprise this story: (1) Óðinn's curse requiring Brynhildr to marry and retire from the battlefield; (2) her oath describing the conditions to be met by the man she marries; (3) her double-betrothal to Sigurðr; (4) her marriage to Gunnarr; (5) her quarrel with Guðrún in the river; (6) her revenge on Sigurðr; (7) and her suicide after his death. (All of these units are assumed by many readers to have been taken from various sources and analogues, some of them no longer extant, that predated the composition of the saga). Now it is clear that these elements do not in themselves comprise a plot, but it is equally clear that they could form the basis of many different tales. Only (1) and (7) must occupy their

present order, but units (2) through to (6) can be arranged in any way a storyteller wishes. That the plot arranging these elements seems defective to so many readers is another way of explaining why the saga can be read in so many different ways. (Or of explaining why it is really not read carefully at all—that is, with the same attention to detail as readers expend on, say, *Njáls saga* or *Hrafnkels saga*). In an effort to understand the Brynhildr-story, I will examine her oaths in their context as a means of demonstrating how their combined effects achieve coherence.

The first reference to the oath occurs in Brynhildr's explanation of how she came to be in a trance prior to Sigurðr's waking her inside the shield rampart. Accordingly, Óðinn has decreed—because she killed one of his favourites in battle—that she forgo the battlefield and take a husband; in response she stipulates that she will marry only a man who knows no fear; Óðinn then puts her to sleep with a *svefnþorn* ['sleep thorn'].¹¹ Her oath could be understood as aimed directly at Sigurðr: that is, forced to marry, she decides to make the best of the curse by marrying a man who appeals to her martial character. Thus, when Sigurðr arrives on the scene, her desire is fulfilled. But if we recognise the paradoxical character of her oath and regard fearlessness not as a virtue which her future husband must possess but rather as a condition which no man can fulfil, then she might actually be attempting to nullify Óðinn's curse.¹² After all, if she really desired Sigurðr as a mate, why does she repeatedly dampen his ardour, insist that their marriage will never take place, and not inform her father and brother of their betrothal on the mountain? Thus, the oath possesses an enigmatic character, and the joke's on Óðinn (or so she thinks)!¹³ Óðinn, himself no slouch at riddles, goes her one better in this test of wits by bringing on stage his great-great-grandson, Sigurðr, and by making him fearless by grooming him in a series of heroic exploits that culminate in his killing the hoard-guarding dragon Fáfnir and eating a portion of its heart.¹⁴ By obliging Brynhildr to marry, Óðinn hopes to gain two things: to take revenge on an intractable woman, and, more importantly, to provide Sigurðr with breeding stock that will produce the kind of offspring Óðinn desires, a fierce race of superior warrior-kings that he has been unable to engender up to this point. Therefore, when a suitor who possesses the feature she least expected any man to have wakes her, she recognises that she has posed a riddle that is too simple for the likes of Óðinn, exclaiming, in effect, 'Damn, here is Sigurðr, a completely fearless man—what do I do now?'¹⁵ From this point until her forced marriage to Gunnarr, she attempts to build a better

riddle by adding necessary conditions to the oath which the man she will marry must meet.

The second and the third references to the oath develop two parts of the riddle, why will Brynhildr's intended husband apparently be chosen by the flame wall, and when was it devised? We learn of its existence when (at the beginning of Chapter 29) Sigurðr, Gunnarr and Högni petition Buðli and then Heimir (her brother-in-law and foster father) for Brynhildr's hand in marriage. In the third reference to the oath, Heimir's response to the suitors is reported in indirect speech:

Heimir kvað hennar kjör vera, hvern hon skal eiga. Segir þar sal hennar skammt frá, ok kvazk þat hyggja at þann einn mundi hon eiga vilja er riði eld brennanda er sleginn er um sal hennar. (48)
[Heimir said it was her choice whom she would marry. He said that her bower was close by and that he thought she wanted to marry the man who rode through the flames which surround it.]

We should notice one enigmatic feature of his statement: he says that she intends to marry the man who rides through the flames, but not that their purpose is to test the suitor—some readers do infer this latter point, perhaps because Sigurðr/Gunnarr does so (as we will see later) and because in some analogues, for example, in *The Merchant of Venice*, such tests really are designed to be overcome by a successful suitor. I will put off discussing until later who constructed the flame wall, but we can, for three reasons, wager that it came into existence sometime between Sigurðr's departure from Heimir's court and his marriage to Guðrún (both events occur in Chapter 28), a period of some 'two and a half years' (*fimm misseri*, 47). First, the flames are not mentioned prior to this point in the saga.¹⁶ Second, if they had existed prior to Sigurðr's waking Brynhildr on the mountain (Chapter 21), why did he not have to contend with them then or later when they meet at Heimir's court during the 'second betrothal' (Chapter 25)? Third, a reader is justified, I think, in believing that when a narrative event, as here, lacks a clear indication as to its position in the time scheme, then its relative chronology might be determined by when it is first mentioned. This reference to the flames occurs in a wooing scene that bridges the two-and-a-half-year gap since Sigurðr left Heimir's and moved on to Gjúki's court, permitting Sigurðr and Guðrún to marry and produce a son, Sigmundur. We wonder about the state of our heroine, left in the lurch (as some readers see things), and (we learn at the end of

Chapter 29) pregnant with Áslaug: is Brynhildr pining away in her bower, or has she returned to the battlefield? The flame wall is one answer to these questions, or rather it is a prolegomenon to that answer.

If Heimir's reference to the flame wall is a means of determining when the flames began to flicker, then Buðli's response (the second reference to the oath) to the three kings' proposal allows us to understand when and why Brynhildr began to specify who would ride through these flames:

Hann tók því vel, ef hon vill eiga níta, ok segir hana svá stóra at þann einn mann mun hon eiga er hon vill. (48)

[He responded favourably to their request, on the condition that she would not refuse it, and said that she was so proud that she would marry only the man she desired.]

Buðli implies that Brynhildr has emended her original oath (which I will call the Fearless-Man Clause) so as to marry the man of her choice (the Man-of-Her-Choice Clause). What he does not tell us is why he has agreed to this clause, a procedure unprecedented in the saga.¹⁷ Moreover, he does not explain whether the Man-of-Her-Choice Clause is a corollary of the Fearless-Man Clause. For example, does this mean that if two men of perfect courage appear, then she will be able to choose between them, or does it mean she can choose anyone she wants? As we will see below, there is reason to believe that Buðli's testy remark is not a reference to the Fearless-Man Clause but rather a veiled allusion to the heated dispute with his daughter to which she refers later in Chapter 31 and during which she adds two clauses to the oath.

Without explaining who has invented the flame wall or why, the next scene partially explains how the oath acquires so many parts. Sigurðr disguised as Gunnarr—the latter's mother Grímhildr, a witch, has taught them how to 'shift shapes'—rides through the flames and says to Brynhildr (in the fourth reference to her oath):

'Ertu ok ætluð mín kona með jáyrði feðr þíns, ef ek riða þinn vafrloga, ok fóstra þíns með yðru atkvæði'. (49)

['You were promised to me as my wife by your father and foster father if I rode through the flames and if you agreed'.]

He, like us readers, has been led to believe that the oath is a straightforward proposition, namely that whoever rides through the fire marries Brynhildr. In response, she explodes this assumption by mentioning (in the fifth reference) two further conditions that the man of destiny must be prepared to fulfil and which we hear about for the first time:

'Gunnarr', segir hon, 'ræð ekki slíkt við mik, nema þú sér hverjum manni fremri, ok þá skaltu drepa er mín hafa beðit, ef þú hefir traust til'. (49)

['Gunnarr [. . .] do not speak like that to me, unless you are superior to every other man and are prepared to kill those men who have sued for my hand, if you have the courage to do so'.]

That is, the successful suitor, in addition to being able to ride through the flame wall, must now possess (1) exceptional virtue and prowess (the Most-Noble-Man Clause) and (2) the willingness to eliminate previous suitors (the Fastest-Sword Clause). It is possible that she has invented these two additional prerequisites ad hoc when she realises that Gunnarr has unexpectedly met the first two conditions (the Fearless-Man Clause, and the Flame-Wall Clause).¹⁸ But if we assume, as most readers do, that the flame wall is tailored to exclude everybody but Sigurðr (or its corollary to allow only him to pass), then we ought to believe that this proviso predates this scene. After all, he is the surest bet to eliminate other suitors, including any whom Buðli might have forced upon her before Sigurðr finally conquers the wall. But in analysing her further references to her oath, I will provide evidence that while she specified before this scene that the successful suitor would be expected to eliminate all the others, she did not anticipate that Sigurðr would be the man to come through the flames. We are still pretty much in the dark at this point, but Sigurðr/Gunnarr calls her to order by insisting (in the sixth reference to the oath) that the agreement as laid down by Heimir has precedence over all other clauses:

'Mörg stórvirki hafi þér unnit, en minnizk nú á heit yður, ef þessi eldr væri riðinn, at þér mundið með þeim manni ganga er þetta gerði'. (49)

['You have indeed wrought great deeds, but I call your attention to your oath, that if someone rides through this fire, then you would marry the one who accomplishes it'.]

Recognising the force of his argument, Brynhildr stands up and greets him formally. They endure the three 'chaste nights',¹⁹ the three kings return home, and Brynhildr visits Heimir.

Although her meeting with Heimir following the flame wall scene does not yet provide us with the solution to the riddle, it does represent a key point in my argument that she wishes to avoid the institution of marriage, that she does not desire Sigurðr, and that she has fashioned the flame wall to preserve her celibacy. (In other words we can only appreciate what is going on in this scene by reading ahead, taking the additional clues on board, and then rereading or remembering this scene.²⁰) She approaches Heimir and tells him in secret that a king appeared in her bower, having ridden through the flame wall, 'ok kvazk kominn til ráða við mik ok nefndisk Gunnarr' (50) ('and said that he had come to marry me and that his name was Gunnarr'). She then utters this revealing remark (in the seventh reference to her oath):

'En ek sagða at þat mundi Sigurðr einn gera, er ek vann eiða á fjallinu, ok er hann minn frumverr'. (50)

['I said that only Sigurðr, my lover to whom I swore an oath on the mountain, would be able to do that'.]²¹

Presumably, her betrothal oath is included among these oaths, and by 'do that' she means *ride through the flame wall* rather than *propose marriage to me*. She might also mean 'would do that', in the sense that she expected that only Sigurðr would in fact get through the fire, as opposed to being the only man capable of doing so, whether he tried or not. Whatever her precise meaning, she did not make any such statement to Sigurðr/Gunnarr in the scene that occurs only some two or three lines previously, a juxtaposition which suggests that we are not meant to regard her remark as an oversight on the author's part but as an important and intended retrospective addition to the narrative. Her puzzlement serves at least four narrative functions: first, to alert us to a feature of the riddle we had not previously known about (i.e., The Only-Sigurðr Clause); second, we are led down the garden path into believing that the Only-Sigurðr Clause entails her desire that he succeed (Hint: this clause is a dummy; she actually does not expect anyone to cross the flames); third, her consternation, and Heimir's muted answer ('Heimir kvað nú svá búit vera mundu' (50) ['he said that things would have to rest there']), make it clear that he is a party to the conspiracy,²² fourth, the riddle seems to be

doubling back on Brynhildr—how, she must wonder, did Gunnarr figure out how to get through the flames against her expectations that only Sigurðr would be able to accomplish this feat? Brynhildr sets out to answer this question two paragraphs later by staging the quarrel in the river with Guðrún,²³ but let us continue our examination of how Brynhildr programs the flame wall and constructs her riddle.

The eighth reference to Brynhildr's oath, uttered soon after she has discovered from Guðrún how Sigurðr has tricked her into marrying Gunnarr, makes clear how and when the flame wall came into existence and how she used it to eliminate suitors. This reference occurs in what I have elsewhere called 'Brynhildr's Mousetrap',²⁴ an exchange she has with Gunnarr in order to discover the nature of his involvement in tricking her into marriage:

'Hvat gerðir þú af hring þeim er ek selda þér, er Buðli konungr gaf mér at efsta skilnaði, er þér synir Gjúka konungs kómuð til hans og hétuð at herja eða brenna, nema þér næðið mér? Síðan leiddi hann mik á tal, og spyrr hvern ek kœra af þeim sem komnir váru, en ek buðumk til at verja landit og vera hqfðingi yfir þriðjungi liðs. Váru þá tveir kostir fyrir hendi, at ek munda þeim verða at giptask sem hann vildi, eða vera án alls fjár og hans vináttu; kvað þó sína vináttu mér mundu betr gegna en reiði. Þá hugsaða ek með mér, hvárt ek skylda hlýða hans vilja eða drepa margan mann. Ek þóttumk vanfær til at þreyta við hann, og þar kom at ek hétumsk þeim er riði hestinum Grana með Fáfnis arfi og riði minn vafrlaga og dræpi þá menn er ek kvað á'. (53)

[*'What did you do with the ring I gave you, the one King Buðli gave me at our last parting when you sons of King Gjúki came to him and threatened to destroy or burn unless you obtained me? Then he spoke to me in private and asked which of those who had come I would choose, but I offered to defend the land and be a commander of a third of the army. He said also that his friendship would serve me better than his anger. Then I considered whether I should accede to his will or kill many a man. I judged myself incapable of contending against him, and so I promised myself to the one who would ride the horse Grani with Fáfni's legacy, ride through my flame wall, and kill those men I chose.'*]

Brynhildr's retrospective account of the visit of the three kings provides the context that allows us to solve the puzzle. That is, she tells a story of the three kings' visit to Buðli's court that differs considerably from the scenes we have witnessed at the beginning of Chapter 29, in which the suitors make their marriage proposals in a straightforward and peaceful manner, first to Buðli and then to Heimir (see above, p. 27). This retrospection causes us to reinterpret not only the exact nature of the wooing but also of the function of the clauses to the oath. And the review makes clear how they came into existence. First, the clause about the successful suitor's riding Grani through the flames (the Faithful-Horse Clause) was added as the result of her father's pressurising her to marry one of the three suitors. (She will repeat this claim in Chapter 32; see below, p. 34). We must assume that prior to their arrival numerous suitors had been showing up and failing to conquer the flames—otherwise where do the suitors come from that she insists must be killed as a condition for marrying her?²⁵—and that Buðli, apparently grown impatient for his daughter to marry, had forced her to choose one of the three kings with no further delay. Second, Buðli's acceptance of her promise to marry one of the three qualifies his statement in Chapter 29 that she would marry the man she wishes; the dramatic situation Brynhildr conjures up in the Mousetrap-scene is to be seen as a fuller account of the earlier scene, so that Buðli's bad-tempered acceptance there (in Chapter 29) of her choosing her own husband is here (in Chapter 31) emended to mean that she was permitted to choose among the three kings.²⁶ Third, Buðli does not seem to understand that the Faithful-Horse Clause points at Sigurðr, for in assuming that all three kings are potential suitors, he appears to be ignorant of Sigurðr's married state, if in fact he even knows who he is. (The saga skilfully manages to make clear that Buðli's grasp of what is happening around him is severely limited). The Faithful-Horse Clause, in its nullifying character, is reminiscent of her first oath (the Fearless-Man Clause) sworn in response to Óðinn's curse (see note 12) that she marry. That is, in agreeing to marry the man who can ride Grani through the flame wall, she is really saying that she will marry no one, because the only man who can ride him, as we learn in Chapter 29, is Sigurðr. Because he is already married, he will not, she assumes, attempt the flames. No one aside from Sigurðr will be able to ride Grani through the flames, and because the only way to get through is on his back, she will remain single. (The joke, or so she once again hopes, is now on Buðli!) She swears this oath, reprogrammes the flames to comply with it, and retreats to her bower to await what she expects will be another failed attempt. In

addition, she adds the proviso that whoever crosses the flames will have to kill all suitors, including Sigurðr. That is, if by accident somebody succeeds, she can insist that he kill Sigurðr (a former suitor), a sure way of eliminating the hapless intruder. Or perhaps this stipulation is designed to thin out the suitors: if word gets around that she might request the successful suitor to kill Sigurðr, many an ardent man will decide to look elsewhere for a bride. Finally, she gives in, perhaps thinking that she can later revert to the Dispatching-of-Suitors Clause, but puts aside this tactic when she learns from Guðrún how she was tricked. Therefore, she expects no one to appear in her bower inside the flames, and probably considers herself home free. She has, of course, not reckoned with the machinations of Grímhildr.²⁷

The remaining four references to the oaths cause us further to revise how we interpret the Brynhildr-story as one involving a woman who is not so much disappointed by love as a woman deceived by her lovers. Later in the mousetrap exchange with Gunnarr she repeats her assertion (the ninth reference) that she

'strengða [. . .] heit heima at feðr [hennar], at [hon] munda þeim einum unna, er ágæztr væri alinn, en þat er Sigurðr'. (53)
[swore an oath at [her] father's that [she] would marry the one most nobly born, and that is Sigurðr.]

At first glance this oath seems to be a repetition of the Only-Sigurðr Clause, but given the enigmatic character of all her oaths, an equally plausible interpretation is that the phrase 'and that is Sigurðr' merely acknowledges his noble birth without asserting that she swore to marry him. Her exchange with Gunnarr, we must remember, occurs after she has discovered how she was tricked and in the course of an acrimonious argument that initiates her revenge upon Sigurðr. Many statements that she makes after Chapter 31 must be seen in this context and must be used very carefully as evidence as to her motives before the 'false wooing' scene, Sigurðr's ride through the flames. Space prohibits my discussing them here.

Of the remaining three references she makes to her oath only one (the twelfth) requires much comment.²⁸ After Sigurðr has been betrayed and killed, she reproves Gunnarr by revisiting the scene in which the three kings rode into Buðli's court to woo her:

'Síðan leiddi Atli mik á tal ok spyrr ef ek vilda þann eiga er riði Grana. Sá var yðr ekki líkr, ok þá hétumk ek syni Sigmundar konungs ok engum qðrum, ok eigi mun yðr farask, þótt ek deyja'.
(59-60)

[‘Then Atli spoke to me in private and asked whether I wanted to marry the one riding Grani. He was not like you, and then I was betrothed to the son of Sigmundr and no one else, and things do not augur well for you, although I die’.]

It is easy to see why readers might understand this passage to mean that she became betrothed to Sigurðr at her own request or that she expressed such a desire. That is, she seems to be telling Gunnarr that she had said at that time, in response to Atli's query, 'I hereby betroth myself to the son of Sigmundr'. But actually her reference only adds a narrative detail that allows us to reconstruct the scene with more precision: the three kings appear in Buðli's court, petition for Brynhildr's hand, and threaten Buðli; he in turn takes her aside and orders her to marry the man he chooses or face his displeasure; she then placates him by devising the Faithful-Horse Clause; he goes back to the three kings and tells them that she will marry the man of her choice; in the meantime she has spoken to Atli and retreated to her bower surrounded by the flames, and the false wooing follows. This retrospective reconstruction allows us to understand that what she actually said was something like, 'Yes, I will marry the man riding Grani [. . .]' in response to Atli's question, not 'I want Sigurðr'. In other words she is telling Gunnarr how the Faithful-Horse Clause came about, not repeating her exact words. She adds as a further goad to Gunnarr the phrase, 'and he was not like you, and then I was betrothed to the son of Sigmundr', simply as a way of identifying the man who was riding Grani, of making it clear that she knows that Gunnarr was not that man, and of contrasting Sigurðr's nobility with Gunnarr's cowardice.

I have argued that we learn from the references to Brynhildr's oath that she changes its character in response to the increasing pressure put upon her to embrace matrimony. These references are neither ill-formed nor indicative of the author's failure to harmonise his sources; on the contrary, they develop a rigid narrative logic that dramatises Brynhildr's mounting desperation in her attempts to escape from the threat that the man-made law—a woman will marry the man chosen by her father—represents to her sense of self. Each of the clauses begins life as a necessary condition—in order to be a successful suitor a man must have feature x, y, or z—and at the end they form a catalogue of sufficient conditions.

For Brynhildr, of course, they are insincere promises, because she constructs them in the expectation that no man will meet them. Nevertheless, as Searle observes, 'insincere promises are promises nevertheless';²⁹ the bitterness of Brynhildr's defeat is that these conditions are met by means of Sigurðr's deception. Óðinn's medicine proves stronger than hers, but only up to the point where she discovers Sigurðr's treachery and then plots his death.

The order in which these references are presented to us by the plot is as follows: 1. the Fearless-Man Clause ['I swore the oath in return to marry no one who knew fear', Chapter 21]; 2. the Man-of-Her-Choice Clause ['[Buðli] said that she was so proud that she would marry only the man she desired', Chapter 29]; 3. the Flame-Wall Clause ['[Heimir] said that she would want to marry the man who rode through the flames which surrounds her bower', Chapter 29]; 4. the Flame-Wall Clause ['you were promised to me as my wife by your father and foster-father if I rode through the flames and if you agreed', Chapter 29]; 5. the Fastest-Sword Clause ['Gunnarr [. . .] do not speak like that to me, unless you are superior to every other man and are prepared to kill those men who have sued for my hand, if you have the courage to do so', Chapter 29]; 6. the Flame-Wall Clause ['You have indeed wrought great deeds, but I call your attention to your oath, that if someone rides through this fire, then you would marry the one who accomplished it', Chapter 29]; 7. the Only-Sigurðr Clause ['I said that only Sigurðr, my lover to whom I swore an oath on the mountain, would be able to do that', Chapter 29]; 8. the Faithful-Horse Clause/the Flame-Wall Clause/the Fastest-Sword Clause ['and so I promised myself to the one who would ride the horse Grani with Fáfnir's legacy, ride through my flame wall, and kill those men I chose', Chapter 31]; 9. the Only-Sigurðr Clause ['I swore an oath at my father's that I would marry the man most nobly born, and that is Sigurðr', Chapter 31]; 10. the Fastest-Sword Clause ['Gunnarr did not ride through the fire to me, nor did he pay me as a bride price the executed dead', Chapter 31]; 11. the Flame-Wall Clause ['I swore an oath to marry the man who rode my flame wall, and I will keep that oath or die', Chapter 31]; 12. the Faithful-Horse Clause/the Only-Sigurðr Clause ['Then Atli spoke to me and asked whether I wanted to marry the one riding Grani. He was not like you, and then I was betrothed to the son of Sigmundr and no one else [. . .]', Chapter 32].

Assigning each of the references a relative chronology will clarify the carefully structured character of the Brynhildr-story: the Fearless-Man Clause (1) is the earliest version of the oath, occurring when Óðinn cursed Brynhildr, followed by numbers (3) and (11), which refer to the Flame-Wall Clause and

which were sworn either immediately after Sigurðr left Brynhildr or following the news that he had married Guðrún. Next come (2), (8), (9), and (12), all of which invoke a variety of clauses that were sworn in response to the appearance of the three kings at Buðli's court. It is at this point in the narrative that she is at her most inventive, reacting to Buðli's panicked demand to choose one of the three kings. The final group of references, (4), (5), (6), (7), and (10), occur during the false wooing. Again, they comprise a variety of clauses, and four of them (numbers 4 through to 7), are the only references to the oath that occur in a dramatised scene rather than a recollection of it; (10) is Brynhildr's retrospective reference to this scene. The ultimate test of the validity and usefulness of the above scheme must be that in rereading the saga, one will understand things that heretofore were unclear. Naturally, my explication does not eliminate all the structural difficulties inherent in the text—as I warned at the outset. Perhaps an interesting exercise might consist in assigning to a group of students the task of pointing out the apparent inconsistencies in the text, even assuming that the readings I propose here have a certain force. My suggestion would be to look at all the things Brynhildr says to Sigurðr and Gunnarr after she discovers the deception, where not everything can be explained away. For modern narrative tastes, the text requires a good editor, who could advise the author on how to harmonise the saga as we have it. But after all the revisions are carried out, it might then lose some of its 'eerie charm'.³⁰ Brynhildr is thus a tragic heroine not because she is cheated out of the man she desires—a decidedly non-feminist reading of the saga—but because she is cheated out of her wish to remain celibate. This radical conclusion presupposes that the anti-feminism of the middle ages had its contemporary opponents, and that *Völsunga saga* can be read as a marriage manual directed at kings, advising them that women married against their will make bad bed-fellows.

NOTES

¹ This essay is an extensively revised, expanded and reconfigured version of a paper which originally appeared as 'Völsunga saga: The Brynhild-Story', in *Gladly Lerne and Gladly Teche: A Festschrift by Students, Colleagues and Friends of Thomas Jay Garbáty in Honor of his Retirement*, ed. by Adam Brooke, www-personal.umich.edu/~tgarbaty/schrift.html.

² Most fully by Theodore M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980).

³ Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth* (London: Grafton, 1992), p. 275. He adds that '[i]t is impossible for this part of the *Völsunga saga* to make sense', p. 276.

⁴ Arabic numerals in parentheses after quotations in the text are page references to R. G. Finch's edition, *The Saga of the Volsungs*. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965). Since this work has long been out of print, readers might wish to consult the recent diplomatic edition by Kaaren Grimstad, *Völsunga saga: The Saga of the Volsungs* (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 2000) and her excellent translation, but to help readers unused to diplomatic texts, I quote from Finch's normalised version. Translations of the Icelandic are my own.

⁵ Andreas Heusler, 'Die Lieder der Lücke im Codex Regius der Edda', in *Germanistische Abhandlungen Hermann Paul dargebracht* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1902), pp. 1-98. Rpt. in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. by Stefan Sonderegger, 2 vols (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), I 223-91, at p. 235.

⁶ Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, p. 240.

⁷ 'The Backward Look: Retrospectivity in Medieval Literature', *Southern Review*, 16 (1983), 356-373, at 357.

⁸ See also Stanley Fish, who calls the reading process *retroactive*, in 'How To Do Things with Austin and Searle: Speech-Act Theory and Literary Criticism', in his *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 197-245, at pp. 166, 202, 205, 221.

⁹ For definitions and discussions of this term, see J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 98-108; John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 54-71; John Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), II 725-745; Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics*. [Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 227-243.

¹⁰ According to Lyons, *Semantics*, p. 730, 'An illocutionary act is an act performed in saying something: making a statement or promise, issuing a command or request, asking a question, christening a ship, etc.'. If we saw Brynhildr in the process of performing such an

illocutionary act, then we would have to take her oath at face value, as a promise to marry the man who satisfies the necessary conditions she imposes upon the successful suitor. That is, the illocutionary force of her oaths (their status as promises) would be unmistakable and no longer subject to ambiguity. She could hardly claim later, after we observe her saying 'I promise to marry the man who knows no fear', that she had made no such promise. When her oaths are reported, however, even when Brynhildr herself tells someone else what she said, the character of the utterances is always potentially enigmatic, because we can never be sure of their exact wording or their 'perlocutionary effect', that is, what her hearers believed she had said. Readers may regard her reported utterance of the oath to marry the man who rides through the flames on Grani's back both as a promise to marry the man who does so and as a stated preference for Sigurðr (which is, of course, what she hoped her hearers in the saga would think), but so long as we do not witness Brynhildr making this statement, its ambiguous character as a sincere promise remains open to interpretation. I am arguing, of course, that such oaths may be regarded not as promises to marry the man who accomplishes the acts or fulfills the conditions but, on the contrary, as unfulfillable necessary conditions that preclude her marrying any man. The subject of Speech Acts in literature, of course, is complex and requires a more extended treatment than space allows here. For an example of how such an analysis might proceed, see Stanley Fish, 'How To Do Things with Austin and Searle: Speech-Act Theory and Literary Criticism', pp. 197-245.

¹¹ Brynhildr as Sleeping Beauty is an example of a motif taken from *Sigrðrífumál*, which itself considerably varies this fairy tale motif. For a brief introduction to the poem, see Joseph Harris, 'Sigrðrífumál', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano et al. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983), pp. 581-82. For the saga's additional transformations of the fairy tale motif, see Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, pp. 81-84.

¹² Why Brynhildr is permitted to counter Óðinn's curse with her oath is not clear. Perhaps her gambit partakes of the principle in classical mythology that while one god or goddess cannot undo another's curse, it can be ameliorated with countermanding stipulations.

¹³ What, a sceptical reader might ask, justifies my assumption that Brynhildr is reluctant to embrace matrimony? One reason is that Óðinn, a god capable of preparing some pretty nasty bits of revenge, chooses marriage as part of her double punishment. That is, he takes away something she clearly wants (battle) and forces upon her something that she, it seems reasonable to assume, does not want (marriage). More directly, after exchanging betrothal vows with Sigurðr the first time, she abjures marriage by telling him at Heimir's: 'Eigi er þat skipat at vit búim saman. Ek em skjaldmær, ok á ek með herkonungum hjálm, ok þeim mun ek at liði verða, ok ekki er mér leitt at berjask' (43) ('it is not fated that we will marry. I am a shield-maiden, and I wear a helm in the company of battle-kings. I will continue to give them aid, and I am not tired of battle'). When he tries to turn her round, she repeats her desire to 'kanna lið

hermanna' (43) ('command the troops'). Moreover, when Sigurðr/Gunnarr proposes to end her celibate days, she repeats her reluctance to renounce the battlefield: 'Ek var í orrostu með Garðakonungi, ok váru vápn vár lituð í mannaþlóði, ok þess girnumk vér enn' (49) ('I was in battle with the King of Gardar, and my weapons were stained with blood, and I long for this yet'). Finally, she tells Gunnarr after marrying him that her marriage was undesired: '... þá er ek var heima með feðr mínum, ok hafða ek allt þat er ek vilda, ok ætlaða ek engan yðarn minn skyldu verða, þá er þér riðuð þar at garði þrír konungar' (59) ('when I was home with my father and had everything that I wanted ... I did not intend that any of you should be mine when you three kings rode into his court'). The lady's not for turning.

¹⁴ At the time he eats a piece of Fáfnir's heart we are not told that it makes him fearless, but we learn later (Chapter 28) that when he gives his wife Guðrún a portion of the dragon's heart, it makes her both wiser and fiercer (*miklu grimmar*). Sigurðr, still virtually a boy, was more than ordinarily courageous even before facing the dragon, and if eating a piece of its heart makes his wife more resolute, then I assume that his repast equips him with perfect fearlessness. In any event, Brynhildr's acceptance of him entails his fearless condition.

¹⁵ Her exact words are: ... 'Ok brá mínum svefni, eða mun hér kominn Sigurðr Sigmundarson er hefir hjálm Fáfnis ok hans bana í hendi?' (35) ('... And disturbed my sleep. And has Sigurðr Sigmundarson arrived, bearing Fáfnir's helm and the instrument of his death in his hand?') In *Sigrðrifumál*, she does not know who wakes her, nor does he know who she is. The differences suggest, perhaps, that in the saga Óðinn has planned their encounter and that Brynhildr expects, even dreads, Sigurðr's appearance; after all she is pretty good at predicting the future. What Brynhildr does next is to betroth herself anew to Sigurðr in the next betrothal scene (at Heimir's court, Chapter 25), and bide her time before he wends his way to Gjúki's court where (as she has correctly predicted) he marries Guðrún. From this point on in the saga, I assume, Brynhildr was always confident—because of her second-sight—that she would never have to regard Sigurðr as a serious threat to her celibate state. Her entire plan from this point on was based upon this—accurately predicted—postulate.

¹⁶ But see Anne Heinrichs, 'Brynhild als Typ der präpatriarchalen Frau', in *Arbeiten zur Skandinavistik: 6. Arbeitstagung der Skandinavisten des deutschen Sprachgebiets: 26.9-1.10, 1983 in Bonn*, ed. by Heinrich Beck (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1985), pp. 45-66, at p. 48; 'Annat er vart eðli: the type of the prepatriarchal woman in Old Norse literature', in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature*, ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), pp. 110-140, at p. 116: she believes that when Sigurðr happens upon Brynhildr inside the shield rampart, it 'is apparently surrounded by a blazing fire'.

¹⁷ In the ten betrothal scenes in the saga—(1) Signý-Siggeirr, Chapter 3; (2) Sigrún-Helgi, Chapter 9; (3) Hjördis-Sigmundur, Chapter 11; (4) Hjördis-Álfr, Chapter 12; (5)

Brynhildr-Sigurðr, Chapter 21; (6) Brynhildr-Sigurðr, Chapter 25; (7) Guðrún-Sigurðr, Chapter 28; (8) Brynhildr-Sigurðr/Gunnarr, Chapter 29; (9) Guðrún-Atli, Chapter 34; (10) Svanhildr-Jqrmunrekr, Chapter 42—only one woman (Hjqrðis) besides Brynhildr is given a choice of husband, and that is only between two rival suitors. Fathers in *Völsunga saga* repeatedly force their daughters into disastrous marriages.

¹⁸ This development is reminiscent of Sigurðr's unforeseen fulfilment of Brynhildr's first oath (The Fearless-Man Clause) when he wakes her on the mountain. Her requirement that he kill previous suitors is also similar to an earlier scene in which Sigrún demands that before she marry Helgi, he kill Hoddbroddr, a suitor urged on her by her father (Chapter 9, 15-17). We might term this motif 'The Breaking of Betrothals Volsung-Style'.

¹⁹ Heinrich's artful phrase, *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature*, p. 119.

²⁰ This is another example of retrospectivity that the saga employs to provide us with multiple narrative perspectives. Another obvious example is that in the two betrothal scenes involving Brynhildr and Sigurðr (the one on the mountain, Chapters 21-22, and the one at Heimir's court, Chapter 25), there is little or no indication that the contact between the two could have produced Áslaug, a retrospective detail we learn of first in Chapter 29. In a conference paper some ten years ago ('The Post-Scenic Element in the Icelandic Saga', in *Contemporary Sagas* (preprints from the Ninth International Saga Conference, Akureyri, Iceland, 31.7.-6.8.1994), pp. 323-44), I discussed the sagas' habit of reporting actions said to have occurred in an earlier scene but which in fact never happen there. I suggested that in all cases the saga author has most likely not forgotten what he had written earlier but simply retells the scene, usually by adding details that shift the narrative focus. The additions are examples of what I am now calling (after Waterhouse and Stephens) *retrospectivity*.

²¹ This passage could also be translated, 'I said when I swore an oath on the mountain [*er ek vann eiða á fjallinu*] that only my lover Sigurðr could do that'. Grimstad's text resolves the ambiguity by offering the reading 'en ek sagða at þat munðe sigurdr einn giora ok ek vann eiða afiallenu ok er hann minn frumverr' (174) ('but I said that only Sigurðr would do that *and* I swore an oath on the mountain and he is my lover').

²² Because Heimir shows no surprise at the mention of Áslaug, he obviously has shared his foster daughter's secret all along; moreover, we can assume he is a complicit party to her plan to remain celibate, for otherwise he would have revealed Áslaug's existence to Buðli or made this information public, necessitating that Sigurðr be called to account. (Calling Sigurðr to account is tantamount to committing suicide).

²³ That is, in order to discover how Gunnarr has penetrated the flames, Brynhildr stages an argument with Guðrún in order to trick her into revealing what she knows. Klaus von See, on the other hand, believes that Brynhildr's behaviour makes no sense ('... daß die Haltungsweise Brünhilds hier jeden sinn verloren hat'). See his 'Freierprobe und Königinnenzank in der

Sigfridsage', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 88 (1957), 163-172, at p. 171. Rpt. in his *Edda, Saga, Skaldendichtung: Aufsätze zur skandinavischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1981), pp. 214-223, at p. 222.

²⁴ Fredrik J. Heinemann, 'Saga Dialogue and Brynhildr's Mouse Trap', *alvissmál*, 8 (1998), 51-66.

²⁵ The Sigmundur-Lyngi competition for Hjördís (see Chapter 11) shows how dangerous it can be to let defeated suitors wander about at will, because, a touchy lot, they do sometimes come back to seek revenge. Even accepted suitors, such as Siggeirr, can be dangerous.

²⁶ See the scene (number 3) mentioned in note 17 in which Eylimi requested that his daughter Hjördís choose between Sigmundur and Lyngvi, a wise decision on the father's part in contrast to other fathers who insist on choosing their daughters' husbands against the women's wishes.

²⁷ In the terms of Waterhouse and Stephens ('The Backward Look: Retrospectivity in Medieval Literature') the kind of retrospectivity I am alleging as occurring in the Brynhildr-story seems to belong to their second type, 'in which the effect of retrospectivity is to make us adjust emphasis amongst the relative weightings we have given to various aspects of the work, and by which an apparently minor element may become major ...' (360). That is, when we experience in the retrospective wooing scene the eighth reference (and subsequent references) to Brynhildr's oath we are led to look back at the other oaths no longer as promises to marry the successful suitor but as unachievable specifications designed to preclude her marriage. On the other hand, their comments on *Beowulf* (which they see as an example of the third type of retrospectivity) might also apply to the Brynhildr-story: 'It [retrospectivity operating on larger narrative units widely separated from each other] is operative in the poet's repetition of the information about Beowulf's battles with Grendel and his mother; each time the battle is narrated we are forced to juxtapose what we already know against what we now hear ...' (366). Likewise in the Brynhildr-story, each time we hear the oath mentioned, especially as the cumulative effect of the various clauses causes us to remember the earlier versions, we increasingly become aware of their ambiguity as ruses to ward off marriage and not as conditions which the successful suitor must fulfill. I wish to thank George Clark for the reference to this valuable article.

²⁸ The tenth and the eleventh references can be dealt with briefly. When she says to Sigurðr (the tenth reference) that 'eigi reið Gunnarr eldinn til vár, ok eigi galt hann mér at mundi felldan val' (55) ('Gunnarr did not ride through the fire to me, nor did he pay me as a bride price the required dead'), she merely denies his assertion that she had chosen Gunnarr as her husband and alludes to the Dispatching-the-Suitors Clause. Likewise, when she says (the eleventh reference) 'Ek vann eið at eiga þann mann er riði minn vafriþoga, en þann eið vilda ek halda eða deyja ella' (56) ('I swore an oath to marry the man who rode through my flame wall,

and that oath I will keep or die'), she dashes Sigurðr's hopes that they might resume their relationship he enjoyed, and she endured, before she married Gunnarr.

²⁹ Searle, *Speech Act*, p. 62.

³⁰ Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, p. 275.

Landscape and Authorial Control in the Battle of Vigráfjörðr in *Eyrbyggja Saga*

Ian Wyatt

Eyrbyggja Saga (*Eyrb.*), like most *Íslendingasögur*, is replete with references to the landscape of Iceland. Indeed, such is the detail of saga landscapes that, until recent years, many readers of sagas considered their representations of landscape to be indistinguishable from the actual landscape of Iceland: that the sagas merely recorded the physical topography of Iceland. The impression of realism projected by saga landscapes, in conjunction with their perceived geographic accuracy, is a key element of the sagas in which the Icelanders have taken great pride and since the nineteenth century, foreign saga enthusiasts have also been drawn to exploring the literary and physical landscapes of Iceland.

Gary Aho examines the writings of forty British travellers to Iceland between 1772 and 1897.¹ He discusses the work of nine British travellers to Iceland between 1772 and 1834 for whom, he states, research or exploration could be said to be the *raison d'être* of their journeys; whereas during the latter part of the nineteenth century visiting saga sites appears to have been the predominant attraction for travellers to Iceland. Andrew Wawn identifies Fredrick Metcalfe as the first traveller to Iceland to bring the 'saga-steads alive for British readers'.² Metcalfe makes some geologic remarks, as well as observations on the history, customs and living conditions of the Icelanders, but his primary objective is to visit saga sites. In his introductory discussion (written in the style of a conversation) he highlights visiting saga sites: 'to see with your own eyes the spots we have been reading of in the Sagas'.³ Metcalfe's desire to see the place of the sagas in the actual landscape is illustrated by his comments on *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Vatnsdalur*:

The whole scene hereabouts is described with such minuteness by the saga —which, witchcraft apart, must be genuine, as much of it

is quoted by the Landnama and other sagas— that the actual localities can easily be identified.⁴

For Metcalfe the apparent correlation between saga landscapes and the physical landscape of Iceland confirms the historicity of the *Íslendingasögur*, or at least *Vatnsdæla saga*.

The breadth of the topographic vocabulary employed by saga authors is comparable to that used in representing other areas of life in the sagas, as with the range of terms used to depict the appearance and nature of individual characters, homes and dwellings, metals, sources of energy, and much else besides. Moreover, the distribution of topographic terms is approximately proportionate to saga length.⁵ The saga author may refer to the name of a hill or a river or some other feature, describe a valley, give a brief description of a storm, highlight a wood, note a breeze or describe deteriorating weather in remarkable detail. For example, in *Eyrb.* we find:

Þat var einn vetr, at snimma kom á vetrarríki mikit, ok gerði þegar jarðbönn^a þar um Bitruna; tóku menn þá aflát stór, en sumir ráku fé sitt um heiði^b [. . .] Um vetrinn á góí kom hríð mikil, ok helzk hon viku; þat var norðanveðr mikit. En er af létti hríðinni, sá menn, at hafiss^c var at kominn allt it ytra,^d en þá var íssinn^e eigi kominn inn í Bitruna; fóru menn þá at kanna fjörur^f sínar.⁶

[It was one winter that severe winter weather came early, and this soon created a lack of grazing there around Bitra. People then took large losses, but some drove their live-stock on to the heath...During the winter, in February, a severe storm came and it blew for a week; it was a strong northerly wind. And when the storm let up, people saw that sea ice had come all the way in to the outer part [of the fjord], but the ice had not come in as far as Bitra. Men then went to search their shores.]

The primary function of this brief description of a severe winter is to provide the narrative motivation for a later conflict, but it also illustrates the precarious nature of agrarian life in medieval Iceland by reference to the landscape. The farmers have lost their high quality fodder (*a*) and have to resort to releasing their animals to forage on the heath (*b*). The weather is so severe that sea ice (*c*, *e*) has actually come into the fjord (*d*), and food is in such short supply that

people have to scavenge on the foreshore (*f*). Just as the lives of men depend on the land, so the saga author makes use of representations of the landscape to depict that life. By describing such a landscape and the ways in which the weather affects it, the saga author illustrates famine conditions without referring directly to the hunger of individuals.

The significant number of place-names, topographic references and comments about the weather in the *Íslendingasögur* combine to evoke the physical Iceland. As Vésteinn Ólason has noted: 'Iceland is the centre of the *Íslendingasögur* world, and the sagas exhibit a powerful sense of place as regards the various parts of the country in which the actions occur'.⁷ Indeed, it is the view of many commentators, particularly *Íslenzk fornrit* editors, that saga landscapes are primarily representations of the physical Iceland. For example, Guðni Jónsson discusses the possible location of the sighting stone erected by Grettir Ásmundarson to locate the mythical Þórisdalur.⁸ This identification of saga references with topographic features or place-names in the actual landscape of Iceland has the effect of reducing saga landscapes to a form of literary grid reference. Such a reductive reading of saga landscapes is perhaps not surprising given their geographic authenticity, and their importance to the cultural identity of Icelanders. As Gísli Sigurðsson observes, the 'sagas and the role played by the Icelandic landscape were...of major significance in the development of the romantic sense of national identity among Icelanders'.⁹

Though the landscapes of the sagas are an important element of the perceived realism of these narratives, they have received very little scholarly attention from a literary perspective I would suggest that it is, paradoxically, the perception of saga landscapes as actual locations that has contributed to a scholarly neglect of these landscapes as literary phenomena. Paul Schach has also noted the lack of scholarly interest in saga landscapes as narrative devices:

Oddly enough, the problem of the treatment of natural scenery in the Old Norse Sagas has been almost completely ignored. The few remarks one finds on the subject are, like most of the comments regarding the style of the Sagas, sweeping or superficial generalizations.¹⁰

Schach's discussion of a wide range of topographies throughout the *Íslendingasögur* remains the only significant examination of saga landscapes as literary devices. For example, in a section on cold weather, Schach finds that the

landscape in the famine scene from *Eyrb.* (discussed above) is an anticipatory setting that prepares the narrative conditions for a conflict over a beached whale, which represented a valuable source of food and potential wealth.¹¹

I have shown elsewhere that, in contrast to a view of saga landscapes as mere backdrops representing the physical reality of the Icelandic landscape, saga landscapes display patterns of functionality in which specific narrative functions may be associated with individual topographic lexemes.¹² For example, *skógr* [woodland] usually refers to the dwarf birch woodlands of Iceland and is associated with concealment, whereas *mörk* [forest] represents the vast forests of Scandinavia and often signifies royal wealth, authority and power. An *á* [river] may carry a retardation function or operate as a physical or legal boundary, and *íss* [ice] provides a neutral location for action. This paper explores the integrated functionality of topographic references within a single saga episode to demonstrate how the saga author may employ references to landscape and weather to integrate or control particular narrative strands and thus illustrate the role of landscape as an element in the narrative grammar of the sagas.

The battle of Vigrafjörðr in *Eyrb.* is an extremely vivid battle scene, which makes wide use of topographical, geographical and meteorological terminology.¹³ Examination of all these elements will demonstrate the role of landscape as an authorial device by illustrating the saga author's use of topography and geography to integrate this scene into the saga, and to orchestrate the outcome of the battle so as to achieve a lasting resolution and thus the closure of a narrative strand.

The following discussion of the use of landscape in this episode is divided into three broad parts. The first will examine the role of the weather in establishing the narrative conditions for the battle, and will comment on the saga author's use of the time frame; there follows a discussion of the use of geography in affirming clan loyalties and as a retardation device. The third element is an exploration of the functions of snow and ice in the actual battle, and its resolution. However, as such a division of elements in an attempt to explore the integrated use of landscape features is somewhat artificial, it should be understood that there is a degree of overlap between these sections.

Weather

The battle of Vigrafjörðr follows that of Álptafjörðr.¹⁴ The two battles are elements of the same feud but they are not causally related. Indeed the events that culminate in the battle of Vigrafjörðr are established during the summer before the battle of Álptafjörðr:

Þat sumar, áðr bardaginn var í Álptafirði,^a hafði skip komit í Döggurðarnes,^b sem fyrr var sagt; þar hafði Steinþórr af Eyri keypt teinæring^c góðan við skipit; ok er hann skyldi heim færa skipit, tók hann vestanveðr mikit,^c ok sveif þeim inn um Þórsnes,^d ok lendu í Þingskálanesi^e ok settu þar upp skipit í Gruflunaust^f ok gengu þaðan út yfir ásana til Bakka^g ok fóru þaðan á skipi heim,^h en teinæringrinn hafði ekki sótt orðit um haustit,ⁱ ok stóð hann þar í Gruflunausti.^j¹⁵

[That summer before the battle of Álptafjörður a ship had come into Döggurðarnes, as was said before. There Steinþórr of Eyrr had bought a fine ten-oared boat from the ship. But when he was to bring the boat home he got a strong westerly wind, which drove them toward Þórsnes¹⁶ and they landed at Þingskálanes and brought the boat ashore at Gruflunaust. And they went on foot out from there over the ridges to Bakki and went home from there by ship, but the ten oared boat was not collected during the autumn, and it remained there at Gruflunaust.]

After the uneasy and fragile settlements made following the battle of Álptafjörðr, the author takes us back in time (*a*), and shifts the geographic focus of the narrative (*b*) away from Álptafjörðr to coincide with the earlier reference to the ship's arrival at Döggurðarnes.¹⁷ The introduction of the ten-oared boat (*c*) is critical to the development of the narrative, because having bought the boat Steinþórr is blown off course (*d — f*) when he tries to take it home the retrieval of this boat is the narrative motivation for the later movement of men that culminates in the battle. The westerly wind that takes them off course (*d*) removes all control from Steinþórr, and the author focuses our attention, by degrees, to the precise location of where the boat will be left (*e — f*); the author controls the narrative and determines the location for the boat's landing (*f, j*) through the use of weather. It is as a result of the weather conditions that

Steinþórr is forced to leave his boat in Vigrafjörðr, almost within sight of Helgafell, the home of his enemy Snorri goði. The saga author creates the narrative opportunity for the battle by making use of the weather to force Steinþórr to leave his boat at Gruflunaust, and the battle occurs when Steinþórr returns to collect the boat.

After landing the boat in Vigrafjörðr, Steinþórr and his men walk to Bakki (*g*) to arrange for a ship in which to go home to Eyrr (*h*). Yet, it would be much easier for Steinþórr and his men to have walked south east from Gruflunaust across Þingskálanes, to arrange for a boat across Álptafjörðr to Eyrr, than to travel west to Bakki (see Figure 1, below). So, why does he choose this route? Although this scene predates the battle of Álptafjörðr in terms of narrative time it occurs after it in the textual sequencing, and I would suggest that Steinþórr took the long route home because of his alliance with the Þorlákssynir. Bakki is presented as the familial centre of the Þorlákssynir, despite their ancestral links with Eyrr, whereas Þingskálanes and the western side of Álptafjörðr are under the control of the Þorbrandssynir, and so it is simply safer for Steinþórr to take the longer route. This notion is supported by the similarly circuitous route taken by Steinþórr when he goes to collect the boat (see below). However, in order to accept this reading of Steinþórr's journey we also have to acknowledge that the saga author has created a minor discrepancy in the saga's time frame, because Steinþórr is taking these precautions before he is involved in the conflict with Snorri. When Steinþórr returns home the saga author returns to the present (*i*), just after the battle of Álptafjörðr, and a reminder that the boat is still in Gruflunaust (*j*).

In this brief introductory section, the saga author makes use of geography, landscape and seasonal references to establish a new narrative thread and integrate it into the fabric of the saga. He also shifts the focus of interest away from Álptafjörðr to the area from Bakki to Þingskálanes and so highlights the importance of geography to clan alliances.

Geography

Just before Christmas Steinþórr decides to retrieve his boat from Gruflunaust, and he sets off with seven men:

alls váru þeir átta saman ok váru fluttir inn yfir fjörð til Seljahöfða ok gengu síðan inn á Bakka, ok fór þaðan Þormóðr, bróðir þeira; hann var inn níundi. Íss var lagðr á Hofstaðavág mjök svá at Bakka inum meira, ok gengu þeir inn eptir ísum ok svá inn yfir eið til Vigrafjarðar, ok lá hann allr.¹⁸

[[. . .] they were eight all together and were ferried over the fjord to Seljahöfði, and then went over to Bakki and from there Þormóðr their brother went with them; he was the ninth. There was a great deal of ice in Hofstaðavágur as far as Bakki the Greater, and they walked along the ice and over the isthmus into Vigrafjörðr, which also lay under ice.]

As Steinþórr had to be ferried across Álptafjörðr, from Eyrr to Seljahöfði, he could just as easily have been taken to Þingskálanes with a short walk to Gruflunaust, or even to the edge of the ice in Vigrafjörðr. Steinþórr's circuitous route reflects the complexity of familial alliances, and the locations of their homes (Figure 1, below), in a blood feud within a small community. Although the Þorlákssynir are described as *á Eyri* [of Eyrr] it is Bakki that appears to be the more significant place in the context of this conflict, and thus in order to move safely overland Steinþórr has to take the long route via Bakki.

Figure 1, below, offers an approximate indication of the areas of influence of the conflicting parties as represented in the saga. I would suggest that Vigrafjörðr is at the confluence of the familial areas of both clans, and it is also directly below Þórsnessþing, the area's administrative centre, and Helgafell, the home of Snorri goði. Although Eyrr is the ancestral home of the Þorlákssynir the saga author highlights Bakki as their familial centre for the action in the episode; this view is supported by Steinþórr's journeys prior to the battle. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards observe that 'the [saga] author draws attention to the enormous pressure these conflicts are placing on society'.¹⁹

However, Steinþórr's lengthy journey also functions as a retardation device. If he had taken a direct route to the boat he could have met with the Þorbrandssynir on the headland of Þingskálanes, and as he outnumbered them and is a renowned fighter himself it is likely that Steinþórr would have won the battle outright. In order for a settlement to be achieved the saga author, working within the confines of a feud culture, mitigates the victory by placing the battle on the ice and redressing the imbalance of numbers through the use of a skerry (see below). In order to achieve this the author uses Steinþórr's long journey to place both parties on the ice so that they meet by accident. There is no intrigue or

planning before the fight, no theft, no beached whale—it is simply the chance clash of two feuding parties with no other motivation than the grudges borne by both sides.

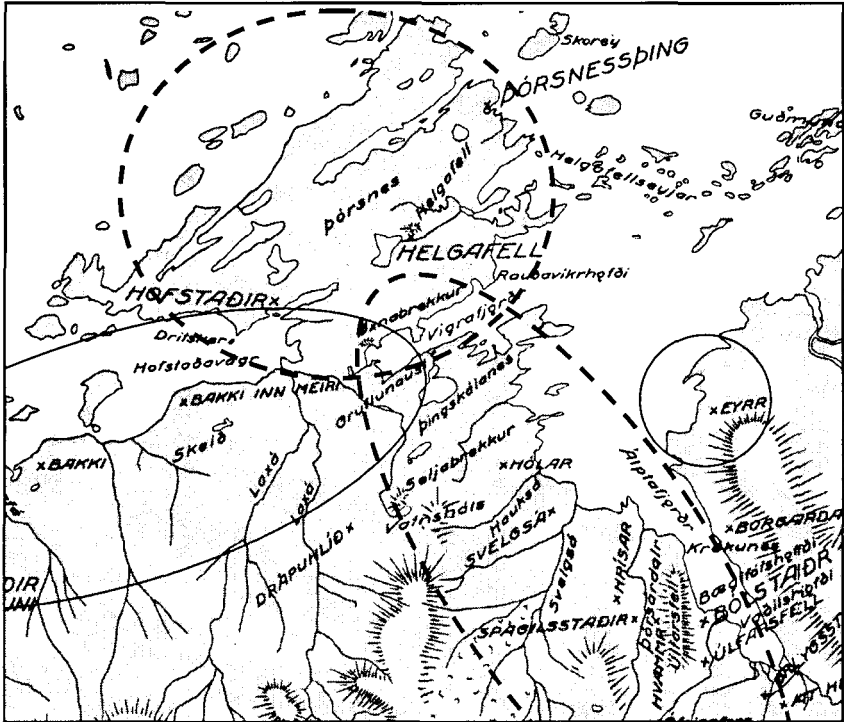


Figure 1: Vigraffjörðr and Areas of Familial Influence²⁰

----- Þorbrandssynir ——— Þorlákssynir

Ice and Snow

An area of frozen water provides the saga author with an unusual location that is temporary, belongs to no one and is under complete authorial control. So, as with rivers, ice may be considered as an active feature that the saga author is able to manipulate for his own narrative purposes.²¹ By using ice as a location the saga author removes any sense of territoriality from the protagonists, and so the ice

may therefore be considered as a neutral location. I would further suggest that the underlying function of ice as a neutral location is to aid the settlement of conflict; swift resolution is, indeed, an element that is common to all conflict scenes located on ice in the *Íslendingasögur*.²²

The battle of Vigrafjörðr concludes a protracted conflict between Snorri goði and the Þorbrandssynir against Björn Breiðvíkingakappi and the Þorlákssynir. Rory McTurk notes that in relation to the overall structure of the saga this feud is one of six narrative strands within the saga that are concerned with Snorri goði.²³ McTurk's discussion augments Paul Bibire's argument that narrative crises within the saga are highlighted by verses;²⁴ the battle of Álfafjörðr is such a crisis and is highlighted by strophe 33.²⁵ Although the battle of Álfafjörðr is the crisis point, the outcome of the battle is inconclusive in that the settlements made are only temporary—'allt var griðalaust með mǫnnum, þegar er menn váru heim komnir frá fundinum' [there was no truce at all between men once they arrived home from the battle].²⁶ The battle of Vigrafjörðr with its enduring settlement provides the actual conclusion to this feud, even though it is not causally related to the battle of Álfafjörðr. The ice in Vigrafjörðr functions as a frozen no-man's land between the areas of the conflicting parties and the neutrality of this location serves to support the resolution of the feud. The conflict affects the whole community and so its resolution on ice transcends clan alliances, which are partially established by geography.

Setting the scene with icy fjords is therefore crucial to the action of the battle, and the precise conditions are established in detail.

Honum er svá háttat, at hann fjarar allan at þurru, ok leggsk íssinn á leirana,^a er fjaran er, en sker þau, er eru á firðinum, stóðu upp ór ísinum,^b ok var þar brotinn mjök íssinn um skerit, ok váru jakarnir hallir mjök út af skerinu.^c Lausasnjórn var fallinn á ísinn, ok var hált mjök á ísinum.^d²⁷

[Vigrafjörðr is such that it is left completely dry by the outgoing tide, and the ice lay on the mud-flats at low tide. But those skerries which are in the fjord stood up through the ice, and the ice around the skerry was much broken, and shards of ice were jutting out at angles from the skerry. Loose snow had fallen on the ice, and the ice was very slippery.]

This description of the conditions in the fjord is an excellent example of what Schach termed expository setting, as each element may be seen to play a role in the battle sequence.²⁸

The low tide leaving muddy flats behind is essential if the skerries are to break through the ice (*a*) and for the ice to remain safe enough for action to take place. A skerry with jutting ice shards around it (*b*, *c*) operates as a stronghold for the Þorbrandssynir, who are outnumbered: 'Þorbrandssynir vqrðusk vel ok drengiliga; hqfðu þeir ok vígi gott, því at jakarnir váru hallir út af skerinu ok váru ákafliga háilir' [The Þorbrandssynir defended themselves well and valiantly; they had a good fighting position, because shards of ice were jutting out at angles from the skerry and they were extremely slippery].²⁹ Eventually the Þorlákssynir overcome the defensive position of the Þorbrandssynir, who are left injured but with only one man dead because Steinþórr prevents his men from killing them all.

The slippery surface of the ice (*d*), which is exacerbated by the *lausasnjór*,³⁰ makes the battle conditions very difficult and so adds to the tension of the fight and aids the dragging of the boat across the ice and the isthmus out of Vigrafjörðr. When Steinþórr is introduced into the saga he is described as 'inn þriði maðr hafi bezt verit vígr á äslandi' [one of the three best fighting men in Iceland].³¹ His skill is demonstrated in combat with Freysteinn bófi, when Freysteinn has the clear advantage:

Steinþórr bað hann eigi renna, ef hann væri eigi sárr; snerisk Freysteinn þá við í skerinu, ok sóttusk þá allfast, ok varð Steinþóri fallhætt, er jakarnir váru bæði háilir ok hallir, en Freysteinn stóð fast á skóbroddunum ok hjó bæði hart ok tíðum. En svá lauk þeira skiptum, at Steinþórr kom sverðshoggvi á Freystein fyrir ofan mjaðmir, ok tók manninn í sundr í miðju.³² [Steinþórr ordered him [Freysteinn] not to run if he was not injured; then Freysteinn turned around at the skerry and they attacked each other harshly, Steinþórr lost his balance because the shards of ice were both slippery and slanting, but Freysteinn stood firm on his spikes [shoes] and struck both hard and often. And their contest ended, when Steinþórr brought a sword strike just above Freysteinn's hips, and took the man apart at the middle.]

This scene clearly demonstrates Steinþórr's prowess as a fighter, overcoming Freysteinn against the advantages afforded him by his superior position on the ice blocks and his spiked shoes.

After the battle, when the Þorlákssynir have left the fjord, Snorri goði arrives at the scene. He arranges for the wounded to be looked after and notes that only Freysteinn has been killed, but he also notices a patch of blood on the snow: 'hann tók upp allt saman, blóðit ok snæinn, í hendi sér ok kreisti ok stakk í munn sér ok spurði, hverjum þar hefði blött. Þorleifr kimbi segir, at Bergþóri hefir blött' [he took up snow and blood together and squeezed it in his hand and put it to his mouth, and asked who had been bleeding there. Þorleifr kimbi said that it was Bergþórr's [Þorláksson] blood].³³ Snorri then says, "'at þetta sé feigs manns blóð, ok munu vér eigi eptir fara'" ["that this is a doomed man's blood, and we need not go after them"].³⁴ Snorri is under pressure to pursue the Þorlákssynir, but the evidence of the bloody snowball is enough to inform him that at least one man on each side has died, and his decision not to go after the men makes a settlement possible. Thus, the *lausasnjór* also plays a small but significant role in the peaceful conclusion of this episode.

In this discussion of the battle of Vigrafjörðr I have sought to suggest how a saga author deploys landscape elements—topography, weather and geography—as literary artefacts to inform and control the narrative. As Robert Lawson-Peebles, writing on the narrative use of landscape in the literature of revolutionary America, observes:

If there is no such thing as an artless language, it follows that descriptions of the environment are never merely empirical. They are strategies which encode the interests and concerns of the writer as well as the physical nature of the terrain, the climate, and so on.³⁵

NOTES

¹ Gary Aho, "Með Ísland á heilanum": Íslandsbækur breskra ferðalanga 1772 til 1897', *Skírnir*, 167 (1993), 205-258.

² Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), p. 294; Fredrick Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland, or Notes of Travel in that Island in the Summer of 1860. With glances at Icelandic Folk-Lore and Sagas* (London: Longman, Green, 1861).

³ Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland*, p. 3.

⁴ Metcalfe, *The Oxonian in Iceland*, p. 215.

⁵ For detailed statistical analysis of topographic terms see Ian Wyatt, *The Form and Function of Landscape in the Old Icelandic Family Sagas* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 2001), pp. 19-31.

⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit IV (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935), p. 158.

⁷ Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of Icelanders*, trans. by Andrew Wawn (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998), p. 82.

⁸ *Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit VII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), p. 201 note 1.

⁹ Gísli Sigurðsson, 'Icelandic National Identity: From Romanticism to Tourism', in *Making Europe in Nordic Contexts*, ed. by Perri J. Anttonen (Turku: Nordic Institute of Folklore, 1996), pp. 41-75 (p. 44).

¹⁰ Paul Schach, *The Use of Scenery in the Íslendingasögur* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1949), p. iii.

¹¹ Schach, *The Use of Scenery*, pp. 158-163.

¹² Wyatt, *Form and Function*, pp. 83-236; Ian Wyatt, 'The Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas: Text, Place and National Identity', *Landscapes*, 5/1 (2004), 55-72.

¹³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 125-130.

¹⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 120-125.

¹⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 125.

¹⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p. 119, suggests 'which drove him round Thor's Ness' for 'ok sveif þeim inn um Þórsnes'; *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. by Judy Quinn in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders I-V*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson *et al* (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), V 190, offers 'which swept them east around Thorsnes'. However, Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p.

xliv, notes the use of *inn* to mean 'towards land', and this usage is supported by Stefán Einarsson, 'Terms of Direction in Old Icelandic', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 43 (1944), 265-285 (p. 268), who also points out that this phrase can mean east in relation to Snæfellsnes. See also Einar Haugen, 'The Semantics of Icelandic Orientation', *Word*, 13 (1957), 447-459; Kirsten Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 51-57; Tatjana N. Jackson, 'On the Old Norse System of Spatial Orientation', *Saga-Book*, 25 (1998), 72-82.

¹⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 106.

¹⁸ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, pp. 125-126.

¹⁹ Hermann Pálsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 8. On the topographic accuracy of the saga see also G. N. Garmonsway, 'Eyrbyggja Saga', *Saga-Book*, 12 (1940), 81-92 (p. 86).

²⁰ Map section taken from Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, facing p. 128 'Umhverfi Helgafells', reproduced with the kind permission of Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, <www.hib.is>. I have added the lines indicating areas of familial influence.

²¹ See Wyatt, *Form and Function*, pp. 128-173; Wyatt, 'The Landscape of the Icelandic Sagas', pp. 64-68.

²² See also *Fljótsdæla saga* [ch. 13]; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* [ch. 15]; *Ljósvetninga saga* [ch. 20]. There is also an ice game in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* [ch. 18] played on *svell* [sheet ice]. A conflict is averted during the game, but the scene is made more complex as Gíslí recites a verse during the game that reveals him as the killer of Þorgrímr Þorsteinsson [ch. 16].

²³ Rory McTurk, 'Approaches to the Structure of *Eyrbyggja Saga*', in *Sagnaskemmtun: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 65th birthday, 26th May 1986*, ed. by Rudolf Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Wien: Hermann Böhlau Nachf, 1986), pp. 223-237 (p. 229), identifies the six narratives relating to Snorri as being in the following chapters: (1) ch.17; (2) chs 23, 26-27; (3) chs 35-38; (4) chs 39, 41-46; (5) ch. 56; (6) chs 57-62. See also Hermann Pálsson and Edwards 1989 [note 10], pp. 7-8.

²⁴ Paul Bibire, 'Verses in the Íslendingasögur', *Alþjóðlegt fornsagnáþing, Reykjavík 2-8 ágúst 1973, Fyrirlestrar* (Reykjavík, 1973), I 1-28.

²⁵ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 124.

²⁶ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 125.

²⁷ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 126.

²⁸ Schach, *The Use of Scenery*.

²⁹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 127.

³⁰ I take *lausasnjór* [loose snow] to indicate powder snow, a type of snow which forms in extremely cold and dry conditions, such as one might expect to find in weather cold enough

to freeze moving salt water, such as a fjord. This therefore has a further function of contributing to the realism of the scene.

³¹ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 22.

³² Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 128.

³³ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 129.

³⁴ Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 129.

³⁵ Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 6.

Orthodox Editing: Medieval Versions of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*

Marta Cobb

In the prologue to *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the unnamed author gives his famous warning about the responsibility of his prospective audience and the dangers of selective reading:

I charge þee & I beseche þee, wiþ as moche power & vertewe as þe bonde of charite is sufficient to suffre, whatsoeuer þou be þat þis book schalt haue in possession, ouþer bi propirte ouþer by keping, by bering as messenger or elles bi borrowing, þat in as moche as in þee is by wille & auisement, neiþer þou rede it, ne write it, ne speke it, ne 3it suffre it be red, wretyn, or spokyn, of any or to any, but 3if it be of soche one or to soche one þat haþ (bi þi supposing) in a trewe wille & by an hole entent, purposed him to be a parfite folower of Criste, not only in actyue leuyng, bot in þe souereinnest pointe of contemplatife leuing þe whiche is possible by grace for to be comen to in þis present liif of a parfite soule 3it abiding in þis deedly body.¹

This lengthy passage demonstrates just how thorough the *Cloud*-author was in composing his warning, attempting to foresee the many possible ways his text might be transmitted and read. His words reveal not only a deep interest in the materiality of the book, but also an awareness of just how little control an author has over his text or his audience once the text has left his possession. His only option, aside from either refusing to let anyone read his treatise or perhaps refusing to write at all, is to charge any readers, listeners, or copyists of the text with their responsibility to him, to themselves, and perhaps most importantly, to others. They must assess whether they or anyone who may receive the text from

them is the right sort of person for the text. Moreover, they must charge each potential audience member, including themselves, to 'take hem tyme to rede it, speke it, write it, or here it, al ouer'.² If the text is not absorbed at leisure and in its entirety, they risk leading themselves and others into 'error'.³ Thus the author seems to imagine his text in the hands of a community of readers joined by the 'bonde of charite', all of whom must look out for one another.

In other circumstances, however, a potential secondary transmitter of the text—that is, someone who is in possession of the text after it has left the control of the author—decides that his or her responsibility towards others is not to transmit the entire text. In other words, that transmitter decides that the best way for an intended audience to read a particular text is to read it selectively. That is indeed what occurs in certain medieval versions of the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. No complete medieval version of the Long Text of Julian's *Revelations* survives. Indeed, the three existing manuscripts of the entire long text were most likely copied by English Benedictine nuns in France in the seventeenth century.⁴ The unique surviving manuscript of the 'full' version of *The Book of Margery Kempe* was preserved in the Carthusian monastery of Mount Grace, where was it read and commented upon by the monks, but it does not seem to have received the lay readership that Kempe possibly imagined for it. The prologue of the book announces that it was created to comfort 'synful wrecchys', implying that it was not specifically written for the edification of monks but for all Christians.⁵ Yet, for all their lack of circulation, especially among a broader lay audience in the medieval period, these longer works provide the focus for the majority of contemporary Julian and Margery scholarship.

Both of these texts, however, evidently circulated in the late Middle Ages in other forms. Julian's Short Text survives in a mid fifteenth-century manuscript, British Library, MS Additional 37790 (commonly referred to as Amherst), which was in turn copied from another manuscript that was made within her lifetime.⁶ Marleen Cré convincingly argues, however, that, the 'milieu in which Amherst originated and was read was almost undoubtedly Carthusian', again limiting the likelihood of a broader lay readership.⁷ More importantly for the current discussion, selections from the Long Text were gathered along with other religious writings into a manuscript—Westminster Cathedral Treasury MS 4—dated around 1500. Following the earlier opinions of Colledge and Walsh, Hugh Kempster in his study of the Westminster text differentiates 'between the scribe who [. . .] mechanically copied the whole manuscript and an earlier editor who undertook the task of piecing together the various extracts'.⁸ In 1501, Wynkyn de

Worde printed a selection of passages from the *Book of Margery Kempe*. As in the case of the Westminster text, it is generally assumed that de Worde is not responsible for revising the text, but that he printed a collection of extracts that were already in circulation.⁹ Thus it is possible to view both texts as the product of earlier editing processes. These condensed editions represent not so much attempts to summarise accurately the texts in question, as efforts to transform them into something else altogether. This study seeks to investigate why and how the unknown secondary editors of these texts attempted to bring them safely into the narrower confines of fifteenth-century orthodoxy and what sort of audience they may have intended for their selective creations. What these editorial processes reveal is a concern about the subversive potential of the body of Christ, especially in the English vernacular, as well as the way female mystics relate to that body. Yet these texts also suggest that the distinction between lay and clerical audiences is not as rigidly fixed as has often been assumed.

It is important to note that these processes of orthodox editing are not a sign of contempt for either text, but rather evidence of a secondary editor's anxiety about unorthodox interpretations made by that text's audience. Indeed, what evidence survives suggests that Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe themselves were anxious about the production and transmission of their texts. *The Book of Margery Kempe* begins with the highly wrought tale of the text's production involving many stops and starts, the efforts of more than one scribe, and even divine intervention. As Sarah Beckwith suggests, this prologue 'testifies to the dangers and difficulties of female authorship at a time when the Church was anxious to control an increasingly literate laity, and where women in particular were the object of a vernacular devotional literature that attempted to channel, construct, and contain feminine spirituality'.¹⁰ Likewise, as shall be seen further on, Julian's depiction of her three wishes at the beginning of the Long Text is quite defensive, assuring her audience that she knew that her desire for bodily sight of the passion and physical illness 'was not the commune vse of prayer'.¹¹ She clearly wants her audience to understand that her visions are the result, not of her own desire, but of divine will. Such anxiety might explain why no medieval versions of the Long Text survive and why the Short Text was copied in 1413, long after she claims to have gained the clearer understanding of her initial visions that prompted the writing of the Long Text. She may have taken a long time to write it or, once it was written, felt that it should not circulate in her lifetime.¹²

This anxiety may stem from the fact that, although neither Julian nor Margery can be properly defined as heretics, neither are they rigorously orthodox. Margery, whose unique brand of devotion prevented her from either being a proper housewife or joining a religious order—she is neither 'closyd in an hows of ston' (*BMK* 870), nor does she 'spynne and carde as other women don' (*BMK* 4330-31)—was perpetually getting into trouble with religious authorities, a tendency that was not helped by her determination to obey only those authorities with whom she was in agreement.¹³ She does seek clerical approval from Archbishop Arundel, Julian of Norwich, and many others, but she also demands 'special treatment', the right to take frequent communion, to choose her own confessor, and to wear white clothing as if she were a virgin.¹⁴ Margery's loud shouts and weeping during sermons and Corpus Christi processions, as well as her desire to be an object of derision wherever she goes, mark her out as a disruptive force in society.¹⁵ Yet, the 'meche slawndyr and meche evyl langage' directed at Margery simply provides her with the opportunity to 'suffyr for hys [Christ's] lofe' as Christ suffered for her (*BMK* 4091, 4103-04). Even though her beliefs, which are examined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, are relatively orthodox, her behaviour—the outward manifestation of those beliefs—subverts communal worship and clerical authority. Moreover, throughout the work, Christ not only tolerates, but actually supports and even requires her erratic behaviour. Thus, her text, which is as much about her unruly life as her conventional beliefs, is problematic. The Carthusians at Mount Grace may have read and annotated the complete text with great interest, approvingly comparing Margery's weeping with that of others of their order,¹⁶ but it seems unlikely that they or anyone else in a position of clerical or secular authority would have wanted a broader lay audience to follow her example too closely. Thus, a later editor of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, possibly a cleric himself, was faced with the task of creating a text in which Margery sets a good example for an audience of pious readers; to do this he had to remove her disruptive activity and create a new context for her often subversive relationship with Christ.

Another secondary and possibly clerical editor hoping to broaden the readership of the long version of the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich confronted a different set of problems. Julian herself was an enclosed anchoress: her public behaviour did not have the same potential for being problematic that Margery's did. Nor does her text, especially the long version, focus upon her public or even her private life much beyond the events of her divine revelations. Yet the arrangement of the long text, consisting of vivid descriptions of the contents of

Julian's visions followed by more didactic sections explaining what is to be learned from them, is unusual when compared to other 'vernacular mystical texts available to the lay populace of late-medieval England'.¹⁷ As Kempster argues, mystical writing in English usually divides into one of two genres, either narrative accounts of personal visionary experiences with little theological explanation, or texts consisting largely of contemplative theology with little or no description of visionary experiences. Julian's Long Text, however, contains both genres inextricably intertwined. For example, in her first 'shewing', Julian witnesses 'the reed bloud rynnynge downe from vnder the garlonde' of Christ (LT 4: 3-4). As part of that 'syght', the 'trinitie' fills her 'hart most of ioy', and she understands 'it shall be in heauen without end to all that shall come ther' (LT 4: 9-11). She then reflects upon the nature of the Trinity:

For the trinitie is god, god is the trinitie. The trinitie is our maker, the trinitie is our keeper, the trinitie is our everlasting loue, the trinitie is our endlesse ioy and our blisse, by our lord Jesu Christ, and in our lord Jesu Christ. And this was shewed in the first syght and in all, for wher Jhesu appireth the blessed trinitie is vnderstand, as to my sight. (LT 4: 11-16)

In the Short Text, Julian makes no mention of the Trinity at this point, she only describes the bleeding of Christ. The Virgin Mary also appears in the first showing in both versions. A pattern emerges in the Long Text in which the 'shewings' incorporate more abstract reflections as Julian increasingly describes her visions less in terms of what she has seen and more in terms of what she understands.¹⁸ These reflections, however, never lead Julian far from Christ and from Christ's human body, which remain central throughout the text. In a sense, therefore, Christ's body authorises the hybrid nature of the work itself. The editor of the excerpted text utilises a different strategy than that previously discussed for Kempe's text, instituting a kind of generic orthodoxy upon the text; he creates a more purely didactic work by eliminating many of the more affective aspects of Julian's mysticism, especially her more vivid descriptions of Christ.

Furthermore, although Julian voices acceptance of the Church's teachings in her Long Text, she also sets forward, in the parable of the Master and the Servant, the doctrine that God does not condemn human sins; in fact, his love for the soul never diminishes (LT 51). Previously the 'comyn techyng of holy church' and her own feelings that the 'blame of oure synnes contynually hangyth vpon

vs' cause her to resist the teaching of her showings regarding God's tolerance of human error (LT 50: 11, 12). Her visions teach her, however, that although 'it longyth to man mekely to accuse hym selfe', it also 'longyth to the propyr goodnesse of our lorde god curtesly to excuse man' (LT 52: 70, 71-72). Thus, as Nicholas Watson suggests, if 'at the highest level, the soul and God are eternally one in their sinlessness' then 'the Church's teachings on sin and God's wrath are only true in a provisional and secondary sense'.¹⁹ In other words, the teachings of the Church only hold true in this world; in the next the worshipper comes into a deeper understanding of God's perspective. By removing the content of many of the showings, the editor of the Westminster text is not only able to adjust the text so that it fits more comfortably within one of the traditional genres of English mystical writing, he also simultaneously removes any indication that the Church may not have the final word on sin and damnation.

Not only do the secondary editors of the reduced versions smooth over these previously discussed difficulties, they also, more obviously, remove the majority of the texts in question in their attempts to reconfigure and rework the texts' meaning. For example, the Wynkyn de Worde edition reduces *The Book of Margery Kempe* to a seven-page quarto referred to as 'a shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by our Lorde Jhesu Cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie Kempe of Lynn'.²⁰ This shortened version, by making reference to the longer work, announces its extracted nature, but these extracts provide little insight into contents of the text from whence they came. Rather than focusing upon the life of Margery Kempe, emphasis is placed upon Christ as the teacher and the source of the text rather than Margery herself. Although the treatise presents the selections as separate units, it reads as a series of dialogues between Margery and the Lord in which Margery acts as a passive receptacle for God's instruction. According to Sue Ellen Holbrook, 'eighteen per cent of the words come from the woman as direct or indirect speech; twenty-two per cent are in the voice of the narrator; and sixty per cent are uttered directly by Christ'.²¹ This is hardly an accurate representation of the longer text in which the words and, moreover, the deeds of Margery dominate throughout.

In spite of the rearrangement of the reduced text, however, some of Christ's instructive utterances allude to Margery's more disruptive behaviour. For example, in the 'shorte treatyse', Christ tells Margery:

Revelations of Divine Love *and* The Book of Margery Kempe

'Doughter, it is more plesure to me that thou suffre despytes, scornes, shames and repreves, wronges, dyseases, than yf thyne hede were stryken thre tymes a day every day in seven yeare.'

'Lord, for thy grete payne, have mercy on my lytell payne'.
(*'shorte treatyse'* 148-52)

In the context of the complete *Book of Margery Kempe*, Christ speaks these words to Margery after she has been driven out of Hull by the contempt of 'the malicyows pepil' (*BMK* 4307), detained by the orders of the Duke of Bedford and accused of Lollardy, threatened with burning by a mob of angry women wielding distaffs—a symbol of the dutiful wifeness that she so conspicuously rejects in her relationship with her earthly husband and reinterprets in her relationship with Christ, her heavenly spouse—and placed under house arrest in Beverly. Nor are these empty threats: Sawtre, the first Lollard burned in 1401, was not only from Lynn, but was a priest at her parish church before being charged with heresy.²² The Archbishop of York, whom she encounters twice, does not condemn her, but neither does he want her to remain in the vicinity; her presence has provoked civil unrest throughout Yorkshire. Thus, not only does she fail to demonstrate social decorum; her need for shames and reproofs requires others to behave in a disruptive manner toward her. She uses the scorn of those around her 'to transcend the world while staying in it'.²³ In other words, not only does Margery reject the world, she forces the world to reject her. Moreover, this rejection from the world, however much it might raise difficulties for her from secular and clerical authorities—and vice versa—validates Margery in the eyes of Christ.

In the new context of the *'shorte treatyse'*, however, Christ's instructions are suitably vague: he does not clarify what he means by *'despytes'* and *'scornes'*, nor does he tell her that she should seek out such treatment. Furthermore, his mention of *'dyseases'* implies the sort of feminine spirituality, described by Caroline Walker Bynum, that usually shows itself through sickness and fasting rather than extensive travel and public scorn.²⁴ Margery's response, taken from a later portion of the complete text in which she does suffer from physical illness, suggests quiet humility. By creating a dialogue in which God does most of the talking and Margery only reveals her eagerness to follow his instructions, the *'shorte treatyse'* goes a long way toward curbing the irascible personality of Margery Kempe, producing what Holbrook describes as *'a coherent set of excerpts'* that commend *'the patient, invisible toleration of scorn and the private, inaudible, mental practice of good will in meditation rather than public or physical acts'*.²⁵ Christ

repeatedly tells Margery that it is her intentions rather than her actions that lead to heavenly reward. For every time she wishes that 'her hede myght be smyten of with an axe [. . .] for the love of our Lorde Jhesu' or blesses 'all the holy places in Jherusalem', she will benefit as if she had suffered martyrdom or gone on pilgrimage in reality ('shorte treatyse' 4-5, 130). The 'shorte treatyse', however, makes no mention of the fact that Margery's life was often threatened or that she did actually visit the Holy Land. In the *Book of Margery Kempe*, Christ does frequently reward Margery for her pious thoughts rather than her deeds, but it is also clear that her actions are of consequence to him and, indeed, inspired by him. The editor of the 'shorte treatyse', however, chooses to ignore these deeds, focusing upon how someone might emulate Margery's irreproachable inner life without creating the same difficulties in the public sphere. Margery Kempe can provide a good example for an audience of pious readers; but it is necessary to carefully control and contain that example—something no-one seemed able to do while Margery was alive.

Once produced, it is easy to see why this collection of extracts appealed to Wynkyn de Worde, a printer known for his interest English contemplative works such as Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* and *Mixed Life* (printed in 1494) and for his connections with the Brigittine monastery at Syon.²⁶ The textual enclosure of Margery Kempe became complete when Henry Pepwell, describing her as a 'deuoute ances', reprinted the 'shorte treatyse' in an anthology of mystical writings in 1521.²⁷ Included in this anthology were several treatises attributed to the *Cloud*-author, Walter Hilton's *Of Angel's Song*, and selections from a *Legenda* of Catherine of Siena. C. Annette Grisé argues that, in spite of the seeming sanitization of Margery and her *Book*, from another perspective, 'Margery Kempe achieves her goal of becoming recognised publicly as a holy woman: she no longer merely emulates Bridget, Catherine, and their sisters, she is placed alongside them and subjected to the same reading and extracting practices that they are'.²⁸ This treatment of Margery and continental female mystics indicates the 'changing devotional fashions and the adaptations which the texts by and about holy women from the continent underwent in the printed tradition'.²⁹

Yet the 'shorte treatyse' advocates a very different type of piety than that exemplified by Margery herself in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. As Jennifer Summit suggests, Pepwell's later edition, with its emphasis upon earning indulgences through prayer and contemplation rather than pilgrimage or strict ascetic practices, asserts the orthodoxy of the practice of indulgences, recently attacked by Luther and his followers, and demonstrates 'how both the printed

book and the genre of female prayer could be wielded for polemical purposes' by ecclesiastical authorities.³⁰ De Worde and Pepwell continue, however, a process of reshaping the text begun by the earlier editor who created the set of extracts; he clearly was someone with an interest in the benefits of contemplation, but also had a desire to see that contemplation conducted in an orderly manner. In his hands, the example of Margery Kempe offers a far more conventional—less outgoing and, thereby, less threatening—example of orthodoxy.

Another unknown secondary editor used a slightly different strategy to adjust the writing of an actual devout anchoress. The Westminster text reduces the long version of Julian's *Revelations* to about forty folios. The manuscript also includes extracts from commentaries on two Psalms traditionally assigned to Hilton, as well as a compilation from his *Scale of Perfection*. According to Barry Windeatt, this is no careless collection; he argues that 'the pattern of abridgement in all four texts alike seems so comparably intelligent and purposeful as to suggest the outcome of the same mind intently reading these four different contemplative texts'.³¹ Yet, although this editor seems to have read Julian's work carefully and obviously found much there that was worth keeping, he completely changes the text's focus. In both the Long and the Short Texts, Julian begins by describing her desire for 'thre gyftes by the grace of god' (LT 2: 4-5), including having 'bodilie' sight of Christ's passion (LT 2: 10). The Westminster text opens not with this desire, nor with the illness that provoked her revelations, but with the Virgin Mary:

Oure gracious and goode Lorde God shewed me in party þe wisdom and þe trewthe of þe soule of oure blessed Lady, Saynt Mary; wherein I vnderstood þe reuerent beholdynge þat she behelde her God þat is her maker, maruelynge with grete reuerence þat he wolde be borne of her þat was a simple creature of his makynge. For this was her meruelyng, þat he þat was her maker wolde be borne of her þat is made. And this wysdom and trowth, knowynge þe grettenes of her maker and the lytyllness of herselfe þat is made, caused her to sey full mekely vnto Gabryell: 'Lo me here, Goddis handmayden'.³²

As stated above, both the long and short versions of the text include Julian's vision of Mary in the first showing. The secondary editor's choice to begin with her humble presence, however, undermines the emphasis—unavoidable in both

the Short and the Long Text—upon Julian's attachment to the human Christ. She specifically desires 'mynd of the passion', to witness the Crucifixion with 'Magdaleyne and with other that were Christus louers' (LT 2: 5, 9-10). Her revelations begin with the bleeding of Christ on the cross and it is to this image that she keeps returning. Yet, as even Julian herself seems aware, this desire for direct access to Christ's body is not unproblematic. She admits that she worried that her wish might not be 'the commune vse of prayer', and therefore insists that she wanted to receive it only if it was God's will (LT 2: 35-36). The Westminster text's new emphasis on the Virgin Mary makes the text more rigidly orthodox. Mary serves as a mediatrix and a meek exemplar, and so qualifies the longer text's attention to Julian's unmediated access to God.

Such alterations create the feeling that the presence of Julian is gradually being removed from the text. In some ways, however, the editor of the Westminster text only continues the process made in the changes from the short to the long version of the *Revelations* in which Julian edits out biographical details included in the previous version, such as the presence of her mother at her supposed deathbed. All references to Julian's gender, save one, have also disappeared in the Westminster text. The one passage in question reads: 'Also in the nyneth shewyng our Lord God seyde to *her* thus: "Art þou well payed þat I sufferd for thee?" And *she* sayde: "Ye good Lord, grannt mercy"' (WT 201-03, my emphasis). As Kempster suggests in his edition of the Westminster text, that one inclusion reads like an editorial mistake.³³ The rest of the text is given in the first person and makes no reference to the number of individual showings; it is worth noting, however, that Julian does remove most gendered references to herself in the Long Text. For example, although she refers to herself as a 'womann, leued, febille and freylle' in the Short Text, she does not repeat this comment in the longer version (ST 6: 41-42). In some ways, the editor merely seems to complete this process.

Yet this later editor makes other, more startling changes to the text in order to bring it into line with those it follows. Most of the showings that create the framework around which the original text is arranged have disappeared. These missing showings largely consist of Julian's more affective visions of Christ's crucifixion—such as the vision of the blood streaming from Christ's head resembling pills, herring scales, and rain from the eaves. What is left are the more abstract showings, such as all of creation reduced to the size of a hazelnut, God in a point, and Christ revealing the wound in his side, not as an emotionally charged reminder of his suffering, but as 'a feyre delectable place, and large inow for all

mankynde þat shall be sauf to reste in pees and loue' (WT 263-65). Also present, at least in part, is Julian's discussion of the role of prayer as well as the concept of God as mother. Clearly the removal of the more difficult theological concepts from the Long Text is not what is at issue for the editor of the Westminster text. Beyond the removal of the problematic passages about God's tolerance of sin—a concept that Julian herself insists that she struggled to accept—this is not a simplified version of the Long Text by any means. The text that results from the editing, however, is differently focused, more didactic and less concerned with the contents of the visions than is its source. If selective editing transformed Margery into what might be considered the perfect female mystic, a passive receptacle of the Lord's wisdom, Julian, whose Long Text represents the mingling of both experience, the traditional realm of the female mystic, and instruction, usually belonging to male contemplatives, almost becomes masculine.

The most profound omission from both texts, however, is the almost complete removal of the body of Christ and, consequently, the intimate relationship that both women have with that body. In *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Margery experiences vivid visions of the nativity and the crucifixion, visions in which she is not only a viewer, but also a participant.³⁴ She famously swaddles the infant Christ at his nativity, and, after the crucifixion, she wishes to banish the Virgin and Mary Magdalene in order to have his 'precyows body be hirself alone' (BMK 6524). Christ is her father, but also her son, her brother, and her husband. In the 'shorte treatyse', this intimacy with the human Christ is only implied: when she sees 'the crucefyxe' or 'a man had a wounde or a best', she sees 'our Lorde' suffering ('shorte treatyse' 65-66, 68). In the context of the complete text, however, this passage leads to a discussion of her violent 'cryingys' and the contempt her weeping often creates among those, whether clergy or lay, who witness it (BMK 2233).³⁵ Through her tears, private devotion becomes public action,³⁶ thus the impact of these tears, both upon Margery's faith and those around her, must be minimised. Likewise, Christ only refers to her as 'doughter' in the 'shorte treatyse', indicating a narrowing and a containment of the multifaceted relationship between them.

Most importantly, in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Margery's seeking out of shame and abuse becomes her own personal form of *imitatio Christi*.³⁷ As she tells Christ:

Now trewly, Lord, I wolde I cowde lovyn the as mych as thu
mythist makyn me to lovyn the. Yyf it wer possibyl, I wolde

lovyn the as wel as alle the seyntyngs in hevyn lovyn the, and as wel as alle the creaturys in erth myght lovyn the. And I wolde, Lord, for thi lofe be leyd nakyd on an hyrdil, alle men to wonderyn on me for thi love, so it wer no perel to her sowlys, and thei to castyn slory and slugge on me, and be drawyn fro town to town every day my lyfetye, yf thu wer plesyd therby and no mannys sowle hyndryd, thi wil mote be fulfillyd and not myn (BMK 6177-85).

Christ showed his love for her and for all humanity through public suffering. In return, she wishes to make a spectacle of herself, to be laid out naked so that all men may not only wonder at her, but also contribute to her humiliation. In this way, she hopes to prove the depth of her love. Thus the body of Christ could be seen to be problematic in *The Book of Margery Kempe* because it leads to and justifies her excessive behaviour. Although most of this passage is included in the 'shorte treatyse', the new context changes its meaning ('shorte treatyse' 124-28). As Voaden argues, it 'is to be read as an expression of devotion rather than of actual ambition'.³⁸ Margery does not need to seek out humiliation; it is enough that she wishes to do so.

Julian never plays nurse to the infant Christ, but she also enjoys an intimate relationship with his human body. As mentioned above, Julian's visions of Christ's body are central to her learning about God's divine love. Never is this more apparent than when, in the midst of her visions, Julian receives a suggestion to look from Christ's suffering body on the cross to 'hys father' in heaven (LT 19:7). Julian feels that there is no danger in shifting her gaze, but she refuses to comply:

I answeyrd inwardly with alle the myght of my soule, and sayd: Nay, I may nott, for thou art my hevyn. Thys I seyde for I wolde nott; for I had levyr a bene in that payne tylle domys day than haue come to hevyn other wyse than by hym. For I wyst wele that he that bounde me so sore, he shuld vnbynd me whan he wolde (LT 19: 10-14).

Julian announces to whomever or whatever is 'speaking' that she will not look away, that, for her, Christ is both her way into heaven and heaven itself. The learning she receives from her visions comes through the suffering and the joy of

his body. This body 'remains for ever the medium through which the whole pattern of the divine plan is understood'.³⁹ In the Long Text, it is Christ's role in the parable of the master and servant that explains why humanity suffers because of their sins even though God's love for them never alters. When the servant, who is Christ but also Adam and all of humanity, falls into the slade that represents both Christ's incarnation and human sinfulness, the Lord never ceases to look upon his servant with love. The servant suffers, but only because he cannot see the Lord's loving gaze. Thus the showing reveals that the suffering caused by sin is the result of human inability to perceive God's love. Just as Christ inspires Margery's indecorous behaviour, the body of Christ authorises both the hybrid nature of Julian's text and her unorthodox views on sin. In both cases, that body must be removed, or at least reduced, in order for the later editor to establish conformity.

It is impossible to determine the identity of the editor of either extracted text. In both cases, the editor's original manuscript—together with any clues it might have held—seems to have been lost. Yet, by looking at the texts themselves, it is possible to reconstruct not only the editors' motives, but also what sort of audience they may have imagined for their selective creations. For comparison, it is useful to consider one text that states quite clearly the sort of audience it has in mind: Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. An English translation and adaptation of the pseudo-Bonaventurian *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, the *Mirror* specifically received approval from Archbishop Arundel after the publication of his *Constitutions* in 1409. Designed to halt the spread of Lollardy, the *Constitutions* forbade the unauthorised translation of any part of scripture into English or the ownership of any translation of the Bible made since the time of Wyclif.⁴⁰ When taken to their most extreme interpretation, the terms of the *Constitutions* also censure the ownership and production of texts such as *Piers Plowman*, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Revelations*, which make extensive use of biblical passages. As Nicholas Watson has argued, this decree did much to stifle the production of devotional and mystical texts, as well as biblical translations, in the fifteenth century.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, Love's text adopts a similar agenda that affects the shaping of his text and its imagined audience. By offering a repetitive series of carefully selected and interpreted meditations upon the life of Christ, it urges its audience to follow his human example of humility and obedience. A more rigidly orthodox text than that of Julian or Margery, the *Mirror* advocates a sort of inward and decorous piety similar to that suggested by the 'shorte treatyse'.

In his proem, Love creates the rhetorical situation of a sermon in which the priest mediates God's divine meaning to a lay audience:

Ande for þis hope & to þis entent with holi writte also bene wryten diuerse bokes & trettes of deuoute men not onelich to clerkes in latyne, but also in Englyshe to lewde men & women & hem þat bene of symple vndirstondyng. Amonge þe whiche beþ wryten deuovte meditacions of cristes lyfe more pleyne in certeyne partyes þan is expressed in the gospell of þe foure euangelistes. Ande as it is seide þe deuoute man & worthy clerke *Bonaudentre* wrot hem to A religiose woman in latyne þe whiche scripture ande wrytyng for þe fructuose matere þerof steryng specialy to þe loue of Jesu ande also for þe pleyn sentence to comun vndirstondyng semeþ amonges opere souereynly edifyng to symple creatures þe whiche as childryn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of ly3te doctryne & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of hye contemplacion.⁴²

Love's introduction imagines an audience of 'lewde men & women & hem þat bene of symple vndirstondyng'. It is, of course, difficult to ascertain precisely who would be included in such a description. David Lawton, for example, suggests that the 'very disparate groups that writers had in mind when they proclaimed the "lewed and englis" nature of their audience might have comprised [. . .] clerics, lay people excluded from Latinate education by class or gender, and those illiterate not in the medieval but the modern sense, unable to read or write in any language—in a word, just about anybody.⁴³ Love, however, is more precise, for he distinguishes the 'clerkes', who can read in Latin, from those other 'lewde' readers and listeners who cannot. In this passage, Love seems to imagine the laity as an unlearned mass requiring illumination from clerics and clerically produced texts. As a concession to the supposed limitations of this readership, Love's text concerns not contemplation of divinity, but rather meditation upon vividly imaged scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin. Denied the 'sadde mete' of contemplation in favour of the 'mylke of ly3te doctryne', Love's presumed lay audience is not only feminised—given subject matter originally designed for the edification of an enclosed nun—but infantilised, considered incapable of consuming 'solid' spiritual food.

If Love's text creates boundaries between lay and clerical readers, it also divides meditation upon the human life of Christ and contemplation of his divinity into separate categories. In this way, the *Mirror* controls its audience's access to him. Both Julian's and Margery's extended texts insist upon the difficulty of maintaining such divisions: the boundary between the human and divine Christ is a fluid one, and their access to him is seemingly unlimited. Love, however, consistently turns his readers away from thoughts of Christ's divinity, focusing upon the extremes of his human life, his nativity and his passion. Love's text offers a series of vivid, guided meditations, asking the worshipper to place him or herself into the scene and to become emotionally involved with its events. In this way the *Mirror* creates a structured, imaginative space in which the worshipper may approach Christ.

This structured series primarily involves the human suffering of Christ that begins, not with the Passion, but with the Incarnation. Describing Christ's circumcision, Love urges his audience to weep with the child Christ:

Miche owht we to wepe & haue compassion with him, for he wept þis day ful sore, & so in þees gret festes & solempnites, we sholde make miche mirþe, & be ioyful for oure hele, & also haue inwarde compassion & sorowe for þe peynes & anguysh þat he suffret for vs. For as it is seid before, þis day he shedde his blode, when þat aftur þe rite of þe lawe, his tendere flesh was kut, with a sharp stonen knife, so þat zonge childe Jesus kyndly wept for þe sorow þat he felt þerþorh in his flesh. For without doute he hade verrey flesh & kyndly suffrable as haue oþer children. Shold we þan not haue compassion of him? (*Mirror*, p. 41, ll. 9-19)

Christ's circumcision becomes the Crucifixion in miniature: as Love reminds his audience, on this day he first 'began to shede his precieuse blode for oure sake' (*Mirror*, p. 41, ll. 5-6).⁴⁴ Indeed, the Crucifixion ceases to be an isolated event at the end of Christ's human life and becomes the very process of Christ's life. This pain must be repeated, over and over again, in the mind of the faithful worshipper. Even now, as he has just begun to live, Christ has already begun to die for humanity's sins. The infant Christ is already the sacrificial lamb who will die on Good Friday, but he is also any child with 'verrey flesh' who weeps for the hurts that he cannot understand. On both levels, he deserves our 'compassion'. The

audience is asked to identify with Christ, using their own experiences. Through the compassion of the reader or listener, spiritual truth becomes earthly reality and Christ's divinity disappears into his humanity. It is a powerfully effective method of arousing devotion, but it does not require participants to reach beyond a very physical love of the more human aspects of Christ.

Moreover, and what is perhaps most important, Christ suffers after 'þe rite of þe lawe'. In this, as in the rest of his life, Christ yields to the authority of the law, although, as the son of God, he is above it. Throughout the text, Love uses the human Christ and the Virgin Mary as paragons of obedience, patience, poverty, and meekness. For example, Mary has herself purified after giving birth even though she and her son are already pure (*Mirror*, pp. 46-49). Love emphasises this point, insisting that both Mary and her son 'keþten þe comune lawe as oþer' (*Mirror*, p. 46, ll. 30-31). Mary and Christ not only obey the commandments of their God, they also bend willingly to secular and religious law. Through their example, Love encourages the audience of the *Mirror* to do the same.

The *Mirror* presents the Crucifixion in a similar manner. Addressing his audience directly, Love urges them to 'depart in manere for þe tyme þe miht of þe godhede fro þe kyndely infirmite of þe manhede', to forget temporarily about Christ's divinity in order that they might concentrate on his human suffering (*Mirror*, p. 161, ll. 5-8). Love asks that they 'take hede of his most perfite obedience' in submitting to the will of his divine father (*Mirror*, p. 163, l. 28), as well as his patient tolerance in the face of his undeserved persecution:

Take nowe gude hede to oure lord Jesu, how patiently & benyngly he receyueþ þat fals feynede clipping, & traytours kosse, of þat vnseily disciple, whos feete he woshe a litel before of his souereyne mekenes, & fedde him with þat hye precious mete of his owne blessedede bodye, þorh his vnspekable charite.

And also beholde how patiently he suffreþ him self to be takene, bonden, smyten & wodely ladde forþ, as þei he were a thefe or a wikked doare, & in alle maner vnmihity to help him self. (*Mirror*, p. 167, ll. 19-28)

Love's text stresses Christ's extreme patience and meekness in the face of others' wrongdoing, the betrayal of Judas and the abuse he suffers at the hands of those who arrest him. Christ freely accepts his undeserved fate and feigns

powerlessness by his own choice for the salvation of humanity. In this way, the text insinuates that its audience should emulate Christ and, like him, suffer willingly for the good of Christian society. Love's Christ passively submits to the clerical and secular powers that would have him put to death, quietly bearing torture and humiliation because it is God's will. Such a portrayal forms a sharp contrast to the servant Christ/Adam of Julian's *Revelations* who is so eager to perform his lord's bidding that 'he stertyth and rynnnyth in grett hast for loue' (LT 51:14). Love's Christ has the Lord's bidding performed upon him. Even Margery's Christ, although willing to suffer humbly enough in Margery's visions, does not allow his servant Margery to submit to clerical or secular authorities when their will contradicts his own.

The extracted versions of Julian's *Revelations* and *The Book of Margery Kempe* might suggest an anxiety on the part of the later editors similar to that of Love's about the need carefully to control the representation of Christ. Love manipulates his Christ in order to impose a kind of social decorum upon his audience; the secondary editors both choose to restrict the presence of the human Christ in their selective creations in order to impose a more straightforward sense of orthodoxy. Neither of these transformed texts, however, is as explicit as the *Mirror* about the readership it hopes to receive. The publication of the Wynkyn de Worde edition of the 'shorte treatyse' suggests a mixed audience consisting of London lay people, but also, given de Worde's connections with Syon Abbey, clerical readers.⁴⁵ Likewise, although the material of the Westminster text suggests an editor as well as a potential audience with an interest in contemplation, the removal of the Latin from the commentaries on the Psalms also included in the text indicates the possibility of a lay audience. If this is the case, these two texts reveal how artificial Love's distinction between clerical and secular readers must have been. Although the audiences of these extracted versions of the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe might not have understood Latin, they are not simply being given the milk of meditation upon Christ's suffering humanity. That sort of 'milk' is precisely what has been removed from both texts. Even greatly reduced, Julian's text is a complex theological work, perhaps even more so with so many of the visions that clarify the commentary largely being removed. The extracts from *The Book of Margery Kempe* are not as complicated theologically, but the final extract privileges the experiences of a single woman over those of 'relygyous men' and 'prestes':

'O my dereworthy Lorde, these graces thu sholdest shewe to relygyous men and to prestes.'

Our Lorde sayd to her ayen: 'Nay, nay, doughter, for that I love best, that they love not, and that is shames, repreves, scornes and despytes of the people; and therfore they shall not have this grace; for, doughter, he that dredeth the shames of this worlde may not parfyghtly love God' ('shorte treatyse' 160-66).

In claiming that priests are denied access to a higher form of Christ's grace because they 'dredeth the shames of this worlde', these closing words mark a curious reversal of Love's proem. Thus it is an individual who seeks Christ without priestly mediation who comes closest to God.

This study has attempted to re-create the decisions of medieval editors who felt that the best reading was a selective one. Examining these texts reveals important insights into fifteenth-century orthodoxy as well as the lack of fixed divisions between clerical and lay audiences. It is perhaps inevitable, if unfortunate, that the presence of the longer and, in some ways, more obviously interesting versions has attracted the majority of scholarly attention in recent years. It might, therefore, be constructive to imagine a present in which neither the Long Text of the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich nor the complete *Book of Margery Kempe* survived. On the basis of the existing evidence, Margery Kempe would have been a devout anchoress, denied the mobility that seems to distress so many both in her time and in our own. Julian would be viewed as a more 'typical' mystic, although some confusion might be created by the extracts in the Westminster manuscript. Some of the showings would be recognised, but it is difficult to ascertain what scholars would make of the more didactic sections. It is, of course, ludicrous to suggest that it would be an improvement if scholars only possessed these shorter witnesses, but if that were the case, they would gain a greater understanding of the way the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe may have been experienced by a medieval lay audience. The fortunate survival of multiple editions, however, offers modern scholarship the opportunity, as well as the responsibility, to focus more rigorously on medieval editing and reading practices and the regulation of female voices through these practices.

NOTES

¹ *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises on Contemplative Prayer*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson (Exeter: Catholic Records Press, 1982), p. 1, ll. 8-18.

² *Cloud of Unknowing*, p. 1, ll. 24-25.

³ *Cloud of Unknowing*, p. 1, l. 29.

⁴ *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 233. There is some debate over the dating of the manuscripts. Marion Glasscoe suggests that one of three Long Text manuscripts, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Anglais, 40 (P), 'belongs to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century', while the other two, British Library, Sloane MSS 2499 and 3705 (S1 and S2), 'belong respectively to the early and later seventeenth century'. See Glasscoe's edition of Julian's Long Text, *A Revelation of Love*, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), p. viii. In contrast, Edmund Colledge and James Walsh in their edition describe P and S1 as being 'roughly contemporary' (c. 1650), but date the hand of S2 to the eighteenth century: see *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), vol. 1, p. 15. For a fuller discussion of the manuscripts and their various editions and translations, as well as the difficulties they pose for scholars, see Alexandra Barratt, 'How Many Children Had Julian of Norwich? Editions, Translations and Versions of Her Revelations', in *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honor of Professor Valerie M. Lagorio*, ed. by Anne Clark Bartlett (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 27-39.

⁵ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2000), ll. 1-2. Hereafter cited as *BMK*.

⁶ Barratt, 'How Many Children Had Julian of Norwich?', p. 27.

⁷ Marleen Cré, 'Women in the Charterhouse? Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* in British Library, MS Additional 37790', in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 43-62 (p. 45).

⁸ Hugh Kempster, 'A Question of Audience: The Westminster Text and Fifteenth-Century Reception of Julian of Norwich', in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 257-89 (p. 257).

⁹ Sue Ellen Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987), pp. 27-46 (p. 40).

¹⁰ Sarah Beckwith, 'A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe', in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Jane Chance (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), pp. 195-215 (p. 197). Rosalynn Voaden also discusses the role of the interaction between Margery and her scribe(s) in 'Words of Flame and Moving Cloud: The Articulation Debate in the Revelations of Medieval Women Visionaries', in *The Medieval Translator 6: Proceedings of the International Conference of Göttingen (22-25 July 1996)*, ed. by Roger Ellis, René Tixier and Bernd Weitemeier (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 159-74 (p. 167).

¹¹ *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Colledge and Walsh, 2, 35-36. Hereafter cited as LT by chapter and line numbers.

¹² Nicholas Watson discusses some of the difficulties Julian would have faced as a female visionary writer in England and argues for a later dating of the long and short versions of the *Revelations* than is usually assumed in 'The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 637-83.

¹³ Ruth Shklar, 'Cobham's Daughter: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the Power of Heterodox Thinking', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 56 (1995), 277-304 (p. 292). See also Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999), p. 129. Wendy Harding also addresses the tensions between Margery and members of the clergy in 'Body into Text: *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 168-87.

¹⁴ Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 94.

¹⁵ Anthony Goodman, 'The Piety of John Brunham's Daughter, of Lynn', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 347-58 (p. 355).

¹⁶ David Lawton, 'Voice, Authority, and Blasphemy in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 93-115 (pp. 111-12). See also Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 206-12, as well as Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*, pp. 151-54. Barry Windeatt includes these annotations in his edition.

¹⁷ Kempster, 'A Question of Audience', p. 269.

¹⁸ David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and*

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Gender in Late Medieval English Culture (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 116.

¹⁹ Nicholas Watson, "'Yf wommen be double naturelly": Remaking "Woman" in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', *Exemplaria*, 8 (1996), 1-34 (p. 21).

²⁰ References to the 'shorte treatyse of contemplacyon' are from the text provided by Barry Windeatt in his edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (see note 5).

²¹ Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', p. 29.

²² Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The 'Book' and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Atkinson suggests that, as Margery must have known Sawtrey, her failure to mention him in her text could be the result of scribal editing. Moreover, Margery's county of Norfolk was considered a hotbed of heretical activity; the surviving records reveal that at least sixty men and women were tried for heresy at the episcopal court in Norwich between 1428 and 1431 (p. 103-04).

²³ Susan Dickman, 'Margery Kempe and the English Devotional Tradition', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1980), pp. 156-72 (p. 169). Dhira B. Mahoney also discusses how, in order to 'live in the world while not of it', Margery seeks 'to find a role in society which could fulfill a function similar to that of the anchorite without the actual enclosure, a role which would exercise a similar power'. See 'Margery Kempe's Tears and the Power Over Language', in *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*, ed. by McEntire, pp. 37-50 (p. 38).

²⁴ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

²⁵ Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', p. 35.

²⁶ George R. Keiser, 'The Mystics and the Early English Printers: The Economics of Devotionalism', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England IV*, ed. by Glasscoe, pp. 9-26.

²⁷ Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*, p. 223.

²⁸ C. Annette Grisé, 'Holy Women in Print: Continental Female Mystics and the English Mystical Tradition', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII*, ed. by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 83-95 (p. 94).

²⁹ Grisé, 'Holy Women in Print', p. 94.

³⁰ Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 134.

³¹ Barry Windeatt, 'Constructing Audiences: A Mystical Example' (unpublished conference paper, Queen's University Belfast, April 2001).

³² 'Julian of Norwich: The Westminster Text of *A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Hugh Kempster', *Mystics Quarterly*, 23 (1997), 177-245, (ll. 1-10). Hereafter cited as WT by line numbers.

³³ Kempster, 'The Westminster Text', p. 198.

³⁴ Denis Renevey, 'Margery's Performing Body: The Translation of Late Medieval Discursive Religious Practices', in *Writing Religious Women*, ed. by Renevey and Whitehead, pp. 197-216 (p. 207).

³⁵ Margery's weeping is mentioned in the 'shorte treatyse': for example, she asks Christ that she may never have any other 'joye in erth, but mournynge and wepynge' for his love ('shorte treatyse' 45-46). Such remarks do not convey the disruptive intensity of her weeping in the complete *Book of Margery Kempe*. For further discussion of Margery's weeping see Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*, pp. 167-202, Mahoney, 'Margery Kempe's Tears', and Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, pp. 88-91, among others.

³⁶ Fiona Somerset describes Margery's tears as 'not only an expression of introverted (yet uncontainable) devotional emotion at the thought of Christ's suffering and her own contrition, but a form of social action': see 'Excitative Speech: Theories of Emotive Response from Richard Fitzralph to Margery Kempe', in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 59-79 (p. 70).

³⁷ Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, p. 82.

³⁸ Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices*, p. 148.

³⁹ Watson, "Yf women be double naturelly", p. 5. Likewise, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt suggests that 'Julian takes affective piety's emphasis on the suffering body of Christ and transforms it into a christocentric theology of revelation and redemption': 'Seeing Jesus: Julian of Norwich and the Text of Christ's Body', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27 (1997), 189-214 (p. 190).

⁴⁰ Anne Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', in *Lollards and Their Books* (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 141-63 (p. 147).

⁴¹ Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822-64 (p. 829).

⁴² *Nicholas Love's 'Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ'*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (New York: Garland, 1992), p. 10, ll. 3-17. Hereafter cited as *Mirror* by page and line numbers.

⁴³ David Lawton, 'Englishing the Bible, 1066-1549', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 454-82 (p. 468).

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⁴⁴ Love's evocation is not unusual. The sermon of John Mirk as well as a Lollard sermon concerning the circumcision portray the event in a similar manner, establishing it as the first of many times that Christ would bleed for humanity. See 'Circumcision (New Year's) Day', in *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Gloria Cigman, EETS o.s. 294 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 66-73, and 'De Circumcisione Domini Nostri, Ihesu Christi', in *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus (John Mirk)*, ed. by Theodor Erbe, EETS e.s. 96 (London: Kegan Paul, 1905), pp. 44-47.

⁴⁵ Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', p. 41.

Christ the Codex: Compilation as Literary Device in *Book to a Mother*

Elisabeth Dutton

Recent study of late medieval devotional texts has considered the compilation as a largely fifteenth-century phenomenon, resulting from anxiety over Archbishop Thomas Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409. It was perhaps safer, when authorship of heterodox works could be severely punished, to avoid claims of authorship altogether and draw on the works of authors writing before censorship.¹ However, the importance of the *Constitutions* may have been overstated—Arundel's legislation was, after all, not a bolt out of the blue but the climax of at least two decades of mounting concern over authority for religious texts—² and, although it seems undeniable that the culture of compilation expanded rapidly in the fifteenth century, sophisticated compilation texts such as *Pe Lyf of Soule*, *Pe Holy Boke Gratia Dei*, and *Book to a Mother* were composed and circulating pre-*Constitutions*.³ *Book to a Mother* in particular demonstrates that compilation offered not only authority and protection in an anxious climate, but also useful structural possibilities to a writer with didactic and devotional purpose.

Book to a Mother is so called because of its claim to be written as a gift from a son to his mother. Little studied until recently, *Book to a Mother* is now the subject of some critical enquiry, particularly into the matter of its orthodoxy. Nancy Warren discusses the text's ambiguous orthodoxy in relation to women, its potential both for regulating women's conduct and 'serving just the opposite function—that is, for encouraging women's independent material and spiritual initiatives'.⁴ Nicholas Watson has indicated the striking juxtaposition of 'reformist and devotional modes of the thought' in the compilation; he notes too that similar contrasts are to be found more broadly in the manuscripts in which *Book to a Mother* survives, which contain a mixture of mainstream devotional texts and works advocating religious reform.⁵ Nicole Rice considers the careful balance which the author⁶ creates between the attribution of spiritual and intellectual

power to the lay addressee and insistence on the sacramental power of his priestly office—the author is, she argues, a parish priest.⁷

The mother to whom the book is addressed is shown as empowered through striking images of reading and writing. If the mother can live like Christ, she will gain a true authority to write:

[. . .] loke wher þi lyuyng accordiþ wiþ Cristes liuinge, and þanke him þerof; and þer it doþ not, scrape it out wiþ sorew of herte and schrifte of mouþe and satisfaccioun [. . .] Þy penne to write wiþ schal be þi loue [. . .] And þus þou maist lerne aftir þi samplerie to write a feir trewe bok and better konne Holi Writ þan ony maister of diuinite þat loueþ not God so wel as þou [. . .] (38/19-39/9).

There is thus also a questionable orthodoxy about the textual roles which the writer of the *Book* creates: Watson considers that the son, by making his mother a writer, plays down his own role as instructor and dispels any notion that learning allows him a 'preacherly privilege'.⁸ Rice asserts that the *Book* nonetheless offers no fundamental challenge to the 'author's priestly authority as spiritual father', nor alters the 'actual roles' of the 'fleshly mother and son'.⁹ This paper will consider how the negotiation of the roles of mother and son, reader and writer/teacher, laywoman and priest is facilitated by the sophisticated self-reflexive compilation structure of *Book to a Mother*. The images of the book itself and its addressee, the mother, are vital to the *Book's* structure: the development of these images through the compilation draws the reader's attention to the immediate dynamic experience of reading a book. The physical reality of the book being thus highlighted, this paper will also allude to the guidance offered the reader by the mise-en-page of *Book to a Mother* manuscripts.

When the son tells his mother that Christ-like living will enable her to 'write a feir trewe bok' better than a master of divinity, he claims that experience and not book-learning grants authority, but this claim may appear paradoxical in a compilation text which rests on the authority of the *auctores* that it weaves together. The text is in danger of undermining its own message. But the compiler exploits his paradox rather to strengthen his text, through the image of Christ as book. In order to know how to live like Christ and thus gain authority to write, the mother must 'stude [. . .] bisiliche in þis bok' (38/18). The central image of the book enables the compiler to control and appropriate to his own purposes the wealth of

textual authority which he cites; it also enables him to make his *Book* available for the devotional use of his mother in her own appropriation of it, as she holds a physical book in her hands and imagistically ingests it, gestates it and writes it.¹⁰

The Compiler's Manipulation of his Sources

Many voices resonate within the *Book to a Mother*, because the compiler's material is largely biblical and the Bible of course includes a vast range of generically varied material. Thus, in *Book to a Mother*, Pauline exegesis, prophetic exhortation, and the love-lyrical voice of the Song of Songs are juxtaposed, sometimes directly cited in compilation, sometimes paraphrased, appropriated or imitated. Scriptural commentators like Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux are also cited. This paper will briefly demonstrate the compiler's varied treatment of his sources and their distinctive voices; it will then go on to show how these voices are disposed and their authority appropriated within the developing logic of the compilation's structure.

The teaching of the *Book to a Mother* can be divided into three seemingly discrete sections¹¹—long scriptural passages, a passage developing the image of Christ as book, and the material of Pecham's syllabus: the Paternoster and Ave, the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue, the beatitudes, and the seven sacraments, gifts of the spirit, deadly sins and deeds of mercy.¹² That the treatise seems designed largely to teach this syllabus is an aspect of its orthodoxy. In presenting the seven deeds of mercy, the compiler begins with a direct citation of God's words at the Last Judgement, as they are presented in the gospels: 'Cometh, 3e blessed' children 'of my Fader; take 3e þe kyngdome þat is aparayed to 3ou fro þe bigynnyng of þe world. I hungerd, and 3e 3af me mete.' (5/2-4: compare Matthew 25:34-5). This the compiler interprets in two stages, his interpretation introduced with the phrase 'þat is'. Interestingly the first stage of interpretation is offered as if in the divine voice: 'þat is, whan the leste of myne þat schal be saued was hungry for defaute of gostly mete [. . .] and 3e taghten hem' (5/4-7).¹³ The second stage of interpretation, which is interpolated into the first, is in the compiler's voice: 'þat is, for to kepe gods hestes' (5/6). From this calm exegesis, however, the compiler suddenly breaks into a lament which seems to echo the medieval complaint tradition as well as the biblical prophet weeping over God's flock, but which he does not indicate to be citation: 'Bot alas and weylawei, whuch a general pestilence is now in al þis world for defaute of þis mete!' (5/8-9). Urgent advice

on the responsibility of preachers and others to meet the spiritual hunger of the world follows, before God's voice, from its gospel source, reasserts itself in discussion of the second deed: "'I thristid, and 3e 3af me drynke'" (5/22-3, Matthew 25:35). The gospels are cited directly, but their meaning is mediated by voices of exegesis and then prophetic exhortation which, in this case at least, have no recognised source and may be the compiler's own words.

In the Apostles' Creed, cited after the Ave near the beginning of the compilation (1/14-2/3) and separated from it only by a red capital in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 210 (fol. 20^r), the only extant manuscript to preserve this section intact, the believer speaks in the first person to an unspecified audience. Like the preceding prayers, the creed appears to have been reported directly, unmediated, but in fact there is a brief but significant interpolation: 'I beleue in þe Holy Gost; holy Chirche' is glossed—'þat is, alle þat schulle be saued' (2/1-2). This glossing then continues in the Decalogue, which, unlike the preceding items in the syllabus is given some introduction specifying speakers (here cited as it appears in MS Laud Misc 210):

¶ Alle þese ten hestes God spak to Moyses in þe hul of Synay: I am þi Lord God, þat delyuered þe of wicked seruage þou schalt haue no fals goddis þat is þou schalt loue noþyng more þan me . noþyng a3en my wille . ffor as Seynt Austyn seyth . þat þyng þat a man loueþ most; þat he worschipeþ for his god / þefore proude man worschipeþ pryde for his god . þe glotoun glotonye . þe lecchour leccherye . and so of alle dedely synnes ¶ þe secunde heste is . þou schalt not take gods name in veyn þat is . þou schalt neuere be ydel ne swere bot it be nedful ¶ þe þridde heste is . . . (MS Laud Misc 210, fols 20^r—20^v).

As in the brief interpolation into the Creed, the compiler does not label his glosses as such in his account of the Ten Commandments. He quotes God in the first person, without acknowledging the textual mediation of a biblical *auctor*: he does not then consistently indicate points at which additional words are provided from some other source. That on one occasion he does name Augustine as a source might suggest that where he does not name anyone the glosses are his own.¹⁴ It also obscures further the presence of the anonymous interpolations, as does the fact that the gloss adopts God's first person: 'þou schalt loue noþyng more þan me . noþyng a3en my wille'. The compiler's voice is presented as God's:

interpolation is marked only by the phrase 'þat is', a ubiquitous glossing phrase but one across which the first person presentation of God is maintained. The compiler's manipulation of his sources is here enabling him to 'play God', to appropriate divine authority for his own words while obscuring the extent to which he is guiding the reader.

Although textually the distinctions between voices are thus blurred here, the *mise-en-page* might at first appear to reflect an interest in identifying voices, as it picks out the beginning of God's speech with a blue capital. However, thereafter only the enumeration of the commandments is highlighted, each individual commandment marked by alternating red and blue paraph marks within the body of the text. The paraph mark in each case indicates not the reappearance of God's voice but the numbering of the commandments: '¶ þe secunde heste is [. . .] ¶ þe þridde heste is [. . .]'. Such control of material through enumeration is one of the marks of compilation, although here of course the control is that of a biblical compiler of the commandments, rather than the medieval compiler of the treatise. Thus the *mise-en-page* contributes to the compiler's manipulation of the voices he compiles.

At the end of his presentation of the seven gifts of the Spirit, which are matched with beatitudes to indicate Christ's blessings upon them and then each briefly and simply glossed, the compiler observes that the soul that has these gifts and blessings will respond with a song 'of louelikyng þat Cristes specyal syngeþ in þe Boke of Songes' (10/19-22): brief phrases from the Canticles are then cited, interlaced with glossing commentary. The commentary is influenced by that of Saint Bernard, but is 'independent in expression':¹⁵ it interprets many passages as relating to active and contemplative life. Strikingly, the commentary does not explain away the sensual imagery of its text, but rather participates in and adopts it. For example, the 'litel bed [. . .] helid with floures' is explained: 'þat is with reste of contemplacioun þat þou hast made fayre with vertues' (11/1-2), and 'Vnder his schadowe I desirede to sitte, and his fruytes were swete to my taste' draws the imagistic commentary: 'With his schadowe he refresched me, and with his frut he fedde me þat my strengþes fayle not in tribulacioun' (12/2-6). The compiler, in his commentary, begins a striking impersonation of the voice of his source. Such impersonation enables the writer to privilege his *auctores* within the text while at the same time strengthening his own authority in their reflected light. It authorises, in this case, a language of sensual enjoyment by which he may deepen the appeal of his text to his reader.

Similarly, when the compiler cites the Psalmist's 'Þe kyng haþ lad me into a

wyn selere and haþ ordeyned me in charite', the comment that this refers to the 'grete multitude of his swetnes' (12/7-9) maintains rather than interprets the sensual imagery; the compiler then translates the image of the wine cellar as the setting for the Annunciation: 'In þis wyn seler oure Lady was loken with seuen 3iftes of þe Holy Gost whan Gabriel here grette in þe conclaue' (13/7-8). This is a highly spiritualised wine cellar, and one which connects Psalter, Gospel and apostolic history, for the cellar is also then John the Baptist's desert, and then the wine which comes from the cellar is that which, once drunk, inspires the faith of Paul and St Cecilia, the Patriarchs and the Prophets (13/7-21).

The images of wine and wine-cellar, and joyful intoxication, thus spiritualised, may at one level evade more literal endorsement of intoxication; the positive associations created between wine and joy may possibly have the opposite effect. The compiler has used a very concrete image to weave an appealing but rather abstract and elusive text from a variety of sources. *The Book to a Mother* is held together by such repeated references to central images: its movement comes from the accumulation of new sources and voices which further enrich the images at each stage. The central images by which this is done are those of 'mother' and 'book', and it is these, and their influence on the form of the treatise, which will now be examined.

The Images of 'Book' and 'Mother'

Throughout the *Book to a Mother* the treatment of the images 'mother' and 'book' is characterised by a two-way movement between physical and spiritual interpretation.¹⁶ Repeated address throughout the treatise to 'modir' keeps a 'real mother' audience in the foreground. The evidence for this is summarised by Adrian McCarthy, who observes a general concern to render instruction relevant to a woman, and specific references which appear to offer insight into the biographical circumstances of the treatise's composition.¹⁷ Examples of general 'feminising' are observable in the treatment of the commandments, where lechery is explained as 'doynge with man bot he were þyn housbunde' (2/25-6), and the tenth commandment is interpreted as 'þou schalt not desire no wommans housbonde' (3/12-13). McCarthy's claim that the interest in the love-lyrics of the Song of Songs is evidence of female audience is not entirely convincing; more compellingly he sees an appeal to a maternal audience in the instruction to 'tak to þe þe swete childe [Christ] and swetliche swaþ hit in his [c]radil wiþ swete loue bondes [. . .]' (50/3-5).

References pointing to the 'real' mother include the compiler's allusions to 'þine two hosbondis—Crist and mi fadir' (30/6) and her patron saint, Andrew (37/16, 37/24). The 'real' mother once offered money for her son to become a canon: 'for Crist wiþ his couent axeþ not twenti marc, as þou woldest sometime haue 3eue for me to haue ben a chanoun, and þei wolde not receiue me lasse þan twenti pound' (122/15-17). This passage, in combination with the compiler's attack on convents which are only interested in recruiting nobility (56/18-23), indicates that both mother and son, while possessing enough wealth to be tempted to excessive interest in it, were nonetheless not wealthy enough to buy their way into orders: this may lie behind the compiler's emphasis throughout the *Book* on a form of inner vocation rather than a formal religious life.¹⁸

Both Warren and Rice discuss the compiler's attitude to religious orders as central to the *Book*. Rice writes of the compiler's proposal that his mother should seek to live the apostolic life 'in the context of the parish, rather than seeking it through the imitation of actual monastic life, which has been compromised by the desire for "propurte".¹⁹ Warren considers the 'Janus-faced' operation, in the *Book*, of elements drawn from female monasticism, which, she writes, functions 'ambiguously [. . .]: it is both positive model and negative exemplum of religious life, both a source of symbolic capital and a sink of corruption'.²⁰ So the compiler condemns the convents as corrupted by material wealth and lust, but implies the value of the Rule and of clausturation when he writes that for those who are so corrupted 'it hadde be bettur þat þei hadden holde Seint Benettis rule, faste iclosed in a cloister of foure stronge wallis, þat ben ri3tfulnes, strengþe, sleiþe and temperaunce' (120/25-121/2). The cloister is here cast in a positive light but also allegorised so that it is made available to those outside real, physical convent walls.

The compiler of *Book to a Mother* seeks to call the mother to a religious life which goes beyond external obedience to a rule, to an internally regulated obedience to Christ's teaching.²¹ So, when the compiler comes to teach the Decalogue, material is arranged around the story of the rich young ruler of the gospel narrative, and not, as is more commonly the case in compilations, around the two great commandments.²² Instead of drawing together the ten commandments by reference to loving God and loving one's neighbour, the listing of the commandments concludes with a gospel passage which alludes to the Decalogue so as to point beyond it:

A nere biþath þat semeth streit to hem þat litel sauour or loue haueth of God and of heuenliche þynges is forte holde Gods

counseyles. þat mowe be vnderstonde in on answere þat Crist
3af to a man þat seyde he had kept Gods hestes fro his 3oupe.
'3it,' quop God, 'on þyng þe lackeþ. 3if þou wolte be parfite, go
and selle al þat þou hast, and 3if hit to pore men; and come,'
lyue as I do, 'and þou schalt haue tresour in heuene.' Þat is, first
3yue þiself holly, bodi and soule, parseuerauntly to Crist þat
was most pore for oure loue, and to alle þat schullen be saued;
for of hem Crist spake þo (3/17-4/4).

The modern punctuation here highlights, by placing outside quotation marks, the compiler's interpolations into this piece, but in the manuscripts the absence of such citation marks makes the compiler's voice harder to disentangle from 'God's' (actually Christ's) words as reported in the gospels. In the gospels, Christ is clearly instructing the rich young ruler to sell physical goods for the benefit of the poor, and asking him to go with him physically; this is evident from the comments which follow in which Christ discusses the difficulty for a rich man of entering heaven and suggestively concludes with the eternal reward for those who leave family for Christ. The passage is thus connected to that with which the treatise opens, to which this paper will turn next.²³ The compiler's spiritualising of this passage looks away from physical wealth and interprets charity to the poor, strikingly, as placing one's life at the service of Christ and the body of believers: the subtle substitution of 'lyue as I do' for Christ's 'follow me' makes claims for this way of life as *imitatio Christi*, claims which are not inherent in 'follow me' as Christ's literal instruction to the rich young ruler. The passage in *Book to a Mother* could appear to be an allusion to religious vocation, although the compiler later, as has been noted, favours a rather more internalised vocation.

Although such references, apparently autobiographical, indicate that the author might have envisaged—or at least desired to appear to envisage—his 'real' mother as the audience of his work, the first allusion to motherhood is a highly spiritualised one. It heads the entire treatise:

To knowe þe bettere my purpos in þis boke, wite 3e wel þat I
desire euerych man and womman and child to be my moder, for
Crist seyþ: he þat doþ his Fader wille is his broþer, suster and
moder (1/1-4).

Christ's words are here taken from a gospel account in which Christ

challenges the idea that his natural family can have prior claims to his attention. Matthew cites directly Christ's words when interrupted in his teaching by the news that his mother and brothers are waiting to speak to him:

And he holdynge forth his hond in to his disciples, seide, Loo!
My modir and my bretheren; treuly whoeuer doth the wil of my
fadir that is in heuenes, he is my brother, suster, and modir
(Matthew 12:49-50).²⁴

Christ effects the shift from the physical to the spiritual family by reference to his father in heaven: for him, the idea of a family's obedience to the father who is its head and a disciple's obedience to God are not analogous but identical. Allusion to this verse at the opening of the treatise immediately introduces a necessary connection between familial duty and Christian obedience: the reference to 'Father' and 'wille' also suggest the Paternoster which follows: 'Oure Fader [. . .] þi wille be fulfilled in vs' (1/5-6). But there is an immediate confusion of voices in this opening to the treatise, exacerbated by the punctuation in the modern edition. Throughout the modern edition of *Book to a Mother*, the colon is used to introduce direct quotation, so 'Crist seyþ: he þat dop [. . .]' (1/1-3) would appear to reflect Christ's actual words. In MS Laud Misc 210 (fol. 20^r) the punctuation might likewise suggest Christ's actual words: 'for Crist seyþ . he þat dop [. . .]', an impression reinforced by the fact that it is Christ who is named as source, and not the Gospel writer who reports his words. But the reading of 'his fader wille' is ambiguous in comparison with Christ's 'my fader wille'—'he þat dop his [own] fader wille', or he that does his [Christ's] father's?—and the omission of the location of the father 'in heaven' facilitates the ambiguity. Evidently Christ's words are actually being reported in the third person, but the lack of clarity in this matter creates an ambiguity as to whether the obedience Christ is enjoining is to God or to the reader's own parents—to a spiritual or physical parent.

That the Paternoster follows without comment extends the ventriloquism by which the compiler can 'speak' Christ's words in such a way as to guide his reader's interpretation: it may appear that the compiler is the ventriloquist's puppet, mouthing Christ's words, but the truth may be more that a puppet Christ is presented as speaking while the compiler controls what is said. The Paternoster is, of course, a direct citation of Christ as presented in the gospels, addressing his father in heaven, but one which Christ instructs us to appropriate. MS Laud Misc

210 begins the prayer on a new line with an illuminated four-line capital (fol. 20^r): this *mise-en-page* may encourage the sense of the prayer as independent from the preceding words, identified as Christ's, and free it for use by the compiler and the reader. The prayer concludes 'so mote it be par charite', and then the Ave follows the Paternoster, again without any introductory comment though with a blue capital, and concluding 'So mote it be', presumably a translation of 'Amen'. The Ave, of course, becomes a prayer when the believer appropriates the words, reported by the gospel writers, in which the Angel Gabriel addresses Mary.

When the reader appropriates the *Book's* prayers for personal use there is an active engagement with the text which perhaps partly explains the *Book's* image of the reading mother as also a writer. Furthermore, as Watson has observed, a cluster of imagery makes the reading mother also the book, 'imaged as parchment' onto which virtues must be 'write within and without' by herself.²⁵ That the book is an image as well as a concrete reality encourages the reader's understanding of the availability for personal appropriation of its contents.

In *Book to a Mother*, the book is first a physical entity: it is the book which the compiler has chosen to write to his mother because it teaches how to follow Christ, and as such draws the reader's attention, early in the treatise, to the physical codex which is in her hands. The compiler seeks to honour his mother by presenting a book to her: 'before alle oþer bokes oon I chese þat techeþ euery man and womman þat wol do after him to be Cristes broþer, sister and moder' (17/21-3). But immediately thereafter the concrete nature of the image is disrupted by the compiler's comment that 'a man may bigge and lerne' the book 'with a litel cold water' (18/3-4). This echo of Matthew 10:42 may allude not only to works of charity but also to baptism, but it is nonsense if the book is still the codex which the compiler has written: clearly the book has already been spiritualised. The book is the physical entity which the son writes to his mother in which any number of instructions and abstractions may be contained. The book is the Bible, in which the commandments are set down, and in which also the life of Christ is set down. Christ is the ultimate book. His deeds exemplify the way of life set down in the book; his words appear in the book; more than this, he is himself the book as all truth is contained in him, and we must learn to 'read' him.

This sophisticated and highly reflexive theology provides a unifying rationale for the three seemingly rather discrete sections of the *Book*—scriptural passages, Christ as book, and syllabus material. Syllabus items supply pattern and rhythm throughout. The treatment of the ten commandments is an example of

this: the necessity of keeping God's 'hestes' becomes almost a refrain in the treatise, although many of the allusions to the commandments are very brief.²⁶ Thus syllabus lists and biblical citations which appear physically and textually separate, at the beginning and end of the treatise, are, by allusion and by doctrine, drawn into the central body of text to serve the image of Christ the book. The structure of the *Book* exemplifies the truth it contains, that Christ is the origin and fulfilment of, and the authority behind, divine law.

In elaborating his image of the book, the compiler takes a biblical passage and alters its central image to suit his theme:

And Crist in þe gospel likneþ þe kyngdom of heuen to a
merchaund þat fyndeþ þat, and goþ and selleþ al þat he haþ and
bieþ þat boc (21/13-15).

Of course Christ actually talks of the merchant finding a pearl of great price, not a book at all, but the compiler seems to have no qualms about attributing to Christ his own image, and even claiming it as gospel. Possibly he expects his reader to know that Christ actually talked of a pearl, and so by allusion looks to draw 'pearl' implicitly into the matrix of associations around the book. This is further evidence of the spiritualising of the book, which here costs all that the merchant has, although it also reintroduces the image of the book as a physical commodity which can be bought by merchants. Paradoxically, by bringing the image 'back to earth', the compiler is able to emphasise the value of the book which might appear to have been undermined by the comment that it can be bought with a little cold water.

Extending the analogy of the book and learning to read, the compiler then draws on the primer, the 'ABC', as an image of the first steps of the ignorant into knowledge. In a particularly effective passage he recalls the child repeating noises as it learns to read:

And þus bigynne we to lerne oure a.b.c., eiþer of [vs] seyinge:
'Cros Crist me spede', and hauyng lamentaciouns for oure
synnes, and seyinge with þe prophete Ieremye: 'A, a, a; Lord, I
cannot speke [. . .]' Þus schul we best bigynne to [lerne] oure
forseide boke' (23/24-24/11).

Clearly, insight is here offered by exploration of one aspect of the book as a

physical image. The apocryphal book of Baruch is cited in support of this 'concrete' book: it is the book of God's commandments, and all who follow it shall live (24/12-14; compare Baruch 4. 1). In Baruch, however, the book is an image for the female personification of Wisdom; the compiler of the *Book to a Mother*, in accordance with the traditional association of the second person of the trinity with Wisdom, makes it Christ, and alters the gender accordingly: the book 'is oure God [. . .] And after þis he was seye in erpe, and with men he was conuersaunt' (24/15-18, compare Baruch 3. 38, 'lyued with men'). In Baruch, however, this passage is much less striking, as the figure of Wisdom is introduced first, and then is contained in the pages of the book: by reversing the order of the citations from Baruch, the *Book to a Mother* draws much greater attention to the book, which is the primary referent, and thus heightens the already striking effect of referring to Christ—a human being rather than the already abstract Wisdom—as a book.

The Text's Circling Structure

Two equally important sources for the *Book to a Mother's* central image are cited immediately after Baruch. The first is from the book of Revelation, in which the book is the scroll with seven seals, but also paradoxically the lamb who alone may open the book: '[þe] lomb þat is [on] þe Fader right hond, þat died for vs and boght vs with his blod to his Fader, wol opene þe boke with þe seuen seles to vs—þat is, himself' (25. 25-26. 2). The second is the call of the prophet Ezekiel, which takes the striking form of physical ingestion of a book:

an hond ysent to me in þe whiche was a boke iclosed; and he opened hit bifore me, and he was writen withinne and withoute, and in þe boke were writen lamentaciouns, songe and sorowe. And he seyde to me: 'Mannes sone, whatsoeuer þou fynde, ete; ete þis boke, and goynge þou schalt speke to þe children of Israel' (26. 10-15; Ezekiel 2. 9-3. 1).

The personification of the book which the compiler achieves simply by translating with the pronoun 'he' ('he was writen') ties this passage to the interpretation suggested by the *Book to a Mother*, that the book is Christ—although there is no real reason for understanding it in this way in its original context. The compiler thus opens the way, of course, to a eucharistic reading as

well as one based on the internalisation of God's wisdom.²⁷ This is the climax of an accumulation of images which have strikingly defamiliarised the book, and thus led the reader deeper into the mystery of Christ who is the book. The accumulation of images grows out of the accumulation of sources: it is a product of the text as compilation. A variety of sources has been compiled, so that a range of voices speak about the central image—the apocalyptic voice of Revelation, the authoritative voice of Wisdom literature, the voices of prophecy and lamentation of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Each voice introduced may call the reader back to re-examine the central image, and it is the image, rather than the questioning and answering interlocutors, which controls the compilation's structure. Structurally, the text appears to be circling back to repeated images.

Within these circles of text argument is developed, as exemplified by the discussion of the seven deadly sins in the *Book to a Mother*. Adam encompassed all seven sins in his original sin. The seven sins infect the stable into which Christ is born—the physical nativity and the spiritual nativity of Christ in the heart of the believer. The seven sins are encompassed by the three sins which the devil used to tempt Christ: Christ overcame them with three virtues relating to religious vows.²⁸ these vows may relate to a physical religious life, but this may be infected with sins, and they may also be lived in the spiritual religious life which does not require entry into a convent. Clearly, where the sins are discussed practically, in connection with the mother who is to read the treatise, those which seem most relevant to her are drawn upon: where the sins are discussed theologically, they are considered in sum and as a whole. The structuring of discussion of the sins allows significant theological ideas to be explored—the implicit connection between Christ and Adam, for example—as well as important devotional images such as the heart as stable from which the dung of sins must be swept. The exegetical and the devotional voices speak in turn.

The allusion to the seven deadly sins in the account of the first commandment, cited above, is exemplary of this compiler's technique. By planting brief references throughout his treatise to anticipate and then, later, recall themes discussed, the compiler creates pattern. The seven deadly sins are first fully listed well into the central 'book' section (43/21-44/3) but by the time the reader reaches this point a number of aspects of the sins have already been revealed—in the case of the first-commandment allusion, that they are a form of idolatry. The seven are also referred to, in the opening section of the treatise, in the account of the seven works of mercy: "'I was in prisoun and 3e come to me". Pat is, when any of myne was bounde with a seuenefold bonde of þe seuene

dedely synnes, and so lay in a depe derk prisoun' (6/16-18): thus the seven deadly sins are, in passing, revealed to have binding power. (The passage also spiritualises the works of mercy and glosses in the voice of God—'any of myne'—as observed in the *Book to a Mother's* opening lines).

When the seven deadly sins are listed in full it is in connection with original sin, and the sinful act of Adam in taking the apple is explicitly held to contain all the seven sins within it. Two authorities are evinced: firstly, James; secondly, Augustine:²⁹

For Seint Iame seip: 'Who offendit in o dedli synne, he is gulti in alle.' As Seint Austin scheweþ how Adam sinnede in alle þe seuene dedli synnes in etinge of þe appel: furst he was proud, for he was inobedient to God; wroþ, for he hatede himself, a[s] Dauid seip, in as muche as he louede wickednesse; glotoun, for he et more þan him nedide; lechour, for he brak wedlok of God and his soule; slouful, in þat he wolde not do as God bad him; enuiose for he slou himself; coueitouse, for he coueitede more þan him nedede (43/19-44/3).

The citation from James is manipulated in this context to lend apparent biblical authority to the listing of the seven deadly sins which is in fact not biblical but traditional. The verse from James 2:10—'forsothe who euer shal kepe al the lawe, sotheli offende in oon, he is maad gyilty of alle'—is actually referring to the Decalogue (see James 2:11). Conversely, the biblical reference, to Adam's eating of the apple, is quoted in connection with Augustine. It is striking that the compiler, following Augustine, has chosen to present the seven deadly sins in connection with Adam, as a number of the sins do not seem most obviously exemplified in Adam's act. In *Book to a Mother*, however, the seven deadly sins are never listed in the abstract, and a consideration of the other occasions on which they are discussed reveals the schematic sense in this first connection with Adam.

There is a brief reference to the seven deadly sins in the account of the nativity, which is a meditation in which the mother is to observe the humility of Christ at his birth, and to see herself as the stable in which Christ may be born.³⁰ Here, the seven deadly sins are like wild beasts which foul the stable; they are not itemised: 'þenk hou ofte þou hast receiued þi God and leid him in a foul, comyne stabele to alle þe seuene dedli synnes. For wilde bestis hauen ofte mad þi soule

fouler stinkinge tofore God' (50/11-14). The next occasion on which they are discussed at some length is in the account of Christ's temptation, which is prefaced, as in the discussion of Adam's sin, by a biblical authority emphasising that in one sin are contained all:

For alle maner sinnes, as Seint Iohn seiþ, þe Euaungelist,³¹ ben undurstonde in þulke þre þat he tempteð Crist inne. Furst in glotenie, whanne he bad Crist þe stones were mad bred. þus þe deuel fareþ wiþ men and wommen [. . .] (55/20-23).

Having emphasised the inter-relationship of all the seven deadly sins, the *Book to a Mother* interprets the devil's temptations of Christ as relating to three of the seven: gluttony (55/22-58/23), which includes greed for worldly riches; pride (58/24-59/7), which includes pride in worldly riches; and covetousness (59/8-12). The selection of these three sins is very significant, as they are related to the three virtues—poverty, chastity and humility—which the author is keen to encourage in his mother. They are the three virtues by which Christ overcame the sins of Adam:

þis bok is Crist, Godis Sone of heuene, wiþ his conuersacioun þre and þrytti wyntur, iwrite wiþinne and wiþoute with humilite to hele Adames pride and oures, wiþ wilful pouerte to hele þe synne of proprete, wiþ chastite to hele fleshlich lustis (31/3-7).

They are also, of course, the three vows of the religious, and immediately after this Christ is declared to be 'þe best rule' (31/9).³² Since the concern of the compiler is to guide his reader to an understanding of Christian living as itself a vocation, one which does not necessarily require membership of an order, it is unsurprising to find that the compiler's discussion of Christ's temptation in terms of gluttony includes an attack on the worldly greed of 'men of Holi Chirche' and 'wommen of religioun' (56/15, 19). But later he exhorts: 'þerfore modir, ches þou Crist to þin Abbot (124/6) and 'þerfore make þi professioun to him [. . .]' (124/23): the image of the religious life is not dismissed but re-interpreted.

Compilation as a literary device

In *Book to a Mother* images are not replaced with interpretation and then

discarded; they are kept before the reader and develop new significances throughout the compilation, contributing to a joined-up theology of Christ as the origin, fulfilment and content of 'the book' which is scripture. Extracts from different sources reveal different aspects of the whole teaching, but the presentation of those extracts obscures the diversity of their origins and voices, even of their 'original' intentions. The reader may not be aware of a linear progression in the text but rather of a truth being gradually revealed through a series of circles, each compiled source at once progressing and returning to the fixed point of a significant image.

The reader is invited to reflect on this experience of the text because the development of the treatise as a whole is the development of the images of reader-mother and book.³³ New significances for these images are constantly offered in the text, never excluding each other but often stretching the abstract imagination, as when the book and the mother meet in the person of the Virgin Mary. The compiler exhorts his reader to an imaginative deployment of the experience of motherhood which she shares with Mary:

[. . .] þenk hou Crist com into þis world to be conceyued, and
how þis Bok was closid nyne monþe in a litel place of a maide
[. . .] þou maist conceyue þe same Crist and bere him not onlich
nine monþes but wiþoute ende (44/20-24).

Warren discusses this passage as fundamentally repressive: 'In a move that goes to striking lengths to repress the material process of childbearing [. . .] the author replaces the fetus in the womb with a text [. . .] inscription, a process coded masculine [. . .] replaces the Incarnation which took place in a woman's body'.³⁴ But vitally, it is not just a text but a book which the mother must bear: it is a physical, 'incarnate' reality which cannot be replaced by inscription, the process of its creation. The striking juxtaposition of the book and the maternal womb exemplifies the creative effects of the process of compilation at various levels: incongruent images from various sources are placed side by side and thus defamiliarised in such a way as to demand fresh attention; different *auctores* are contained within one book, and held by one reader who may become a fruitful mother as she meditates upon them. Whatever the compiler includes in the physical book which the reader holds must also have a place in the reader's understanding of the figurative book—a compilation book—which is his medium and his subject.

NOTES

¹ This argument is developed by Nicholas Watson in 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822-64, and summarised in his essay 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 539-65.

² For a summary of the development of this concern, particularly as it related to biblical translation, see Annie Sutherland, 'Biblical citation and its affective contextualisation in some English mystical texts of the fourteenth century' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1999), chapter 2.

³ *Book to a Mother* has been dated on the basis of internal evidence to 1370-80: see *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. by Adrian James McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981) pp. xxx-xxxiv. Citations from the text are from this edition by page and line number, unless manuscript folios are cited. Two of the manuscripts in which the text is preserved are fourteenth-century, and two fifteenth-century. For full descriptions of the manuscripts containing the *Book*, see Elisabeth Dutton, 'Textual Disunities and Ambiguities of *mise-en-page* in the Manuscripts Containing *Book to a Mother*', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 6 (2003), 149-59.

⁴ Nancy Bradley Warren, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 77-92 (p. 77).

⁵ Nicholas Watson, 'Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman: Devotion and Dissent in *Book to a Mother*', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 169-84 (pp. 170-71).

⁶ Nicole Rice, '*Book to a Mother: Imitatio Christi* and *imitatio clerici*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35 (2005), forthcoming. Rice throughout uses the term 'author'; I shall generally refer to the 'compiler' of the *Book*.

⁷ Rice, '*Book to a Mother*': 'knowledge not only of confession, but also marriage and baptism, imply the experience of a parish priest rather than that of the friar, who would be canonically limited, except in special circumstances, to preaching, confession and burial'.

⁸ Watson, 'Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman', p. 182.

⁹ Rice, '*Imitatio Christi*'.

¹⁰ The image of writing has been cited above: images of gestation and ingestion will be discussed below. Warren notes 'not uncommon' late-medieval references to Christ as a written text, for example in the *Charters of Christ*: see Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, p. 216 n.54.

¹¹ The manuscripts of the *Book* witness to the strength of these sectional divisions: see Dutton, 'Textual Disunities'.

¹² This list expands the original six-article programme of religious instruction outlined by Archbishop Pecham in 1281. Pecham's syllabus, which was to be preached in the vernacular to the laity four times a year, was perhaps the most influential of many episcopal decrees stemming from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which sought to address problems of clerical ignorance and education of the laity.

¹³ 'Pat is' echoes the phrase '*id est*' with which medieval commentators on the Bible introduced their glosses: the English phrase thus reflects the standard practice of biblical commentary in, for example, the *Glossa Ordinaria*. However, it would not be standard commentary practice to gloss as if in the divine voice.

¹⁴ It is probable that this is not always the case. The fourth commandment gloss, 'Worschipe þi fader and þi moder þat is boþe bodily and gostly', occurs also in *Speculum Christiani*, ed. by Gustaf Holmstedt, EETS o.s. 182 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 22/17-18. There is, however, no need to posit direct influence of *Book to a Mother* on the *Speculum* – the comment is a catechetical commonplace in episcopal decrees.

¹⁵ *Book to a Mother*, p. 209 (note to 10/22-13/6).

¹⁶ That this movement is not conclusively from the literal to the spiritual perhaps qualifies Warren's interesting argument that '[b]y displacing female monasticism into the "ghostly" realm, where as metaphor or figure it is applicable to men as well as women, these texts repeat the gendered movement of exegesis which passes from the literal (associated with the fleshly and feminine) to the figurative (associated with the spiritual and masculine)': Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, p. 80.

¹⁷ For McCarthy's summary see *Book to a Mother*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

¹⁸ This is a related but slightly different speculation to that by McCarthy, who suggests that the mother was considering entering a religious community and that the son wrote for this reason: McCarthy cites Power's observation of the frequency with which widows did enter community. See *Book to a Mother*, p. xxviii. Watson notes that twenty marks would not have been a large dowry for a man entering religious life, and that this may suggest that the treatise was created by a member of the lower rather than middle or upper gentry: 'Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman', p. 174.

¹⁹ Rice, '*Imitatio Christi*'.

²⁰ Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, p. 80.

²¹ Such a shift of emphasis may recall Christ's own teaching in relation to the Decalogue: he internalises the external by asserting that murder is not only the physical act of killing but also the internal act of anger (Matthew 5.21-2) adultery not only a physical sexual act but an internal act of desire (Matthew 5.27-8).

²² See, for example, the arrangement of Decalogue material in *Pe Lyf of Soule: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. by Helen M. Moon (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1978), 27/11-65/9.

²³ Material is here blended from the accounts in Matthew 19 and Luke 18, and possibly also from Mark's gospel. The connection of these two passages might suggest that the compiler was working with some form of thematically arranged reference work, looking up 'mother'.

²⁴ Scriptural citation throughout this paper is from the early Wycliffite Version, c.1380, in *Wycliffite Versions of the Bible*, ed. by J. Forshall and F. Madden, 4 vols (Oxford, 1850).

²⁵ See 'Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman', p. 177.

²⁶ E.g. 6/12-13, 58/1, 64/10, 79/8, 80/1, 82/4.

²⁷ Warren discusses the vitally significant fact that, in medieval eucharistic teaching, the host is not metabolised into the human body, but rather that the human being who receives the host thereby becomes part of the body of Christ: Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, p. 92.

²⁸ This focus on the three vows as overcoming the seven deadly sins may lie behind the compiler's omission of the expected identification between the sins and the seven devils which were cast out of Mary Magdalene. At the point in the text where Mary Magdalene's devils are mentioned (28/3), the focus is on the ten-stringed harp, figure of the commandments: it is obedience to the commandments which here casts out the devils, and not the apostolic virtues. The commandments are, in the passage on the temptations, simply tools for resisting gluttony (58/12-23).

²⁹ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, ch. xlv, *PL* 40: 254.

³⁰ This meditation on the nativity is found at 48/15-50/18.

³¹ McCarthy suggests as the source I John 1.16, a verse which does not exist, and gives the Latin 'concupiscentia carnis . . . concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae' which may correspond to I John 2.16. If this is indeed the source verse then the *Book to a Mother* is using the verse in a context very different from its original context, which is not related at all to Christ's temptation: it is clear, however, how the compiler could come to interpret this triad as relating to lechery/gluttony, covetousness and pride.

³² Watson discusses the *Book to a Mother* as subverting the genre of the monastic rule: see 'Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman', pp. 180-2.

³³ My discussion here agrees with Watson in noting the importance of imagery and the figure of Christ in patterning the treatise, but differs somewhat from his interpretation of these observations: Watson finds the treatise 'disorderly' and 'rambling' ('Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman', p. 175). The conclusion he draws from this, however, resonates with my argument here: 'the work's lack of tight organization is systematic, expressions of a belief [. . .] in the corrupting potential of all external forms, including literary ones. Such a belief is obvious in the author's suspicion of clerics, nuns, and others with pretensions to holiness [. . .] But the fear

that the outer sign is always on the point of perverting itself into a simulacrum of the inner reality it represents—perhaps the most important attitude late medieval affectivity shares with Lollardy—has also found its way into the work's account of its genre and purpose, and even into its presentation of the status of its own words as vehicles for conveying truth' (p. 176).

³⁴ Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, p. 90.

Courtly Love and the Tale of Florie in the Middle English *Melusine*

Jan Shaw

It is a commonplace of feminist criticism that medieval romance is a discourse which privileges masculine values, and positions women as either supporters of, or distracters from, the main goals of chivalric life. To find a space for a feminine subjectivity within such a discourse is a complicated task. Such a space is sometimes found through the machinations of the marvellous;¹ fairy women are powerful in knowledge and action, and often have considerable agency in negotiating relationships with mortals, particularly men.² The mortal woman of this period, however, in both historical reality and literary representation, has few tools with which to carve out her own subjective space, particularly in the face of the powerful cultural forces which act to arrange her life. This paper discusses one such human figure: Florie in the Middle English *Melusine*.³

The tale of *Melusine* was written in France in 1394 by a French cleric, Jean d'Arras. Another version, in verse, with rival political patronage, was written in the early 1400s by Coudrette. The tale, in both versions, enjoyed considerable success in the following centuries. The number of extant manuscripts of both versions is considerable. D'Arras's version was repeatedly reproduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in both manuscript form and as printed editions, particularly in France. However, it was Coudrette's version which was the major source of the tale in northern Europe, where it was translated and widely disseminated. Over the next couple of centuries translations of Coudrette's version appeared in German, Polish, Russian, Czech, Danish and Swedish. D'Arras's version was also translated in Europe, but only into Dutch and Spanish.⁴ While both versions of the tale were translated into English in the early sixteenth century, there is only one extant manuscript of each.⁵ The French texts have attracted a certain amount of critical attention, particularly d'Arras's version;

however, the English tales have received little and the marriage tales even less.⁶ It is hoped that this paper will go some way to redressing this comparative neglect.

The Melusine of the title is a knowledgeable, forceful, and powerful fairy woman. She marries a mortal, builds cities and founds a great lineage. Melusine and Raimondin have many sons, four of whom go out into the world and marry heiresses of kingdoms or duchies, stretching the family's influence across Europe. In three of the four marriage tales the young women have, in varying degrees, the same qualities of independence of thought and action found in the figure of Melusine herself. In one case these qualities do not emerge. The tale of the marriage between Florie and Guyon begins with a delightful picture of Florie frolicking with her maidens. By the end of the tale she has disappeared from the text. While this tale appears to depict a romantic and courtly ideal, in this paper I argue that Florie is eradicated by the operation of courtly love, while Guyon, her suitor, uses courtly conventions to gain the crown.

In the tale of *Melusine* relations between the sexes are construed as processes which require participation from both parties in order to be sustained. The central relationship of the tale, that of Melusine and Raimondin, is based upon a pact: she will protect his honour and increase his prosperity as long as he protects her privacy on Saturdays. If the pact is broken his honour and prosperity will dissipate and his lineage will decline, and she will move to a half-life existence—unable to live in the human world, and yet unable to achieve a human death—which will be sustained until judgement day. The marriage of Melusine's parents is also based on a pact: the fairy Pressine marries Elynas on the condition that he will not visit her in childbed. If the pact is broken she will leave him, taking their children with her. Human marriages are similarly characterised by negotiation and exchange. While patriarchal figures dominate in pre-marital negotiations, the prospective brides are not silent. They speak sometimes publicly and sometimes privately, challenging patriarchal determinations, and their prospective husbands give support and show deference to them. Indeed even private words have great public effect when the Duchess Christine privately refuses the King of Anssay's hand, and war results. Further, agreement does not guarantee lasting success; after marriage some betrayals inevitably occur. The logic of the tale suggests that a successful relation between the sexes is an ongoing process which can only be sustained through the reciprocity of exchange between active participants.

Reciprocity is sustained in Melusine and Raimondin's relationship for more than twenty years. At the height of its prosperity their sons go out into the world

to help beleaguered neighbours. Melusine's advice to her sons before they leave on quests (pp. 110-113) includes directives on appropriate behaviour towards women. Melusine advises her sons to 'help', 'counseylle', 'nourysshe', 'worship', 'gyue ayde' and 'comforte' women, especially those 'that men wol haue dysherytet vnlawfully' (p. 111, ll. 7-11). Even Geffray, her most violent son, heeds her advice. In his relations with men Geffray is inclined to attack, kill and ask questions later, yet he negotiates peaceably with women. Geffray kills a dragon and even burns down an abbey full of monks in a fit of rage. Pursuing traitors he has no mercy, killing indiscriminately. Indeed Geffray often behaves, towards men at least, excessively, and by any reasonable measure 'vnlawfully'. When Geffray seeks out the alleged traitor Gueryn of Valbruyant he unexpectedly meets the Lady of Valbruyant. Geffray greets her courteously and the lady successfully negotiates a fair hearing for her husband. This outcome would not have been achievable without the change in register from martial combat to courtly negotiation necessarily brought about by deference to the lady as protagonist (pp. 257-261).

While Melusine's sons act on her advice, Melusine herself is on the brink of ruin through betrayal. After the success of her sons, just at the height of the family's influence, Raimondin is brought to doubt Melusine by the urgings his brother. '[A]ll esprysed with yre & Jalousy' (p. 296, ll. 12-13) he goes to her chamber, makes a hole in the door with his sword, and spies on her.

[He] sawe melusyne within the bathe vnto her nauell, in fourme of a woman kymbyng her heere, and fro the nauel downward in lyknes of a gret serpent, the tayll as grete & thykk as a barell, and so long it was that she made it to touche oftymes, while that raymondyn beheld her, the rouf of the chambre that was ryght hye. (p. 297, ll. 2-7)

Raimondin's reaction is not horror at the sight of Melusine in such a form, but horror at what he has done by looking into her private chamber. He has betrayed her: 'My swete loue, now haue I betrayed you, & haue falsed my couenaunt [. . .] and haue forsworne myself toward you' (p. 297, ll. 10-13). Raimondin is so distressed by his betrayal that he laments for the next two pages, and exiles his brother from the court under threat of death.

This betrayal, although long in coming, is no surprise. There is a certain narrative inevitability to the revelation of Melusine's fairy secret. And yet, the

suffering of Pressine and Elynas in their separation after the breaking of their pact—which occurs early in the tale and to which Melusine bears witness—gives a glint of hope that if the pact between Melusine and Raimondin is broken Melusine will not follow through on her threat to leave. Indeed she does forgive him once. But the tale of Florie acts as a warning of the consequences to the feminine of a lack of reciprocity in relations between the sexes. The disappearance of Florie shows us the fate of she who makes no conditions, who draws no boundaries. She offers herself completely. Melusine makes no such mistake.

Courtly love has been described as nothing more than masculine sexual desire.⁷ Whether, as Lacan would have it, it is a textual fantasy, representing the reverse of a complete absence of consummation in the real world,⁸ or, as Duby would have it, it is a textual sublimation of impossible consummation,⁹ it nevertheless sustains the goal—even if a fantastical one—of physical consummation.¹⁰ Masculine sexual desire is clear for all to see; it has, apparently, a certain honesty about its purpose. Moreover, it is supposedly spontaneous, requiring, indeed having, no justification.¹¹

Feminine desire, on the other hand, is problematic in the extreme. It is a medieval commonplace that women are governed by the material body, and are therefore emotional and lustful beings.¹² As such they need to be carefully controlled by their menfolk who are governed by the higher faculty of reason.¹³ 'Good' women also control themselves; they betray no desire, no agency and no will in the face of their masculine masters.¹⁴ While feminine desire is not absent¹⁵ in courtly romance, it is largely unspeakable and unpursuable:¹⁶ indeed, it is irrelevant.¹⁷ Moreover, since the courtly woman cannot legitimately express desire, her refusal of masculine advances comes to mean nothing:

For you should know that woman is so noble and gentle that she is too ashamed to say to her lover: do with me what you will. And since she cannot bring herself to utter this abomination, the man should thus conquer his companion by force.¹⁸

Indeed, the issue is not whether or not she loves him, but whether he considers himself worthy of being loved, and, as Andreas Capellanus points out in his Rule XVIII of the Rules of Love: 'good character alone makes any man worthy of

love'.¹⁹ Therefore, while masculine desire achieves a legitimate field of play in the model of courtly love, feminine desire has no legitimate space. Feminine desire is denied legitimate expression: it is literally forced underground, which is consistent with its status as a mysterious and unpredictable power.

It has been argued that medieval conceptions of desire can be understood in terms of the dichotomous binarisms clear/veiled, open/secretive, known/unknown, spontaneous/contrived, innocent/guilty, male/female.²⁰ However, if we reflect upon the conception of courtly love as mentioned above, we quickly realise one (at least) internal inconsistency. If masculine sexual desire is characterised by transparency, and feminine sexual desire by secrecy and unknowability, then how can the ultimate goal ever be achieved (otherwise than through the rape which Andreas Capellanus recommends)? The answer can only be that feminine modesty and reserve must be, ultimately, conquered; the veil of contrivance must be torn away, secrets must be revealed and unknowability must become knowable.²¹ The assumptions of sexual difference within this model are therefore based upon the masculine as knower, as agent or subject of knowledge, and the feminine as becoming knowable, as object of knowledge. In other words courtly love becomes the process of coming to know. It is this objectification, this knowability of the feminine, which disallows Florie's existence as a subject and leads to her annihilation.

This process of the inevitable revelation of the feminine as annihilating can be explored through Luce Irigaray's theorisation of the love relation as an 'amorous exchange' between two.²² The operation of such a relation is described as a two-way movement 'establishing a chiasmus or a double loop in which each can go toward the other and come back to itself'.²³ This movement has a number of effects, including the creation of a 'third term' which has variously been described as an energy or 'work', a 'shared outpouring', and a 'loss of boundaries', which operates as both a separate entity and as a mediator between the one and the other, causing each to return to him or herself altered:

Of pleasure's neither mine nor thine, pleasure transcendent and immanent to one and to the other, and which gives birth to a third, a mediator between us thanks to which we return to ourselves other than we were.²⁴

Another effect of the chiasmus is the 'remainder': that energy not contained momentarily within the third term and not required in the maintenance of the third

term. This excess or overflowing cannot be identified or traced, for in Irigaray's system there is no keeping account, no measuring of equal and opposite, only '[e]xchanges without identifiable terms, without accounts, without end [. . .] [w]ithout additions and accumulations'.²⁵

This two-way movement through space and time creates a space within which the various effects of the amorous exchange can be realised. This space is necessary not only for movement but for separateness, to ensure for each a return to the self, and most importantly a return 'to herself as the place where something positive can be elaborated'.²⁶ To maintain the separateness of the two subjects of desire it is necessary for each to have her or his own 'proper place' to come back to: that part of the self which remains untapped, which is not offered for consummation or assimilation within the love relation; it is that part of the self which remains unknown.

If this proper or private place is not maintained, then the one inevitably consumes the other: 'often the one and the other destroy the place of the other, believing in this way to have the whole; but they possess or construct only an illusory whole and destroy the meeting and the interval (of attraction) between the two'.²⁷ If the other is contained in this way, all movement is stilled and energy dissipated, disallowing the movement necessary to the amorous exchange. To maintain one's own private place is particularly important for the feminine, who, within Western culture at least, has been that which is contained and consumed by, and assimilated into, masculine desire. To maintain one's private place is nothing less than a condition of subjectivity.

If courtly love is a process of the masculine coming to know and the feminine becoming knowable—of unveiling the veiled, revealing the secret and unravelling the contrived—then it can be understood as a containment, consumption and finally an assimilation of the private place of the feminine by her masculine knower. This process necessarily collapses the space between the masculine and the feminine, disallowing movement and exchange, and nullifying her separateness (he still can maintain his separateness, as the revelation of his private place is not part of the process described here). They are no longer two, but consolidated into the oneness of masculine subjectivity.

Of course intimacy is not the limit case for desire, and courtly love has been explored as a veiled representation of, or a feint to deflect attention from, other kinds of exchange, most particularly economic and political.²⁸ Duby notes that the lady, if she is the wife (rather than the daughter) of the lord of the manor,²⁹ is not without some influence, and could prove to be a well-connected

friend to a young knight in pursuit of advancement.³⁰ Laurie Finke³¹ takes this notion further by suggesting that a client-patron relationship exists between a lover and his lady. She argues that the language of feudal servitude so often found in the troubadour lyric could well be literal:

It may be that economics is simply being evoked as a metaphor for love, but it is just as likely that courtly love is a highly codified way of talking about economic exchanges and the investment of symbolic capital (Finke, p. 47).

If the language of love is a highly codified, 'euphemerised' discourse of economic exchange, then the lady becomes the medium through which wealth and status can be negotiated by the lover for his performances, whether poetic or martial.³² If the lady is a marriageable daughter of the lord, then she may also be useful as the sign of economic exchange. While Florie is thoroughly occupied with the courtly ideal of love, Guyon has his eye on more tangible and long lasting rewards. Courtly manoeuvres, and the implied masculine sexual desire which needs no justification, have the effect of sanitising Guyon's political ambitions.

Guyon plays the part of the courtly suitor. After a pleasant evening of 'honeste & gracyous talkyng' of 'grete solace & joye', Guyon and Florie's intimacy increases until he is on the verge of 'dyscouer[ing] his thoughte to her', but he is called away just before he comes to the point. Accordingly, he 'humbly' offers himself as her champion, and later, sends her the spoils of his victory (p. 163-164). Guyon has behaved perfectly but revealed nothing of himself. While he has the potential, and apparently the intention, to do so, he does not. It is implied, therefore, that Guyon has a transparency to his character which resists the operation of subterfuge and secrecy. There is an implied honesty, a frankness, that the appropriate level of intimacy will inevitably reveal. But it is no more than a semblance; whatever 'his thoughte' might have been is never revealed. Guyon behaves properly, in a contained and controlled manner, but the text makes no further mention of his thoughts or feelings. The word 'love' is not used once in relation to Guyon.³³

Florie, on the other hand, is a more animated figure. She is delightfully happy and gay. She is 'ryght glad & joyous' and 'full glad & joyous' in the space of thirteen lines. On hearing of the coming of the strangers she and her maidens rush off to dress lavishly for the occasion. It is twice noted how happy she is at the prospect of visitors—she is 'ryght glad & joyous of the commyng of the

strangers', and she 'moch desyred theire commyng'—even before she knows who they might be. When her father instructs her to take special care of Guyon she is ready and willing: she is 'full glad & joyous' and 'toke hym by the hand swetly' (p. 163, ll. 7-8). Moreover, the text does not hold back in describing Florie's feelings after she has spent the evening with Guyon:³⁴

Florye thanne knowyng for certayn his soudayn departyng, her herte was fylled with dueyl & sorowe / how wel she kept contenance in the best manere that she coude / and louyngly beheld guyon [. . .] There thenne entred guyon in to his ship [. . .] and wete that Florye was mounted vp vnto the vppermost wyndowe of an hye tour, and neuer departed thens tyl she lost the sight of guyons vessel, prayeng god to preserue hym from al daunger. (p. 164, ll. 1-13)

Florie's semblance of control and restraint is like Guyon's semblance of transparency: it is a public performance which she cannot maintain for long. When Guyon sends the spoils of his victorious battle to Florie and her father, the text makes no mention of any restraint on her part. Instead it bursts forth with three instances of the word 'joye' in the space of three lines:

And the pucelle was so joyous of these nouuelles that she had neuer in her naturel lyf so grete joye. For know ye wel she loued so entierly guyon þat all her joye was of hym. (p. 166, ll. 25-28)

Moreover, the text uses the word 'love' twice in describing Florie's feelings for Guyon: 'she [. . .] louyngly beheld guyon', 'she loued so entierly guyon'.³⁵ Florie's desire for Guyon remains unspoken by her, but it is in effect an open secret. Her attempts to hide her feelings are perfunctory and short-lived, and her love has the innocence of both spontaneity and disinterestedness.

According to this reading, while Guyon professes devotion, it is Florie who experiences desire. Florie's desire is artless. Her father is present when she experiences the greatest joy of her life; when Guyon's messenger arrives, with good news and gifts. Soon after, her father, ailing and close to death, enters into negotiations with Urian to secure Guyon as Florie's husband. As far as it goes, fortune (in the form of her father) seems to be operating in Florie's favour: she gets what she apparently wants without even having to speak it. The French text

then goes on smoothly. Guyon accepts the offer of her hand graciously and returns to Cruly where Florie welcomes him back, and her words of thanks for his war booty draw the audience back to that moment in the text when she is described as being in love.³⁶ In d'Arras's version the conversations between Guyon and Florie are characterised as exchanges of direct speech three times (pp. 126, 127, 144).

The treatment of this episode in the Middle English *Melusine* text is somewhat different. After so successful a beginning, in which a relation based upon passionate predisposition is suggested, Guyon returns to Cruly to marry Florie but the meeting and conversation depicted in the French text is not reproduced in the Middle English text. Florie is not seen to welcome him back, and there is no renewal of their conversation. She appears once in the text at this point as Guyon's silent bride and is disposed of in one line: 'There was guyon wedded with Florye' (p. 181, l. 1). This diminution in the representation of Florie is also evident in her speech, which becomes less direct as the tale progresses. On their initial meeting Guyon and Florie exchange courtly greetings in direct speech when Florie welcomes Guyon to her father's realm (p. 163, ll. 8-10) and there follow 'many honeste & gracyous talkyng' (ll. 13-14), but when Guyon is called away he alone speaks and she is silent (p. 163, l. 33 - p. 164, l. 1). Her words are not recorded in direct speech again. Her words are described in indirect speech, and her love is presented in the third person. She recedes from the text.

Any lessening of feminine activity and/or speech in an English translation of a French text is contrary to expectation. While feminine agency remains prevalent in French literature into the twelfth century—the 'wooing woman' was an attractive and virile figure in the French *chanson de geste*—the emergence of romance and the ideals of courtliness marginalise feminine agency, particularly in terms of relations between the sexes.³⁷ The English tradition, however, did not adopt the conventions of courtliness as wholeheartedly as the French. Love and the female beloved are not idealised to the same degree in the English tradition,³⁸ and it is excessive idealisation that leads to abstraction.³⁹ The English tradition, therefore, leaves the path open for a more active participation by women in narratives of love.⁴⁰ However, the English translator of this tale—the tale of Melusine, a most active and powerful woman—chooses to annihilate Florie. This ending is quite a radical reading of the love relation which was apparently developing in Guyon's first visit to Cruly. Moreover, as a point of departure in the tale it marks itself out as a moment of significant meaning.

Does the operation of the love relation cause the eradication of Florie? The tale of Florie hints at a private place beneath Guyon's courtly exterior that intimacy might at least partly reveal. The figure of Florie, on the other hand, cannot sustain the semblance of a private place. Florie is not the ice-maiden of earlier courtly narratives, but she is trapped in a courtly model of compliant femininity nevertheless. She is happy and gay, she takes pleasure in visitors, and she is ready for any worthy knight who comes along. Florie makes no conditions: she is fully available as a malleable object of knowledge and conquest.

Moreover, Florie draws no boundaries around herself which could betray the existence of a private place. There is no moment of crisis or drama for Florie which could be construed as a point of rupture, or even of resistance. There is no point at which she must exercise agency. She does not even have to voice her desire for Guyon. Florie is what she appears to be: she is completely revealed and nothing remains. In keeping with R. Howard Bloch's conception of the paradox of love—that love only exists to the degree that it is secret; that secret love only exists to the degree that it is revealed; and revealed, it is no longer love⁴¹—Florie is both objectified and abstracted by the operation of courtly love and by the actualisation of her own love. Love disappears upon being revealed; Florie disappears upon revealing herself. She does not reveal *their* love, nor a secret pact, nor does she break a promise: what she reveals is herself. Florie is annihilated because there is nothing of herself that is sustained: she is entirely consumed by the love relation.

Florie's consumption by the courtly love relation is further naturalised by the negotiations regarding her marriage. Historians have conclusively shown that, despite the rhetoric of theology, consent to marriage in this period did not reside with the young people in question, and most particularly not with a young woman in Florie's political position.⁴² However, feminine agency in marriage is a recurring theme throughout the romance of *Melusine*, including the other three marriage tales. While each of the young women in these tales is happy with the man presented to her as a prospective husband, each has something to say about the manner of her marriage: Ermynee (p. 156), Christine (p. 213) and Eglantyne (p. 237-238) are each engaged in discussions about the prospect of marriage and each gives her consent, although under varying degrees of coercion. The question of marriage is not raised with Florie; her consent is not sought, nor is it given. Even in the French text, from which an implied consent perhaps could be extracted, the question is never stated and the consent is not given. This departure from the thematic of feminine agency is veiled by Florie's love. In both d'Arras's

version and the Middle English *Melusine* Florie's passionate love for Guyon cannot be in doubt; however, after the harrowing tale of Ermynee, in which she is brow-beaten into submitting to an untimely marriage, there can be no assumption of consent on the basis of love alone.⁴³ In contrast, Guyon is asked for his consent, and space is made for his possible refusal by Urian, who offers to step into the role of war lord of Armenia in that event. Guyon does not refuse, indeed he does not even hesitate (p. 180).

Florie's agency in her relation with Guyon is further elided by his act of crowning himself:

There was guyon wedded with Floryc / and after the feste all the
barons of the land came to Cruly & made theyre homage to
guyon, whiche crowned himself king & regned honourably. (p.
181, ll. 1-4)⁴⁴

It is a commonplace that the crown is a signifier of possession of, and power over, the realm. Within patrilineage the princess as heiress is similarly imbricated with such signification and it is this imbrication which the other marriage tales in this text work to overcome. Indeed they often succeed. Urian's action of placing the crown in Ermynee's lap and promising to help her keep it returns to her the status of actor (as possessor), differentiating her from the crown as that which is acted upon (as possessed).

Thenne enclnyed Uryan byfore the kyng wher he laye, and toke
the croune and putte it in Ermynes lap, sayeng 'Damoyselle, it is
your, and sith it hath fortunied thus with me, I shall you helpe to
kepe it my lyf naturel, yf it playse god ayenst al them that wold
vsurpe it or putte it in subgecion (p. 156, ll. 5-11).

The implicit transfer of feminine submission from father to husband, which is encoded in the dying king's act of crowning Urian, has already been undercut by Urian's previously negotiated conditional consent (in which he does not accept submission). Further, in the tale of Eglantyne the signifiatory separation of princess from realm is reiterated by both Anthony and Regnauld. In the tale of Eglantyne, Anthony positions Eglantyne as actor in the kingmaking, separating her from the crown: he says, 'come hither Regnauld brother, receyue this pucelle to your lady, For *she maketh you* kynge of behayne' (my emphasis, p. 239, ll. 25-

26). Moreover, Regnauld explicitly accepts Eglantyne for herself alone, not her lands: 'For yf thys noble pucelle had not one foot of land, yet wold I not reffuse her loue to haue her to my lady, after the lawes of god requyren' (p. 239, ll. 30-32).⁴⁵

The cumulative effect of the actions and words of Urian, Anthony and Regnauld is a suggestion that the Lusignan brethren do not expect, nor even desire, submission. They seek a mutuality of exchange with their spouses, acknowledging their capacity to operate as protagonists in the economy of amorous exchange. The actions of Guyon, on the other hand, displace Florie from protagonist to the position of interval between himself and the object of his desire: the crown. Her consumption is therefore the price of achieving his desire.

The dénouement of the tale of Florie describes the deadly effect on the feminine of courtly notions of love. While Florie and her maidens delineate a domestic space, offering sustenance and recreation to the glamorous and victorious knights, this material sustenance provided by the feminine to the masculine is reconfigured, in true courtly fashion, as the inspiration of the face of the muse. Thus inspired, Guyon leaves this space to perform deeds of significant prowess. The economy of material exchange—the obligation which has already been incurred—is veiled by a rhetoric of devotion. And yet, despite his promises—'your vassall & seruaunt shal I euer be vnder the standart of your gouernance' (p. 163, l. 36 - p. 164, l. 1)—Guyon is never required to act upon this apparent status of submission. Regardless of what she might actually provide, the feminine is always as a fact of her sex positioned not as the giver, but as the receptacle which is the receiver of gifts. Moreover, to occupy such a position, even for a moment, regardless of what she might otherwise do, is to be construed as compliant with, and by extension complicit to, the coercive order which has structured that position. The narrative can therefore, without compunction, be taken to its logical conclusion, and Florie disappears.

In the tale of Melusine the three other young women of the marriage tales are depicted with varying degrees of agency. One thing they all do at some point is rupture the bounds of courtly passivity through speech. Ermynee incurs the wrath of her father by speaking publicly to the court of her wishes, Eglantyne challenges her uncle's advice (in private), and Christine causes a war by refusing an offer of marriage. In each of these instances the young women reveal the existence of a private place, a place which harbours independent thoughts and

desires, a place of potential rebellion, a place of personal replenishment. The depiction of Florie suggests no such place. Indeed the only words we hear her speak are of welcome. The text positions as expendable this young woman who has no existence separate from the love relation. Within the logic of this text, for a woman to exist she must maintain a private place, a place which is preserved from consumption by the love relation. In other words, for a woman to exist, she must exist outside the love relation.

Maintaining this space of feminine subjectivity in a culture which privileges the masculine is not easy. Each of the three young women who sustain such a place do so in resistance to patriarchal figures, but ultimately need the support of their husbands to sustain it. Guyon offers no such support and Florie does not seek it. Florie seems readily to accept her fate. But what if she did not? The tale of Florie offers no such possibility, but the tale of one of Florie's and Guyon's descendants does. With a similar hero-takes-all attitude to Guyon, a later king of Armenia takes on a lady who resists. In the episode of the Sparrowhawk castle (pp. 362-368), one of the three conclusions of *Melusine*, the hero who succeeds in the test will be granted any prize he desires by the lady of the castle except herself. Guyon's exploitative practices are amplified in the behaviour of this young man who strikes the final blow to the Lusignan lineage through his own attempted *raptus* of Melior, the lady of the castle, powerful fairy-woman, and Melusine's sister. He repeatedly insists, despite angry warnings, that he will have Melior as his prize. After four refusals he attempts to take her 'by manere of vyolens and by force' (p. 367, ll. 17-18) but she vanishes. He does not accept that Melior is a participant in the economy of the game, rather than an object to be transacted within it. As a result he is beaten by unseen assailants, thrown out of the castle, and he and his lineage for nine generations are cursed. As noted above, Florie's annihilation is the effect of her complicity to a consuming love relation. Similarly, explicit physical violence is the effect of resistance to it, and total separation is the logical conclusion of Melior's rejection of it.

The consumption of Florie through the operation of the love relation also gestures towards that moment central to the narrative of the text, that moment which deals the very first blow to the Lusignan lineage rather than the last, when Raimondin disallows Melusine's private place. Melusine has a great secret which is the source of her tenure in the human world. In order for Melusine to live in the human world she must find a husband who will not seek to know her secret and who will not speak of the existence of her secret to anyone. In other words, she must find a man who will not objectify her through the process of coming to

know (her), nor through the actualisation of her secret through revelation. In the event of the breach of the first condition Melusine turns the knowledge economy on its head. By not acknowledging the breach she leads Raimondin mistakenly to believe that she does not know of his act. This reveals his knowledge of her as partial, and they continue to live as before. His second betrayal, however, cannot be so easily reconfigured. In a fit of rage Raimondin accuses Melusine publicly, in the presence of the court, of being a 'fals serpent' and a 'fantosme' (p. 314, ll. 26, 28). Public exposure irretrievably and intolerably breaches not only Melusine's secret, but also the secret of their relationship, the secret of their pact. The breaking of the pact is the beginning of the end for the House of Lusignan. Raimondin goes into self-imposed exile and the lineage goes slowly into a decline which is reinforced by the behaviour of Guyon's descendant in the episode of Sparrowhawk Castle. The Lusignan lineage goes into decay as a direct result of masculine challenges to the legitimacy of a feminine private place.

The tale of Florie is quietly expressed, but it acts as a warning, a harbinger of trouble to come. Melusine's three other sons act generously, supporting their wives in achieving some semblance of that feminine subjectivity so evident in Melusine herself. They are their mother's sons. Guyon does none of this. Amidst these tales of hope for the future of the love relation, the tale of Florie plants the seed of doubt. It gestures forward to the first and last blows to the Lusignan lineage, blows which manifest themselves in betrayal of the feminine. The appropriation of the private place of the feminine is a central issue in the tale of *Melusine*, and it is foreshadowed by the tale of Florie, that hairline crack from which all things fall to ruin.

NOTES

¹ See Geraldine Heng, 'Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory', in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. by Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), pp. 283-300. See also Geraldine Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *PMLA*, 106 (1991), 500-514.

² Laurence Harf-Lancner delineates two main categories of fairy according to their relationships with their human menfolk. There is the conqueror, who subjugates her lover to the laws of her own desire, carrying him off to another world: for example the malevolent Morgan, the gentle fairy-lover of Lanval, the lascivious Lorelei, or the deadly siren. Then there is the conquered, who is subjugated by love, and who bends to the human law of her beloved. Harf-Lancner positions Melusine in this place of the conquered. Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine: La naissance des fées* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984), p. 434.

³ This paper considers the Middle English version of d'Arras' tale as found in *Melusine, Compiled (1382-1394 A.D.) by Jean d'Arras, Englished about 1500*, ed. by A. K. Donald, EETS o.s. 68 (London: Trübner, 1895), cited throughout as *Melusine*. For a discussion of textual differences and similarities between the English and French versions of d'Arras's tale see Robert Joseph Nolan, *An Introduction to the English Version of 'Melusine': A Medieval Prose Romance* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1971), and for Coudrette's version see Donald Marshall Shull, *The Effect of the Theory of Translation Expressed in The Anonymous "Romans of Partenay" (T.C.C. MS R.3.17) Upon the Language of the Poem* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1984).

⁴ Roberta Kay Rigsby, *In Fourme of a Serpent fro the Nuel Downward: The Literary Function of the Animna in 'Melusine'* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1979), pp. 62-66. W. W. Skeat also notes the existence of an Icelandic manuscript fragment in the British Museum: *The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen: otherwise known as The Tale of Melusine: Translated from the French of La Coudrette (about 1500-1520 A.D.)*, ed. by W. W. Skeat, EETS o.s. 22 (London: Trübner, 1866), p. v.

⁵ The English version of d'Arras is British Library, MS Royal 18 B ii; of Coudrette: Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R.3.17.

⁶ To my knowledge the only article which examines the young women in the marriage tales is Brenda M. Hosington, 'Mélusines de France et d'Outremanche: Portraits of Women in Jean d'Arras, Coudrette and Their Middle English Translators', in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, ed. by Juliette Dor (Liège: Département d'anglais, Université de Liège, 1992), pp. 199-208. Other aspects of these tales have been discussed in Jane H. M. Taylor, 'Melusine's Progeny: Patterns and Perplexities', in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding*

Fiction in Late Medieval France, ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 165-184, and in the same volume in Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Fiction and History: The Cypriot Episode in Jean d'Arras's *Mélines*', pp. 185-200.

⁷ 'For there is no doubt about it: what these works called 'love,' whether in Latin or in various dialects of the vernacular, was quite simply desire, the desire of men, and men's sexual exploits. This is true even of the tales of so-called courtly love': Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: the Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. by Barbara Bray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 221.

⁸ '[Courtly love] is an altogether refined way of making up for the absence of sexual relation by pretending that it is we who put an obstacle to it. It is truly the most staggering thing that has ever been tried. . . . For the man, whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject, courtly love is the only way of coming off elegantly from the absence of the sexual relation': Jacques Lacan, cited in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. by Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1985), p. 141.

⁹ Georges Duby, 'The Courtly Model', in *A History of Women II: Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 250-266.

¹⁰ 'Love *par amour*, or passionate love, is the type most love poets are inspired by: its moving force, physical attraction, is of an emotive character, and its aim—however stimulating the conversations between the suitor and his lady may be—is the physical union with the beloved': Erik Kooper, 'Love and Marriage in the Middle English Romances', in *Companion to Middle English Romance*, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), p. 174. This comment accords with Duby, 'The Courtly Model'.

¹¹ This love, according to Duby, 'was violent, sudden "love", which, like a flame, once kindled was irresistible': Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, p. 221.

¹² Carolyn Larrington, *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 51. For a summary of the theological interests in the frailties of women see Jacques Dalarun, 'The Clerical Gaze', in *A History of Women II*, ed. by Klapisch-Zuber, pp. 15-42. See also the first two chapters of R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), which focus on the writings of the early Church Fathers and later interpretations of their work. For a summary of the theological/medical view (largely unimpeded by anatomical observation) see Claude Thomasset, 'The Nature of Woman', in *A History of Women II*, ed. by Klapisch-Zuber, pp. 43-69. For a discussion of Henri de Mondeville's fourteenth-century treatise on surgery, see Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

¹³ Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Bloch argues that the Christian church of the Middle Ages positions woman, simultaneously, at both extremities of the moral/religious spectrum: she occupies both the place of seducer and redeemer, of Eve and Mary. This bi-polar position proves impossible to negotiate. Firstly, '[p]oised between contradictory abstractions implicated in each other, women are idealised, subtilised, frozen into a passivity that cannot be resolved', and secondly, the feminine is abstracted to such a degree that 'woman (not women) can only be conceived as an idea rather than a human being': Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 90.

¹⁵ See Judith Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman in Anglo-Norman Romance', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 149-162; Flora Alexander, 'Women as Lovers in early English romance', in *Women and Literature in Britain: 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp 24-40. See also Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

¹⁶ In reference to the courtly lady, Laurie Finke notes that '[t]he woman's sex precluded the expression of her own desire': Laurie Finke, *Feminist Theory, Women's Writing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 48. Indeed the courtly lady is traditionally depicted as an ice-queen. 'The lady's desire seems [. . .] to be non-existent [. . .] she seems cold and distant, passion-less': Toril Moi, 'Desire in Language: Andreas Capellanus and the Controversy of Courtly Love', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 22, 24, cited by Weiss, 'Wooing Woman', p. 160.

¹⁷ '[H]er desire is beside the point precisely because it is in the withholding of her favors, in her silence, that she exercises her power [. . .] she remains a silent and passive object, represented as a thing (*res*), the object of the poet's desire': Finke, *Feminist Theory*, p. 48.

¹⁸ *La Poissance d'amours dell Pseudo-Riche de Fournival*, ed. by Gina Battista Speroni, (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1975), p. 68, as cited by Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 57.

¹⁹ Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. by John Jay Parry (New York: Norton, 1969).

²⁰ Pouchelle, discussing anatomy alone, notes: 'Outside-inside, masculine-feminine: two pairs of oppositions which are developed through anatomy (indirectly) by Mondeville, then by Chauliac, and finally [. . .] by Ambroise Paré. [. . .] Here we see again the connotations of 'hidden', and thus of secrecy, attaching to the *secreta mulierum*, and [. . .] it would almost be possible to invent a paradigmatic series making 'interior', 'hidden', 'closed' and 'feminine' into equivalents': Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery*, pp. 135-136.

²¹ Despite being apparently unknowable, women's 'secrets' were 'known' and discussed at length in both medical and theological writings, most famously in Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *De secretis mulierum*, ed. by Helen Rodnite Lemay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). Also see Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery*.

²² Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: Athlone Press, 1993), pp. 7-10.

²³ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 9.

²⁴ Luce Irigaray, 'Questions to Emmanuel Levinas: on the divinity of love', in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 178-189 (pp. 180-181).

²⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 196.

²⁶ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 9.

²⁷ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 54.

²⁸ For a summary of the historical development of the view that this relation is in fact an affair between men see E. Jane Burns, 'Speculum of the courtly lady: Women, love, and clothes', in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29 (Spring, 1999), p. 253-292.

²⁹ In the late twelfth century courtly love shifted from the exclusively extra-marital (and therefore impossible) to include pre-marital practice. Duby, 'The Courtly Model' (p. 263).

³⁰ Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, pp. 219-226.

³¹ The Rhetoric of Desire in the Courtly Lyric', in Finke, *Feminist Theory*, pp. 29-74.

³² See particularly Finke, *Feminist Theory*, pp. 33-48.

³³ This is also the case in the French version by Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine: Roman du XIVe siècle par Jean d'Arras*, ed. by Louis Stouff (Dijon: Berniguad, 1932), pp. 126-130, 141-144.

³⁴ Interestingly, Donald chooses to head the page with 'Guion falls in love with Flory', interpreting Guyon's formulaic courtly behaviour as love, but he ignores Florie's love which is clearly explicated in the text. Donald does, however, acknowledge Ermynee's love for the unseen and unmet Urian, heading p. 135 with 'Ermine in Love'.

³⁵ In d'Arras's version this occurs only once: 'Et saichiaz qu'elle amoit tant Guyon qu'elle pouvoit plus': d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 130.

³⁶ d'Arras, *Mélusine*, pp. 143-144.

³⁷ Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman', pp. 149-150.

³⁸ Susan Crane provides a history of the English reactions to and adoption of courtliness in *Insular Romance*. See particularly chapters 4, 'Measuring Conventions of Courtliness', and 5, 'Adapting Conventions of Courtliness'.

³⁹ This is one of the themes which permeates Bloch's work. See Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, especially pp. 143-156.

⁴⁰ The equality of lovers is shown to be a common characteristic of early English romance in Alexander, 'Women as lovers', pp. 24-40. This characteristic was also noted by Gervase Mathew, and interpreted by him as 'completely un-courtois': Mathew, 'Marriage and *Amour Courtois* in Late Fourteenth-Century England', in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 129, as cited in Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 136. Helen Cooper similarly finds that women's participation in love is more marked in Middle English and Anglo-Norman romances. Cooper argues that feminine desire which is constructed positively in romance is often socially and/or politically stabilising, and therefore supportive of the existing order: Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See particularly Chapter 5, 'Desirable Desire: "I am wholly given over unto thee"', pp. 218-268. Perhaps the most famous example of the difference between the English and French traditions is the different treatment of Lancelot and Guenivere by Chrétien and Malory. While Chrétien allows Guenivere love, hers is not comparable to Lancelot's: 'if he was very dear to her, his love for her was a hundred thousand times as great': *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, trans. by D. D. R. Owen (London: Dent, 1987), p. 247. Malory makes no such distinction. Indeed he makes the point that: 'whyle she lyved she was a trew lover, and therefor she had a good ende'. *Malory: Works*, ed. by Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 649.

⁴¹ Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 123.

⁴² Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*; Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Phoenix, 1995). For a contrary view see Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997).

⁴³ Ermynee admires Urian from afar. He has brought an army from Lusignan to help her father, the King of Cyprus, defend the city against the Saracens. Ermynee thinks of him constantly, and these thoughts keep her awake at night (pp. 134-135). She is also greatly distressed by the injuries her father has sustained in battle. Despite the comforting words of the barons she knows he is dying. Ermynee suffers under an emotional tumult throughout this time, including occasional physical collapses (pp. 150, 154). As a result of this, she consents to the marriage but she states that they must wait until after her father's illness is over. This stipulation draws a tirade of verbal abuse from her father. Most reluctantly, she finally submits to his wishes for a speedy marriage (p.156).

⁴⁴ In d'Arras's version this moment of crowning is not described and the implicit agent of Guyon's transformation is the marriage itself. The parallel section in d'Arras's version reads: 'Lors furent fianciez et le lendemain furent espousez a grant solennité, et fu la feste grant et noble et dura xv. jours. Et avant que la feste departist, tous les barons firent hommage au roy Guyon': d'Arras, *Mélusine*, p. 144.

⁴⁵ Anthony does not have the opportunity to separate the crown from the woman in the tale of Christine for two reasons. Firstly, Christine is a duchess and therefore no crown is involved. Second, Christine is a sovereign: she has no father or other male relative to assume the role of patriarch, and she refuses to submit to anyone who tries to install himself as such. When asked if he will consent to marriage with Christine, he defers to her: 'lete now the pucelle be sent for, For yf she be playсед therwith I consent me þerto' (p. 213, ll. 9-11).

A Sentence of Cursing in Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285

Niamh Pattwell

The influence of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and the Lambeth Council of 1281 on the production of vernacular manuals of religious instruction has been well documented.¹ In the spirit of ecclesiastical reform, it was perceived that the less learned clergy required simple, pastoral manuals from which to instruct the laity, at least three or four times a year, in the six principles of faith. Throughout the thirteenth century, the English Church held a series of councils to publicise legislation dealing with such matters, including the administration of the sacraments, preaching and excommunication. Chapter nine of Archbishop Pecham's 1281 Lambeth Council statutes, otherwise known as *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*, was undoubtedly the most influential part of this legislation.² It was a concise document, outlining exactly the principal tenets of the faith: the fourteen articles of faith, ten commandments, two evangelical commandments, seven works of mercy, seven capital sins with their branches, seven principal virtues and the seven sacraments. *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* was little more than a syllabus, but it was considered substantial enough to circulate as an independent tract. More often, however, it was appended to or collated with other tracts to form a comprehensive programme of religious instruction including the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, the Bidding Prayers and the General Sentence of Excommunication. The commonplace nature of the material, as well as the scribal tendency to replace tracts of one manual with tracts from another, is confusing for editors and scholars of religious writing. For example, it can be difficult to distinguish one version of a tract on the Ten Commandments from another. Bibliographical aids such as the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500* and the *Index of Middle English Prose (IMEP)* have alleviated some of the difficulties, with the latter particularly helpful for its inclusion of the incipit of each tract of the manual.³

The Sentence of Cursing or General Sentence of Excommunication is one of the more popular items in the manuals of religious instruction. It was usually appended to the end of the manual, sometimes circulating independently before inclusion in a codex of religious writings. Its importance can be attested to by the frequency with which it appears in codices of religious writings, where occasionally it is the only Middle English item.⁴ A Sentence was composed of three distinct parts: a prologue invoking heavenly and earthly authority, a list of offences and a curse that 'departith a man from the blisse of heuen, fro howsel, shrifte and al the sacramentis of Holy Chirche and betake hym to the deuy!'.⁵ In 1981, Oliver Pickering classified over forty different Middle English versions of the Sentence into nineteen groups.⁶ Until then, 'no attempt to list them all seems ever to have been made'; catalogues included the material under a generic title 'A Sentence of Cursing' or 'General Sentence of Excommunication'.⁷

Since Pickering's article appeared, the Sentence has been included as a distinct item within bibliographical works, although the efforts to classify and thereby establish the inter-relationship of each Sentence have not always been so consistent. In 1985, R.E. Lewis *et al.* included the Sentence of Excommunication in their *Index of Printed Middle English Prose*.⁸ They divided the Sentence into nine different categories, largely dependent on Pickering's, and added a manuscript copy of the Sentence, British Library, Royal MS A11.A.i, to group C of their classification which corresponds with group 4 of Pickering's classification. In 1986, Robert R. Raymo included a section on the Sentence of Cursing in his 'Works of Religious Instruction and Philosophy'. He added five more manuscripts with the Sentence to Pickering's list, but did not attempt to classify them. They are: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 692, fol. 31^r; Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285, fols 57^v–60^r; British Library, Additional MS 11579, fols 141^r–143^r; British Library, Royal MS 8 B.xv, fols 186^v–187^r; Worcester Cathedral MS F.172, fols 150^r–154^r.⁹ *IMEP III* (1986) added Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 77, fol. 148 to group 4 of Pickering's classification.¹⁰ *IMEP V* (1988) included the Sentence in BL Additional MS 11579, fols 141^v–43^r but did not attempt to classify it.¹¹ *IMEP VI* (1989), cataloguing the two Sentences of Cursing in York Minster MS XVI.M.4 (both of which are considered to be York versions of the Sentence), included the Digby 77 and Royal 8 B.xv manuscripts mentioned above. Pickering and Powell also listed a number of manuscripts noted by R.M. Ball in his dissertation on clerical education in the Middle Ages: British Library, Harley MS 2379, fols 105^r–09^v, New College, Oxford MS 292, fol. 115^v, Manchester, John Rylands University

Library, Lat MS 339 fol. 147^{r-v}, and Salisbury Cathedral MS 126, fol. 3^r.¹² They also cited Society of Antiquaries MS 718 in this entry. The Sentences were not classified.

In *IMEP VIII* (1991), Sarah Ogilvie-Thomson listed the fragment of the Sentence of Excommunication found in New College, Oxford MS 292, fol. 115^v, but is somewhat ambivalent in her classification. She sends the reader to another entry in *IMEP VIII*, the two versions of the Sentence found in Trinity College, Oxford MS 86 [20] and [23], both of which were included in Pickering's system in two different groups.¹³ It is unclear whether New College MS 292 bears any textual relationship to either of the Trinity MS 86 Sentences. Ogilvie-Thomson also drew attention to the existence of Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285, without classification. *IMEP XIII* (1999) cited the Lambeth Palace MS 172, fols 172–73^v listed in Pickering's original article, commenting that a similar version has not yet been identified and referring the reader to previous volumes of the *IMEP*.¹⁴ Valerie Edden included Worcester Cathedral MS F.172, fols 148^v–155 and Worcester Cathedral MS Q.9, fol. 315 in the *IMEP XV* (2000). The former she described as 'a free-standing version of *IPMEP* 122' and the latter she did not classify at all, merely pointing to Pickering's article.¹⁵

It is clear then, that while Pickering's classification has been considered useful it has not always been applied, even in the *Index of Middle English Prose*. Many would-be classifiers acknowledge the Sentence as a separate tract within a larger manual, but they do not always attempt to establish the relationship of one version to another. To be fair, classification of the Sentence is not always easy. It is dependent on access to already classified versions and, even then, it can be difficult to discern one version from another. At what point does one decide that this is not merely an adaptation of an already existing version but is, in fact, a new version requiring a new classification?

While working on an edition of *Sacerdos Parochialis*, a religious instructional manual of the early fifteenth century, I discovered that the Sentence of Cursing accompanying that text in Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285 (fols 57^r–60^r) was not the usual Sentence found with that manual.¹⁶ With the assistance of Pickering's article, I discovered that the Sentence of Cursing that normally accompanies *Sacerdos Parochialis* belongs to group 2 of his classification.¹⁷ Furthermore, British Library, Burney MS 356 contains two Sentences, both the group 2 Sentence of Cursing and the Sentence of Cursing found in Pembroke MS 285. The longer, group 2, version occurs first in the Burney manuscript (fols 50^v–53^r), immediately after the tract on the Sacraments,

followed by the shorter, simpler group 10 version (fols 53^r-54^v). In Pembroke MS 285, the group 10 Sentence is the only Sentence of Cursing in the manual. Apart from the fact that both the Burney and Pembroke manuscripts contain *Sacerdos Parochialis* and that both are the only manuscripts of the *Sacerdos Parochialis* tradition to include the group 10 version of the Sentence, there is no other discernible link between the two manuscripts. The versions of *Sacerdos Parochialis* contained in both are not textually close. Moreover, the Burney manuscript also contains a version of the Sentence found in the other *Sacerdos Parochialis* manuscripts.

In this article, my primary objective is to establish the relationship of the Pembroke Sentence to other Sentences within Pickering's classification. Secondly, but no less importantly, I wish to discuss briefly the implications of this inter-relationship and to consider why the Pembroke scribe used a different Sentence; this discussion will illustrate the importance of further reflections on the Sentence of Cursing.

Group 10 of Pickering's classification includes three manuscripts: British Library, Arundel MS 130; British Library, Burney MS 356; and Trinity College, Oxford MS E.86.¹⁸ According to Pickering, these three manuscripts 'textually appear to stand mid-way between' the two preceding groups: group 8 which is the York Sentence of Cursing and group 9 which he calls R.¹⁹ Group 8 or the York Sentence is preserved in five manuscripts and in one printed edition.²⁰ Pickering notes that 'the printed edition and these five manuscripts appear to preserve practically the same text of the Sentence'.²¹ A relatively modern edition of the Sentence was published by W. G. Henderson in 1875 for the Surtees Society.²² Group 9, or R, is found in *Quattuor Sermones*, a manual of religious instruction printed by Caxton in 1483-4, and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS A.381, fols 1^v-2^v.²³ The Sentences contained in both these treatises are textually very close.

The texts in group 10 are similar enough to be identifiable as a particular recension of the York Sentence, but do not show the same cohesion as the York and R versions. Burney MS 356, for example, contains an item on simony not found in any other version of this Sentence. Arundel MS 130 omits an item on heresy and money-clippers found in the other two manuscripts of this group.²⁴ The Pembroke Sentence contains a version of the Sentence of Cursing sometimes closer to that found in Burney MS 356 (fols 53^r-54^v) at other times closer to the Sentence found in Trinity MS E.86. The identification of the Pembroke Sentence with group 10 depends not only on similarities between the Pembroke Sentence

and the Burney, Arundel and Trinity Sentences, but also on how the Pembroke Sentence differs from the York and R Sentences, particularly where the York and R Sentences exhibit unique features.

Like Burney, Pembroke includes an item on abandoning children (see accompanying table, item 16.3) that does not occur in the Trinity and Arundel Sentences. Nor is this item a feature of R, but it is found in the York Sentence. Both the Pembroke and Burney Sentences mention the difficulty of not knowing whether the child is christened or not, and refer to 'weyletes' or 'crosse way' which the York Sentence omits.²⁵

Burney MS 356, fol.54^r:

Also alle wommen þat here chyldron in cherche porches oþer in weyletes oþer in feeldes leggeþ, or leueþ y-crystnede or now3t y-crystnede wher-fore þe[y] beþ y-called fondelynges.

Pembroke MS 285, fol.59^r:

Alle þo þat leye or doþ leye her children by ony crosse way or at þe chirche dore or in any oþer vnleful place to be founde of oþer men nat knowynge wheþer þei be crystened or noon.

York (Manuale et Processionale, ed. by Henderson, p. 121):

Also alle they that wylfully lese theyr children, or leuys them in felde, or in towne, or in chirche dore, or in any other place, and leuys them socourles.

The Pembroke and York Sentences, on the other hand, agree in their use of the nominative third person pronoun 'þo' or 'they' instead of 'women' and in their positioning of the main verb 'leye' or 'lese' immediately after the subject. In the Burney Sentence the main verb occurs in the finite position of the clause. The phrase 'or in any other place' is also common to both the Pembroke and York Sentences.

In the item on theft of church property (see table, 12.1-2), the Pembroke Sentence also shows textual affinities to both the York and Burney Sentence. It – uniquely – uses both 'restitucion' of the York Sentence and 'satisfaccion' of the group 10 and R.

York (Manuale et Processionale, ed. by Henderson, p. 120):

Also alle that houses, maners, graunges persones or vicars, or of any other men of holy Chirche ageynst theyr attorney wyll any maner of good mouable or onmouable away beres, or with strength or wrongfully away drawes or wastis: of the whiche cursynge they may nat be assoyled tyll they haue made restitucion to them that the wronge is done to.

Pembroke MS 285, fol.59^r:

Alle þo þat houses, manners or granges of parsones or vicars or eny oþer men of holy chirche a3eyn hur wille, eny manere good mevable or unmevable a-way beren wit streyngþe or wrongfullyche a-way drowen or wasten, of wyche cursyng þei mowe not be assoyled tel þei haue made restitucion and satisfaccion to whom þe wrong his doon to.

Burney MS 356, fol 53^v:

Also alle þey þat ow3t of houses of maneres, grawnges or gardynes of archbysshopes, bysshopes, abbates, pryores, abbesses, pryoresse, parsones, vycares, or any oþer man of holy cherche a-3en here wyll or a-3en here torneys wyll any manere gowd mevable or onmevable away bereþ wyþ strenkþe or wronglyche a-wey draweþ or wasteþ; of whyche corsyng þey mow now3t be a-soyled for he haue y-maked satysfaccyon to hym þat þe wrong was y-do to.

In this item on church property, the Pembroke Sentence does not share the extra material found only in the Burney Sentence. The Burney Sentence expands the subject matter to include 'gardens' and specific titles of 'men of holy chirche' such as 'archbysshopes, bysshopes, abbates, pryoresse' as well as 'parsones and vycares'. This appears to be unique to the Burney Sentence, and perhaps indicative of an adaptation to a monastic audience.²⁶ The Pembroke Sentence, in this case, remains closer to the Trinity Sentence.

The Pembroke Sentence is quite clearly not a version of the York Sentence. R and the three manuscripts in group 10 of Pickering's classification share a feature not found in the York Sentence: they mention specifically the province of Canterbury in the item on tithing (see table, 24.2), whereas the York version does

not make mention of a particular province. The Pembroke Sentence agrees with R and group 10, against the York Sentence, in naming the province of Canterbury in that particular item.²⁷ The item on incendiaries (see table, before 18) unique to the York Sentence is omitted from the Pembroke Sentence and item 1.4 on tithes does not follow the lengthier York version. In other words, the Pembroke Sentence does not have any of the items unique to York.

Nor is the Pembroke Sentence a version of the R Sentence; it is free of items unique to R such as the longer item on tithing (see table, 29) or the placement of the item on witches (see table, 13.2).²⁸ In the York and group 10 Sentences, the item on witches follows the item on heresy (13.1) whereas in R it occurs much later, after the item on the consistory courts (see table, 25). Pembroke agrees, in this case, with the York and group 10 Sentences.

The Pembroke and Burney Sentences are further linked through the items 1.8 and 2.1, even if the link is caused by scribal confusion. The Burney Sentence is the only version to list the item forbidding the spilling of blood on hallowed grounds (see table, 1.8), immediately after the item forbidding the purchase of letters in secular courts (see table, 1.7) and just before the item condemning those who disturb the peace of the land (see table, 2.1). In the York, R and Trinity versions of the Sentence, the item on disturbing the peace of the land (2.1) precedes the item on spilling blood (1.8). The Pembroke Sentence initially follows the order of the Burney Sentence, by placing the item on the spilling of blood (1.8) immediately after the item on the purchase of letters (1.7). However, it then omits completely the item on the disturbing of the peace and the items condemning those against the king's right (2.1-2). Whether this was an accidental or deliberate omission is unclear. However, this is not the first time that the copyist or scribe of this second half of Pembroke MS 285 has mislaid material in this way. For example, he conflates the sixth and seventh commandment in the copy of Pecham's syllabus found in this manuscript on fol. 50^r, possibly through eye-skip. It is possible therefore, that he once again misplaced two or three items on closely related material in the Sentence of Excommunication. The order of material might, therefore, have originally followed the Burney version of the Sentence, but later have become confused through scribal error.

The inter-relationship between the Pembroke and Burney Sentences would therefore be fairly well established if it were not for another expansion unique to the Burney Sentence. In the item forbidding war against the king's peace, the Burney Sentence includes a note against war on the peace of the land.

York (Manuale et Processionale, ed. by Henderson, p. 118):
Also alle those that are ageynste the Kynges right. Also all those
that the warre susteynes ageynst the Kynges peas wrongfully.

Quattuor Sermones, p. 82:

And alle tho that ben ageyn the right of our lord the kyng. And al
tho that werre susteyne agaynst the kyng wrongfully.

Burney MS 356, fol.53^v:

Also alle þat bep a-3en þe ky[n]gges ryht of þe reme. Also alle
þat werre susteyneþ wrongfullyche a-3en þe kyng, or þe pees of
þe londe.

Trinity MS E.86:

All-so all tho that the rightes of the kyng be a3en. Als[o] all tho
þo þat werre susteyne a3en the kynges pes wrongfully.

Pembroke MS 285, fol. 58^v:

Alle þo þat werne sustene a3eyn þe kynges pees wrongfulliche.

The Pembroke Sentence, despite beginning to follow the order of material in the Burney Sentence, agrees with the other versions of the Sentence (especially Trinity MS E.86) against the Burney Sentence by not including the expansion concerning the 'pees of the londe'.

The Pembroke Sentence has a unique feature. It omits the item on violence against clergy from its usual place (see table, 14) (either after the item against witches as in the Burney, Trinity and York Sentences (13.2), or after the item forbidding stealing goods from a church in the R Sentence (12.2)) to include it after the item on disruption of Christian consistory courts (see table, 25). There is no discernible explanation for this change in the order of material. The absence of a conclusion in the Pembroke Sentence is, however, also a feature of the Arundel Sentence.²⁹

A final note on the manuscripts in which the Pembroke and Burney Sentences are found confirms the inter-relationship of these texts and highlights the importance of further study on the Sentence of Cursing. As previously stated, the Sentence in Pembroke MS 285 and the Sentence in Burney MS 356 form part of a religious instructional manual for the clergy known as *Sacerdos Parochialis*.

This is a late fourteenth-century or early fifteenth-century manual of religious instruction intended to assist the less literate clergy in their pastoral duties. The manual, although it begins with the rubric from Pecham's 1281 statute *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*, is largely derived from William Pagula's Latin manual (or a later version of it) of the early fourteenth-century, *Oculus Sacerdotis*. *Sacerdos Parochialis* includes instruction on the *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, fourteen articles of faith, ten commandments, seven works of mercy, seven principal virtues, seven deadly sins and the seven sacraments. Most versions of the treatise also include a set of bidding prayers and, as stated earlier, a Sentence of Cursing. The Sentence of Cursing usually found with *Sacerdos Parochialis* is a much more complex and lengthy Sentence than that under discussion here.³⁰ Did the scribe-compiler of Pembroke MS 285, unlike other scribes or copyists of *Sacerdos Parochialis*, deliberately choose the shorter Sentence of Excommunication to accompany his copy of the manual, or was it a simple matter of availability or accident?

Sacerdos Parochialis generally circulated independently in one quire, or two at most. The Sentence of Cursing was one of the last tracts in the manual and, therefore, most prone to being accidentally lost. It is quite possible that the Sentence of Cursing was already missing from the exemplar and the copyist merely supplemented with whatever Sentence was available to him. However, the replacement of one Sentence of Cursing with another in Pembroke MS 285 is probably more deliberate. One might even call it an act of editing. The Sentence of Cursing that normally accompanies *Sacerdos Parochialis* is long and unwieldy, embedded with Latin references to Canon Law. As such, it would be difficult material for 'illiterate' clergy, without Latin or a degree in Canon Law, or for the laity. Pickering describes the York Sentence, of which R and group 10 are obviously relations (if not recensions), as follows:

In comparison with some of the forms of Sentence described above, the York Manual's is a plain text, comprising a simple list of some fifty of the usual offences. No authorities are cited, and the formal curse at the end is given in Latin.³¹

The York, R and group 10 versions of the Sentence are indeed simpler and more 'vernacularised' than the Sentence of Cursing that normally circulated with *Sacerdos Parochialis*. As such, it would appeal to a lay reader, ignorant of Canon Law and to those who believed in the use of the vernacular as a means of education in matters of faith.³² We already have evidence of a conscious compiler

or scribe in Pembroke MS 285, even if he is occasionally careless. He supplements the usual form of the *Pater Noster* with a longer version, includes a sermon not found elsewhere, and excises the usual tract on the seven deadly sins to include another known as *Every Christian Man and Woman*.³³ The whole of *Sacerdos Parochialis*, including the supplementary material, is written in the same fifteenth-century hand. The codex is not the work of *ad hoc* collections of quires or tracts, but suggests deliberation and editorial choice, perhaps for a less literate audience. Unfortunately, the only name in the manuscript is in a sixteenth-century hand, "Raffe Mainarde oeth this book". A.I. Doyle suggests that the sequence of St. Sitha included in the manuscript indicates a link with the Augustinian Priory in Ossyth, Essex.³⁴ It is arguable that the manuscript was compiled for use by a secular cleric, employed by the Augustinians to work as curate in one of the parishes in their care.

In conclusion, the Pembroke Sentence fits best in group 10 of Pickering's classification. It does not share any of the unique features of the York or R Sentences and it contains material found only in the manuscripts of group 10. Unfortunately, the Pembroke Sentence is not consistent in following one version of the Sentence found in any of the three manuscripts in group 10, although it does have some strong links to the Burney manuscript, not least the unique order of items 1.8-2 and the inclusion of the item on abandoned children. It is also impossible to ignore the *Sacerdos Parochialis* connection. There is evidence that the compiler or scribe of *Sacerdos Parochialis* in the Pembroke manuscript excised and replaced material elsewhere in the text. He appears to have applied the same selectivity to the Sentence, preferring a simpler version to the usual lengthy Sentence normally associated with *Sacerdos Parochialis*. While Sentences have already been associated with particular geographical areas (the Sarum Sentence with Salisbury Cathedral, for example), there is a suggestion in the Pembroke manuscript that the Sentence may have been chosen for a particular audience.³⁵ It is a 'simpler', less canonical or Latinate version than that usually included in *Sacerdos Parochialis*, therefore easier reading for a 'simple cleric' if not a lay reader.

The above analysis of the Sentence and its place within the *Sacerdos Parochialis* tradition is by no means complete. However, it does point to the importance of further study and the need for more consistent attempts to classify material. Only then can we hope to establish patterns of distribution, to locate Sentences both geographically and chronologically. The Sentence of Cursing has much to contribute to the study of religious writing and manuscripts of the late Middle Ages.

	Burney MS 356	Pembroke MS 285	Trinity MS E86	York	Quattor Sermones	Rawlinson MS A381
	Prologue	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
1.1	Violation of freedom of church	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Presented as one item.	Yes. Presented as one item.
1.2	Being against the freedom of church.	Yes	Yes	Yes		
1.3	Making the church pay secular taxes.		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1.4	Withholding tithes or other payments from church.	Yes	Yes	Yes (longer)	Yes	Yes
1.5	Denying someone the right to sanctuary in a church.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
1.6	Sacrilege through removal or damage of church property.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
1.7	Seeking authority of secular courts over church courts.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1.8	Committing an act of violence on hallowed grounds.	Yes	Yes	Disturb Peace (2.1)	Disturb Peace	Disturb peace
2.1	Disturbing the peace of the land	Yes	No	Draw blood (1.8)	Draw blood	Draw blood
2.2	Being against the king's right of the realm.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2.3	Sustaining war against King, and peace of the land.	Yes.	Yes. Omits reference to land.	Yes. Omits reference to land.	Yes. Omits reference to land.	Yes. Omits reference to land.
3	Robbers or murderers unless it is in self-defence.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Being against Magna Carta.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Lying in court in cause of matrimony.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Lying to disinherit someone else.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
7	Lawyers who lie for profit.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
8	Defaming someone maliciously.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Interfering with ecclesiastical presentation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

10.1	Despising the king's commandment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Presented as one item.	Yes	Yes	Yes
10.2	Preventing capture of cursed man	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Receiving profit to disturb peace	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12.1	Taking goods from the houses of clergy or religious without their consent		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12.2	Taking goods violently from churches	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13.1	Maintaining or belief in heresy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
13.2	Witches	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
14	Violence against clergy	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Supporting Saracens	Yes	Yes	Heathens	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
16.1	Women who procure abortions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Name wrong father knowingly	Name wrong father knowingly	Name wrong father knowingly
16.2	Women who knowingly name the wrong father	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Procure abortions	Procure abortions	Procure abortions
16.3	Women who abandon children	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
17.1	Falsifying the king's money	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.2	Copying or reducing the value of coins	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.3	Falsifying legal documents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.4	Buying or selling by false measures	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.5	Falsifying the king's standard	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.6	Preventing the fulfillment of a will	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17.7	Swearing falsely for profit or to hurt another	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
30	Incendiaries (York only)	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
18	Robbers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	Withholding another's goods	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
20	Disturbing the peace	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Thieves
21	Thieves and those who support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Disturbing peace

Appendix

	them							
22	False conspirators	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
23	Making untrue claims in court	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
24.1	Withholding goods reserved for tithes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
24.2	Giving away tithes to pay a debt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
25	Preventing church courts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
26	Simony	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Witches (no. 13 above)	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
	Violence against clergy (no. 14 above)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
27	Heretics who do not believe in the Eucharist	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
28	Usurers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
29	Withholding of tithes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (longer version)
	Conclusion	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes Latin

This table lists each item or offence as it occurs in the shorter version of the Sentence contained in British Library, Burney MS 356. The division of the Sentence into the items is entirely my own. An attempt has been made to divide each item into parts that are linked thematically. For example, the first item is made up of any offence that violates the freedom of the Church; the second item includes any attempt to disrupt the peace of the land, and so on. The division is employed to facilitate comparison between the versions of the Sentence. The numbers reflect the sequence in the Burney MS 356 Sentence; items not occurring in the Burney Sentence have been given additional numbers. See, for example, no. 30 after 17.7 where this item is found only in the York Sentence.

NOTES

I am grateful to Brendan O'Connell, Oliver Pickering and Kari-Ann Rand-Schmidt for their help on a draft version of this article.

¹ See, for example, Leonard Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. by T. J. Heffernan (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 30-43; Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Books of Religion', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 317-44; part three of W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); and H. L. Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993).

² For a list of manuals influenced by Pecham's statute see J. L. Peckham, *Archbishop Peckham as a Religious Educator* (Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1934), pp. 98-113.

³ Robert R. Raymo, 'Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction', in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, ed. by A. E. Hartung, 11 vols (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts, 1967-), vol. 7 (1986), pp. 2257-357 and 2470-582; *Index of Middle English Prose*, gen. ed. A. S. G. Edwards, 17 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987-); P. S. Jolliffe, *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974).

⁴ In two cases, British Library, Additional MS 11579, fols 141^r-143^r and British Library, Royal MS 8 B.xv, fols 186^v-187^r, the Sentence of Excommunication is the only Middle English prose item in the manuscript. In the Royal manuscript, the Sentence is appended to a manual of Latin religious writings which include a version of *Oculus Sacerdotis*, and a tract each on the *Pater Noster* and on the *Ten Commandments*, also in Latin. The Additional manuscript 'is preceded by some related Latin works': see Peter Brown and Elton D. Higgs, *Index of Middle English Prose V* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), p. 38.

⁵ N. F. Blake, *Quattuor Sermones printed by William Caxton* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975), p. 81.

⁶ O. S. Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing in Middle English: Or, A Case for the Index of Middle English Prose', *Leeds Studies in English*, 12 (1981), 229-44.

⁷ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 229.

⁸ R. E. Lewis, N. F. Blake, and A. S. G. Edwards, *Index of Printed Middle English Prose* (New York: Garland, 1985), pp. 44-46.

A Sentence of Cursing in Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285

- ⁹ Raymo, 'Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction', p. 2573.
- ¹⁰ Patrick Horner, *Index of Middle English Prose III* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1986), pp. 26-27.
- ¹¹ *IMEP V*, p. 38.
- ¹² O.S. Pickering and Susan Powell, *IMEP VI* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), p. 55; R. M. Ball, 'The Education of the English Parish Clergy in the Later Middle Ages, with particular reference to the manuals of instruction' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1976), p. 294 n. 1.
- ¹³ Sarah Ogilvie-Thomson, *Index of Middle English Prose VIII*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), p. 73.
- ¹⁴ O. S. Pickering and V. M. O'Mara, *The Index of Middle English Prose XIII* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), p. 14.
- ¹⁵ Valerie Edden, *The Index of Middle English Prose XV* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 67 and 69.
- ¹⁶ Niamh Pattwell, *Sacerdos Parochialis edited from British Library MS Burney 356 and Exornatorium Curatorum edited from Cambridge Corpus Christi Sp. 335.2*, 2 vols (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Trinity College Dublin, 2004). Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285 contains a version of the *Speculum Christiani* and of *Sacerdos Parochialis*. The Sentence is found on fols 57^r-60^v of the Pembroke MS after a brief tract on the five senses and prior to the tract on the *Pater Noster*. A full description of the manuscript is included in my thesis, pp. 58-6. See also V. M. O'Mara, 'A Study of Unedited Late Middle English Sermons that Occur Singly or in Small Groups' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 1987). Kari-Ann Rand-Schmidt is currently preparing a volume of the *Index of Middle English Prose* for the Pembroke College manuscripts.
- ¹⁷ The other manuscripts with the Sentence are: British Library, MS Harley 4172, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 110, Trinity College, Oxford MS 7. Cambridge University Library MS Dd.12.69 originally had the Sentence of Cursing, but it has since been ripped out. One can read some of the words on the remaining stubs.
- ¹⁸ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', pp. 237-8.
- ¹⁹ See also Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', pp. 235-7.
- ²⁰ For a list of manuscripts and the printed edition see Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 235.
- ²¹ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 236.
- ²² Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', pp. 235-6. *Manuale et Processionale ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis*, ed. by W.G. Henderson, Surtees Society 63 (Durham: Andrews, 1875), pp. 119-22.
- ²³ Blake, *Quattuor Sermones*, pp. 81-5.

²⁴ British Library, MS Burney 356, fol. 54^v. I have not seen British Library, MS Arundel 130, so am here dependent on Pickering's comments.

²⁵ *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001), s.v. 'Weyletes' n. pl. (see wei-letes): a place where two or more roads meet, junction; also, a street, byway.

²⁶ The layout and contents of the Burney manuscript would seem to indicate that it was prepared in and for a monastic setting.

²⁷ Pembroke College, Cambridge MS 285, fol. 59^v.

²⁸ This longer item in R is essentially a Middle English translation of Boniface's statute on tithing. For a Latin version of Boniface's statute on tithing see F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 795-7.

²⁹ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 237.

³⁰ This is the first sentence (fols 50^v-53^r) and is included in Pickering's article under group 2: 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 230.

³¹ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 236.

³² Many scholars have discussed the restrictive nature of Arundel's 1409 Constitutions in which he laid out the Pecham syllabus as the maximum that the laity ought to be taught. The possible effect on vernacular religious writings is treated comprehensively by Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822-64.

³³ I have argued in my thesis that *Every Christian Man and Woman* is an abbreviated form of Richard Lavynham's *A Lityl Treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins*. For an edition of the latter see *A Lityl Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins by Richard Lavynham*, ed. by J. P. W. M. Van Zutphen (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1956). For a note on the sermon see V. M. O'Mara, 'A Checklist of Unedited Late Middle English Sermons that Occur Singly or in Small Groups', *Leeds Studies in English*, 19 (1981), 141-66.

³⁴ A. I. Doyle, 'A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th and early 16th centuries, with special consideration of the part of the clergy therein', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1955), p. 11 of his notes.

³⁵ Pickering, 'Notes on the Sentence of Cursing', p. 233.

Hope Emily Allen Speaks with the Dead¹

Deanne Williams

On a fateful day in the summer of 1934, Hope Emily Allen, an American medievalist living and working in London, was summoned to the Victoria and Albert Museum to identify a medieval manuscript owned by Colonel Butler-Bowdon, scion of an old Catholic family from the north of England. Over the years, the Butler-Bowdons had taken a number of their heirlooms to the Victoria and Albert for identification. This one had been discovered in a ping-pong cupboard.² But this time, all of the English authorities on medieval manuscripts were on their summer holidays. Miss Allen, a scholar who had published widely on the subject of medieval mystics, was brought in for the job. She identified the manuscript, now British Library Additional MS 61823, as *The Book of Margery Kempe*, a text known to scholars only from extracts printed in sixteenth-century editions by Wynkyn de Worde and Henry Pepwell. *The Book of Margery Kempe* was published almost immediately in a modernised version edited by the Colonel, and a scholarly edition of the text, edited by Sanford Brown Meech, with notes by Allen, was published by the Early English Text Society in 1940.

The Book of Margery Kempe has since come to play a foundational role in the establishment of a canon of women authors, and it occupies an important position in recent theoretical and revisionist approaches to medieval studies. It has provided a focus and stimulus for recent studies of medieval popular devotion, Lollardy, and social dissent, and supplied feminist scholars and theorists of gender with classic examples of *écriture féminine*, writing through the body, and queer identity.³ Margery is a touchstone for the concerns of contemporary feminist and medieval scholarship. If she had not been rediscovered, she would have had to be invented. Her book provides an irresistible blend of defiance of authority (especially of 'patriarchy', that troubled term), unabashed sexuality, and unembarrassed emotion. Composed by a series of male amanuenses, *The Book of*

Margery Kempe raises tantalizing questions about authorship, authority and the mediated status of textuality. Its radically individualistic form of religious devotion offers a model of resistance and independence to contemporary scholars who are seeking an alternative Middle Ages to counter a previous generation's celebration of obedience and submission.⁴ And it charms any reader who likes a rebel.

Margery gives contemporary readers the chance to see themselves reflected in her text. By identifying *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Hope Emily Allen produced not only a text, but also a model for locating the self in the object of study. Allen's self-conscious investment of her own personality, personal conflict, and personal commitments in her scholarship seems ubiquitous today, as the lines between scholarship and memoir are so often, and so productively, blurred.⁵ At a time when medievalists were preoccupied with philological and linguistic concerns, Allen was pursuing historical work devoted to uncovering the lives of medieval mystics, or, to put it in her own words, 'the character and circumstances of individuals who had once lived'.⁶ In her early research on the identity of the women for whom the *Ancrene Riwe* (or 'guide for anchorites') was written, Allen located and reconstructed a medieval analogue to her own life: bookish, retired, and spent largely in the company of women. After identifying the Butler-Bowdon manuscript, Allen sought to incorporate Margery Kempe within what she called a 'remarkable contemporary feminist movement'.⁷ At this time, Allen was, herself, part of a small group of women scholars with whom she lived and worked on Cheyne Walk in Chelsea.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations* opens with the phrase, 'I began with the desire to speak with the dead'.⁸ Like many scholars, Hope Emily Allen's desire to speak with the dead prompted her to recreate the past in her own image and to use the past, consciously or unconsciously, to explore and comment upon issues in the present. However, speaking with the dead is not without its misunderstandings. Allen's attempt to place Margery, an illiterate East Anglian brewer's daughter, within a transnational community of highly educated female mystics was far from a triumphant act of feminist inclusion. Academic politics as well as gender and class tensions interfered and, ultimately, defeated Allen's project, leading her to distance herself from Margery.

As John Hirsh describes in *Hope Emily Allen, Medieval Scholarship and Feminism*, Allen eventually lost control over the EETS edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* to Sanford Brown Meech of the University of Michigan.⁹ At this time, her attitudes towards the text itself began to change. Denigrating Margery's

accomplishments by damning her with the charged term, 'hysteric', Allen enshrined hysteria as the key term in critical discussions of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, anticipating its significance in subsequent theoretical discussions of women's writing.¹⁰ The personal papers (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Eng. Misc. c. 212, d. 217, and c. 484), collected by her friend Joan Wake and deposited in the Bodleian Library, chart Allen's path from young academic prizewinner to alienated independent scholar, and complicate any attempt to explain Allen's difficulties as a simple example of gender prejudice. These papers allow us to recover the historical and cultural as well as personal circumstances surrounding the identification and eventual publication of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, shedding light on a key moment in the evolution of a feminist literary canon and literary theory, and on the role played by psychoanalysis in the history of twentieth-century medieval studies. Along with her published works of scholarship and fiction, they uncover a personalised and idiosyncratic mode of literary criticism that looks to the past for answers to the problems of the present.

Smashes

Hope Emily Allen's desire to speak with the dead was incubated during her undergraduate years at Bryn Mawr, where she was influenced by the charismatic and powerful Carey Thomas, president of the college from 1894-1922. From 1900-1905, Allen basked in the visionary glow of 'PT', as she was affectionately known. In daily speeches at chapel, 'PT' exhorted Bryn Mawr girls to apply their studies to further 'the cause of women' and to keep in mind the following maxim: 'only failures marry'.¹¹ She considered 'the books we read, the knowledge we get' to be 'weapons for the Ego to fight with when the time comes'.¹² Thomas's rhetoric of muscular feminism, which openly defies the Victorian cult of the angel in the house, extends to her appropriation of a classic image of masculine power to describe the political, and specifically feminist, ends of academic achievement: 'now is the time when we are forging our swords'.¹³

For Carey Thomas, medieval scholarship was less an end in itself than a means of performing feminist conviction. Carey Thomas did her postgraduate work in comparative philology at Leipzig and Zurich, two of the small number of universities that would award advanced degrees to women at the time. After submitting a master's thesis on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, she promptly abandoned philology for university administration. Whereas Thomas had been put

off by nineteenth-century German philology, with its almost anthropological notions of textual purity and corruption, and its nationalist, genealogical models of textual transmission, Allen found a more congenial scholarly home in England.¹⁴ After graduating from Bryn Mawr in 1906 (her commencement speaker was Henry James), she went on to graduate studies at Newnham College, Cambridge. There she blended the model of feminist action that she had inherited from Thomas with traditional English methods of historical scholarship. In her work, Allen sought medieval counterparts to herself, charting a historical genealogy for the alternative, independent lifestyle that she had chosen: one that eschewed marriage and childbirth, and favored, instead, intimate female friendships that were devoted to the shared pursuit of some form of higher calling or profession.

Allen's research concerned the identity and life records of the women for whom the *Ancrene Riwe*, a twelfth-century guide for anchorites, was written. In a series of three *PMLA* articles published between 1918 and 1935, Allen proposed their names (Emma, Christina, and Gunhilda), located their anchorage at Kilburn Priory (in what is now Hampstead), traced the records of its foundation in 1134, and submitted that the Kilburn hermit, Godwin, was the name of the *magister loci* who had composed the text.¹⁵ Allen dated the text's Corpus Christi College Cambridge manuscript to the early twelfth century, and hypothesized that three 'daughters of Deorman' were the offspring of one Deorman, 'an important Anglo-Saxon thane of William the Conqueror', and his unidentified Norman wife. Deorman (or Derman) of London was the tenant-in-chief of the *Domesday Book*, which documented the assets of William the Conqueror's English territories.

The *Ancrene Riwe*'s advocacy of chastity and enclosure resonates with the all-female communities in which Allen lived. After Bryn Mawr and Newnham, Allen shared a Chelsea house with Dorothy Ellis, a fellow anchorite-fancier, and their friend, the historian Joan Wake. Allen referred to their little triple as the 'Three Daughters of Deorman'. At a time when Charlotte Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain of St. Hugh's College were publishing papers which claimed that they saw the ghost of Marie Antoinette walking at Versailles in spiritualist journals, Hope Emily Allen was using the 'medium' of scholarship to establish contact with the prototypes for her own life-choices, with her medieval, mystical, ego-ideals.¹⁶ Her efforts to track down the records of the three recluses and to gain, as she puts it, 'an intimate and complete knowledge of both the domestic and the spiritual incidents' in their lives attests to her interest and investment in female achievement in a context which sets itself apart from marriage and sex.¹⁷

As President of Bryn Mawr, Carey Thomas had encouraged and inspired a group of individuals, the future scholars and doctors and lawyers of Allen's generation, to put off the exigencies of compulsory heterosexuality for as long as possible. She stated explicitly that one of her feminist goals was for more women to fall in love and take up house together, and devote themselves to their intellectual or political or artistic work. Her goals were not inconsistent with the acceptance and encouragement with which passionate same-sex relationships were viewed.¹⁸ Turn-of-the-century parents who were horrified by the thought of their daughters so much as waltzing with men sent their girls off to boarding school or college with stern injunctions against dating or any form of heterosexual fraternizing. Thus, Thomas and her Philadelphia Quaker set pursued intense friendships with each other, writing home to their mothers openly relating the joys of their latest 'smash' (their slang word for 'crush'), including hopping into bed in their flannel nightgowns for a rapturous reading of Swinburne. When Thomas, who regarded Swinburne as an essential component of courtship, wrote a triumphant letter from college, relating her success at an all-girl dinner party that she attended in a tuxedo, her mother (who was at the time lamenting the dwindling of her own passionate feelings for another Quaker matron) responded with a letter sternly forbidding a repeat performance. Mrs. Thomas's concern was not that her daughter was taking a male part with her girlfriends, but that nice Quaker girls from good Philadelphia families should not expose their legs (or limbs) like prostitutes.¹⁹

Parental rules about avoiding relations with men until marriage were, of course, bound up with the property value of their virginity, but marriage at this time (as it was in the Middle Ages) meant the reality of submission to a spouse, childbearing and other domestic demands, and, for wealthy girls, relinquishing to their husbands control over a sizeable fortune. For Allen, the prospect of marriage was, quite literally, a nightmare. She once wrote to Ellis, 'after your cable last night I had a nightmare ... you announced you were going to be married—I was in a torment to ask if a clergyman, but did not dare to ask questions! I feared in that case you would spend all your time on Sunday school and parish work!'²⁰ As a graduate student at Cambridge, Allen's real 'smash' appears to have been with an Anglo-Greek biologist named Marietta Pallis, who recorded their love in a poem that contains the following lines:²¹

I blew a kiss to the cherry
and the wind blew its petals to me:

with its delicate flakes I was whitened,
I loved, and the month was May.

Here the traditional elements of a medieval love-lyric—the May morning, the blossoms—are deployed in a celebration of female eroticism. Note, too, how the lyric 'I' is whitened by this love making, a suggestion of the chastity or purity often associated with love between women. Pallis adorns what Ben Jonson called 'chaste tribadry' and Queen Victoria called absolutely nothing at all, Pallis adorns her lyric with classic medieval images of purity and renewal that echo and reflect upon Allen's research on anchoritic spirituality.

Many Victorians and late nineteenth-century Americans considered sex an essentially male enterprise: phallic participation was required for a loving caress to become carnal knowledge. For Allen and for Thomas (who asserted, 'I have disliked gentlemen all my life') lesbianism continued long past graduation.²² However, the word 'lesbian' was not, at this point, commonly in use: Thomas's journals record her discovery of the term late in life, and a lengthy consideration of its applicability to her own experience.²³ And of course, at this time, many topics (like money, politics and religion, as well as sex) were considered inappropriate for polite conversation. As for sex, Thomas's mother wrote, 'naked female backs and thighs and knees are not subjects that ought to be discussed promiscuously.'²⁴ As a result, it is difficult to pin down precisely what kind of intimacy the women experienced together. Readers today encounter references to 'clasped hands and loving eyes and close kisses and admiration' and cannot help assuming that sex, or at least what we define as sex, is involved.²⁵ We may only speculate upon the specific acts that are referred to in the highly charged emotional economy of secrecy and disclosure that informed boarding-school and college smashes, or what exactly lies behind the joy of a shared passion for feminist activism or writing or scholarship or motivates a horror for the dynamics of heterosexual marriage. Although we ascribe sexuality a primary role in our own classifications of identity, it has not always occupied this central position. In any case, Hope Emily Allen would say that it is none of our business.

As much as her feminist commitment, Allen's unusual religious background explains her desire to reconstruct the women's community of the *Ancrene Riwe*. Writing in 1949 to C. T. Onions, who was at that time the editor of the Early English Text Society, Allen attributed the 'extra pleasure' that she derived from her research on the mystics to her 'fortunate background'.²⁶ She was referring to her childhood in the utopian religious community of the

Perfectionists, in Oneida, New York. Founded by John Humphrey Noyes in the 1840s, the Perfectionists opposed traditional social structures such as private property, marriage and the nuclear family. They practiced communal childrearing and what they called 'complex marriage', a doctrine that opposed monogamy, and considered all members of the community married to each other.²⁷ In their teens, young men and women were initiated into sex by their elders. Particular attention was paid to young men learning from older women the necessity to please their partners: they would be criticised in public if they didn't. The men also learned to practice *coitus reservatus*, a natural form of birth control, with the idea of women having the right to decide when they wanted to become pregnant. By 1880, however, many of these practices had been abolished, and Hope Emily Allen was born and raised in the decades following the community's return to traditional monogamy. Their successful businesses—including silverware (which the Oneida company manufactures to this day)—ensured a high level of prosperity for its members.

In an undated letter to her friend Joan Wake, Allen made explicit the ties between her religious background and her scholarly work: 'to me scholarship has always been sounding very individual—as religion would be'.²⁸ The Perfectionists' abolition of traditional social structures and binaries in order to construct a utopian community may have shaped Allen's scholarly interest in mysticism as well as anchoresses, while its historical advocacy of a woman's right to sexual choice may also have informed Allen's decision to spend her life in the company of women. We can also trace Allen's comfort with communalistic domestic structures—from Bryn Mawr to Newnham College to Cheyne Walk—to the practice of sharing wealth in the Oneida community. If Allen's 'fortunate background' opened her mind to alternative life choices, it also gave her the opportunity to pursue them. While choosing a life with women, often devoted to a shared vocation, was viewed by many with a kind of philosophical indulgence, money made this kind of life practically possible. A modest private income from Oneida gave Allen economic independence: she was proud that she was not in the position of having to seek either employment or a husband's support, and she was sorry when the 1929 stock market crash meant that she had to take up paid work, for a time, for the *Middle English Dictionary*.

Allen's scholarship refers frequently to the privileged background of the daughters of Deorman: as she remarked in a 1934 letter, 'there is scant hope of tracing our ladies unless they were heiresses'.²⁹ Allen's account of their decision to become anchoresses, rather than upper-class wives, could equally apply to

members of her own Bryn Mawr cohort who chose professions over marriage: 'they were of noble birth, and young, and their entrance into religion had occasioned a stir in the world'.³⁰ In her 1929 article, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', Allen writes admiringly of the royal patronage the women received for their spiritual work: 'it is against a background of worldly prominence that the author of the *Ancren Riwle*, writing to three nobly born recluses, sketches the temptations of the enclosed life, and this we can understand when we realise that in real life as in romances in the twelfth century kings and nobles visited holy anchorites and anchoresses'.³¹ This passage evokes the fictional world of Malory, drawing upon a quintessentially medieval image of knights visiting and paying homage to and supporting anchoresses. The life that Allen conjures for her anchoresses reinforces her own choices as well as the intellectual reasons behind them: with their bodies safely enclosed behind walls, the anchoresses have the opportunity to hold forth verbally. Covering their physical selves, literally blocking them up, gives them license to offer spiritual advice that would signify differently (or perhaps not at all) if the knights or kings were confronted with the physical presence of the women along with their words. This leaves the anchoresses free to bask in male attention and approval.

Masculine Investments

Hope Emily Allen constructed her own kind of twentieth-century anchorage, an insulated world of female friendship and feminist scholarship. However, as the image of the kings and knights visiting the anchoresses suggests, it is impossible to create a life untouched by gender politics. Although Allen shared her life with women, and, as her friends recall, 'read Jane Austen up to the end', she remained, nevertheless, deeply male-identified.³² After her death in 1960, one of her friends fondly recalled 'that time we three were staying at Newnham', where Allen was 'flitting around in her black beret and long black cape like the ghost of Erasmus'.³³ Allen was embracing a model of academic homosociality, to be sure, yet Erasmus's scholarly community rigidly excluded women.

Allen's *Ancren Riwle* scholarship manifests her investment in masculine approval: she describes how the three 'maidens' entertained rich and famous men (rather like Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas), and refers to the financial support they received from them: 'to take devout women under their protection was not an uncommon act'.³⁴ Moreover, Allen's interest in the *Ancren Riwle* was

motivated initially by her admiration for the 'master' who is (indisputably for her) the text's author.³⁵ Allen's editions of the work of Richard Rolle, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle* (1928) and *The English Writings of Richard Rolle* (1931), had given her the kind of professional status that led the Victoria and Albert to think of consulting Allen when they received the curious Butler-Bowdon manuscript. Her research won the Rose Mary Crawshay prize from the British Academy. The Bodleian Library papers contain congratulatory letters from the leading lights in medieval scholarship: Carleton Brown, executive secretary of the Modern Language Association and noted scholar of Middle English lyrics; G. G. Coulton, the Cambridge medieval historian; R. W. Chambers, Quain Professor of English Language and Literature at University College, London. Yet they also record her dismay when Sir Israel Gollancz, then the secretary of the British Academy, invited her to tea, and she learned that it was a prize only for women: 'Sir I then announced the prize, but told me to come to his house Sat.—then only by accident did I learn the prize was for women—a disappointment'. Allen's desire to have her work praised on its own terms, and not because it was written by a woman, trumped whatever recognition she may have had that the prize was intended to encourage and publicise the work of female scholars.

Another disappointment came in 1928, when J. R. R. Tolkien rejected her conclusions about the date of the *Ancrene Riwe*. In a 1928 article for *Essays and Studies*, Tolkien argued against Allen's dating of the manuscript on philological grounds, thus calling into question her association of it with the daughters of Deorman and Kilburn Priory. Tolkien proposed the later date for the manuscript that remains widely accepted among medievalists.³⁶ He complained that Allen's account of the reception of the text, its court connections, and its translation into Anglo-Norman for a noble audience, were too sentimental. Allen was cut to the quick. But her hurt was assuaged when, as she describes in a letter to R. W. Chambers, she received 'one of the nicest letters' from Tolkien, which made it clear that 'he did not mean anything personal against me ... I am much relieved to get rid of the sense of disapproval which I had suffered from'.³⁷

Allen's reaction to J. R. R. Tolkien's rejection of her work reveals how being in error, in a factual or intellectual sense, presented less of a problem to her than the loss of acceptance by her male colleagues. Her attachment to masculine models of scholarship in male-dominated academic hierarchies illustrates the extent to which the traditional equation between masculinity and power penetrated into a female-identified environment, its influence reaching those

spaces explicitly designed to exclude it. We may trace Allen's investments in masculinity in her short fiction, published in the twenties alongside the work of Gertrude Stein and Hart Crane, in high-profile magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Dial*. At the same time that she was pursuing her research on anchoresses, Allen was writing short stories that adopt the perspective of a male protagonist. Allen's women function as potentially tragic objects to be admired or, more frequently, pitied.

Like Stein, Henry James, and other members of that generation, Allen is interested in the complex cultural experiences of the American abroad. However, unlike their counterparts in Stein or James, Allen's Americans do not visit country houses or city *pied-à-terre*. Instead, they cross the Atlantic to visit the rustic, rural East Anglia of their ancestors. It comes complete with villagers speaking in heavy dialect, rendered phonetically (and with plenty of apostrophes) much in the manner of Mark Twain. At loose in the English countryside, earnest, upright American men encounter exotic East Anglian women, mysteriously harmed by sex and scandal. In 'The Fanciful Countryman', published in *The Dial*, Billie (note the feminine spelling) Appleyard falls in love with Emily Woods, and he resolves to take her back with him to America, nobly overlooking 'the black warks of the fam'la' that exclude Emily from courtship by the locals.³⁸ Yet Billie is also tempted by the even more humble Jennie, who uses all of her charms to persuade him to buy her a pair of gloves. In 'Ancient Grief', published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, John Williams visits the home of his grandmother, finding her to resemble closely the 'many squat brunette types' in the area: 'remnants, he was told, of a primitive race cut off by the fens'.³⁹ There he learns that she had been made pregnant by a 'gentleman parson' (182). Not wishing to confront the father, as she felt it would ruin his life, she sought refuge with another man in 'the New World' (186). John's attempts to probe the villagers for more details prompt him to make the following observation: 'some issues are too deep and delicate for any touching by a third party, however interested' (187). Identified, in the first story, with the fetishised glove, or with a diabolical black mark, female sexuality is imagined in these stories as impenetrably private, unattainable, and obscure.

Allen shifts the paradigm slightly in 'A Glut of Fruit', also published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Here, James Turner visits the East Anglian coast of his childhood with his American wife and daughter. Margie, James's daughter, falls in love with Myles, a young man living in brutal poverty. While the eventual success of Myles's suit parallels James's success at wooing his wife, as well as developing the theme of love-across-class-boundaries that appears to be a

favourite with Allen, it also prompts James to acknowledge that the years have passed. Allen writes: 'His wife looked haggard [. . .] up to now he had been able to pride himself on her looking more like Margie's sister than her mother'.⁴⁰ Allen's fiction reproduces traditional gender roles apparently without negative judgment. It reflects a value system that feminists of subsequent generations have critiqued, anatomised, and dismissed: the stereotypes of a youthful beauty and a haggard wife; the sense of threat a father feels from the interloper, his daughter's suitor; and the possibility of sexual activity shaming and harming a woman for life. Paradoxically, given her choice of male protagonists, Allen's stories reproduce the idea that there is an eternal feminine, an idea of Woman that is fundamentally different from, an inaccessible to, men.

Allen's entrenched attitudes to gender would seem to conflict with her commitments to the feminism of her day, to her career in a male-dominated field, and to her domestic life shared only with women. Her male protagonists suggest that a flight from the female, and, in particular, from female sexuality, was necessary for her to attain professional advancement. The Rose Mary Crawshay prize was earmarked for women. However, at that time, most women who achieved this level of scholarly achievement had placed themselves outside the commitments of marriage and childbearing. Many of Allen's generation acknowledged that the demands of the household (identified as 'female') and the opportunities of a professional life (identified as 'male') remained incompatible. Gertrude Stein, for example, came to the conclusion that very few women, such as herself, were actually capable of the accomplishments of great men. Although Stein praised to the skies the norms of feminine domesticity embodied by Alice B. Toklas, she nevertheless exempted herself from such activities.

Stein pursues her essentially anti-feminist position in *Fernhurst*, an early *roman à clef* that was later reworked in *The Making of Americans*. *Fernhurst*, the subtitle of which is *The History of Philip Redfern, A Student of the Nature of Woman*, is based on an event that occurred during Hope Allen's senior year at Bryn Mawr. Mamie Gwinn, who had been Carey Thomas's companion for years, left Carey for Arthur Hodder, a devastatingly handsome former student of William James and recent Bryn Mawr appointment.⁴¹ For years, Thomas had referred to Gwinn as her 'wife', and they had traveled together to graduate school in Germany and Switzerland. There was even a rumour that Gwinn, in the tradition of many long-suffering academic wives, had ghost-written Thomas's doctoral thesis. For Stein (herself a former student of William James, who attended Johns Hopkins Medical School thanks to Carey Thomas's efforts), their

breakup—a scandal, really—encapsulated the social problems created by the 'college woman ... conducting herself in all things as if there were no sex and mankind made all alike and traditional differences mere variations of dress and contour'.⁴² For Stein, the world is pushed out of balance, not by sexism, but by a 'doctrine of the superiority of women' (6), bolstered by a combination of progressive Quaker politics and Victorian morality.

Stein argues that women's moral, professional and intellectual powers produce confusion when they are allowed to develop unchecked by male authority. Each of Stein's female characters has a weakness in her character: Nancy, the wife of Mr. Redfern (i.e. Arthur Hodder) is an unthinking conservative; Miss Thornton (based on Carey Thomas) is aggressive and insensitive; and the dreamy and inspirational Miss Bruce (Mamie Gwinn) is out-of-touch with reality. The women defuse the masculine energies of Redfern, and produce serious trouble for themselves. Yet for Stein, Arthur Hodder and his exploits supply the material, not for lesbian tragedy à la Radcliffe Hall, but for stern social critique. Rather than 'persisting to the end in the belief that their power was as a man's', Stein instead pleads with the 'new woman' to 'relearn the fundamental facts of sex' (4). For Stein, the male mandate to conquer and to possess must prevail, and 'the great mass of the world's women should content themselves with attaining to womanhood' (5). Her point made, Stein gives the story a happy ending: Miss Bruce eventually sends Mr Redfern back to his stolid Midwestern wife and returns to her true soulmate, Miss Thornton. If only life had mirrored art: Arthur Hodder's early death prompted Mamie Gwinn to lose herself in spiritualism and seances. Carey Thomas consoled herself by taking up with Mary Garret, a woman with the same initials as her former lover.

Yours ever, Gunhilda

Allen, like her elusive anchoresses, inhabited a 'female world of love and ritual'.⁴³ In their respective periods, they established for themselves a mode of living that cushioned them from being hurt or even touched by the more unpleasant aspects of heterosexuality and gender difference. Allen's little utopia blended easily with the same-sex friendships sanctioned by her society, while the medieval anchoresses inhabited a world in which sex was suspect—at best, a necessary evil, and something to get out of if at all possible. However, as Allen's short fiction and Gertrude Stein's *Fernhurst* attest, it is one thing to live away from

men, and another thing to succeed in avoiding masculinity altogether. Their fictional treatments of love and desire not only handle heterosexual relationships, but adopt a male perspective and even sanction traditional gender roles, producing a strangely anti-feminist aspect to their feminism.

Ultimately, the publication of *The Book of Margery Kempe* brought Hope Emily Allen neither the satisfaction of professional kudos nor the pleasures of transhistorical feminist community-building. As John Hirsh explains in *Hope Emily Allen, Medieval Scholarship and Feminism*, Allen lost control over the EETS edition to Sanford Brown Meech, a Harvard graduate recently appointed at the University of Michigan, whom she hired to transcribe the manuscript after confirming her role as editor for the EETS edition. In a letter to Robin Flower (then the general editor of EETS), Allen describes Meech as 'a very energetic worker'.⁴⁴ He took the transcription job because he had a young family to support. Subsequent letters that insist 'the paleography is not my job', and describe Meech's projected introduction as a 'secular annotation', reinforce Allen's view of Meech as a subordinate.⁴⁵ Employing Meech to do the work she didn't want to do left Allen free to chase anchoresses (which she still considered her real work), and to produce a kind of key to medieval mysticism that would contextualise Margery within the tradition of medieval women's spirituality: 'a general synthesis, using my materials and ideas on medieval literary history, of many years'.⁴⁶

However, almost as soon as he started working for her, Meech began to undermine Allen's authority as editor by working and communicating directly with Colonel Butler-Bowdon. Allen concedes, in a 1936 letter to Mabel Day of EETS, that her overzealousness might have alienated the colonel:⁴⁷

I did irritate the owner during the last part of my cooperating with him over his modern edition—after I had turned it back to him, and was very worried, not only about its accuracy, but also about his possibly—not realizing what this meant—forestalling your edition. The owner took Mr. Meech into his confidence about his irritations.

Eventually, in a move for which, as Hirsh observes, he would have never had the nerve if Allen had been a man, Meech had himself named co-editor, and was given leave by Robin Flower, then the general editor of EETS, to write the extensive philological introduction. Thus, the 1940 edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* presents Meech's introduction first. Allen's short prefatory note

comes second. Meech's success with the EETS edition places male bonding in conflict with class prerogative. Whereas Allen was operating within the codes of amateurism and gentility that served scholars in the nineteenth century, Sanford Meech was a young academic on the make—Allen noted with horror that he sported a Phi Beta Kappa key—his mode of behaviour anticipating current conceptualisations of literary studies as a profession.⁴⁸

If Allen was not, as she was beginning to discover, one of the boys, her response was to refuse to allow Margery to become one of the girls. In the late 1930s, when she was composing her prefatory notes to the EETS edition, Allen had sought to place Margery, whom she considered to be a 'very creative type of person', firmly in the tradition of what she called the 'notable women writers of the Middle Ages' such as Hroswitha of Gandesheim, Hildegard of Bingen, and Elizabeth of Hungary.⁴⁹ However, Allen changed her tune. In the addendum to her prefatory notes, dated 1940, Allen recasts Margery as a 'hysteric' (lxv), defining hysteria as 'a mental disease consisting chiefly in an exaggeration of suggestibility' (lxv). Where Allen once found Margery 'original' (lxii), 'visionary' (lxii), 'endowed with the spiritual graces' (lxi) and, best of all, 'egotistical' (lv), she now views Margery as 'neurotic, vain, illiterate, physically and nervously overstrained' (lxiv), a victim of 'constitutional deficiencies' and 'shattered health' (lxv). Abandoning her previous claims for Margery's unique relationship to an inherited tradition, Allen now insists that Margery's spirituality merely 'reflected back' what she was 'incapable of making her own'.

Allen's change of heart reflects a painful process of disavowal, transferring onto Margery her own experience of exclusion on the basis of gender. Of course, Margery Kempe is a highly complicated figure. Intensely emotional, irrepressible, obnoxiously self-absorbed, she is a character that many people, throughout her life, seemed to love to hate. Nevertheless, Allen had originally sought to include Margery within the all-female spiritual community that she was constructing in her work on medieval anchorites. However, the publication of Colonel Butler-Bowdon's modernised edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* in 1936 had prompted a wave of male reviewers to describe Margery with reference to the psychoanalytic terminology of the day: 'a supreme egotist'; 'unhinged'; her actions 'manifestations of the same sex aberration'.⁵⁰ Using a term that unwittingly looks forward to readings of Margery Kempe by Robert Gluck and Carolyn Dinshaw, Dean Inge of *The Evening Standard* dubbed her 'certainly queer, even in a queer age'.⁵¹ Father H. Thurston, S. J., who wrote for Catholic periodicals such as *The Month* and *The Tablet*, and who had 'long experience of psychological types like

Margery', asserted 'that Margery was a victim of hysteria can hardly be open to doubt'.⁵² Critiquing Margery's 'terrible hysteria and exaltée piety', complaining about her emotionalism and bad manners, and insisting, 'the hysterical temperament is revealed in every page of the narrative portions', Thurston diagnoses Margery as a classic hysteric.

Rather than defending Margery from these reviewers, Allen's addendum instead defers to their 'expert judgment'. Her change in attitude enshrines hysteria as the key term in the reception of Margery Kempe, who has been diagnosed with everything from post-partum depression to conversion hysteria.⁵³ Although Allen does not locate hysteria as an illness of the womb (in the tradition of Janet and Charcot), she nevertheless uses its stereotypical connotations to diminish her appraisal of Margery. Hysteria was traditionally perceived as symptomatic of women's biological incapacity to think abstractly, argue dispassionately, or make lasting cultural contributions: an excess, as it were, of an innately inferior femininity. Thus, for Allen, Kempe's text is no longer the work of an original thinker, but evidence of a psychological pathology. Mimicking, rather than contributing to, the tradition of mystical writings, Kempe's text is interesting now only for the 'clues' to her condition that are 'dropped' in the 'most tedious and repetitious parts of her book' (lxvi). Now the object of psychoanalytic investigation, her spiritual insights are transformed into a clinical testimonial out from which an accredited professional can establish a definitive diagnosis.

By 1940, however, hysteria had been reformulated. Sigmund Freud's revisionist work on hysteria had changed the field of psychoanalysis at the turn of the century. His 'A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria' was translated into English and published in 1909; 'Dora' appeared in English in 1924.⁵⁴ For Freud, hysteria was the damming up of emotional and sexual responses to a damning social order. Tormented by the conflict between the presence of her physical desires and the negations of a moralistic culture that would deny their existence, the Freudian hysteric exhibits physiological symptoms that indicate her psychological defence against a sexual longing that is at once fascinating and terrifying. Like Margery, Freudian hysterics often suffered from an experience of sexual abuse that they interpreted as a personal fault. Their hysteria was the affliction of a life that had been circumscribed by their psychological and economic dependence on fathers and husbands, and it signaled their unwillingness to accept the female roles that had been thrust upon them.

Feminist appropriations of hysteria in the wake of Freud, such as Hélène Cixous's celebratory self-identification with Freud's Dora in *Le rire de la Méduse*,

provide a congenial point of entry into *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Cixous even writes, 'you'll splutter I'm a mystic').⁵⁵ There is a Medusa-like intensity in Margery's mystical excesses: her irrepressible tears, frank sexuality, and fascination with the morbid details of Christ's suffering exemplify Cixous's manifesto for the literary transcendence of phallocentrism by writing through the body. In fact, Margery Kempe of Lynn has a great deal more in common with Freudian hysterics such as Dora, who, like Kempe, came from a middle-class family in a 'remote provincial town', than with Anglo-Norman heiresses (or expatriate American medievalists). Moreover, as David Aers observes, 'Margery's religious identity involved a *rupture* with the earthly family, an energetic struggle *against* the nuclear family, its bonds, its defenses in the lay community, and its legitimating ideologies'.⁵⁶

Margery's mystic method is entrenched in the feminine. She focuses upon the most domestic aspects of birthing, caring and nurturing associated with the Virgin, while her lachrymosity and melancholia take their cues from the mournful attitudes of the Madonna. Her devotion to the Holy Family, moreover, reproduces in an idealised form the aspects of the traditional household that she abandoned for Christ, while her intense love for Christ is powerfully overlaid with heterosexual metaphors.⁵⁷ Yet if Margery's dramas of self-denial are rooted in what Freud would call the family romance, her devotional practice also reflects her ambition to catapult outside these restrictions, and to enjoy a completely unique place in the heart and mind of Christ. Margery was a tireless self-promoter. Her spiritual aspirations seem consistent with the successes she enjoyed, prior to her religious awakening, in the brewing business. The very existence of her manuscript, composed by a series of amanuenses whom she had to persuade to listen to her and copy down her words, is a testament to her singular ambition. Defying her status as wife and mother by donning the white robes that signify virginity, Margery sought not simply to reject but to transcend gender binaries. Margery's dogged opposition to the male representatives of ecclesiastical authority, and her cherishing of the feminine aspects of Christ's wounded vulnerability, constitute a highly physical (even combative) and performative mysticism that starkly polarises opposites as a means of blasting them apart.⁵⁸

Although Hope Emily Allen's use of the term 'hysteria' opened the door for Freudian hysteria (and its discontents) to offer contemporary readers a congenial paradigm to make sense of Margery's theories and practice, she originally used the term to distance herself from Margery. Her account of Margery's

psychological condition invokes earlier formulations of hysteria, despite a familiarity with Freud. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many of the leading lights of the Cambridge intelligentsia, such as the botanist A.G. Tansley, the maths prodigy Frank Ramsay, and the psychologist Lionel Sharples Penrose, were either undergoing analysis or considering it, discussing it with their friends, travelling to Vienna in secret, or trying very hard to avoid it altogether.⁵⁹ Even if Allen had managed somehow not to encounter Freud at Cambridge, by 1940 he was ubiquitous in the educated London circles in which Allen travelled. Leonard Woolf started publishing James Strachey's translations of Freud at the Hogarth Press in 1924, and psychoanalysis fast became a fashionable subject for dinner conversation as well as scholarly investigation. A letter Allen wrote to the medieval scholar Mabel Day, outlining her plans for a general study of English mysticism, makes it clear that she knew Freud: 'I had thot of putting together the salient features [of Margery Kempe's relationship to a mystical tradition] in a series of preliminary excurses—taking the background up to c. 1400, when the whole picture, as I now realize, changes for English mysticism (what was once mysticism drops into being considered mere conventional devotion of the more intense sort. The change is something like psychology before and after Freud)'.⁶⁰

Allen may have intuited the fruitful coexistence of Freudian hysteria, mysticism and feminism in her private correspondence, but her published work on Margery Kempe resists it. Instead, hysteria signals her frustration with Margery, who is difficult to imagine as one of the daughters of Deorman (however fanciful they turned out to be). It also constitutes a projection of her experience of professional humiliation directly onto the subject of her scholarly investigation, in order to detach herself from a situation that was causing her emotional pain. Despite the intensity of her will to succeed in terms that were not circumscribed by gender prejudice, it appears that Allen was defeated by Meech because she was a woman. Like Freud's hysterical analysande, who 'pressed her dress up against her body with one hand (as the woman), while she tried to tear it off with the other (as the man)', Allen was simultaneously supported in her feminist work and ambitions and suppressed by male privilege: a form of entitlement she wished for herself.⁶¹ Hence, Allen's note and her addendum produce the scholarly equivalent to the repressions of Freudian hysteria. They describe her initial excitement, which, she says, 'swelled my notes far beyond expectation' (lxi-ii) such that their publication had to be 'postponed' to a separate volume. As the scope of her projected study increased, her relations with Meech and Butler-Bowdon deteriorated, and Allen's contribution dwindled to mere 'notes', reflecting

her internalization of traditional models of gender difference and acceptance of the diagnosis of a coterie of male professionals. The pleasure of finding a place for Margery and for herself as a scholar is thus transformed into the agony of thwarted desire.

Allen had every intention of completing her study of the international feminist mystic community, which would include the material from the projected separate volume on Margery Kempe for EETS. But her Casaubon-like project was never completed.⁶² Of course, the outside world did much to interfere: the manuscript was identified at the time of the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and the tensions between Allen and Meech were coming to a head just as World War II was being declared. Allen reluctantly returned to Oneida in 1939, writing to Joan Wake, 'thank God every drop of blood in my body is English'.⁶³ A volume which made a strong argument for the influence of continental and especially German mystics on English spirituality could not have felt terribly congenial in wartime.⁶⁴ One senses, however, that a loss of heart really informs Allen's abandonment of the volume. Allen had found in her anchoresses a prototype for her own life-choices, rejecting marriage and childbirth for higher learning. The international feminist community of mystics that she sought to reconstruct offered a medieval analogue to the alternatives that activists such as Carey Thomas had opened up as a means of altering the limiting circumstances in the lives of women. But life changed with the war. After Allen returned to America, she perpetually postponed and, ultimately, abandoned her work on Margery, while her friends put aside their own scholarly ambitions to support the war effort. As Joan Wake wrote to Dorothy Ellis: 'I think it is a fall from grace that one of the three daughters of Deormann should be see of Hosp. Supp. Dep. [an overseer of the Hospital Supply Department, where women worked rolling bandages and other medical supplies for the war effort] wh. [when] so many can do + only the very elect can do the Religious Houses of Cambs [Cambridgeshire] ... Love to you both—Yrs ever [. . .] (was it?) Gunhilda?'⁶⁵

Hope Emily Allen and Margery Kempe were forced apart; yet they could be reunited. The historical, cultural and personal circumstances that surround Hope Emily Allen's identification of the Margery Kempe manuscript reveal a female, as well as explicitly feminist, version of the kind of idiosyncratic, individualistic and politically motivated literary-historical scholarship that has come to dominate the field of literary studies in the wake of the New Historicism. In her work on the so-called 'Daughters of Deorman', Allen had sought out medieval paradigms for her own life-choices, and forged a relationship between

the ideals of medieval epic and romance and the strictures of medieval religious practice, and her contemporary world. By contrast, her work on Margery Kempe opened the door (albeit unwittingly) to the forms of religious, social and sexual disobedience that inspire literary studies today.

This key moment in the reception of Margery Kempe sheds light upon the evolution, throughout the twentieth century, of a feminist literary canon and literary theories. It also allows us to historicise the significant role played by psychoanalytic theory in medieval studies, as scholars continue to debate the respective merits of historicist scholarship and psychoanalytic interpretation.⁶⁶ This debate highlights the impossibility of unmediated access to the past, despite the powerful attraction of 'the medieval' and the challenge of cracking its codes, while, at the same time, drawing attention to the cultural specificity of psychoanalysis itself, with its roots in modern bourgeois European culture. Although Allen did not give Margery the benefit of being a Freudian hysteric, open to future reinterpretation and celebration, the history of her relationship with *The Book of Margery Kempe* reminds us that when we are speaking with the dead, we are also negotiating with ourselves.

NOTES

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² See Hilton Kelliher, 'The Rediscovery of Margery Kempe: a Footnote', *British Library Journal*, 23 (1997), 259-63.

³ See, on religion and politics, Sarah Beckwith, 'A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 34-57 and David Aers, 'The Making of Margery Kempe: Individual and Community', in his *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing, 1360-1430* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 73-116; and, on gender, Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1991) and Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁴ See especially Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, but also Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) as well as *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003). On the ideological underpinnings of various constructions of the Middle Ages see Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁵ See, for example, Marjorie Perloff, *The Vienna Paradox* (New York: New Directions, 2004); Alice Kaplan, *French Lessons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). On the intersection between scholarship and biography (or autobiography), see Michelle R. Warren, "'Au commencement était l'île": the colonial formation of Joseph Bédier's *Chanson de Roland*", in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* ed. by Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 205-226.

⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 116. March 12, 1949.

⁷ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech, with a prefatory note by Hope Emily Allen, EETS o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. lix.

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⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

⁹ John C. Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen. Medieval Scholarship and Feminism* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1988). This indispensable book is the source for much of my biographical information on Hope Emily Allen.

¹⁰ See Allen's addendum to her prefatory note in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech, p. lxxv.

¹¹ See Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *The Power and Passion of M. Carey Thomas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp. 198 and 385.

¹² Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 35.

¹³ Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 35.

¹⁴ On the political implications of German philology, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "'Un souffle d'Allemagne ayant passé': Friedrich Diez, Gaston Paris, and the Genesis of National Philologies', *Romance Philology*, 40 (1986), 1-37.

¹⁵ See Hope Emily Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwele*', *PMLA*, 33 (1918), 474-546; 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwele*', *PMLA*, 44 (1929), 635-80 and 'The Three Daughters of Deorman', *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 899-902.

¹⁶ Terry Castle, 'The Marie Antoinette Obsession', *Representations*, 38 (1992), 1-38.

¹⁷ See Allen, 'On the Author', p. 639.

¹⁸ Martha Vicinus, 'Distance and Desire: English Boarding-School Friendships', *Signs*, 9 (1984), 600-622.

¹⁹ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 68.

²⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 45. February 21, 1956.

²¹ See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 28.

²² See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 66.

²³ For discussions of the term 'lesbian' and its history see (among others) Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. by Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 13-31; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

²⁴ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 127.

²⁵ See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 86.

²⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 116. March 12, 1949. In the 1920s, Allen corresponded with George Bernard Shaw, who was interested in socialist experiment, about the Oneida Community, and offered a strong defence of the community and its ideals.

²⁷ On the Oneida community, see Maren Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1969) and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia. Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

²⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 93. Undated.

²⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 37. January 25, 1934.

³⁰ See Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 476.

³¹ See Allen, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 646.

³² See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 57.

³³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.484, fol. 57. July 8, 1960.

³⁴ See Allen, 'The Origin of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 474, and 'The Three Daughters of Deorman', p. 902.

³⁵ See Allen, 'On the Author of the *Ancren Riwle*', p. 637.

³⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meidhad*', *Essays and Studies*, 14 (1928), 104-26.

³⁷ See Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, p. 107.

³⁸ See Allen, 'The Fanciful Countryman', *The Dial*, 83 (December 1923), 477-500 (p. 479).

³⁹ Hope Emily Allen, 'Ancient Grief', *Atlantic Monthly*, 131 (February 1923), 177-87 (p. 180).

⁴⁰ Hope Emily Allen, 'A Glut of Fruit', *Atlantic Monthly*, 132 (September 1923), 343-52 (p. 351).

⁴¹ Thomas despised what she considered Hodder's 'medieval' notions about women. Perhaps his attitude recalled her own experience of discrimination as a graduate student in medieval philology. See Horowitz, *The Power and Passion*, p. 303.

⁴² Gertrude Stein, *Fernhurst, Q.E.D. and Other Early Writings* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 5.

⁴³ Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The female world of love and ritual: relations between women in nineteenth-century America', *Signs*, 1 (1975), 1-29.

⁴⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 2. October 22, 1934.

⁴⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 4. January 15, 1935.

⁴⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 56. Undated.

⁴⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 22. June 19, 1936.

⁴⁸ Hope Allen was not very circumspect about her class prejudice. As she wrote to Dorothy Ellis following a transatlantic voyage back to America in 1937: 'I was put with ex-melting pot at noon—ship full of Americanised persons from another world and stratum. At my table they compared notes on returning after 27, 21, 43 years! Quite interesting, but I couldn't stand the association for a week, so dashed to the agent, who was still on board ... Tonight I have been put at a table of women who at least can say something such as one is used to hearing'. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 93. December 31, 1937.

⁴⁹ See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech and Allen, pp. lviii and lix.

⁵⁰ Reverend Sir John R. O'Connell, 'Mistress Margery Kempe of Lynn', *The Downside Review*, 55 (1937), 174-82 (p. 176), and Thomas Coleman, review of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 162 (1937), 498-502 (p. 499).

⁵¹ Quoted in George Burns, 'Margery Kempe Reviewed', *The Month*, 171 (1938), 238-44 (p. 238). It is important to note, however, that other reviewers found Margery to be quite charming: Sir John Squire in the *Daily Telegraph* described her as 'a born story-teller with a genius for writing', while H. B. Charlton sets Margery apart from female stereotypes when he praises the text in the following terms: 'there are few domesticities ... and few mundanities' (quoted in Burns, 'Margery Kempe Reviewed', p. 238).

⁵² Herbert Thurston, 'Margery the Astonishing', *The Month*, 168 (1936), 446-56 (p. 456).

⁵³ See Hope Phyllis Weissman, 'Margery Kempe in Jerusalem: *Hysterica Compassio* in the Late Middle Ages', in *Acts of Interpretation: The Text in Its Contexts 700-1600. Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Literature in Honor of E. Talbot Donaldson*, ed. by Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. 201-17 and William Ober, 'Margery Kempe: Hysteria and Mysticism Reconciled', *Literature and Medicine*, 4 (1985), 24-40.

⁵⁴ Freud's *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses* was first issued in English translation in 1909; his *Collected Papers*, edited by James Strachey (including *Dora*) was published by the Hogarth Press in 1924.

⁵⁵ Hélène Cixous, 'Le rire de la Médus', *L'Arc*, 61: 39-54; 'The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1 (1976), 875-893.

⁵⁶ See Aers, 'The Making of Margery Kempe', p. 99.

⁵⁷ However, Margery's love for Christ provides the inspiration for Robert Gluck's novel, *Margery Kempe* (New York: High Risk Books, 1994), about the sexual passions of a gay male protagonist.

⁵⁸ As Barry Windeatt writes, most eloquently, Margery Kempe 'ignores the dualistic exclusions of traditionally male interpretations of the spiritual life, in which the flesh and the world can only be left behind. In this she could seem unnervingly radical and intrepid, needing all her indomitable spirit to face the misunderstanding and slander that followed her in life. Through a transvaluation of the sexual and social roles into which she was cast by birth and marriage, Margery Kempe claims her own spiritual path as a woman and has bequeathed—more lifelike than a book of visions and more eloquent—her moments of being, her 'felyngys and revalacyons and the forme of her levyng'. See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry A. Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 30-1.

⁵⁹ See John Forrester with Laura Cameron, 'Tansley's psychoanalytic network: An episode out of the early history of psychoanalysis in England', *Psychoanalysis and History*, 2

(2000), 189-256, and John Forrester's 'Freud in Cambridge', Inaugural Lecture for the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge (9 May, 2002).

⁶⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. c.212, fol. 93. January 28, 1947.

⁶¹ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Freud on Women. A Reader* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 152.

⁶² Of course, as an independent scholar, Allen had no outside pressure to complete her work. As she wrote to Mabel Day, her editor at EETS, 'I feel that the work is of enough importance so that you will want to print it when I get it as I want it to be. I don't want to send it till it suits me and till the copy is relatively final. The delay is not due to divagations but to lack of nervous force': Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Misc. 212, fol. 47, April 6, 1944. In 1947, she admits 'it is all too complicated to pass on as it is', (fol. 93, January, 1947), and as late as 1949 she describes herself as 'browsing but not composing' (fol. 118, March, 1949).

⁶³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 101. Undated, 1939.

⁶⁴ Although Allen made precisely the opposite argument in a letter written that same year, when she was still feeling optimistic about her role in the edition: 'I feel that the German hysteria disclosed makes it somewhat timely under the circumstances. It is so just the same—wrong-headed, sentimental, even when in some way virtuous': Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Letters d.217, fol. 99. Undated, 1939.

⁶⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Engl. Misc. c.484, fol. 51. April 10, 1940.

⁶⁶ See Louse O. Fradenburg, 'We Are Not Alone: Psychoanalytic Medievalism', *New Medieval Literatures*, 2 (1998), 249-276; Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism*; Lee Patterson, 'Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch: Psyche and Clio in Medieval Literary Studies', *Speculum*, 76 (2001), 638-80.

The Question of Traditional English Dialect Boundaries

Monika Wegmann

One of the primary objectives of dialect geography has always been the division of language in space, thus the determination of regionally distributed forms and dialect areas, and the establishment of boundaries between such areas. The traditional method of defining dialect areas is based on the drawing of dividing lines, the so-called isoglosses, which form the basis for the clearly defined boundary lines drawn by traditional dialectologists. The use of such dialect boundaries in traditional dialectology has given rise to much controversy, mainly in the United States, where Lawrence Davis and Charles Houck have raised the question of what factors influence the determination of dialect.¹ They have come to the conclusion that both the selection of dialect items and the method of analysis are decisive. By using quantitative methods—which are not the subject of this paper—they demonstrate that there is no clearly defined Midland dialect area in the United States, as, for example, Hans Kurath has it, but rather a transition area from the North to the South.² By using a different statistical method and another set of data, Timothy Frazer on the other hand, finds enough similarity to argue against Davis and Houck and therefore for a Midland dialect area.³

This paper will focus on traditional dialect geography in England, rather than the situation in the United States. Discussions in English dialectology have not been as heated as they are in the United States, in spite of the fact that British materials call for critical examination, as Davis, Houck, and Clive Upton demonstrate.⁴ In analogy with their work in the United States, Davis and Houck together with Upton reviewed the various attempts at mapping dialects in England and they have challenged the accepted notion of dialect boundaries. Their aim was to examine the concept of dialect area by using computational analysis; computational maps, unlike traditional ones, are based on large amounts of data,

which suggests that they should be more objective. The idea of Davis, Houck, and Upton hence was that, provided their computational analysis revealed tendencies which reconfirmed the dialect areas represented on traditional maps, there was some justification to draw such areas. However, the first indication of the dialect situation in England being more complicated than one may expect when looking at traditional dialect maps was the difficulty experienced by Davis, Houck, and Upton in generating meaningful computational analysis: 'the data revealed unmanageable variation, so we were forced to accept the fact that any computational analysis would not reveal central tendencies'.⁵ This disillusioning statement is crucial to English dialectology, because it disturbs the convenient idea of clearly defined dialect boundaries given to us in linguistics textbooks and encyclopaedias alike.⁶

Peter Trudgill's maps of the dialect areas of England are the ones best known and most frequently reproduced. For this reason, it is important to note Davis, Houck, and Upton's point that Trudgill's classification of English dialect areas 'like earlier claims about English dialect boundaries [. . .] rests on Trudgill's selection of items to represent his regions'.⁷ I will analyze Trudgill's method of constructing his map of traditional dialect areas in detail, paying particular attention to the East and the South-East of England, and thus take up the question of drawing dialect boundaries. It will be seen that boundary lines are not natural, but merely constructions of dialect geographers and non-linguists alike. It has long been noted how deep-rooted the idea of well-defined, clear-cut dialect areas is in people's minds, and maps like Trudgill's corroborate such ideas.⁸ Therefore, the questions of how objective dialect boundaries can be and what exactly they represent need to be reconsidered.

The following discussion will be structured by four main points. The first of these is the absence of clearly defined dialect boundaries in the East and South-East of England. The second is the ease with which one can find evidence and methods which yield the boundary lines one wants to draw. Third, I argue that items and features to be mapped should be chosen randomly for synchronic studies, and, fourth, that all levels of language—syntactic, morphological, phonological, and lexical—should be taken into account when attempting to draw dialect boundaries. On the basis of these four points, I will reveal what is hidden by clearly defined dialect boundaries and what is problematic about Kurath's suggestion that 'in working out the areal structure, only items exhibiting fairly clear-cut dissemination patterns are taken into consideration'.⁹ According to Kurath's traditional mapping technique, a dialectologist should have an idea of

how his or her map will look before s/he starts drawing the dialect boundaries so that the particular items can be selected which yield what I will call predetermined dialect boundaries. Kurath says that 'such choices are usually made by men who have more or less extensive information of one kind or another about the behavior of other heteroglosses [meaning isoglosses in this context]'.¹⁰ However, what criteria (whether linguistic and/or extra-linguistic) exactly underlie a predetermined pattern is not explained by Kurath. The conclusion that Kurath's method generally permits a subjective or individual choice of items or features therefore appears to be justified. Moreover, Kurath's method reveals that he must have believed in clearly defined dialect boundaries, since otherwise he would not have suggested a procedure of item selection which cannot produce anything but 'clear-cut dissemination patterns'. Trudgill's map of the traditional dialect areas in England serves as an example of a dialect map drawn in Kurath's tradition. Since this map is widely-known, I will take it as the starting point for the development of my ideas aiming at a more objective method of data selection and cartographic reproduction. As will be seen, more objectivity can be reached by random selection of items and features and by considering all four levels of language; however, I will demonstrate that objectivity can only be achieved at the cost of easily readable maps.

The material used for the present investigation comes from three sources, the first of which is René Kontic's *Dialects in East-Anglia and the South-East of England*; my basic map, which I used for all the maps presented in this paper, has been adapted from this doctoral dissertation.¹¹ The *Linguistic Atlas of England* (henceforth *LAE*) served as my second source.¹² It is a secondary study containing interpretive maps which are based on materials of the *Survey of English Dialects* (henceforth *SED*).¹³ The advantage of using exclusively *LAE* maps for this investigation is that several factors which influence the cartographic representation of dialects can be kept constant. For example, *SED* data were obtained exclusively from NORMs (non-mobile, older, rural males), so the social factor remains constant. The introductory Map 1—showing the East and the South-East of Trudgill's traditional dialect areas of England—has been adapted from my third source, which is Trudgill's *The Dialects of England*.¹⁴



Map 1: Traditional dialect areas in the East and the South-East of England according to Trudgill

South:

Central: Eastern Central: [South Yorkshire]
[Lincolnshire]
[Leicestershire]

Southern: Western: [Western Southwest]
Eastern Southwest
Southeast

Eastern: Central East
Eastern Counties

The heavy bold line is a major division separating the Central area north of the line from the Southern area south of it. Furthermore, the heavy bold line together with the medium bold lines divide our map into the Eastern Central area, the Eastern area, and the Western area. Within these three areas, there are subdivisions indicated both by broken lines and dotted lines. In the Eastern area, e.g., the broken line separates the Central East from the Eastern Counties, and the Western area is cut into the Eastern Southwest and the Southeast by one of the broken lines. Note that the areas in square brackets are not labelled on Map 1, but the broken lines delimit their geographical location.¹⁵ The dotted lines finally show even further subdivisions.

The different shapes of the lines indicate that obviously each dialect boundary is not equally important, but Trudgill does not explain explicitly how he determined the importance of his lines. It is therefore unclear according to which criteria certain lines delimit major divisions and others subdivisions only. The locality dots must not be taken as points of reference, since I adopted Trudgill's lines and drew them on my basic map, which comes from Kontic (i.e. the map with the locality dots is not Trudgill's, but I transferred his boundary lines onto my basic map). Consequently, the boundaries on Map 1 are only approximate compared with the locality dots, which are missing on Trudgill's map.

Trudgill delimited the traditional dialect areas of England by mapping eight specially chosen items. These items and features are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Trudgill's eight items/features used to determine his traditional dialect boundaries in England, and the substitutes for four out of his eight items.¹⁶

Item		Feature	
Trudgill	Substitute	Older form	Newer form
<i>arm</i>	<i>butter</i>	/r/	/r/-dropping
<i>bat</i>	<i>man</i>	[a]	[&]
<i>blind</i>	--	[I]	[aI]
<i>hill</i>	<i>hearse</i>	/h/	/h/-dropping
<i>land</i>	<i>man</i>	[&]	[Q]
<i>seven</i>	--	[s]	[z]
(<i>long</i>)	(--)	([&])	([Q])
(<i>night</i>)	(--)	([i;])	([aI])

According to Trudgill, these items were taken in part from *SED* (*arm, bat, blind, land, seven, night*) while the other two items (*hill, long*) come from a source Trudgill does not specify.¹⁷ The items in Table 1 illustrate particular, well-known phonological features, six of which yield isoglosses in my area of investigation; they therefore deserve some consideration. The two features in parentheses do not concern the area under consideration here.

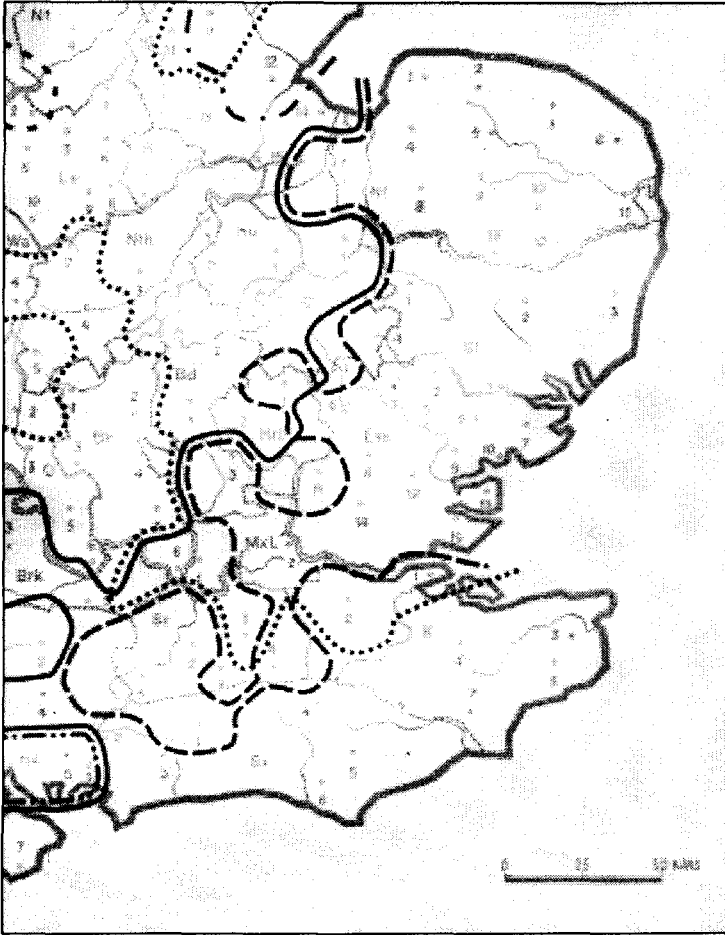
The first feature refers to the loss of rhoticity before a consonant or pause in words like *arm* and *butter*. The second feature is the so-called short *a*, which is pronounced either [a] or [æ] in most traditional English dialects. The two examples in Table 1 are *bat* and *man*. The third feature represents what can be called lengthening of short vowels before certain consonant clusters. Trudgill's example deals with the lengthening and diphthongization of the high front unrounded vowel /i/ before the consonant cluster /-nd/ in words like *blind*. This gives us [aɪ] in certain English dialects, and in others, where the lengthening and diphthongization did not take place, we still have [I]. Feature four is called /h/-dropping. /h/ can only occur at the beginning of words as in the two examples in Table 1, *hill* and *hearse*, or at the beginning of a stressed syllable, as in *behind*. Many dialects do not exhibit *h*, so our examples would be pronounced [ɪɪ] and [3;s]. Feature five represents the change of short *a*, pronounced [æ] to short *o* pronounced [Q] in front of /n/. The two examples listed in Table 1 are *land* and *man*. Feature six represents /s/ and two other voiceless fricatives, /f/ and /ʃ/, becoming voiced initially in words like *seven* pronounced either [ˈsevn] or [ˈzevn].

What is most striking about Map 1 is that Trudgill says that the boundaries on it are produced by the isoglosses yielded by the items or features discussed above.¹⁸ He drew a separate map for each of the eight items or features and finally explained that 'if we combine maps 1-8 into a composite map, this gives us the picture we present here in map 9 [Trudgill's composite map from which my Map 1 has been adapted].¹⁹ Accordingly, Trudgill equated each isogloss produced by the single items or features with a dialect boundary, a method frequently used in European dialectology. Edgar Schneider states:

Isoglosses are most prominent and receive their greatest weighting when they function as so-called 'selective indicators', i.e. when the course of a single isogloss, selected specifically for this purpose, is explicitly taken to be representative of the borderline between two labelled major dialect areas.²⁰

This method, which Trudgill applied in Map 1, deserves special consideration, particularly his heavy bold boundary line starting from the Wash and running south-westwards, illustrated on Map 1. The problem, as will be shown, is that this bold line is not created by the features in Table 1 but rather by preconceptions about dialect boundaries and where they should lie. In fact, drawing such dialect boundaries is generally risky in an area as heterogeneous as the one under consideration. This supports Schneider's point that a 'problem which is sometimes ignored is that by their very character as lines isoglosses suggest a pseudo-exactness of the course of a borderline which is not justified by factual reality'.²¹

The mapping system applied to review Trudgill's findings can be explained and illustrated by Maps 2 to 4. Map 2 displays the isoglosses of the items *blind*, *butter*, *hearse*, *man* (twice), and *seven* according to LAE.



Map 2: Isoglosses representing Trudgill's features

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| — · — · | <i>blind</i> | ———— | <i>man (for bat)</i> |
| ····· | <i>butter (for arm)</i> | - - - - | <i>man (for land)</i> |
| — · — · | <i>hearse (for hill)</i> | — · — · | <i>seven</i> |

Note that the individual features represented by these six items are listed in Table 1 above. The different types of lines here have no further implication than to show clearly which feature belongs to which line, in other words, a dotted line is not less important than a broken line.

These items represent the six (out of eight) features of Table 1 which yield isoglosses in the area dealt with here. It can be seen from Table 1 that I substituted four out of eight of Trudgill's items. This is because the four examples for which I used substitutes are not mapped in *LAE*, one of the basic sources for this paper. Trudgill suggests *man* as another example for both *bat* and *land*, so I followed him.²² *Hearse* for *hill* and *butter* for *arm* are my own substitutions, Trudgill did not mention them as examples. All of the substitutions, however, represent exactly the same features as Trudgill's items. Assuming Trudgill's method of equating an isogloss yielded by a single item with a dialect boundary is justified, the substitution of items is legitimate; otherwise, the boundaries yielded by them depend on actual individualizations rather than items.

The adaptation of the *LAE* maps for Map 2 deserves some explanation. Since *LAE* distinguishes some features more closely than Trudgill does, I used only those *LAE* isoglosses which represent Trudgill's features exactly. Thus, while *LAE* distinguishes, for example, variants of /r/ in *butter*, I distinguished, following Trudgill, only between rhotic and non-rhotic dialects. Kurath notes that the isoglosses assembled on a map like Map 2 'run in bundles of various sizes—close knit or spaced. These bundles show the location of major and minor dialect boundaries and thus indicate the dialectal structure of the total area'.²³ From a structuralist point of view, not all the isoglosses are equally important. Hence Kurath states:

To evaluate the relative importance of the dialect boundaries suggested by the bundles, it is not enough to count the heteroglosses [meaning isoglosses here] composing the bundles. The heteroglosses must be evaluated from the structural point of view before a sound decision can be reached. For this reason, heteroglosses of different kinds should be assembled separately, so that they can be evaluated by groups. Each set will contribute some evidence for subdividing the area; taken together they will furnish the basis for a generalized scheme designed to exhibit the dialectal structure of the area. This procedure is laborious, and to some extent arbitrary [. . .] From the structural point of view, heteroglosses fall into three major classes: phonological, morphological-syntactic, and lexical.²⁴

According to their relative importance in the structure of the language, Kurath suggests allocating different values to the different classes of isoglosses without giving any examples of how to evaluate them. He therefore leaves it up to the dialectologist to find an appropriate solution, which might be the reason why he calls this procedure 'to some extent arbitrary'. The aspect of stability is usually a decisive factor in attempts at evaluating different isoglosses, but to date no standardised way of weighting them has been found. However, Kurath is more explicit about the lexical isoglosses:

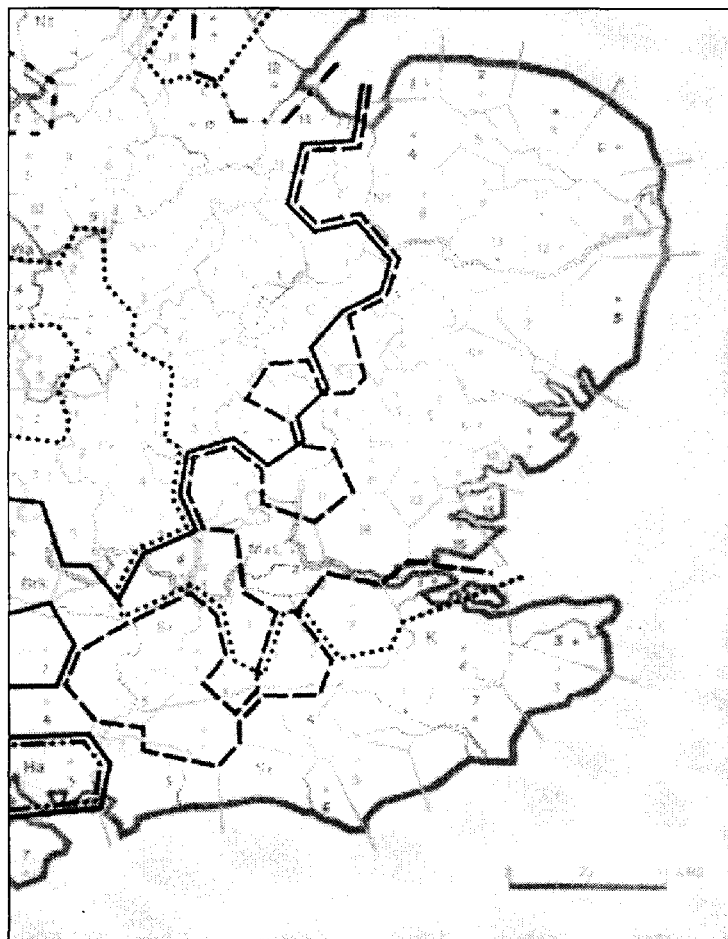
The lexical heteroglosses can be more easily handled than the morphological and the phonological. Since the lexicon of a language, though not lacking systematization, is not as rigidly structured as the morphology and the phonology, all heterolexes yielded by the survey can be given the same rank and assembled on a single map.²⁵

In his traditional dialect classification, Trudgill only deals with phonological isoglosses; unlike Kurath, he makes no further distinctions but rather treats them as Kurath suggests for the lexical isoglosses in that he does not give them different values or weight them differently according to their particular stability. I have therefore evaluated Map 2 according to the procedure Kurath proposes for lexical isoglosses:

On an outline map on which every community investigated is set off from its neighbors by lines so as to provide a 'honeycomb grid', the course of each heterolex is entered segment by segment. In the end, the number of heterolexes running between any two communities in the area is recorded on the grid. As a result, the grouping of heteroglosses in bundles of various sizes is brought into relief.²⁶

The honeycomb grid used in the present investigation comes from Kontic, who constructed his grid, which is not mathematically correct, according to the procedure suggested by Kurath.²⁷ The basic idea of the honeycomb grid is that each locality investigated—each dot on my basic map—should be separated from its immediate neighbours by lines which in the end yield a honeycomb grid. Onto these lines, the dialectologist enters the course of his isoglosses. Accordingly, I

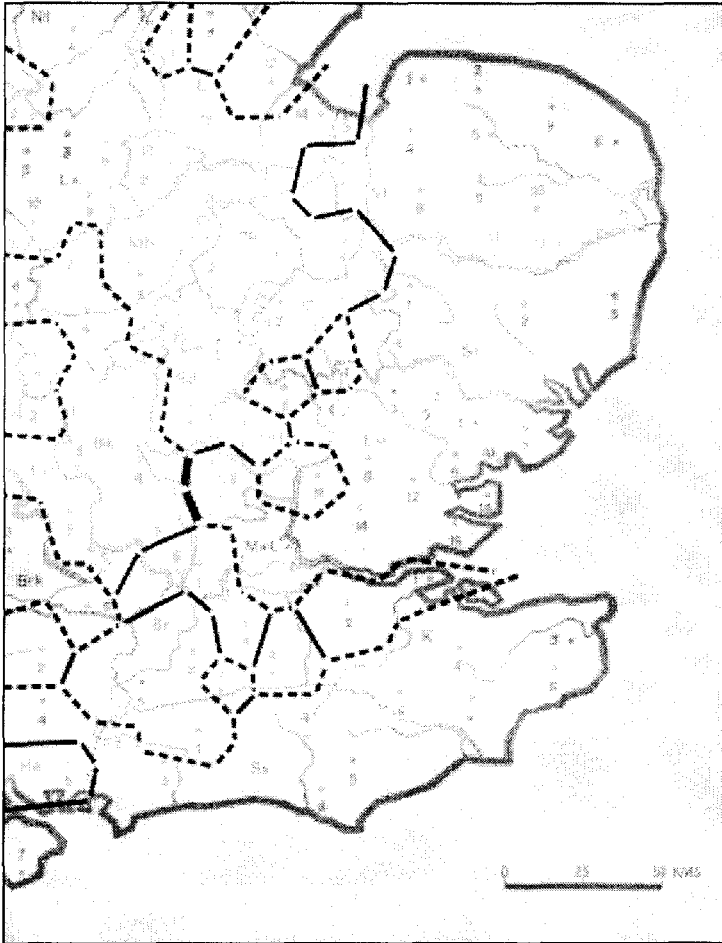
have transferred all the isoglosses from Map 2 onto my honeycomb grid. What results from this procedure is Map 3.



Map 3: Isoglosses representing Trudgill's items and features on the honeycomb grid

— · —	<i>blind</i>	——	<i>man</i> (for <i>bat</i>)
·····	<i>butter</i> (for <i>arm</i>)	- - -	<i>man</i> (for <i>land</i>)
- - -	<i>hearse</i> (for <i>hill</i>)	- · -	<i>seven</i>

As a next step, I have counted the bundles of isoglosses on Map 3 segment by segment and brought them into relief, which is illustrated by Map 4.



Map 4: Bundles of isoglosses yielded by Trudgill's features

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| ----- | 1 isogloss | ————— | 3 isoglosses |
| ————— | 2 isoglosses | | |

This map displays the bundles of isoglosses yielded by the six items or features of Map 3. A comparison of Map 4 to Map 1 shows that Trudgill's clearly defined dialect boundaries are not particularly clear on Map 4. On the contrary, Map 4 reveals that Trudgill's boldest dialect boundary on Map 1, running south-westwards from the Wash, is not defined by his own features. This result is

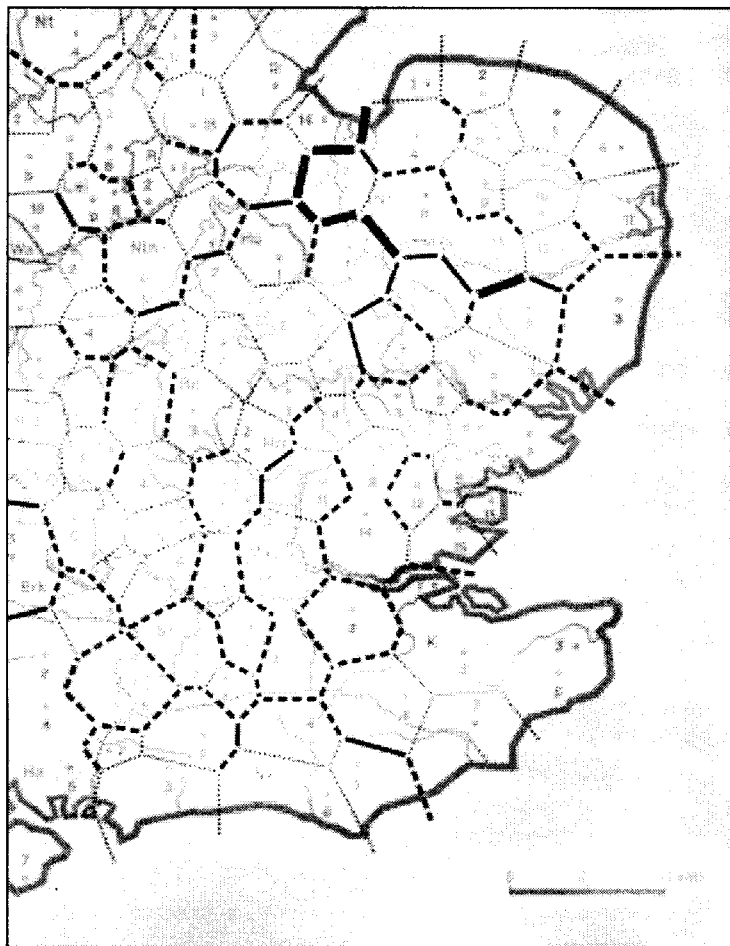
probably a function of the fact that he does not take into account either the /U/ vs. /V/ distinction as, for example, /bUt/ in the North vs. /bVt/ in the South, or the /a/ vs. /a;/ distinction as in /tSaf/ in the North vs. /tSa;f/ in the South. Although the two features are not totally co-extensive, dialectologists who use the same method as Trudgill often consider these two features as a basis for their North-South boundaries.²⁸ According to Martyn Wakelin, 'the areas so delimited [by the features /U/ vs. /V/ and /a/ vs. /a;/] [. . .] allow us to speak of "northern" and "southern" dialect areas, [. . .] which I regard as the main ones at the present day'.²⁹ Trudgill's classification of traditional English dialects in his *The Dialects of England* differs slightly from that of other dialectologists. His North-South boundary runs further north, from the Lancashire coast down to the Humber, so that all the areas north of that line belong to his North traditional dialect areas, while the areas south of it constitute his South traditional dialect areas. His bold line running south-westwards from the Wash, as can be seen on Map 1, separates his Central areas from the Southern areas.

Trudgill was certainly well aware of that frequently drawn boundary based on the /U/ vs. /V/ distinction and the /a/ vs. /a;/ distinction, and he consequently seems to have drawn his bold line in spite of the fact that he did not map either of the two features which would have yielded it. Moreover, Trudgill calls his eight specially selected features, 'the eight major features of English Traditional Dialects we can use to divide the country up into different areas'.³⁰ This statement implies that Trudgill started with his own notions of what the dialect boundaries should be, and then chose his items or features according to the boundaries he wanted to map. Furthermore, this statement reveals three assumptions:

1. Phonological features other than the ones Trudgill lists are less important.
2. The other levels of language, syntactic, morphological, and lexical, need not be considered.
3. It does not matter what item one chooses as long as it represents the sound distinction in question, or, in other words, all the items representing the particular phonological feature yield the same isoglosses, and hence, the same dialect boundaries.

We can regard a synchronic dialect study to be a snapshot of the state of dialects at a particular moment in time. In such a snapshot, all levels of language—syntactic, morphological, phonological, and lexical—should be equally important, since they together constitute the utterances of speakers.

Consequently, the inclusion of items and features of all four levels of language is indispensable. Furthermore, a synchronic dialect study, unlike a diachronic one, does not trace particular sound developments or morphological changes in time. A synchronic dialect study rather describes the state of dialects at a particular moment when a subject answers a fieldworker's questions. The different items and features occurring in the answers should be equally important, since together they constitute the dialect of the subject. Thus the items and features to be taken into account in a synchronic dialect study should be chosen randomly. Although research has shown that the four levels of language are not equally stable, this is not relevant for a synchronic analysis, since stability is a diachronic matter. This means that weighting the four levels of language differently according to their stability, as Chambers and Trudgill suggest, is not necessary, at least for a synchronic approach.³¹ What is indispensable, however, is the inclusion of items or features of all four levels of language, as illustrated by Maps 5-8.

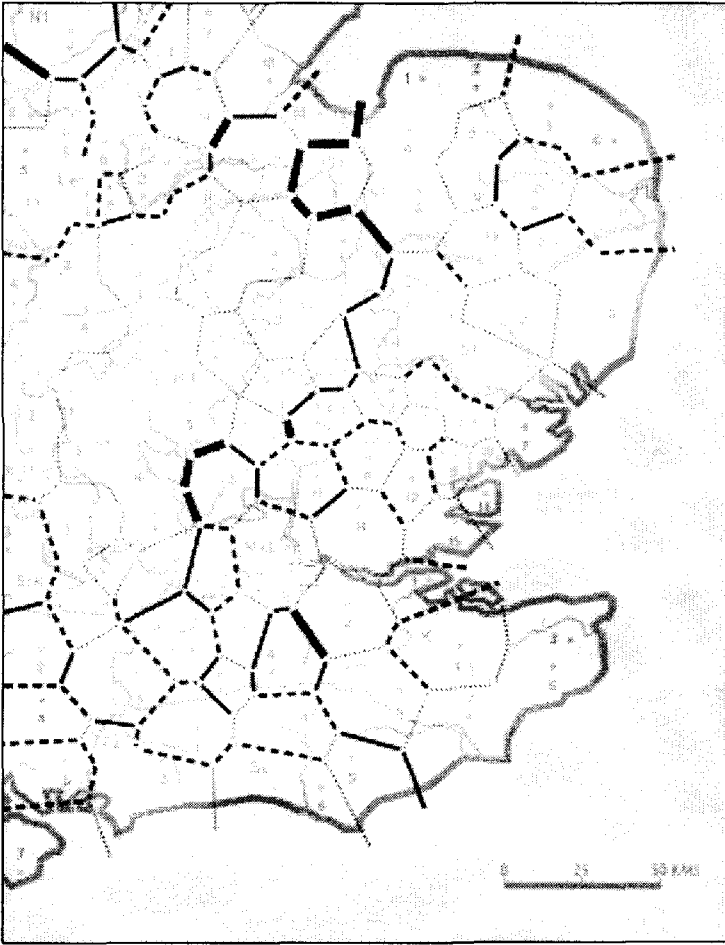


Map 5: **Phonological items randomly chosen**

(based on *LAE*)

.....	1 to 2 isoglosses	————	5 to 6 isoglosses
-----	3 to 4 isoglosses	—————	7 to 9 isoglosses

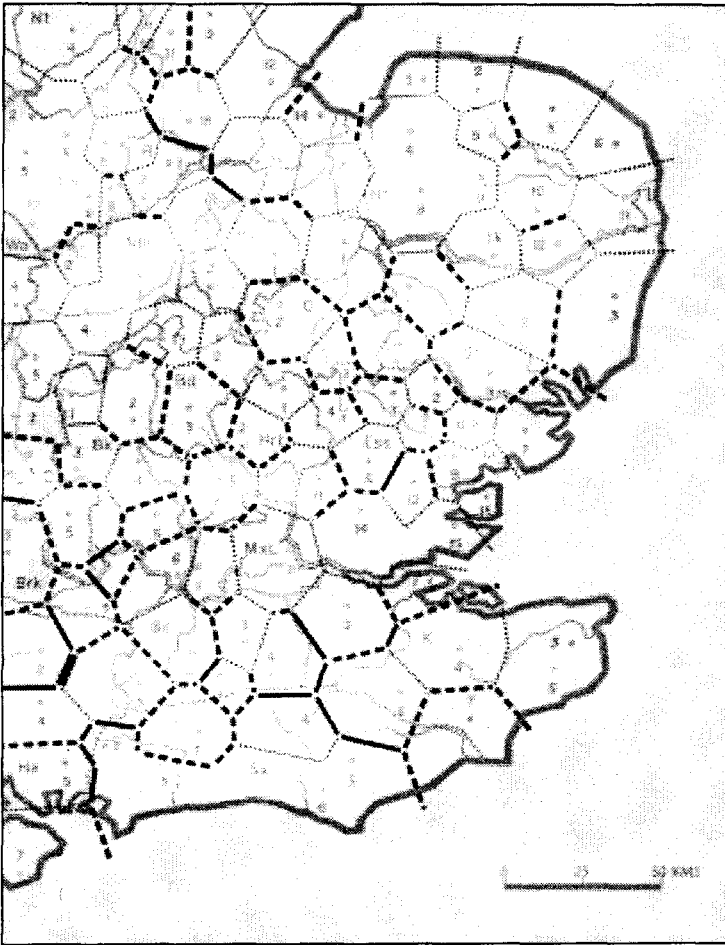
Items: *chaff* [Ph 3], *forks* [Ph 47], *hand* [Ph 220], *home* [Ph 129c], *old* [Ph 133c], *thigh* [Ph 116], *thunder* [Ph 51], *tongue* [Ph 52], *yolk* [Ph 43c]³²



Map 6: **Morphological items randomly chosen**
(based on *LAE*)

.....	1 to 2 isoglosses	—	5 to 6 isoglosses
-----	3 to 4 isoglosses	—	7 to 8 isoglosses

Items: *(he) came* [M 51], *caught* [M 52], *children* [M 60], *(they) grew* (intransitive) [M 53], *hers* [M 77], *himself* [M 80], *his* [M 76], *theirs* [M 79], *yours* (singular) [M 78]

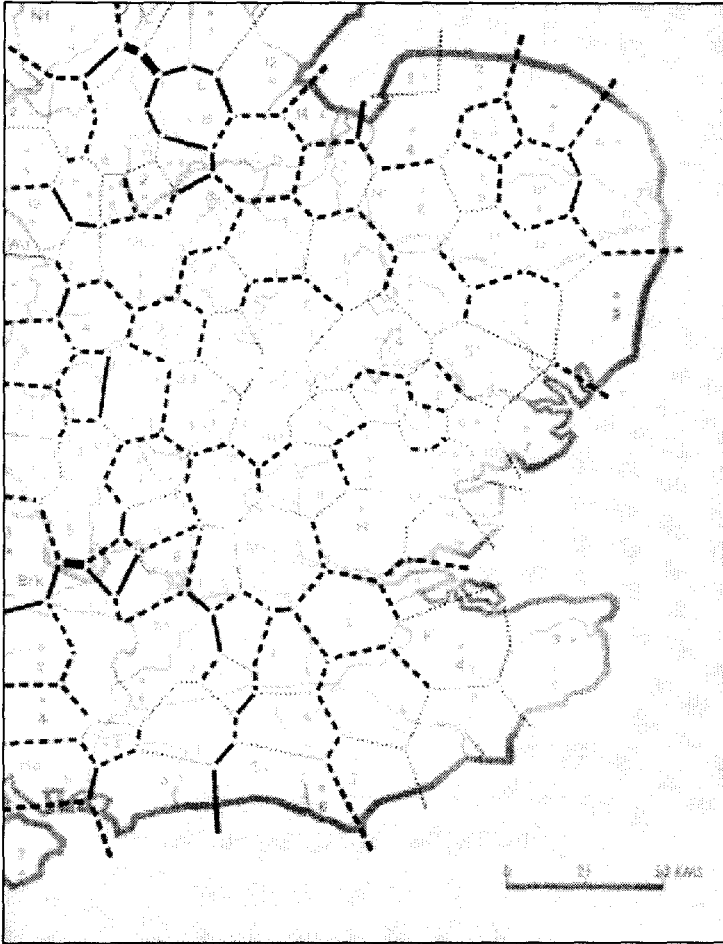


Map 7: Syntactic items randomly chosen

(based on *LAE*)

.....	1 to 2 isoglosses	————	5 to 6 isoglosses
-----	3 to 4 isoglosses	—————	7 to 8 isoglosses

Items: *did not do* [S 9], *give it me* [S 1], *go and* [S 4], *on Friday week* [S 8], *(came) to (see)* [S 3], *to whom* (relative) [S 6], *twenty-five to three* [S 7], *we put the light on* [S 2], *who* (relative) [S 5]



Map 8: Lexical items randomly chosen
(based on LAE)

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | 1 to 2 isoglosses | ———— | 5 to 6 isoglosses |
| ----- | 3 to 4 isoglosses | ————— | 7 to 8 isoglosses |

Items: *chip* (of eggs hatching) [L 28], *gapes* [L 47], *girdle* [L 36], *(keep) hens* [L 27], *mole* [L 26], *slice* (noun) [L 34], *stay at home* [L 62], *tire* (noun) [L 7], *top-and-tail* [L 13]

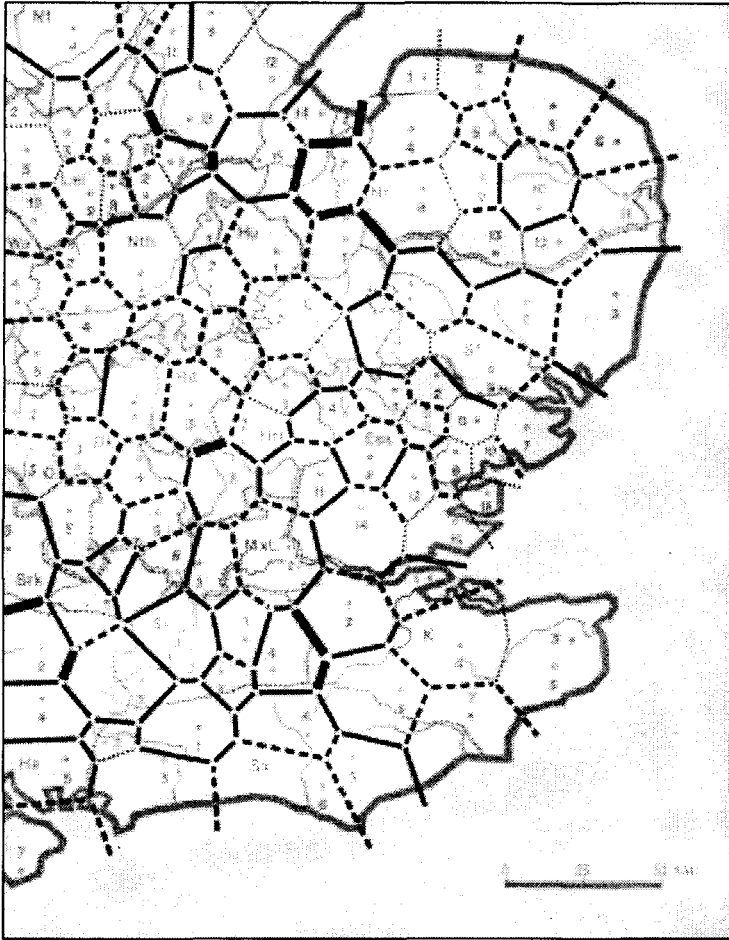
The third and fourth points noted at the beginning of this paper argue that, on the one hand, the choice of items and features should be random, and, on the other hand, that all four levels of language should be taken into account. Each of Maps 5-8 deals with one level of language, and they have all been drawn according to the following method: for each level of language, nine individual maps from *LAE* were chosen. The choice was basically random except that the maps had to have isoglosses in my area of investigation. I decided on nine maps for each level of language because in *LAE* there are only nine syntactic maps, and it seemed reasonable to consider an equal number of *LAE* maps for each level of language. Then, for each level of language, I entered all the isoglosses from the nine *LAE* maps on a honeycomb grid and counted them in order to get bundles of isoglosses, as illustrated on Maps 5-8. Unlike Kurath, I did not select certain bundles and omit others, but rather mapped all of them. Thus Maps 5-8 illustrate all the bundles yielded by the isoglosses.

A comparison of the phonological Map 5, the morphological Map 6, the syntactic Map 7, and the lexical Map 8 reveals that they do not corroborate what Kurath found in the United States, nor what Wolfgang Viereck found in England—namely that the phonological, the lexical, and the grammatical (including the morphological and the syntactic) levels yield the same boundaries.³³ Simply put, there is no substantial agreement among Maps 5-8, between the bundles of isoglosses the four levels of language yield.

Two general observations can be made regarding Maps 5-8. First, it becomes evident that, concerning the bundles of isoglosses, the phonological and the morphological maps show less scattering than the syntactic and the lexical ones. Viereck (1980b: 28) only partially agrees with this finding when he says that 'syntax shows relatively little regional variation—much less than phonology, morphology and vocabulary'.³⁴ On the other hand, he states that 'the map [morphological map 9 in Viereck's 'Dialectal Speech Areas in England: Orton's Phonetic and Grammatical Evidence' (see note 33)] reveals largely the same structure for morphology as we described for lexis [. . .] and for phonetics'.³⁵ Furthermore, Jack Chambers' and Trudgill's structuralist approach of grading isoglosses noted above ranks the syntactic level most important and the lexical level least so.³⁶ This generally means that one is not likely to get any more clearly defined dialect boundaries by weighting the different levels of language differently. This, at least, holds true for the present investigation. My second observation involves a comparison of Map 5 with Map 4. Both are based on phonological features, but Map 4 displays six specially chosen items and features,

while Map 5 shows the bundles yielded by nine randomly chosen items and features. Despite some similarities along the border between Nf and Sf, the bundles on the two maps look rather different. This supports Davis' point that 'dialect areas are, in large measure, a function of the items one selects, and that changing those items even slightly can result in very different sets of boundaries'.³⁷

This study strongly suggests that the more items one considers the less strong the bundles of isoglosses are. This can be seen if we look at the four levels of language separately: on Maps 5-8 we have bundles which are seven to nine isoglosses strong, meaning that there are localities which differ in seven to nine out of nine features. However, if Maps 5-8 are combined into Map 9, we find that, with 36 items, nine for each of the four levels of language, the strongest bundle is made up of 24 isoglosses only. This indicates that no consistent pattern emerges.



Map 9: Composite map

(based on Maps 5-8)



1 to 5 isoglosses



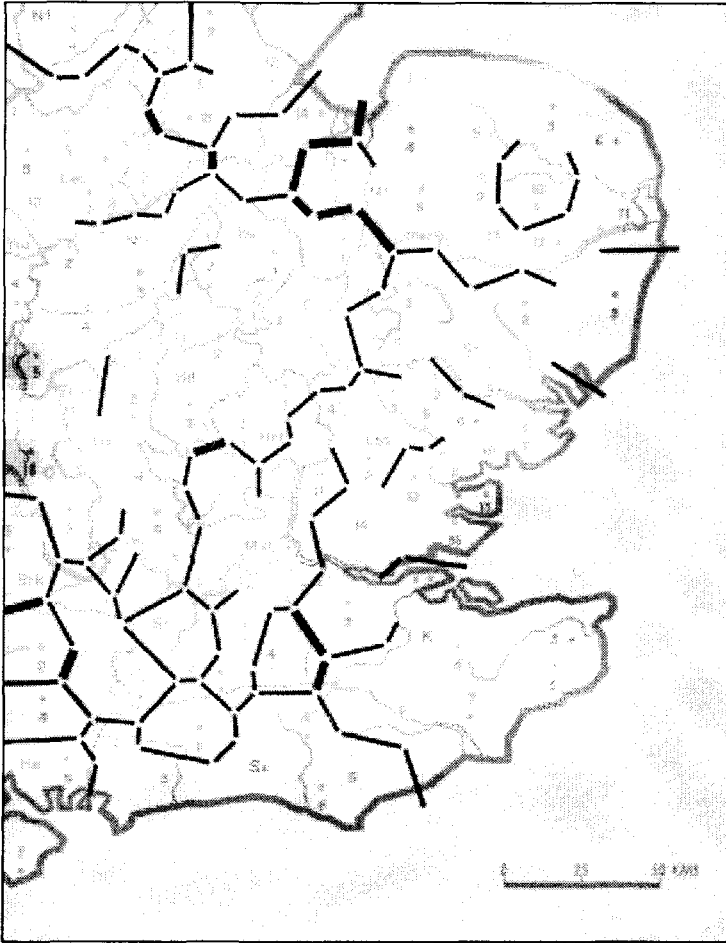
6 to 10 isoglosses



11 to 17 isoglosses



18 to 24 isoglosses



Map 10: Composite map simplified
(based on Map 9)

- 11 to 17 isoglosses
- 18 to 24 isoglosses

Map 10, which is a simplification of Map 9, shows that the area of investigation dealt with in this paper is rather heterogeneous even when as small a set of 36 randomly chosen items of the four levels of language is taken into account. This finding is corroborated by Davis, Houck, and Upton, who point out that 'major

English dialect patterns seem clear only when one examines carefully chosen items or small groups of items'.³⁸

A comparison of Map 10 and Map 4 adds yet another dimension, namely that of the levels of language: with a small set of items including all four levels, the bundles of isoglosses do not indicate more clearly defined dialect boundaries on Map 10 than we have on the phonological Map 4. Interestingly, however, the bundles on Map 10 have some similarities to Trudgill's boundaries on Map 1, which should not be ignored; that is, we can see part of Trudgill's bold line running south-westwards from the Wash, which has been discussed above in some detail. The point still remains that in the East and South-East of England, neither Map 10 with a rather small set of items for each level of language nor any other map I have drawn supports the notion of clearly defined dialect boundaries. There is simply too much internal variability to justify such boundaries.

The primary aim of this investigation has been to demonstrate that there are no clearly defined dialect boundaries in the East and the South-East of England. The example of Trudgill's traditional English dialect map has shown that, in accordance with Kurath, he found evidence and methods to draw clearly defined dialect boundaries in this area. My analysis of his map has revealed, however, that his boundary lines in my area of investigation are the product of predetermination. Trudgill carefully selected his exclusively phonological items and features according to his personal expectations of the course which his boundary lines should run. Each isogloss produced by these items and features was eventually equated with a boundary line, as Trudgill explains, in order to delimit the traditional dialect areas of England. Yet according to my investigation these boundary lines are not confirmed by other items and/or features of either the phonological, the morphological, the syntactic or the lexical levels of language (see Maps 5-8); thus Trudgill's traditional dialect boundaries cannot claim general validity. As I have concluded elsewhere, 'dialect maps which are drawn in Kurath's tradition are highly subjective, since they permit predetermination in that, for example, the choice of items and features is exclusively based on the dialect geographer and so is the ultimate course of his boundary lines'.³⁹

In order to reduce the influence of the dialect geographer on his or her map, I suggest the items and features should be chosen randomly and from all four levels of language; moreover, all the isoglosses yielded by the items have to be considered for the determination of dialect boundaries. It has become evident that we can only reach more objectivity at the cost of easily readable maps: unless a small amount of carefully selected items is examined, the variability causes the

boundaries to vanish. We should accept this finding because it reflects reality and because our maps should represent the real dialect situation as exactly as possible.

NOTES

I am most grateful to Dr. Clive Upton for helpful discussion during the preparation of this paper for publication.

¹ See Lawrence M. Davis and Charles L. Houck, 'Is There a Midland Dialect Area? -- Again', *American Speech*, 67 (1992), 61-70; Lawrence M. Davis and Charles L. Houck, 'What Determines a Dialect Area? Evidence from the "Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest"', *American Speech*, 70 (1995), 371-86; Lawrence M. Davis, 'The Reliability of Dialect Boundaries', *American Speech*, 75 (2000), 257-59.

² See Hans Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949).

³ Timothy Frazer, 'On Transition Areas and the "Midland" Dialect: A Reply to Davis and Houck', *American Speech*, 69 (1994), 430-35.

⁴ Lawrence M. Davis, Charles L. Houck and Clive Upton, 'The Question of Dialect Boundaries: The SED and the American Atlases', in *Issues and Methods in Dialectology*, ed. by Alan R. Thomas (Bangor: University of Wales, 1997), pp. 271-83.

⁵ Davis, Houck and Upton, 'The Question of Dialect Boundaries: The SED and the American Atlases', p. 271.

⁶ See Jack K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill, *Dialectology*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

⁷ Davis, Houck and Upton, 'The Question of Dialect Boundaries: The SED and the American Atlases', p. 277.

⁸ See Eugen Dieth, 'A New Survey of English Dialects', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 32 (1946), 74-104; *The Linguistic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Kirsten Malmkjær, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 108-110.

⁹ Hans Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 24.

¹⁰ Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, p. 38.

¹¹ René Kontic, *Dialects in East-Anglia and the South-East of England* (doctoral dissertation, University of Basle, Basle: Econom Druck, 1990).

¹² *Linguistic Atlas of England*, ed. by Harold Orton, Stewart F. Sanderson and John D. A. Widdowson (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

¹³ *Survey of English Dialects (B): The Basic Material*, ed. by Harold Orton and Martyn F. Wakelin (Leeds: Arnold, 1962-71), IV: 1-3 (1967-68); *Survey of English Dialects (B): The Basic Material*, ed. by Harold Orton and Michael V. Barry (Leeds: Arnold, 1962-71), II: 1-3 (1969-71); *Survey of English Dialects (B): The Basic Material*, ed. by Harold Orton and Philip M. Tilling (Leeds: Arnold, 1962-71), III: 1-3 (1969-71).

¹⁴ Peter Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

¹⁵ For Trudgill's complete classification of the traditional English dialects see Trudgill's *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, p. 33.

¹⁶ See Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, pp. 19-35 and *The Dialects of England*, 2nd edn, pp. 20-36.

¹⁷ Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 2nd edn, p. 139.

¹⁸ Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, p. 32.

¹⁹ Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, p. 32.

²⁰ Edgar W. Schneider, 'Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methods of Area Delimitation in Dialectology: A Comparison Based on Lexical Data from Georgia and Alabama', *Journal of English Linguistics*, 21 (1998), 175-212 (p. 179).

²¹ Edgar W. Schneider, 'Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methods of Area Delimitation in Dialectology', p. 178.

²² Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, pp. 19-31.

²³ Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, p. 24.

²⁴ Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, p. 25.

²⁵ Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, p. 25.

²⁶ Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*, p. 25.

²⁷ Kontic, *Dialects in East-Anglia and the South-East of England*, p. 239.

²⁸ See Martyn F. Wakelin, 'The Stability of English Dialect Boundaries', *English World-Wide*, 4 (1983), 1-15 (pp. 1, 12, 13).

²⁹ Wakelin, 'The Stability of English Dialect Boundaries', p. 1.

³⁰ Trudgill, *The Dialects of England*, 1st edn, p. 32.

³¹ See Chambers and Trudgill, *Dialectology*, 2nd edn, pp. 99-100. It is important to note here that my synchronic approach to this investigation does not conflict with the basic materials from *SED* and *LAE*, which have a historical emphasis. These data and maps are treated as synchronic records, as they are mainly of the 1950s, regardless of their diachronic focus.

³² Throughout this paper, the references to *LAE* maps are enclosed in square brackets.

³³ Hans Kurath, *Studies in Area Linguistics*; Wolfgang Viereck, 'Dialectal Speech Areas in England: Orton's Phonetic and Grammatical Evidence', *Journal of English Linguistics*, 19 (1986), 240-57; Wolfgang Viereck, 'Dialect Speech Areas in England: Orton's Lexical

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- ³⁴ Wolfgang Viereck, 'The Dialectal Structure of British English: Lowman's Evidence', *English World-Wide*, 1 (1980), 25-44 (p. 28).
- ³⁵ Viereck, 'Dialectal Speech Areas in England', p. 243.
- ³⁶ Chambers and Trudgill, *Dialectology*, p. 99.
- ³⁷ Davis, 'The Reliability of Dialect Boundaries', p. 257.
- ³⁸ Davis, Houck and Upton, 'The Question of Dialect Boundaries: The *SED* and the American Atlases', p. 272.
- ³⁹ Monika Wegmann, *What If There Are No Dialect Boundaries? Dialect Maps Revisited* (unpublished Lizentiatsarbeit, University of Zurich, 2003), p. 152.

Reviews

Words Derived from Old Norse in Early Middle English: Studies in the Vocabulary of the South-West Midland Texts. By Richard Dance. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 246. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003. xxv + 542 pp. ISBN 0-86698-288-4.

This is a major work and a model of its kind. Beginning life as an Oxford D.Phil. thesis, it was expanded during Richard Dance's tenure of a subsequent three-year research fellowship at Cambridge. The length and quality of the resulting book, together with the detail of the supporting footnote documentation, show the enormous value of uninterrupted research time for the assemblage, organisation and analysis of data of the kind found here. We have the American MRTS series to thank for the book's publication, and we can perhaps deduce that no British publisher could be found to take it on.

The volume is organised into two parts: (A) a lengthy discussion in six chapters of the evidence for, and history and function of, Norse-derived words in early South-West Midland (SWM) texts, and (B) the presentation of the lexical data itself, along with words that Dance rejects from his corpus; however, this back-to-front procedure presents no problem to the reader. The data on which the discussion is built comprises 319 Norse-derived lexemes identified by the author in sources that are listed in Chapter Two: principally *Ancrene Wisse* (in its various manuscripts), the members of the *Katherine Group*, the *Wohunge* group of texts, *Lazamon's Brut*, the *Lambeth Homilies*, the *Worcester Fragments*, and the glosses of the so-called Tremulous Hand of Worcester. Chapter One is introductory, surveying earlier scholarship and providing historical, methodological, and theoretical background. Chapter Three is concerned with the identification of the lexical data, on the basis of etymological evidence, and with models of language contact, while Chapter Four investigates how the words in question 'arrived in English and were integrated into its linguistic systems' (p. 104); the crucial finding here is that, phonologically, Norse words are, in general, likely to have spread slowly into the SWM via other Middle English (ME) dialects.

Chapter Five then turns to matters of the distribution in ME of the vocabulary in question, of semantic analysis, and of the stylistic contexts in which the words are found. The theme of the concluding Chapter Six is the process, or processes, by which the Norse words entered SWM linguistic usage. In total the

discussion takes 330 pages, but the evidence and arguments are so patiently put forward, with so much cross-referencing, signposting, and helpful summary—not to mention self-deprecating comments about the difficulty of the task and the gaps in the evidence—that the reader is carried along partly by the beauty of the organisation and the exemplary attention to methodology.

It is, however, Dance's conclusions that make the book memorable. Although proper, expert attention is paid to the phonological and morphological aspects of the evidence, it is the stress on semantic and stylistic considerations—on the function of the Norse-derived words in their context—that gives the work its edge. A short review cannot begin to do justice to the strength of Dance's analyses, but, in brief, he shows in Chapter Five that the Norse lexis in the SWM can be divided into a larger core group of words, mainly for everyday concepts, which usually occur elsewhere in ME before they enter the SWM; and a smaller group of words with literary-stylistic functions, apparently chosen for their capacity to deliver special stylistic effects such as alliteration (and chosen not, Dance suggests, because they were 'Norse' but because they were considered part of a much larger stock of specialised vocabulary available for exploitation in this way).

In Chapter Six, which is concerned with the routes the words took, he shows first that there is very small likelihood that Norse items entered the SWM by direct transfer from Norse speakers. Instead he posits three separate processes: (a) a pre-Conquest diffusion of Norse vocabulary via 'official' Old English documents such as laws; (b) a gradual spoken diffusion of the core Norse lexis from other ME areas, while the words were still in subordinate position in terms of speakers' lexical choices (Dance acknowledges that elucidating the reasons for words attaining dominance in their lexical fields is a separate matter); and (c) a far more rapid transmission across distance of the stylistically-motivated lexis (faster because not deeply embedded), probably linked to the spread of shared literary traditions.

Having explained the need to seek different explanations for different groups of Norse-derived words, Dance remarks that 'there is very little' about their occurrence in the SWM 'that need be considered particularly surprising' (p. 327). He is too modest. It takes subtle and thoroughgoing linguistic analysis of the kind exemplified in his book to enable such conclusions to emerge and to be made to sound so self-evident.

Three Alliterative Saints' Hymns: Late Middle English Stanzaic Poems. Edited by Ruth Kennedy. Early English Text Society o.s. 321. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. cix + 120 pp. ISBN 0-1971-2324-9

This edition presents the Middle English texts of the *Alliterative Katherine Hymn* by Richard Spalding, the *Alliterative John Evangelist Hymn* found in one of the two Thornton anthologies, and the anonymous *Alliterative John Baptist Hymn*. These three lesser known poems were already edited separately in 1907/1937, 1867 and 1907, but Kennedy's volume adds immensely to these older editions. The hymns themselves are fairly short (only 686 lines in all, pp. 1-23) so that the bulk of the edition consists of a lengthy introduction (containing textual, stylistic and historical analyses), combined with what seems to be an exhaustive glossary, as well as a select bibliography and a detailed body of mainly lexical notes. The three texts occur in unique fifteenth-century witnesses, which Kennedy investigates separately and in close detail. Unfortunately, the edition has the respective plates of manuscript pages of the *Evangelist Hymn* and the *Baptist Hymn* erroneously placed and glossed. The texts are subjected to several editorial changes, including conjectural emendation on the basis of metre and alliteration, and Kennedy uses the notes to signal and elucidate these, allowing the reader to form his/her own view on their legitimacy. However, in the case of the *Katherine* poem, a considerable number of mainly metrical emendations are taken directly and without any further comments from the text's 1937 edition by F. Holthausen. The impressive range of commentaries and interpretations in the notes (pp. 25-95), in which Kennedy attempts to explain the sometimes 'thorny, crux-ridden' phrasings of the texts, makes reading the hymns a rather slow and laborious process, which, unfortunately, is not always entirely rewarding for the modern reader: as Kennedy traces in her introduction ('Sources and Affiliations'), all three poems show little originality or development and fall back entirely upon the hagiographical traditions associated with these three saints in fourteenth-century England.

It is for their stylistic qualities that these poems deserve closer attention. Kennedy uses this edition to bring together, as she already did in her PhD thesis (*The Alliterative Katherine Hymn: A Stanzaic Poem of the Late Fourteenth Century*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bristol, 1991), the only three specimens of what she calls a 'narrow sub-genre' of the 'informal corpus' within the 'Alliterative Revival', i.e. that of hymns addressing saints and using an alliterative long-stress metre in rhymed fourteen-line stanzas. She goes into

considerable detail analysing the constructions, metre and alliterations of the three poems separately. She provides a very thorough and statistically-based study of the poems' alliterative patterns and metrical structures, and traces not only their similarities, but also the subtle characteristics of the different poets' styles – by which she reinforces the case for separate authorship. Kennedy also attempts to date and situate this sub-genre as precisely as possible. She finds further historical and palaeographical evidence for earlier hypotheses that all three poems must date from between 1390 and 1400, and through a meticulous linguistic analysis of the poems' authorial and scribal dialects, she is able to situate two of the poems in North Yorkshire and one in South Lincolnshire. Kennedy's findings are intriguing, as they locate and date the three hymns to an area (the North and East Midlands) and a period in time which in recent scholarship are becoming more and more associated with the production of stylistically complex poetry. Although some attention is paid to the wider Middle English context of these three hymns in the section 'sources and affiliations' (including an interesting association with Middle English drama), Kennedy's stylistic analysis would have benefited from an even wider perspective: the fourteen-line heterometric stanza form, which combines end-rhyme with alliteration, and uses *iteration* or *concatenatio* between and within the stanzas is comparable with that of contemporary refrain poems, like, for example, the Vernon/Simeon Lyrics, which recently have been associated with the East-Midlands as well and which also use similarly complex eight- and twelve-line stanzas for narrative and, at the same time, invocatory and supplicatory compositions, or even the early-fifteenth-century Lambeth 853 and Digby 102 poems and the more northern *Pearl*. However, such a study could probably be seen as outside the scope of a text edition. Kennedy's volume certainly opens doors towards a better understanding of the range and circulation of this highly accomplished poetic style which came to flourish in the late-fourteenth-century Midlands, and it will be up to further scholars to fully investigate this.

GEERT DE WILDE

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH

Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography. By Joanna Summers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. viii + 229 pp. ISBN 0-1992-7129-1

The chief interest of this book lies in the equation it makes between imprisonment and first-person narrative. Summers persuasively suggests that the isolation and displacement associated with imprisonment provide the perfect correlative for the existential angst of a certain kind of late-medieval subject: the self-conscious intellectual caught between different communities, and forced into a heightened state of self-awareness. Summers is most impressive when demonstrating the intertextual links between these texts and works by such authors as Boethius and John Gower, as well as the intertextual linking between the different key texts themselves. Less impressive is her handling of the ideological background of these texts, although she does discuss political motivation in its more pragmatic forms. In particular, there is little discussion of the nuances of religious sentiment in the works discussed or of the contrast between Boethian spirituality (essentially Neoplatonist) and late-medieval Christianity. This ought to be relevant to her argument as she is proposing that Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* was an important model for the works she discusses. Religion and politics were often intertwined in this period, as is clearly true in Thomas Usk's case, though Summers fails to mention Usk's Lollard background and how this determined his relationship with the different factions of his day. This is all the more surprising for the fact that Lollardy forms the subject of her fourth chapter. In spite of these reservations, however, the book is an erudite and well-constructed study of authorial self-consciousness in late-medieval Britain.

Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love* has not received a great deal of critical attention until comparatively recently, so it is heartening to see it treated in the kind of detail that Summers affords it. Her examination of the relationship between Usk and his spiritual interlocutor Lady Love, and the contrast between this and the relationship of Boethius and Lady Philosophy, is particularly insightful. She demonstrates how Usk subtly raises the status of the human pupil in the dialogue so that he speaks almost on terms of equality with his instructor, something that breaks with Boethian tradition but serves Usk's immediate purpose: to present himself as a trustworthy individual deserving of patronage. Summers argues that the work's extensive use of pearl iconography indicates that it was written to appeal to members of the royal faction, since Richard had adopted the pearl as one of his motifs from the mid-1380s onwards. However,

Usk's relatively low rank and status must surely make it unlikely that Richard himself was the intended addressee (as Summers seems to hint) or that Richard can be equated with the Margarite-pearl of Usk's allegory very directly. That Usk was addressing members of the legal community serving the King (men such as Robert Tresilian) seems a more likely hypothesis and Summers does offer this as an alternative. That Thomas Berkeley, literary patron and landed magnate, served more than once as Justice of the Peace at the time when Usk was active, might have been worth mentioning given that Usk's *Testament* contains allusions to texts and themes (such as the use of the vernacular) known to have interested Berkeley. My theory that Berkeley's wife Margaret de Lisle was on one level the inspiration for Usk's Margarite was not intended to reduce the work to a purely literal narrative, as Summers asserts (p. 50, note 28): I offered the identification as one of several layers of meaning present in the work, and did not intend to deny the symbolic value of the pearl. As Usk notes towards the end of the *Testament* in a Pauline saying: 'the letter sleeth, but the spirit giveth life'. Both literal and symbolic meanings are present and complement each other in this work, a text much concerned with the body, and the theology of the incarnation. It is this, as much as its preoccupation with material reward, which make it un-Boethian, but Summers neglects the theological themes present in the *Testament*.

Summers's main concern, in the chapter about *The Testament of Love* and the other chapters, is to show how writers seek to secure political advantage through their writings. To be effective, however, this kind of argument requires an intuition for who the audience for these works might be, and this is not always present. In the chapter on James I's *Kingis Quair*, for example, Summers hints that James may have offered his book as a promise to his subjects that he would act reasonably rather than tyrannically as a king, but this is not substantiated. It is true that the work presents a portrait of the young James as someone schooled by adversity, and later by love, to conduct himself with self-control and rationality. However, the work only survives in one copy and it is not clear how it can have been intended as the kind of political manifesto directed at a general audience that Summers takes it to be. Exactly how could the *Quair* have served James's purpose politically? I take the work to be a much more introspective one than Summers seems to do, and the brooding, anxious mood of the opening suggests to me that James wrote it as a kind of self-consolation at a time of crisis, possibly much later than the 1424 date Summers and others propose for it.

Summers presents the *English Book* of Charles d'Orleans as an apolitical text, concerned solely, and rather flippantly at that, with amatory matters. It is

true to say that the text avoids direct reference to political matters and lacks an overt political agenda, but its very obliquity can be seen as a strategy. Written in English, the text must have been addressed to an audience that consisted of his captors, so the attempt to engage and entertain them indicates a policy of appeasement. It is an interesting fact that most of the authors Summers writes about displayed an ambivalent attitude towards their captors, who seem to have been regarded as potential allies and friends as much as enemies. This is certainly true of Usk, who speaks of offending the Margarite with genuine contrition and speaks of being tied in the stocks of 'Daunger' (the erotic disdain associated with the courtly lady). James too seems to submit to his imprisonment with a certain degree of acceptance, though it is a frustrated acceptance. To some extent, these writers are reworking the theme of love's paradoxically blissful torment: the acceptance of imprisonment is submission to love's sway. There is an ideological dimension to this too, however: the ambivalent attitude towards the powers that restrict and contain the writer reflects an ambivalent stance vis-à-vis tradition and authority. The textual tradition embodied by such texts as Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* is both accepted by these authors (as providing a necessary framework) and at the same time betrayed. Summers could have gone further in her exploration of these textual relations: she meticulously identifies sources and possible influences without suggesting what the real significance of such borrowings and links might be.

Summers's chapter on the Lollards Thorpe and Wyche provides fascinating insights into the problems of negotiating with authority. She presents Thorpe and Wyche as authors who largely succeed in creating their own authority through skilful deployment of certain rhetorical tropes and dramatic devices. Although the discussion of these texts, which are not obviously literary, provides an instructive contrast to what has preceded, and is well-managed, the transition at this point in the book is perhaps a little abrupt. Little explanation is offered for considering these ostensibly factual texts in conjunction with the more fabulising ones treated earlier, texts which include supernatural figures and elements of classical mythology. Some kind of reflection on recent critical developments (particularly New Historicism) seems needed here to justify the use of the same approach for both kinds of text. Summers's focus in this chapter is not so much on the theological points being discussed by these two Lollards as on the rhetorical devices deployed to construct authority. This certainly makes for a clear and concise exposition, but one might wish for a little more depth of treatment. The same is true of the chapter on George Ashby, author of *A Prisoner's Reflections*

and the *Active Policy of a Prince*. Summers notes Ashby's emphasis on the Christian virtue of patience in his work but does not consider how, and how successfully, his Christian ethics are harmonised with the classical tradition embodied by Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* is an important influence on the text (as Summers acknowledges).

Boethius's radical intellectualism in the *Consolation* enabled the medieval authors inspired by the text to break free of the bonds of community and to establish their individuality on new and exciting terms. However, this individuality (in the case of such medieval authors as the ones Summers discusses) is rooted in the figural realism of the Christian tradition – in the historical specifics of lived experience rather than in the Neoplatonic life of the mind – and this is what makes the textual relationship with Boethius so fraught and yet at the same time so dynamic. Summers notes that Ashby does not cite Boethius openly (and this is true, I have noticed, of other authors who were clearly indebted to the *Consolation*). The reason for this reticence, one might speculate, is that Boethius (although later canonised as a Christian saint) does not, in the *Consolation*, adopt an orthodox Christian perspective. The epilogue of Summers's book offers a stimulating (and refreshingly original) interpretation of Malory's *Morte Darthur* as a text with a distinct narratorial voice. She argues that the explicit are in dialogic relation to the main narrative and that, by positing a historically-specific author, they encourage the reader's awareness of earthly mutability, a theme pertinent to the main text.

The book is well-produced and well-edited, though there are a few textual errors. One occurs on p. 137, line 4, where the title *Testament* is given instead of (as was surely intended) *Testimony*. The sentence reads: 'It would seem that the *Trial* and more particularly the *Testament*, are an attempt to counteract the ecclesiastical authorities' recounts of Wycliffite history, notably the accounts of recantations by well-known Lollards.' This mistake is unfortunate, as it could lead to confusion with Usk's *Testament*, a quite separate work. Overall, however, Summers's study is to be recommended as a measured and wide-ranging introduction to a fascinating topic.

LUCY LEWIS

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Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory. By Christiania Whitehead. Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003. xi + 324 pp. ISBN 0-7083-1794-4.

Christiania Whitehead's engaging study of medieval architectural allegory brings together two significant strands of recent scholarship: the history of spatial representation, including spatial metaphor, and the study of late medieval devotional literature. Her approach is admirably wide-ranging: part one of the volume ('Christian Architectural Allegory') begins with the significance of the temple for early Jewish culture and ends with the fifteenth-century Birgittine domestic allegory, *An Honest Bede*. In between, by means of a series of thematically-organised chapters (Temple, Memory, Ark, Church, Cloister, Castle, Household), she examines Christian exegetical traditions from Augustine through twelfth-century redirections to late medieval devotional impulses, the impact of classical and medieval rhetoric on the use of architectural structures as 'memorial backgrounds', and Latin and vernacular literary adaptations of allegorical structures. Part two ('Classicizing Architectural Allegory') is organised not around particular structures but around four distinct (though interlinked) poetic traditions: 'the medieval architectures of fortune, fame and honour, knowledge and sex' (p. 2). These traditions are traced back to classical, particularly Augustan, poetry, and the 'Chartrian' revitalisation of that body of material in the twelfth century. An 'Afterword' draws together the threads of the preceding discussions, and, looking forward to a future 'revision of the current map of medieval allegory', concludes with the claim that 'architectural allegory deserves to be viewed as a subgenre in its own right' (p. 264).

Undoubtedly the great strength of this book is its location of late medieval vernacular literature in a variety of contexts: not just scriptural, but also medieval exegetical traditions, and classical Latin literature and medieval adaptations and reworkings thereof. Indeed it is only as the book goes on that its focus comes to rest on post-twelfth-century literature: early chapters in both sections lay careful foundations with detailed discussions of classical and early Judaeo-Christian traditions of writing and understanding allegory, as well as twelfth-century literary reformulations. This emphasis on the *longue durée* enables Whitehead to discern important shifts in the nature and use of allegory. For instance, in her chapter on 'Church', she observes a shift of exegesis 'from the scriptures to a contemporary spatial domain' (p. 54), as liturgical handbooks of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries gloss the contemporary church in terms of scriptural buildings

rather than vice-versa. She also emphasises the importance of these liturgical manuals as an 'intermediate resource for a number of later vernacular religious allegorists' (p. 60). As this last quotation shows, Whitehead is alert to the interconnections between Latin and vernacular literature, while always sensitive to the inflections of adaptation and translation. It is possible to imagine a much more closed treatment of this topic, one that went for the hazy historicising sketch in an opening chapter before getting down to the real business of late medieval devotional writing. To her credit, Whitehead keeps looking sideways as well as back, so the picture of late medieval vernacular writing that emerges is one of dialogue both with classical and Judaeo-Christian traditions, and across vernacular literatures. Whitehead is as subtle a reader of Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la mutacion de fortune*, or Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Das fleißende Licht der Gottheit* as she is of Skelton's *Garlande of Laurell*, and that flexibility across linguistic and period barriers in itself suggests a promising model of scholarship for the often hermetic region of Middle English studies.

Working the *longue durée* inevitably has its pitfalls. From time to time an absence of reference to critical debate on particular texts and authors is notable. Admittedly it would be unfair to expect an author covering approximately one and half millennia of architectural allegory in about 250 pages to wade through thickets of *Piers Plowman* scholarship, or sink in the mire of recent debate on Augustan poetry. That disengagement from critical literature can be liberating, but it invites revision. More significantly, coverage of a very large number of texts perhaps prevents more than a rather fleeting attention to manuscript traditions and evidence. As a result, there is a somewhat surprising lack of attention to visualisation of architectural forms: these castles are very much of the mind and the word. Although reference is made in a general way to actual buildings, one consequence of this is that Whitehead never quite makes the link between physical and textual architecture; indeed the fundamental question of the meaning of 'architecture' is not addressed. A final cavil is the curious decision to provide only a select bibliography, containing 'fundamental primary texts and all studies which make a significant contribution to the book or which are cited more than once' (p. 308). It is to be hoped that the editors of what is shaping up to be an excellent series reconsider, and provide readers of future volumes with complete bibliographies.

These minor criticisms aside, we should celebrate the appearance of such a wide-ranging, erudite, and valuable work, one that surely will contribute vital compass points and rhumb-lines to any new-look map of medieval allegory.

ALFRED HIATT

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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