Leeds Studies in English

New Series XXXIII

2002

Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
2002

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Leeds, England

ISSN 0075-8566

Contents

The Images and Structure of *The Wife's Lament*

Alaric Hall

The Wife's Lament (hereafter *WfL*) has proved enigmatic for the best part of two centuries, and remains so. But critical perspectives on the poem continue to shift, and shed new light as they do so. For many years, scholars were principally concerned to unpick, through various means, the poem's allusive narrative first half, coping with even such fundamental issues as the number of men to whom *WfL*'s speaker refers. However, most of those who have looked at *WfL* recently have concentrated on its more lyric second half, recognising that ignorance as to why the speaker is where she is, and indeed precisely what she is lamenting, does not deny us the appreciation of that lament's literary force. But it remains the case that the speaker's story is important to that appreciation, and the question of how many men are involved in her story is still fundamental. Michael Lapidge recently viewed the landscape depicted in *WfL*'s second half as 'an object correlative of the speaker's emotions', suggesting that

> Those critics who have attempted to visualise the relative positioning of the oak-tree and the cave have been frustrated, for the simple reason that the poet is describing a mental landscape, not a physical one; in its loneliness and desolation it is a visible embodiment of the narrator's invisible grief.[1]

Emily Jensen has even argued that

> From these literal associations [of *eorðscræf*] we are left with a female speaker in "The Wife's Lament" who is either dead and speaking from the grave or is alive and living in a cave . . . I am not convinced . . . that either occurs in "The Wife's Lament".[2]

I do not deny the effectiveness of *WfL*'s imagery as a metaphor for the speaker's state

of mind, nor the value of viewing the poem from a 'lyric' perspective. Indeed, focusing on the 'lyric' passage can offer means to help understand the preceding narrative passages: although some have recently been usefully adduced, there are numerous close analogues for the poem's imagery which have yet to be discussed in its context – offering not the literal associations of landscape which Jensen discards, but an approach to the literary ones which, it appears, the Anglo-Saxon audience knew.[3] These analogues, I think, can shed considerable light on how we should understand both the imagery of *WfL*, and its narrative.

A further source of evidence for understanding *WfL* is its manuscript context, particularly the manuscript pointing.[4] Tentative though one must be in reading the Exeter Book's punctuation, this can offer evidence for how we should attempt to read the poem's syntactic and formal structure, giving us perspectives on how we should understand it both in terms of its aesthetics and narrative.

We may frame our understanding of *WfL* as a woman's lament with Anglo-Saxon and English analogues, both verbal and thematic, dating from before and after *WfL*'s extant text. Pre-dating the Exeter Book is the right-hand panel of the Franks Casket, conventionally dated to the eighth century; the depiction on the panel 'has not been interpreted'.[5] Fiona and Richard Gameson have noted the casket in this connection, but the analogue has yet to receive close consideration.[6] The panel's inscription was edited by R. I. Page:

Her Hos sitiþ on harmberga
agl[.] drigiþ swa hiræ Ertae gisgraf
sarden sorga and sefa torna.

Page tentatively translated this as 'Here Hos sits on the sorrow-mound; she suffers distress in that Ertae had decreed for her a wretched den (?wood) of sorrows and torments of mind'. Interpretation is not straightforward – Page himself offers a subtly different alternative, and, for example, Hilda Ellis Davison pointed out that the first six runes could, on textual bases, be read just as well as *herh-os* ('a temple-deity') – but this seems essentially the most plausible explanation.[7]

The image of this inscription immediately resonates with *WfL*'s depiction of a woman who has been commanded to 'wunian on wuda bearwe / under actreo in þam eorðscræfe' ('dwell in a wooded grove / under an oak-tree, in the cave'), and although Page translated 'on harmberga' as 'on the sorrow-mound', it could also mean '*in* the sorrow-mound'.[8] The central scene of the panel is a horse, surrounded by foliage, standing on one side of what appears to be a mound, looking across to the face of a

man on the other side. The mound has a small figure inside it. However, on the far left hand side of the panel is a bestial human-figure sitting on a mound. Which mound the inscription refers to is clarified by the fact that each panel of the casket is designed either with an even bipartite division, or the referent of its inscription in the middle. The central figure of the right-hand panel, then, would seem to be Hos – *in* the sorrow-mound, just like the speaker of *WfL*.

There are a few words besides the main inscription, of which Page's summary should be sufficient: 'Above the horse's back is the word "risci" which ought to mean "rush, reed"; beneath its belly is "wudu", "wood"; over its head is "bita" which may be the name of the horse (Biter) or of the man facing it'.[9] *Wudu* is of course a further detail which is present in *WfL*, perhaps reflected also in the carved foliage. A less clear link between the two texts is the element *-den*. Neither horse nor any other association with *denn*'s common meaning, 'den, lair (of an animal)', is present in *WfL*.[10] However, *denn* is also twice attested as 'grave' – an ambiguity reminiscent of *WfL*'s *eorðscræf*, which has a meaning of 'grave' secondary to its primary meaning of 'cave'. It is possible, moreover, that *WfL*'s speaker is in a sacred grove, so it is interesting that *denn* is once used to gloss *lucum* ('a wood, grove, or thicket of trees sacred to a deity'), and that there is evidence for the association of horses and sacred groves elsewhere among the Germanic peoples.[11] Tacitus in *Germania* chapter 10 associated horses with sacred groves:

> proprium gentis equorum quoque praesagia ac monitus experiri. publice aluntur isdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi et nullo mortali opere contacti[12]
> [But their [the Germans'] special divination is to make trial of the omens and warnings furnished by horses. In the same groves and coppices are fed certain white horses, never soiled by mortal use.]

A similar association appears in the Eddaic poem *Hlöðskviða*, preserved in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*, but reckoned to be among the earliest eddaic poetry: 'var . . . í Húnalandi . . . mari vel tǫmum / á mǫrk inni helgu' ('There was . . . in the Hun-Kingdom . . . horse well-broken / in the holy forest').[13]

As Battles has shown, the figure of the female lover being banished, or sent for sanctuary, to a subterranean location also appears in Middle English poetry, in *Sir Tristrem* and, portrayed at greater length than in Wace's *Roman de Brut*, in Laȝamon's *Brut*. Tristrem and Ysonde flee from King Mark to an 'erþe house' in a forest; King Locrine's lover Astrild is installed as his concubine in a luxurious cave outside

London.[14] Battles has chosen to see this figure in rather prosaic terms, noting numerous examples of the use of souterrains for sanctuary in Nordic prose; but its presence on the casket and in *WfL* surely represents a topos, and Hos's *harmberg* seems unlikely to be a souterrain. This combined evidence makes it likely that an Anglo-Saxon audience, presented with a woman *in eorðscræfe*, would immediately have in mind a set of associations of love, banishment, paganism and sanctuary, regardless of any historical use of souterrains.

Middle English poetry also offers a remarkable verbal analogue for *WfL*. Among the earliest surviving Middle English secular lyrics is the well known *chanson d'aventure*, *Nu springes the sprai*, which involves a woman's lament. Its manuscript dates from around 1300. At the end of the first stanza, the lamenting *mai* cries 'Wai es him I louue-l[on]gi[n]ge / Sal libben ai' ('Woe is to the one who must live forever in love-longing').[15] This parallels *WfL* 52b-53, 'wa bið þam þe sceal / of langoþe leofes abidan' ('Woe must be to the one who must / in longing await love/a loved one'). *Nu springes* has a close Old French analogue, but 'Wai es him I louue-l[on]gi[n]ge / Sal libben ai' is unique to the English poem; moreover, taking *-e* in the text to be silent, these lines scan as an Old English alliterative line.[16] It would appear to represent an element of a vernacular English *frauenlied* or 'lover's lament' form, surfacing in the surviving corpus only here and in *WfL*.

Comparable findings have been made by Joseph Harris, looking at earlier Germanic poetry. Harris perhaps put excessive weight on this, arguing for a common Germanic elegiac form, but this emphasis need not detract from some of his observations. He notes that 'The OE poem [*WfL*], like the German one [*Hildebrandslied*], focuses on the deserted woman's dwelling place' (as does the Franks Casket). He also found that 'There seems to be a significant bond . . . between the scene of elegiac discourse and the verb "to sit"', which we see in *WfL* 37.[17] The figure appears in *Wulf and Eadwacer*, of course: 'þonne hit wæs renig weder ond ic reotugu sæt·' ('Then it was rainy weather and I sat weeping'). Besides in *Hildebrandslied*, there are several examples in the Poetic Edda, including *Oddrúnargrátr* (stanza 13) and *Guðrúnarhvöt* (stanza 9); there are impersonal and men's instances in *Deor* (lines 24, 28), and the themes of sitting and elegy are also present on the Franks casket. This evidence is a strong indicator that *WfL* is what its text, to modern readers, implies it to be: a vernacular woman's love-lament – though one with a substantial narrative content. It also suggests that intrinsic to the poem's fabric was a network of figures and phrases associated with such a form, invisible outside the vernacular context.

Before trying to reconstruct this context further, however, we must consider whether *WfL* was intended to stand alone, or if it was intended for an audience who

already knew the story to which it alludes. One could, in favour of the former idea, invoke the influence of material such as the *Song of Songs*, or Latin love-lyrics represented by the eleventh century Anglo-Saxon *Cambridge Songs* collection.[18] This material contains lovers' laments which seem to allude to a narrative, but which nonetheless are in contexts where there is no such narrative. However, it seems more likely that *WfL*'s audience was expected to know the story; that such stories were in circulation is demonstrated by the Franks Casket. *WfL* line 9, the largely baffling 'þa ic me feran gewat folgað secan' ('Then/when I departed to go to seek (a) *folgað*') might be explicable by Latin influence, but its striking use of *folgað*, which 'appears to have been a legal term in OE, denoting the service due by a retainer to his lord', would be a very odd element to introduce unless in allusion to a known event; and the line can hardly be swept under the carpet, resonating as it does with lines 6 and 18 ('ærest min hlaford gewat heonan of leodum' and 'ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde').[19] Two interpretations of the events of line 9 are that the speaker sought the protection afforded by a lord-retainer relationship, or sought a euphemistically described lover; in either case, a measure of special pleading is necessary to get round contextual or semantic problems, and this seems best provided by assuming a narrative known to the poem's intended audience. *WfL*, like many of the lyrical poems of the Poetic Edda, was intended to be understood in a narrative context; and allusion thereto was clearly an important part of the poem.[20]

Let us look more closely at *WfL*'s lyric imagery. The speaker's environment is depicted in lines 30-32a as

dena dimme duna uphea	dim dales, tall hills,
bitre burgtunas brerum beweaxne	bitter *burgtunas* overgrown with briars,
wic wynna leas	a home without joys.

As I have said, the 'object-correlative' approach to this, whereby the speaker's gloomy surroundings are a pathetic fallacy, is reasonable and useful. 'It could', indeed, 'be said that her mind, like the surrounding valleys is *dimme* and *brerum beweaxne*'.[21] It is also the case that the briars are unique in surviving Old English poetry. Leslie noted that 'Briars, thorns and brambles are similarly used as elegiac motifs in early Welsh and Irish poetry'; another parallel would be Gawain's description of the Green Chapel in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 2190: 'Þis oritore is vgly, with erbez ouergrowen'.[22] The evidence for interaction between Anglo-Saxon and Celtic vernacular poetries is slight, and the image can certainly be taken as a polygenetic representation of long-term human abandonment, bearing a pathetic fallacy. On the

other hand, it is at least of interest that the other associations of the Green Chapel – which is a mound in the wilderness, 'holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue' ('hollow within, just an old cave', line 2182), the 'corsedest kyrk' ('most accursed church', line 2196), and a fitting place for the appearance of the devil (lines 2185-2196) – correlate rather well with other associations which may be established for the description of the speaker's location quoted.

It is important in this context to recognise that images focusing on landbound natural scenes are very rare in Old English poetry; while, nonetheless, line 30 has an Old English analogue in *The Pheonix* lines 21-26. This describes Paradise with, amongst other statements:

beorgas þær ne muntas	Neither hills nor mountains
steape ne stondað ne stan clifu	stand there, steep, nor do stone-cliffs
heah hlifiað swa her mid us	tower high, as here among us,
ne dene ne dalu ne dun scrafu	nor valleys nor dales nor dim hollows,
hlæwas ne hlincas ne þær hleonað	mounds nor rises, nor does any rough thing
'oo' unsmeþes wiht	thing lie there.

All this translates Lactantius's 'Nec tumulus crescit nec cava vallis hiat' ('Neither mound rises nor does hollow valley gape'), and while such expansion is not uncommon in *The Pheonix*, the poet's interest in this scene is still worthy of note.[23] To this comparison may be added the possible connotations of 'wic wynna leas', paralleled later in *WfL* in the speaker's description of her *freond* as remembering a 'wynlicran wic' ('more joyful home'). Phrases comparable to these occur twice elsewhere in the Old English corpus, in *Beowulf* line 821 and *Genesis A* line 928. *Beowulf*'s 'wynleas wic' ('joyless home') refers to Grendel's home, widely supposed to represent a hell-on-earth, and *Genesis*'s 'wynleasran wic' ('more joyless home') describes the world to which Adam, fallen from paradise, is to be banished. Perspectives on *dimme* are offered by Jean Ritzke-Rutherford:

> In keeping with the natural psychological and metaphysical associations coupled with light and darkness . . . and firmly anchored in Biblical and homiletic writing, light in OE poetry is equated with good, while darkness stands for evil and even death.[24]

These parallels to lines 30-32a give us the context in which the speaker's location seems to have been understood – it seems rather precisely to be an anti-paradise,

connoting hell. To one person, the lines could have been primarily Christian images; to another, perhaps, traditional images whose Christian associations were secondary; but either way, the essential idea seems clear.

The *bitre burgtunas* have recently been re-examined by P. R. Orton, and there is little point in raking over the various suggestions as to what they may be. Orton chose to read *burg* as 'home', thus 'bitter home-enclosures' ('home' being ironic).[25] But to read the compound literally, as 'bitter defence-enclosures', may be perfectly appropriate, if the speaker's unpleasant location is also her sanctuary. Whatever the meaning of the compound, this literal interpretation would work as paronomasia. However, the fact that Hos was 'on harmberga', 'in/on a sorrow-hill/barrow', provides an important analogue for the *bitre burgtunas*.[26] *Burg* and *be(o)rg* were often confused in Late West Saxon; to cite some poetic examples, *Exodus* uses *burhhleoðu* (line 70) of the wall of water, and *burgum* (line 222) as 'hills', and recent editors read *burghleoþum* in *Riddle 27* (line 2) as 'mountain slopes'.[27] 'Bitter barrow-enclosures' is a simple and appropriate reading of *bitre burgtunas*, in a stroke removing the difficulties of the compound and illuminating the character of the *eorðscrafu* in which the speaker situates herself.

It may be that we can improve our understanding of *burgtunas*, moreover, by noting the context which the speaker gives it in lines 15 and 27:

het mec hlaford min	her/heard niman	My lord commanded me to *her/heard niman*
heht mec mon wunian	on wuda bearwe	A person commanded me to dwell in a wooded grove

Her/heard (crossing a line break in the manuscript) is a notorious crux, and its meaning is important to interpreting *WfL*'s narrative. There is no need to rehearse the debate over its meaning, which is ongoing;[28] only to note that an attractive and common reading is *herh-eard*, hypothesising a compound of an Anglian smoothed form of the attested West-Saxon *hearh/he(a)rg*, 'a place sacred to a god, with an idol and an altar . . . a grove', and the construction *eard niman*, 'to take up an abode'.[29]

One well-known context for a *herg* is that of *Beowulf*, lines 3071-73. The Geats swear

þæt se secg wære	synnum scildig	that that man should be guilty with sins
hergum geheaðerod	hellbendum fæst	confined to hergs, to fast hell-bonds,
wommum gewitnad	se ðone wong	tormented with evils, who plundered that

strude[30] place.

For these hellish connotations to be found in *WfL* would be wholly consonant with the other evidence regarding the speaker's location. The combination of mound, sacred place and sanctuary is also attested in history, in a runic inscription at Oklunda in Östergötland (southern Sweden). The inscription, apparently dating from the ninth century, was cut on a rock on a knoll.[31] The latter part of the inscription is obscure, but the opening reads: **kunar : faþirunaʀþisaʀ : insa flausakaʀ : sutiuiþita**. That is, *Gunnarr faði runar þessar. En sa flo sakr. Sotti vi þetta . . .*, translated by Jansson (himself translated by Foote) to mean 'Gunnar cut these runes. And he fled under penalty. Sought this sanctuary. . .'.[32] Southern Sweden was geographically distant from Anglo-Saxon England, but the lands were culturally close, both in origin, and as part of the North Sea littoral. Indeed, on the evidence of *Beowulf*, the eyes of Anglo-Saxon poets were fastly on that region.

These considerations, then, may inform us about the general location of the speaker of *WfL*. Her remaining comments on her abode stress two further elements: the *actreo* and the *eorðscræf*, first mentioned in line 28, and then reiterated in 36, both times in clear association. It is very hard to dismiss this as Lapidge's 'mental landscape' – it is too specific and its implications as a 'visible embodiment of the narrator's invisible grief' too obscure. As I have already suggested, it is also hard to understand it by Battles's literal approach: 'Some critics have read this [*herheard*] as an indication that the structure is a pagan shrine, but there is a more humbly realistic reason why the narrator might emphasise the trees, namely because they are dominant features of the landscape surrounding her dwelling'.[33] This may be so; but she does not emphasise the trees, but rather *an oaktree*, under which the *eorðscræf* lies. So let us explore the literary associations of these elements, and their coupling.

The semantics of *eorðscræf* have been extensively studied, so I shall not go over them again here.[34] The speaker also refers to the place with 'eald is þes eorðsele' ('this earth-hall is old'). The character of an *eorðsele* has been considered by Hume, who found the 'earth-hall' here to be an 'anti-hall' – it thus behaves contrariwise to the hall in Old English poetry, which represents 'a circle of light and peace enclosed by darkness, discomfort and danger' and 'the social system associated with it'.[35] *Eald* must have been meant to add to or modify these associations. Leslie argued that the word implies the *eorðsele* to be man-made, and the *eorðsele* in *Beowulf* (the word's only other attestation) and Tristrem's *erþe house* are both portrayed as the products of a civilisation long past and mysterious: 'Etenes bi old dayn / Had wrouȝt it' ('Giants in old days had made it'; cf. *Beowulf* lines 2717b-2719).[36] Significantly, both poems

emphasise hereby the caves' pre-Christian origins. The speaker's cave in *WfL* seems, then, to be not any old anti-hall, but one with a concise pointer to these further associations, of the hellish, and the time before Christianity.

The collocation of the *actreo* and *eorðscræf* would remain obscure, but for their striking analogues, not only from Nordic prose and Middle English, but the Bible and the Poetic Edda; though, admittedly, *WfL* is the only instance where precisely these two elements are specifically combined, so interpreting the collocation must remain difficult. S. A. J. Bradley has observed that 'The oak . . . is confined mainly to the Old Testament, where it is regularly associated with sanctuaries, altars and graves, or symbolises worldly splendour humbled in the day of the Lord's retribution'.[37] 'Regularly associated' is excessive – there are, for example, only two instances of graves at oak trees (Genesis 35. 8; I Chronicles 10. 12), though cave-burials are also found (e.g. Genesis 49. 29). Even so, all the associations Bradley lists are present, some fitting particularly well into the context of *WfL*. Ezekiel 6. 13 says that

> fuerint interfecti vestri in medio idolorum vestrorum in circuitu ararum vestrarum in omni colle excelso in cunctis summitatibus montium et subtus omne lignum nemorosum et subtus universam quercum frondosam locum ubi accenderunt tura redolentia universis idolis suis[38]
>
> [your slain men will have been among your idols, round about your altars on every high hill, in all the tops of mountains and beneath every leafy tree and beneath every leafy oak, the place where they offered pungent incense to all their idols.]

Caves also feature widely in the Old Testament as dwellings and places of escape; indeed, when Lot flees Zoar to dwell in a cave (Genesis 19. 30), *Genesis A* uses *eorðscræf* (line 2597). Oak-trees could also be associated with legitimate altars (e.g. Joshua 24. 26), but otherwise these references demonstrate a similar range of associations to those which we might already suppose in *WfL* – of pagan religion, and refuge. An audience with no more than a knowledge of *Genesis* could have perceived the location of *WfL*'s speaker largely in Biblical terms to be associated with damnable ways of life, though, that said, I see no reason to seek here distinct 'pagan' or 'Christian' layers in *WfL*: each may have taken on elements of the other, in the poetic tradition, or in individual members of the poem's audience.

The possibility of a direct line of Biblical influence on Old English poetry is clear.[39] Comparisons between Old English poetry and the Poetic Edda are more

hazardous. Even so, links are clear – verbally, for example, between *The Seafarer* (lines 72-73) and *The Wanderer* (lines 108-09) and *Hávamál* (stanzas 76-77); and thematically, perhaps most strikingly, between *Deor* (1-13), the Franks Casket and *Völundarkviða*.[40] How far such connections should be perceived as being cognate, and how far due to later sharing of ideas between the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians is a significant consideration; but the presence of links remains sure, and hopefully sufficient for the present purpose.

In the *Poetic Edda*, subterranean locations are associated with prophetesses and giantesses, and also with death (*Völuspá* stanza 66, *Baldrs Draumar* 2, *Hyndluljóð* 1 and *Helreið Brynhildar* 1, 3, 14). More strikingly, the analogues also associate places of death with the roots of a tree, twice with regard to giantesses. One, as Orton pointed out, is *Skírnismál*. In the course of thirteen stanzas of threats which Skírnir extends in his attempts to woo Gerðr for Freyr, Skírnir suggests that

Ara þúfo á	On an eagle's mound
scaltu ár sitia,	you shall sit from early morning,
horva heimi ór,	looking out of the world,
snugga heliar til	hankering towards hell
Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs,	Hrimgrimnir is the name of the giant
er þic hafa scal,	who'll have you
fyr nágrindr neðan;	down below the corpse-gates,
þar þér vílmegir	where bondsmen will give you
á viðar rótom	at the roots of the wood
geita hland gefi!	goat's piss to drink.
(Stanzas 27, 35)[41]	

Another parallel is provided by *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* stanza 16, in which Atli curses the giantess Hrímgerðr:

nío rǫstom	You ought to be nine leagues
er þú scyldir neðarr vera,	underground
oc vaxi þér á baðmi barr!	with fir-trees growing from your breast!

Much the same association occurs in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*. Hervör goes to the burial mound of her father Angantýr, declaring

Vek ek yðr alla	From the roots of the tree
undir viðar rótum.[42]	I arouse you all

The associations of trees and the subterranean in the Poetic Edda seem to be death, and curses upon females; and their own nature implies that the topos has pagan associations. Admittedly, the females in question are rarely human, and it is the trees' roots which are emphasised, but presumably the analogy with Old English poetry stands – the associations are quite consonant with the material from the Franks Casket. Combining the Biblical material and previous discussions, we may tentatively suppose that in *WfL* the speaker's location was envisaged as caves within a burial mound, or at least a mound to which the poem is trying to give connotations of death, surrounded by an enclosure which is overgown with briars. The place had associations with paganism, set in a dim landscape of almost hellish grimness. As Ritzke-Rutherford has said, 'If the greatest joy of poets and Christians is the brightness of Paradise, the greatest loss of the damned is to be cut off from that light'.[43]

But none of this quite accounts for *WfL*'s insistence upon an *actreo*. Unfortunately, there is only one comparable Eddaic instance of an oak-tree, which Kershaw adduced from stanza six of the Flateyjarbók text of *Helreið Brynhildar*:[44]

Lét mig af harmi	In sorrow the courageous king
hugfullr konungr	made me,
Atla systur	the sister of Atli,
undir æik búa[45]	to dwell beneath an oak

along with its generally preferred memorial variant from the *Codex Regius*,

Lét hami vára	The wise king had our
hugfullr konungr,	magic garments –
átta systra,	eight sisters we were together –
undir eic borit	put under an oak.

In contrast with the material of the Franks Casket, this seems to point towards the speaker's oak-tree as primarily a place of sanctuary, rather than banishment – though, of course, the two phenomena may be closely associated, in both narrative and emotional terms. Likewise, sanctuary is the principal force of Battles's Nordic analogues, and, as it seems to me, his Middle English analogues too.

These analogues are crucial to interpreting *WfL*'s narrative. Banishment might

obviously be explained by adultery, if ingenuity overcomes the suggestion that both *hlaford* and *mon* would seem to banish the speaker to the same place; whereas placing the speaker in sanctuary would be more simply understood as the deed of one, concerned, husband.[46] Admittedly, the lost story is not guaranteed to have been as simple as these suggestions imply; but to aim for simplicity is a sound policy from which to start. *WfL*'s predominantly narrative first half, wherein further perspectives on this problem can be found, is hard to interpret, and debate as to how the poem should be verse-paragraphed, its sentences divided, and their sequence interpreted, fill its critical history. As an example, let us note lines 9-11:

> ða ic me feran gewat folgað secan
> wineleas wræcca for minre weaþearfe·
> ongunnon þæt þæs monnes magas hycgan

Should *ða* here be taken to imply '*When* on account of my woeful plight I went wandering, a friendless exile, to find a following, the man's kindred plotted . . .', or '*Then* I set out on my way, friendless and homeless to seek for support in my sore need. // The man's relatives had secretly cast about . . .'?[47] This is a problem to which I shall return.

WfL's larger structure is likewise problematical, but there are two points of consensus. One is the discreteness of lines 1-5, defined by the aural envelope of *wrece . . . sið* (lines 1-2) and *wræcsiþa* (line 5); the fact that the first four lines are a syntactic and thematic unit, with 5 a complimentary gnomic statement; and the contrast between the present tenses of 1-5 and the preterites which follow. Scholars also agree that 42-53 are a unit. They end with *langoþe*, which parallels *longaþes* in 41; and they comprise a shift from the speaker's (indicative) description of her own present situation, to some kind of (partly subjunctive) portrayal of *geong mon*, *min freond*, enveloped by two gnomes. With these divisions, however, consensus ends. To survey three interpretations: Richard Hamer grouped lines 6-26 and 27-41; S. A. J. Bradley divided this further, into 6-14, 15-26 and 27-41; while R. F. Leslie, perhaps wisely, avoided crystallising the structure by allowing the text numerous divisions: 6-14, 15-17, 18-26, 27-29 and 30-41, interpreted by D. R. Howlett to imply 'a prologue of five lines (1-5) and four sections of twelve lines'.[48]

One approach to reading *WfL*'s structure which does not demand the prejudging of the lost narrative is to examine aurally and semantically interrelating lines, as did Jane L. Curry, though she did not push her observations as far as she might.[49] But another is to adduce the poem's manuscript punctuation. This is not, of course, a

simple matter – the pointings of the Exeter Book seem to be used in a bewildering variety of syntactic contexts, but are clearly not intended merely to mark the metre as they do in the Junius manuscript, being too infrequent. Even so, an understanding of the punctuation can be approached. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe offered as a hypothetical general principle, 'a point means a pause. Use whenever necessary'.[50] M. B. Parkes, in a wider context, has also argued that 'Medieval scribes and correctors punctuate where confusion is likely to arise . . . and do not always punctuate where confusion is not likely to arise'.[51] Pointings fall in *WfL* lines 8, 10, 14, 17, 22, 28, 29, 37 and 40. Apart from that in 37, they each fall at the end of a b-verse. The majority could be read as modern full stops, though not those in 22, 37, and 40, which should be considered first.

Line 37 runs 'þær ic sittam mot sumorlangne· dæg' ('There I may sit the summer-long day'). The pointing here is hard to attribute to anything other than a mistake. It might be explained by the fact that *-langne* is written over an erasure, which has left a large gap after the word, into which the scribe might have inserted the point by way of a space-filler, or mark of error. Whatever its interpretation, however, it seems unlikely to bear on how we should read the line.

The point in line 22 may be considered in the context of 21b-23:

ful oft wit beotedan	Often indeed the two of us vowed
þæt unc ne gedælde nemne deað ana·	that nothing should part us except death alone·
owiht elles eft is þæt onhworfen	nothing else. Again has it changed

O'Keeffe has suggested that the Exeter Book punctuation lacks a 'system', being instead 'text-specific', based on a 'rhetorical understanding'.[52] This is reasonable, but probably not entirely true. The point in line 22 is probably explicable as one of several occasions in the codex where a parenthetical half-line at the end of a sentence (here *owiht elles*) is preceded by a point, as in *Vainglory* lines 64-65, *Judgement Day I* lines 1-2, and, to quote, *The Seafarer* 79-80:

awa to ealdre ecan lifes blæd·	for ever and ever the glory of eternal life·
dream mid duge/þum dagas sind gewitene[53]	joy among companies. Days have departed

The point at the end of line 40 seems simply to be a rhetorical pause without the finality of a full stop:

forþon ic æfre ne mæg	Therefore I can never
þære modceare minre gerestan·	rest from that spirit-trouble of mine·
ne ealles þæs longaþes þe mec on þissum life begeat	nor from all the longing which (has) seized me in this life

Of the other pointings, several coincide with aurally resonant lines, emphasising O'Keeffe's linking of the pointings with rhetorical pauses. Lines 9 and 18, which parallel the verse-paragraph opening in 6, follow points; likewise, line 14's *longade*, seen elsewhere in *WfL* to be an ending-word, is immediately followed by a point. Line 29, 'eald is þes eorðsele eal ic eom oflongad' ('This earth-hall is old; I suffer longing throughout myself'), is followed by a point, and can be read as a conclusive line, especially given its gnomic tone.

Reading these points as something like full stops, the text can be seen to demarcate the episodic progression of lines 6-17. Reading the points thus, and assuming that the episodes are in chronological order (they open, after all, with *ærest*, followed in the next section by *ða*), difficulty in interpreting, for example, lines 9-11 (quoted above), is apparently resolved, the pointing dividing 9-10 from 11 and following. The speaker's lord departed and she suffered *uhtceare* ('troubles in the twilight-before-dawn') over his whereabouts. Then she set off because of her *wealþearf* (woeful-need). *Þæs monnes* ('that person's') kinsmen began to plot that the two be parted; *and mec longade* ('and I suffered longing'). Her lord commanded her to *her/heard niman*; *forþon is min hyge geomor* ('therefore is my heart sorrowful').

It is possible to push the evidence of pointing further. At the end of line 17 (*forþon is min hyge geomor*), with the ends of the metrical and manuscript lines almost coinciding, the scribe placed 17's point squarely in the middle of the eleven millimetres left to him, and wrote *ða*, the first word of line 18, on the next line. Admittedly, *ða* as written covers a centimetre, so one cannot make too much of the detail; but the manuscript's declaration of a break after line 17 remains visually striking. This emphasises Howlett's passing suggestion that, in our text of *WfL*, the verse-paragraph following the prologue was intended to be read as 6-17 – twelve lines – and that one can read 6-53 as four twelve-line verse-paragraphs. Line 29, the last of the second twelve-line group, happens also to be the last line on the recto, ending with the manuscript line. The break at 42 is, as I have described, evident enough without punctuation. Aurally, this arrangement is effective. It divides the poem into stanzas of past tense – past tense – present tense – present tense. Line 15's *Het mec hlaford* . . . parallels line 27's *heht mec mon* . . . , each introducing a three-line coda to its stanza. The two lists characterising a *mon* (lines 18-21a and 42-45b) may now

be read each to comprise the first four lines of a verse-paragraph.[54]

Admittedly, however, this sort of stanzaic form is not the norm for the surviving Old English poetry. In a way, this supports the reading: a scribe has inserted pointings where the unusualness of the form might confuse the reader. However, with our uncertainty regarding the intended functions of the pointings, some other evidence is required. Certainly, *WfL* is not stanzaic in the same way that *Deor* is, with its irregular stanzas, each opened with a capital and concluded with a gnomic refrain and heavy manuscript punctuation. Nor is it much like the *Rune Poem*, with its 3- and 4-line stanzas. But a strong comparison is afforded by *The Wanderer*, which has a five-line introduction ending with a gnomic phrase, and can be read in four very nearly equal sections (lines 1-29a; 29b-57; 58-84; 85-115).[55] *The Wanderer* includes its introduction in its count, but is nonetheless closely analogous to the structure of *WfL* which I read.

This reading again has implications for our understanding of the story to which the speaker alludes. It may help to crystallise the meaning of *ða* in line 18, 'ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde' ('*ða* I found myself a fully matched person') – 'then' or 'when'? In simpler circumstances than those of *WfL*, one would assume 'when', as the placing of the verb at the end of a phrase is usually associated with subordinate clauses.[56] If line 18 were to be associated with the episodic progression that has gone before, by dividing the verse-paragraphs later, or, say, at line 15, then it might best be included as a 'then', perhaps giving a scheme like this: 'first my lord departed . . . then I set out . . . relatives began to consider . . . my lord commanded me to dwell . . . *then* I found myself a fully matched person . . .'. But the stanzaic structure favours 'when'. The narrative scheme of stanza one, starting with the lord's departure and ending with the speaker's banishment, concludes. The narrator then focuses on her relationship with her *hlaford*, starting 'when' 'ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde'. This eliminates the difficulty which may be had in perceiving one character to be referred to so contrastively as both *hlaford* and *mon* – assuming that both parties had to meet before they could enter the relationship whereby the man should be a *hlaford*, then the speaker can do little but refer to him as a *mon* at this contrastively early juncture in her story.[57]

According to this reading, one can consider *WfL*'s prologue a stanza-by-stanza synopsis of the rest of the poem.[58] Here is the prologue in full:

Ic þis giedd wrece bi me ful geomorre	I declare this poem about myself
minre sylfre sið Ic þæt secgan mæg	completely sad, my self's journey. I can say it,
hwæt ic yrmþa gebad siþþan ic up weox	what I have experienced of hardships since I

niwes oþþe ealdes no ma þonne nu	grew up, *niwes oþþe ealdes*, no more than now.
a ic wite wonn minra wræcsiþa	Always must I suffer the torment of my exile-journeys.

The declarations that the speaker is *ful geomorre*, and that she means to speak *minre sylfre sið*, tell the audience that she is a woman, but prompt them to wonder why she is *geomor*, and what has been her *sið*. Accordingly, in the first stanza (6-17), she answers them, with the story of her misfortunes. 'Forþon', she explains, 'is min hyge geomor'. In stanza two (18-29) she becomes more specific, as in lines 2b-4a. The implications of 'siþþan ic up weox' are unclear; it could simply mean 'since I grew up', but it could plausibly be a euphemism for her marriage.[59] Either way, it points to a time of or before the speaker's union with her *hlaford*, thus before the events of stanza one. 'Niwes oþþe ealdes' is a slightly odd formulation – *niwra oþþe ealdra* ('new or old') would have been the more obvious way of qualifying *yrmþa gebad*. As it stands, the phrase could be read to mean 'of a new man or an old man'. However, I would read it as an adverbial phrase meaning 'recently or of old'.[60] Genitives are almost certainly adverbial in *londes* in line 8 and in *feorres folclondes* in lines 46b-47a, so there is nothing intrinsically unlikely about the adverbial reading.[61] 'Niwes oþþe ealdes' ties in with the second stanza: lines 24-25a, 'is nu swa hit no wære / freondscipe uncer' ('the friendship of the two of us / is now as though it never were') points with *nu* towards the recent past; while line 18, 'ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde' ('when I found myself a fully matched man'), I would argue, implies a more distant past. This is then contrasted with a statement of the speaker's present – in the introduction with 'no ma þonne nu' ('no more than now'), and in the poem with the third stanza (30-41), the vivid vignette of how things *sindon* ('are'). Finally, the introduction makes its gnomic declaration of 'a ic wite wonn minra wræcsiþa' ('I have always suffered the torment of my exile-journeys'), paralleled by the gnomic lines in stanza four (42-53), which, though not explicitly regarding the speaker, implicitly represent her feelings.

Combining these considerations, then – punctuation, structure, and analogues – I should like finally to re-examine the second half of the poem, the third and fourth stanzas. I have examined above stanza three's portrayal of the speaker's location; elsewhere in the stanza, the speaker concentrates less on her location and more on her feelings, and the poetry, for a modern reader, seems to speak more for itself. This is perhaps deceptive – it is likely that the Anglo-Saxon audience could recognise and appreciate the speaker's adoption of appropriate elegiac (indeed perhaps women's elegiac) postures, as in *sittam* in lines 37-38:

þær ic sittam mot	sumorlangne· dæg	There I may sit the summer-long· day
þær ic wepan mæg	mine wræcsiþas	There I am able to weep (for) my exile-journeys.

Jensen has argued that with the turning of its thoughts to other lovers in 'frynd sind on eorþan / leofe lifgende leger weardiað' in lines 33b-34, and the motion implied in 'þonne ic on uhtan ana gonge / under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu' ('then I wander alone in the twilight-before-dawn / under an oaktree throughout these caves') in lines 35-36, the speaker's mind frees itself from the machinations of external forces, leading in stanza four to a 'mind in control of itself, able to "resist its surroundings"' – only without 'the philosophic overlay of *Sfr* [*The Seafarer*] or *Wan* [*The Wanderer*]'.[62] Jensen's reading is not unattractive. Kershaw noted regarding 'sumorlangne· dæg' that 'Imelmann believes that a contrast to *uhtan* is intended'.[63] This, read in conjuntion with the earlier *dimme*, implies a progression from night to day, and dark into light. However, other considerations militate against the reading. In the first place, 'Frynd sind on eorþan . . .' is not to be taken unquestioningly to mean 'friends are on the earth, / living beloved they lie in beds' (as Jensen takes it), since it could also mean 'friends are in the earth, / beloved while living, they lie in graves'. Critics of *WfL* have consistently taken one or the other of these readings, as Jensen does, and ignored the alternative possibility, despite the fact that both interpretations have been in publication since 1859.[64] However, the uncertainty seems now to have been resolved: Kathryn A. Lowe's detailed semantic and syntactic study has shown that the reading which Jensen chooses here is in fact implausible, and that the line must mean, to quote her translation, 'There are friends, dear ones dwelling in the earth, they inhabit graves'.[65] I have emphasised the likely associations of caves under trees, while Jensen herself recognises that *on uhtan* is a 'conventional image of . . . the time when one's sorrow is at its peak'; moreover, wandering seems also to be an elegiac motif.[66] This combination, then, seems unlikely to have symbolised a progression towards stoicism to a vernacular audience. Far more striking to my mind is the characterisation in the ironic use of *motan* and *magan* in lines 37-38 – a tone of bitterness and anger which is not philosophical, but does toughen a lament which could have become self-pitying.

The speaker ends this verse-paragraph with lines 39b-41:

forþon ic æfre ne mæg	Therefore I can never
þære modceare minre gerestan·	rest from that spirit-trouble of mine·
ne ealles þæs longaþes þe mec on þissum life begeat	nor from all the longing which (has) seized me in this life

The last line is desperately crowded – its b-line contains the largest number of initial unstressed syllables apparently permitted in Old English metre, all of which are short and none of which except perhaps *mec* has even very great lexical stress to slow the line down.[67] The line contains significant extra-metrical alliteration and assonance, on *þ*, *l*, and *ea*, and is apparently emphasised by the punctuation. While caution is required in making assumptions about Old English rhetorical style, this line certainly does not seem calm, and can easily be supposed to be desperate.

It is after this that the speaker's thoughts really turn outwards, for the last passage of the poem (lines 42-53). Now she considers the situation of another person. The stanza begins with

a scyle geong mon wesan geomormod	Always must a young person be sad-minded,
heard heortan geþoht swylce habban sceal	hard the heart's thought, likewise must (he)
bliþe gebæro eac þon breostceare	have a blithe demeanour, moreover heart-
sinsorgna gedreag	trouble, a multitude of continual-sorrows

Line 42 is a gnomic line – *geong mon* could be any young person. 42-45b is mainly of A-rhythms, with markedly more lexical stresses than metrical, and a high ratio of lexically stressed syllables to unstressed, and of long syllables to short. It seems steady, in marked contrast to line 41. The parallel passage of lines 18-21a runs

ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde	When I found myself a fully matched man,
heardsæligne hygegeomorne	ill-blessed, sad-minded,
mod miþendne morþor hygende	(his) heart dissembling, thinking on violent
bliþe gebæro	death, with blithe demeanour

Comparing these passages suggests that the speaker means lines 42-45b to apply particularly to the 'ful gemæcne monnan', and gives us an insight into his character: the speaker's demands in 42-45a, compared with the description earlier, in 18-21a, imply a fairly subtle distinction between how the *mon* is and how he should be. Given that the *mon* is *gemæcne*, that 42 is gnomic, and that the descriptions resonate with the speaker's description of herself as *geomorre*, they must apply to her as well as her *mon*. But perhaps more revealing are the changes between the two passages. In 18-21a, an ostensibly optimistic start is undercut in a barrage of adjectives and participles; but in 42-45a, the pace is steady, the understanding extended from the descriptive to the prescriptive, 'mod miþendne morþor hycgende' exorcised. 'Bliþe gebæro' is now perhaps representative more of stoicism than dissembling. Likewise,

the final gnomic line of the poem seems to imply a character with this sort of control: it has an steadily logadoeic rhythm, both in terms of length and stress. Although it was presumably not composed specifically for *WfL*, it has been selected for the job, and its character is therefore significant. The last phrase, 'wa bið þam þe sceal / of langoþe leofes abidan' (lines 52b-53) would appear emotive, but not the cry of one completely overcome – the speaker is becoming wiser (though not resigned). Between these gnomic passages, however – lines 42-45a, and lines 52b-53 – the syntax of the stanza becomes debatable, in lines 45b-52a. Quite how we should understand this is an issue I consider below, so the translation I offer is a possibility conforming to the interpretation I shall argue:

sy æt him sylfum gelong	whether all his worldly joy is
eal his worulde wyn sy ful wide fah	belonging to himself or whether it is that,
feorres folclondes þæt min freond siteþ	outcast everywhere in a far country, my friend
under stanhliþe storme behrimed	sits, under a stone-cliff, frosted by storm,
wine werigmod wætre beflowen	a spirit-worn friend surrounded by water
on dreorsele dreogeð se min wine	in a sorrow/gore-hall, that friend of mine
micle modceare he gemon to oft	suffers great spirit-trouble, he recalls too
wynlicran wic	often a more joyful home.

It seems remarkable that the stanza contains no punctuation at all. Given the suggestion by Parkes noted above, this absence would seem to imply that the vernacular audience found the stanza's rhetorical structure transparent. I favour, therefore, a reading which invokes the minimum of syntactic complexity and disjunction. This policy disfavours an interpretation of lines 45b-47a like Hamer's 'All earthly joy / Must come from his own self. Since my dear lord / Is outcast . . . '.[68] Recent opinion has tended strongly towards reading these lines as a 'whether . . . or' construction, rather than taking *sy* as an imperative; and a priori, 'sy æt him sylfum gelong / eal his worulde wyn' seems an odd curse, especially in what otherwise seems to be a non-Christian context. Moreover, the 'whether . . . or . . .' reading demands no syntactic break as great as a modern full stop between 42 and 52b.[69]

It is also unclear whether the *þæt* clause is dependent on both *sy* clauses, or only the second (which is how I have taken it above). However, we might improve our understanding of the syntax by looking at the content of the *þæt* clause. Klinck, in her edition of the Old English elegies, called the content of lines 47b-51a 'a vague dismal location'.[70] But far stronger and more specific associations may have been recalled by the passage. The situation seems much like the 'Cliff of Death' topos

identified by Fry: the 'motif includes four basic elements: cliffs, serpents, darkness, and deprivation, and occasionally wolves and wind'.[71] The Cliff of Death was associated with hell, as in *Judith* 111b-21, which, in a description absent from the Latin original, describes the departure of Holofernes's spirit; or St. Paul's vision of hell, described in Blickling Homily XVI.[72] Comparisons with the portrayals of Hel in *Völuspá* and *Snorra Edda*, which connect closely with the 'Cliff of Death' topos, are also possible, but the Christian ones seem distinct enough for the present purpose.[73] I have already mentioned the apparent hellish connotations of *wynlicran wic*. Moreover, as Schaefer pointed out, the description also recalls Matthew 7. 26-27:[74]

> et omnis qui audit verba mea haec et non facit ea similis erit viro stulto qui aedificavit domum suam supra harenam et descendit pluvia et venerunt flumina et flaverunt venti et inruerent in domum illam et cecidit et fuit ruina eius magna
> [And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act accordingly will be like the foolish man who built his home on the sand; and the rains fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that home, and it collapsed, and great was its downfall.]

These analogues suggest for us the extremity of the nadir threatening the *wine*, whether read through Old English poetry or the Bible: it is more than a 'dismal location' which he seems to face. They also suggest that the clause is dependent only on 'sy ful wide fah' and following. Not only does 'sy æt him sylfum gelong eal his worulde wyn' ostensibly say 'whether things are going well for him', but even if it did imply ill, it would be very hard to interpret it to govern the *þæt* clause while still having it contrast with *sy ful wide fah* . . . as 'whether . . . or' demands.

Alain Renoir has suggested that the *wine* has suffered a

> catastrophic inversion . . . in his condition. Thus considered, the process reads like an illustration of the familiar New Testament assertion that the Lord "deposuit potentes de sede . . ." . . . apprehension thereof must unavoidably affect the impact of the narrative on a Christian audience.[75]

The speaker may also be implying a different kind of catastrophe. Given the hellish appearance of the *wine*'s prospect in 46b-50a, and the curious expression of 45a-46a, perhaps the speaker is essentially saying 'whether he is alive, or dead (such that . . .), my friend suffers'. 'Wa bið þam þe sceal / of langoþe leofes abidan' ('Woe must be to the one who must / in longing await love/a loved one'), and a man in hell must *abidan* forever – just as, the speaker feels, she must. Her indirect expression of her *langoþ* allows her to impart to it the force of analogy with the eternal torments of hell, without risking bathos. For a Christian audience, these associations may again have thrown *WfL* and the woes it depicts into the context of a pagan time.[76]

It seems to me most likely that there is only one man in *WfL*: the principal force of the comparatively full Biblical, Middle English, and Norse prose analogues is to imply that the speaker's location is a sanctuary, and there is no need to suppose two men to have sent her there. The cultural and chronological proximity of the Franks Casket analogue means that implications of banishment cannot be dismissed; but such connotations may manifest themselves quite easily as a strong secondary aspect to a primary implication of sanctuary. This reading is supported if one is to consider line 18 to start with 'when', as seems most likely if it is the opening of a verse-paragraph, as it would imply the *mon* and *hlaford* to be identical, rather than different as 'then' in that position would tend to suggest. This would appear also to open up *WfL*'s central dynamic: the tensions between a woman's desire to be with her *hlaford*, and his command that she should be in sanctuary; and between her affection for him and her bitterness that she has been forced from him.

The speaker's character is drawn thoroughly and with sympathy. 'Ful oft wit beotedan / þæt unc ne gedælde nemne deað ana· / owiht elles' ('Often indeed the two of us vowed / that nothing should part us except death alone· / nothing else') is an image of impetuous young lovers – but the *beot*, to take 'eft is þæt onhworfen' with these lines as well as those following, had to change, since something other than death has separated them; and we have the disillusionment of age. Not only the character's longing, but her bitterness, is worked into the persona's voice; and indeed, it has a voice, distinct in the second stanza, in which the speaker uses both 21a and 23b polysemically as pivots between passages. We see a resilient mind, to which age's wider perspective on the world is emerging in the last stanza.

As for the reasons for this separation, 11-12 (the actions of 'þæs monnes magas') and 25b-27 ('sceal ic feor ge neah / mines felaleofan fæhðu dreogan'; 'I must, far or near, / suffer the ?blood-feud of my much-beloved') are probably all the narrative we will have; but we also have hints in the *mon*'s apparently flawed character. Bray's idea that 'The poets [of *WfL* and *Canu Heledd*] use the lamentation to foreground the

failure of martial, heroic ideals to those who are neither warriors nor chieftains' is useful; but in both cases, we might also have, and perhaps have more prominently, criticism of those who do not achieve those ideals: after all, 'beorn sceal gebidan þonne he beot spriceð' ('A man must bide his time when he speaks a vow'; *The Wanderer* line 70).[77] It appears that the speaker's *hlaford* has, in heroic terms, failed her; though given that he is 'ful gemæcne', she may not be without fault herself. He has, perhaps, failed in other ways too, and this conceivably provides a context for his *fæhðu*. The closest we can come to understanding 9-10 may be to guess that the speaker attempted to follow when 'min hlaford gewat heonan of leodum', ('my lord departed, hence from the people(s)'), 'folgað secan' perhaps in wry allusion to violence unknown to us, or to her own exilic state, normally associated with lordless men. At some point in her endeavours, 'þæs monnes magas' attempted to prevent her; and he sent her into sanctuary. Focusing on the worse possibility for his existence, the speaker seems pessimistic about its outcome. She loves him very well – but also sees that he has brought his fate upon himself, and that she is sharing the consequences. The sympathy she might extend to him can only be tempered by the wracking experience she is enduring.

The situations of the speaker and her *freond* are, then, neither merely gloomy landscapes, nor purely pathetic fallacy: they involve distinct motifs, possibly including 'women's/lovers' lament' figures, describing environments with images not only of misery, but also, it seems, inversions of the paradisical – images of the hellish. We can read these images simply as traditional *topoi*; but might also view them from a Christian perspective, whereby the pagan associations of the speaker's environment intensify its terror. It seems likely enough that both readings could have been found among an Anglo-Saxon audience – even a wholly Christian audience. A more particular perspective on the Anglo-Saxon reading of *WfL* is also available in the poem's manuscript punctuation. Precisely in what ways the Exeter Book's pointings should be interpreted remains uncertain; but their evidence again offers us a chance to refine our understanding of the poem, if we can understand that evidence: the neglected voice of an Old English speaker, or speakers, can be brought to bear on long-standing questions of syntactic, formal, and therefore narrative division, to improve our understanding of *WfL* as a cultural and historical artefact, and, hopefully, as a poem.[78]

NOTES

[1] Michael Lapidge, 'The Comparative Approach', in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 20-38 (p. 34).

[2] Emily Jensen, *'The Wife's Lament*'s *Eorðscræf*: Literal or Figural Sign?', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 91 (1990), 449-57 (pp. 450-51).

[3] Recent studies of analogues are P. R. Orton, *'The Wife's Lament* and *Skírnismál*', in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. by Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 11 (Leeds: Leeds Studies in English, 1989), pp. 205-37; Paul Battles, 'Of Graves, Caves and Subterranean Dwellings: *Eorðscræfe* and *Eorðsele* in *The Wife's Lament*', *Philological Quarterly*, 73 (1994), 267-86. Orton's conclusions have been developed, with a somewhat cavalier approach to the complexities of the sources, by Robert Luyster, *'The Wife's Lament* in the Context of Scandinavian Myth and Ritual', *Philological Quarterly*, 77 (1998), 247-70.

[4] Folio 115 of the Exeter Book, Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501. For facsimile see *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, ed. by R. W. Chambers, Max Förster and Robin Flower (London: Lund, 1933); for an edition recording MS pointing, see *The Exeter Book Part II: Poems IX-XXXII*, ed. and trans. by W. S. Mackie, EETS o.s. 194 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 152-54.

[5] David M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Art from the Seventh Century to the Norman Conquest* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), pp. 85-86. Wilson prints a photograph of the right-hand panel on p. 85, and photographs of the rest of the casket on pp. 46-47; reproductions of each panel are also included in *The Vikings*, ed. by T. R. Farrell (London: Phillimore, 1982), plates 21-26; a photograph of the right-hand panel is also reproduced in *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), between pp. 116 and 117.

[6] *'Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, and the Discovery of the Individual in Old English Verse', in *Studies in English Language and Literature: Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. by M. J. Toswell and E. M. Tyler (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 457-74.

[7] R. I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes*, 2nd edn (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 177-79; cited by R. W. V. Elliot, *Runes, an Introduction*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 133-34.

[8] Exeter Book quotations cited from *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Bernard J. Muir, 2 vols (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1994), collated with Chambers. I include manuscript pointings, but not the markers which come at the end of poems. Translations from Old English and Latin are my own, and are intended only as a

guide to understanding the original text. However, where I discuss a word's semantics in the course of this piece, I merely include the original word(s) in any translations.

[9] Page, p. 181.

[10] *Dictionary of Old English*, ed. by A. C. Amos (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986–), s.v. *denn*.

[11] *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (London: Oxford University Press, 1879), s.v. *lucus*.

[12] Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. and trans. by H. Hutton, rev. E. H. Warmington, in *Tacitus I: Dialogus, Agricola, Germania*, ed. by E. H. Warmington, rev. edn (London: Heinemann, 1970), pp. 128-215 (pp. 278-79).

[13] *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, ed. and trans. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Nelson, 1960), text p. 47, discussion pp. xxiii-xxviii. Cf. Bede's naming of the first Anglo-Saxon settlers as Hengist and Horsa (both meaning 'horse'), and his claim of a prohibition on the pagan priest Coifi against riding a stallion. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, repr. with corrections 1991), books I.15 and II.13.

[14] Battles, pp. 274-76.

[15] *The Early English Carols*, ed. by Richard Leighton Greene, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), no. 450, lines 6-7.

[16] *Altfranzösische Romanzen und Pastourellen*, ed. by Karl Bartsch (Leipzig: Vogel, 1870), p. 111; cf. Helen Estabrook Sandison, *The* Chanson d'Aventure *in Middle English*, Bryn Mawr College Monographs, 12 (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1913), p. 48, n. 3.

[17] Joseph Harris, 'Hadubrand's Lament: on the Origin and Age of Elegy in Germanic', in *Heldensage und Heldendichtung im Germanischen*, ed. by Heinrich Beck (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 81-114 (pp. 86-87).

[18] Cf. M. J. Swanton, 'The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration', *Anglia*, 82 (1964), 269-90; W. F. Bolton, 'The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration Revisited', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 205 (1969), 337-51; *The Cambridge Songs ('Carmina Cantabrigiensia')*, ed. and trans. by Jan M. Ziolkowski, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A, 66 (London: Garland, 1994), nos. 27, 40, 48.

[19] *Three Old English Elegies*, ed. by R. F. Leslie (Aberdeen: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 53.

[20] The precise nature of this context is essentially unknown. Nicholas Jacobs has emphasised the suggestion that the form of intermixed prose and verse preserved in Irish provides a model to understand the Welsh 'saga *englynion*', and extended it to Old English poems such as *WfL*, supposing that the poetry which we have has been recorded without its

prose frame ('Celtic Saga and the Contexts of Old English Elegiac Poetry', *Etudes Celtiques*, 26 (1989), 95-142). There is very little evidence of any Welsh influence on Old English literature, but such a form could have come via Irish ecclesiastics, or through Norse (cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*). However, while we have indisputable evidence for Old English verse-narratives, our only Old English prose narratives (e.g. saints' lives, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) appear to derive from Latinate forms. The only possible exception which I know of is the 'Cynewulf and Cyneheard' 755 *Chronicle* entry, which, while in some ways impressive, does little to suggest a burgeoning Old English prose narrative style. We should perhaps suppose instead that had, say, the compiler of the Codex Regius organised the Exeter Book, we might have had a prose passage explaining *WfL*'s context.

[21] Martin Green, 'Time, Memory and Elegy in *The Wife's Lament*', in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, ed. by Martin Green (London: Associated University Presses, 1983), pp. 123-32 (p. 125).

[22] Leslie, p. 11. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd rev. edn by Norman Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[23] Cf. Elizabeth Dearing Hanscom, 'The Feeling for Nature in Old English Poetry', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 5 (1903-05), 439-63 (p. 454); *Genesis B*, line 60a, which describes hell as *þa deopan dala*.

[24] Jean Ritzke-Rutherford, *Light and Darkness in Anglo-Saxon Thought and Writing*, Sprache und Literatur: Regensburger Arbeiten zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 17 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1979), p. 175.

[25] Orton, p. 212.

[26] Amos, s.v. *beorg*.

[27] *Exodus*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 87 (citing other examples); Muir, I (1994), p. 307; II (1994), pp. 593-94. Similar and probably related changes are discussed by Richard M. Hogg, *A Grammar of Old English Volume 1: Phonology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 205-07, and Alaric Hall, 'Old MacDonald had a *Fyrm*, *eo*, *eo*, *y*: Two Marginal Developments of <eo> in Old and Middle English', *Quaestio: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic*, 2 (2001), 62-90 (esp. pp. 69-70) (an electronic reproduction of this article is available at http://www.alarichall.org.uk).

[28] Most recently, Carole Hough, '*The Wife's Lament* Line 15b and *Daniel* Line 499b: Two Notes on Place-Name Evidence', *English Language Notes*, 35 (1998), 1-4.

[29] Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), s.v. *hearh*; Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, *A Guide to Old English*, 5th edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 266. N.B. While *bearu* means a

'grove, wood', it is also attested as 'referring to a sacred grove', Amos, s.v. *bearu*. For a survey see Orton, p. 209.

[30] MS *strade*. *Beowulf* quotations from *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by Fr. Klaeber, 3rd edn (Boston: Heath, 1950), collated with *Beowulf: Reproduced in Facsimile*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, 2nd rev. edn by Norman Davis, EETS o.s. 245 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[31] Ingrid Sanness Johnsen, *Stuttruner i vikingtidens innskrifter* (Oslo: Universitetsforlagets Trykningssentral, 1968), pp. 138-40.

[32] Sven B. F. Jansson, *Runes in Sweden*, trans. by Peter Foote (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1987), p. 37.

[33] Battles, p. 273.

[34] See, for a survey and study, Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The Situation of the Narrator in the Old English *Wife's Lament*', *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 492-516.

[35] Kathryn Hume, 'The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 63-74 (p. 64).

[36] Leslie, pp. 55-56; Battles, p. 274.

[37] *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, trans. by S. A. J. Bradley (London: Dent, 1982), p. 382.

[38] Biblical quotations cited from *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. by Robert Weber, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Würtemburgische Bibelanstalt, 1969).

[39] For example, much of Old English poetry is free translation from the Bible and its apocrypha, e.g. *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, *Andreas*, and much besides this draws on Christian-Latin material (e.g., in the Exeter Book, the three *Christ* poems, *The Pheonix*, *The Seafarer*).

[40] John McKinnell, 'The Context of *Vǫlundarkvida*', *Saga Book of the Viking Society*, 23 (1990), 1-27; Richard Cox, 'Snake Rings in *Deor* and *Vǫlundarkvida*', *Leeds Studies in English*, 22 (1991), 1-20.

[41] Cf. Orton, 219-21. Quotations from the Codex Regius from *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denmälen 1. Text*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, 4th rev. edn by Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962). Translations from *The Poetic Edda*, trans. by Carolyne Larrington (Oxford: Oxford Unviersity Press, 1996).

[42] Tolkien (1961), p. 14.

[43] Ritzke-Rutherford, p. 202.

[44] The implications of this stanza are particularly interesting for *WfL*; see fn. 58 below.

[45] *Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems*, ed. and trans. by N. Kershaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 174.

[46] For the former argument see Thomas M. Davis, 'Another View of *The Wife's*

Lament', *Papers on English Language and Literature*, 1 (1965), 291-305 (p. 302).

[47] Bradley, p. 384; Kershaw, p. 33.

[48] *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, ed. and trans. by Richard Hamer (London: Faber, 1970), pp. 72-74; Bradley, pp. 384-85; Leslie, pp. 47-48; D. R. Howlett, '*The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 79 (1978), 7-10 (p. 7).

[49] Jane L. Curry, 'Approaches to a Translation of the Anglo-Saxon *The Wife's Lament*', *Medium Aevum*, 35 (1966), 187-98.

[50] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 152-53.

[51] M. B. Parkes, 'Punctuation, or Pause and Effect', in *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. by James J. Murphy (London: California University Press, 1978), pp. 127-42 (p. 138).

[52] O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 153.

[53] MS *blæð*.

[54] Taking *bliþe gebæro* in line 21a with the description.

[55] Cf. D. R. Howlett, 'The Structures of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 47 (1975), 313-17.

[56] Mitchell and Robinson, §145; cf. Bruce Mitchell, *Old English Syntax*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), II, §3914.

[57] For an argument based on this lexical contrast, see Andy Orchard, 'Oral Tradition' in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 101-23 (p. 121, n. 3). An interesting comparison may be drawn between my reading and stanza six of *Helreið Brynhildar*, whose first part I have already quoted. Its second half carries the same meaning in both MSS (cf. *Flateyjarbók*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, 4 vols (Akranes: Flateyjarútgáfan, 1944-45), I (1944), p. 395); I quote the *Codex Regius* text here:

Lét hami vára	The wise king had our
hugfullr konungr,	magic garments –
átta systra,	eight sisters we were together –
undir eic borit;	put under an oak;
var ec vetra tólf,	I was twelve years old,
ef þic vita lystir,	if you want to know,
er ec ungom gram	when I gave my promise
eiða seldac.	to the young prince.

Quite to what event Brynhildr alludes here is unknown: 'Should the "young prince" be construed as the king who carried off the *hamir* and should it be understood that he exacted a betrothal in exchange for their return? Or is the "young prince" Agnarr, whom, whom she presently supports in battle?' (Theodore M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, Islandica, 42 (London: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 114-15). But a possible reading would be that, upon reaching the age of majority (12), she swore oaths to a 'young prince', and he subsequently sent her (or, in the *CR* text, her swan-cloak), under an oak-tree. *WfL*'s 'ic up weox' could imply much the same as *Helreið Brynhildar*'s 'var ec vetra tólf', and could also, reading *ða* as 'when' in line 18, mark her growing up as a significant step towards swearing her oaths of love. It seems possible, then, that the narrative behind Brynhildr's allusion is essentially similar to that of *WfL*. As I have already noted, in Norse, it is supernatural women who tend to be set in locations such as we see in *WfL*, and if something similar held for the ancestors of the topos which we may perceive in *WfL*, then the association of the story of what appears to be a normal woman with that of a valkyrie need not occasion surprise.

[58] Cf. *The Wanderer* lines 1-5.

[59] Cf. note 55; Davis, p. 299.

[60] Cf. Leslie, p. 53.

[61] Mitchell, 1, §1399.

[62] Jensen, p. 454.

[63] Kershaw, p. 175.

[64] Kathryn A. Lowe, ' "A Fine and Private Place": *The Wife's Lament*, ll. 33-34, the Translators and the Critics', *'Lastworða betst': Essays in Memory of Christine E. Fell*, ed. by Kathryn A. Lowe and Carole Hough (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), pp. 122-43. My thanks go to Katie Lowe for showing me this article in advance of publication.

[65] *ibid.*, p. 137.

[66] Harris, p. 96.

[67] Cf. Mitchell and Robinson, p. 164.

[68] Hamer, p. 73.

[69] Cf. *An Anthology of Old English Poetry*, trans. by Charles W. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 11.

[70] *The Old English Elegies*, ed. by Anne L. Klinck (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 187.

[71] Donald K. Fry, 'The Cliff of Death in Old English Poetry', in *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry*, ed. by John Miles Foley (Columbus: Slavonica, 1987), pp. 211-33 (p. 215); cf. A. C. Bouman, *Patterns in Old English and Old Icelandic literature*, Leidse Germanistische en Anglistische Reeks, 1 (Leiden: Universitaire

Pers, 1961), p. 59.

[72] For *Judith* see Fry, pp. 215-16; for Blickling Homily XVI cf. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the* Beowulf-*Manuscript* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), p. 39.

[73] e.g. Eleanor Lench, '*The Wife's Lament*: a Poem of the Living Dead', *Comitatus*, 1 (1970), 3-23 (pp. 16-17, n. 37).

[74] Ursula Schaefer, 'Two Women in Need of a Friend: a comparison of *The Wife's Lament* and Eangyth's Letter to Boniface', in *Germanic Dialects: Linguistic and Philological Investigations*, ed. by Bela Brogyani and Thomas Krömmelbein, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series 4: Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 38 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1986), pp. 491-524 (p. 505).

[75] Alain Renoir, 'Christian Inversion in *The Wife's Lament*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 49 (1977), 19-24 (pp. 22-23).

[76] Fittingly enough, perhaps, for a poem immediately preceding, in its manuscript context, one on Doomsday, the start of a sequence dealing with 'aspects of the Easter liturgical season' (Muir, I, p. 26). It may also be noted in this connection that *WfL* can be seen to exhibit many features found in riddles, conceivably making its position in the Exeter Book between riddles 1-59 and *Judgement Day I* a deliberate pivot between sections of the anthology (cf. Faye Walker-Pelkey, '*Frige Hwæt ic Hatte*: *The Wife's Lament* as Riddle', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 28 (1992), 242-66). A further point of interest, made to me by Andy Orchard, is that not only does the first line of *WfL* contain *giedd*, among whose meanings is 'riddle', but so does the last of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, the poem that precedes riddles 1-59: 'uncer giedd geador ·'.

[77] D. A. Bray, 'A Woman's Loss and Lamentation: Heledd's Songs and *The Wife's Lament*', *Neophilologus*, 79 (1995), 147-54 (p. 152).

[78] I am much indebted to Paul Bibire and Andy Orchard for their helpfulness and advice in the writing of this article, and thank them. I thank also Zoe Boulter, Mary and Naomi Ward, and Harriet Thomsett for reading drafts and helping with library facilities.

Anglo-Saxon Women: The Art of Concealment*

Gale R. Owen-Crocker

The tomb of the Anglo-Saxon saint, Cuthbert, which had remained behind the high altar in Durham Cathedral since the construction of the building in 1104, was excavated in 1827.[1] St Cuthbert, a Northumbrian ascetic, had died in 687, but his shrine subsequently became a cult centre, and his coffin was opened on a number of occasions when relics were removed and precious gifts added.[2] The nineteenth-century excavation revealed the remains of textiles which had encased the saint's body in ever-increasing layers of expensive shrouding over several hundred years of devotion. The most sumptuous were a silk stole and maniple, lavishly embroidered in coloured silks and spun gold (filé thread made by winding a gold lamella round a silk core). These matching vestments have become landmarks in Art History and Textile History.[3] The stole is embroidered on the front with elegant, full-length depictions of named Old Testament prophets flanking a central motif of the hand of God; busts of Thomas and James, saints of the extreme east and west, occupy the terminals. The maniple is decorated on the front with the figures of two popes and their deacons, again all named, and flanking the hand of God. The terminals here are also distinctive, with busts of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, the predecessor and successor of Christ. The backs of the stole and maniple are plain, apart from the terminals. However, on the reverses of these terminals are embroidered inscriptions: one end carries the words *ÆLFFLÆD FIERI PRECEPIT* 'Ælfflæd had [this] made', and the other *PIO EPISCOPO FRIÐESTANO*, 'for pious Bishop Frithestan'.[4] The texts give a secure historical context for the vestments. Though the language is Latin, the letters ash (Æ) and eth (Ð) are derived from the Old English alphabet. Both Ælfflæd and Frithestan are known persons whose identification confirms an English provenance for the embroideries and provides close dating. Ælfflæd was the second wife of the Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Elder;[5] she was dead, or at least out of favour, by about 919, when Edward remarried. Frithestan was bishop of Winchester, the royal and ecclesiastical centre of Wessex, from 909 to 931. The embroideries, then, must have

been commissioned in the decade between 909 when Frithestan became bishop and 919 when Ælfflæd was no longer in the position of royal patron. The vestments were almost certainly given to the shrine of St Cuthbert by Ælfflæd's stepson, King Athelstan, who visited the cult centre at its temporary base in Chester-le-Street in about 934, when, it is recorded, he presented several gifts, including a stole and maniple.[6]

The reverse-side inscriptions are very important to scholars of our own era. They localise the vestments in southern England, and in supplying a fairly precise date in the early tenth century, demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon Winchester Style, with its characteristic windswept-looking garments and its use of acanthus leaf ornament, was already well developed in England long before the making of the most famous manuscripts that manifest it, such as *The Benedictional of St Æthelwold*; and that *opus anglicanum*, the gold embroidery for which England was famous in the later Middle Ages, had already reached a high level of sophistication in the Anglo-Saxon period. What, though, did the inscription of her name signify for Ælfflæd?

In the Anglo-Saxon era literacy was restricted, therefore the inclusion of text on an artefact was a somewhat esoteric act. If the text included the name of, for example, a prophet or archangel who was depicted on the artefact without distinguishing mark, the text was potentially informative and instructive. There are examples among the Cuthbert relics: the seventh-century reliquary coffin which has named archangels and apostles incised into the oak,[7] and the embroidered stole with its series of prophets. The incorporation into a decorative scheme of the name of a contemporary person, however, whether owner, donor, maker, or the recipient of prayer, was an extravagant addition, unnecessary to understanding the iconography of the artefact, an addition which would not be undertaken without thought since it entailed additional expertise, labour and expense. Such names were generally depicted in the same techniques as the primary decoration.[8] The gold and silk of the Cuthbert vestments were particularly élite raw materials.

Vestments inscribed with the name of a royal patron would carry regal prestige to the wearer. The giver of them might also expect some benefit of a more spiritual kind: in general terms, the gift of a precious object to the Church was made for the good of one's soul, but more specifically the presence of the donor's name meant that every time the bishop vested in the garments he would see the name of Ælfflæd and would probably pray for her;[9] and her name would be close to his body as he carried out the holy rites. However, the queen gained an even greater sanctity than she might have expected: the stole and maniple, in being placed in a reliquary, became *brandea* – cloths sanctified by proximity to the holy relics. Ælfflæd's name was to spend nine

hundred years close to the body of one of Anglo-Saxon England's premier saints.

Names are not common on Anglo-Saxon artefacts[10] and it is noticeable that, where these are women's names,[11] they are sometimes, like Ælfflæd's, on the back. Is this coincidence, or does it reflect a deliberate suppression of the female names? Is the situation any different with male names, which appear far more frequently than female?[12] These questions will be considered here in a series of case studies.

Men's names, it seems, are usually depicted where they can, or could, be seen. The names of owners and donors are, not surprisingly, particularly prominent. The name *ETHELVVLFRX*, 'Ethelwulf R[e]x' is inscribed in a panel on the bezel on the front of a finger ring, where it is clearly visible.[13] The inscription is an integrated part of the ornament, sharing the materials – gold and niello – and the decorative techniques of the triangular zone above it, which has an ornamental, possibly Christian, design of birds and plant. Ethelwulf was the name of a ninth-century King of Wessex (reigned 828-58),[14] the father of the more famous Alfred the Great (see below). It is supposed by art historians that the king was the donor, rather than the owner of the ring, in which case the wearer would carry the prestige of bearing the king's gift visible to all who could read it.

Although the name of a man may appear on what seems to us a secondary surface of an object, the text can be both decorative and authoritative. The Alfred Jewel is a gold and enamel terminal which was probably once mounted on a slim rod.[15] The front face is decorated with part of a human figure, depicted in cloisonné enamel beneath a covering of rock crystal, and the back with an incised plant design in gold; but round the curving sides of the pear-shaped plaque is an inscription in Old English: *AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN*, 'Alfred ordered me to be made'. The object is generally, if not certainly, associated with King Alfred of Wessex (reigned 871-99), who was not only famous for coming to terms with the Vikings, but also for instituting educational reform and establishing written English as a literary language. The inclusion of the name 'Alfred', and the choice of the English language for the inscription could link the object with Alfred's programme of translating classic Latin works into the vernacular. The gold, scarce in later Anglo-Saxon England, suggests high prestige patronage. The Jewel was discovered only four miles from Athelney, a place particularly associated with King Alfred. (This marshy area was where Alfred went into hiding in 878, the worst period of his conflict with the Vikings.) The King built a monastery at Athelney in gratitude for his victory and the Jewel could have been part of his endowment. The iconography of the plaque, with a human figure that may represent the Sense of Sight, and hence 'Insight' or 'Wisdom', is an emblem

appropriate to King Alfred, a scholarly and philosophical man, who mentions, in the preface to his English translation of St Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, that a valuable object which he calls an *æstel* will accompany every copy of the book sent out to his bishops. Though the purpose and appearance of an *æstel* cannot be identified with certainty, there are several reasons to suggest it may have been a pointer for reading, which would also protect a precious book from the soiling effect of hands.[16] If the Alfred Jewel is the handle of an *æstel* of this kind we can see how the name of the king, inscribed in gold letters, would inspire the recipient and function as a propaganda device, promoting Alfred's educational reform programme.

It seems to have been particularly desirable for a man to have his name inscribed on fighting equipment. The first example I would like to consider is a helmet found at Coppergate in York.[17] This is a rare object, one of only four surviving Anglo-Saxon helmets. They are all different, but it may be no coincidence that they all bear religious emblems, either pagan, or Christian, or in one case, both.[18] The Coppergate helmet, which is the latest in the series, dating to the second half of the eighth century, carries a repeated inscription consisting of Latin words, some abbreviated, which can be expanded and translated into a prayer: 'In the name of Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, God and with all we say Amen.' There follow the name *OSHERE* and *XPI*, 'Christ'. The inscription is much more obscure than might appear from conventional photographs.[19] The words are set into sunken panels which run from front to back and from side to side of the helmet in a cruciform arrangement, and hence much of the inscription is separated from the main decorative area, which is the face-mask. Because of its position over the top of the helmet, the writing would not have been readable when the object was on the head of an adult man, though part of it would have been visible. The message is encrypted, either deliberately or inadvertently, in that the front-to-back strip letters are set sideways, the left-to-right inscription is not in sequence and the two parts have their letters facing in different directions; also the inscription is retrograde.[20]

Three of the long, iron fighting knives known by the Old English name *seax* or *scramasax*, a mid to late Anglo-Saxon weapon-type, have inlaid decoration which includes a personal name. A *seax* found in the River Thames at Battersea, London, inlaid with silver, copper and brass wire, has a 28-letter Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet and the personal name *Beagnoþ*, also in runes, inlaid on one face.[21] Runic writing is an angular script, designed to be carved into things, cut into wood or engraved into metal, and may have carried a recondite significance different from that of Roman script: the Old English word *run* means 'secret'.[22] Although runic letters were in existence in England before the conversion to Christianity, the pagan Anglo-Saxons

had tended to use them as isolated symbols such as the arrow-shaped *Tyr,* the name of a war-god,[23] or in short and unintelligible strings.[24] The custom of using letters to spell out text is, in England, a development of the Christian era.[25] Ironically, the pre-Christian runes are used alongside or instead of Roman letters, even for Christian purposes.[26] The use of runes gives an esoteric, probably protective, aura to the Battersea *seax*. Though the name could not be read by any except the runically literate, the lettering comprises the major part of the ornament. Even if the owner carried the knife in a sheath which concealed the blade,[27] the decorative inscription would have been clearly visible as the object was held in the hand, either in its primary function as a fighting weapon or on other occasions we might imagine, when it would be used for practice and demonstration, when it was being polished, and at social occasions where it was likely to be handed around for admiration and comparison.

Another name-bearing fighting knife, a *seax* from Sittingbourne, Kent, has inlaid decorative panels of silver, copper, brass and niello.[28] Most of them are ornamental, with acanthus leaves and interlace, but each side of the knife includes panels inscribed in Old English, one proclaiming *S GEBEREHT ME AH* 'S[i]gbert owns me',[29] the other *BIORHTHELM ME WORHTE*, 'Biorhthelm made me'.[30] We see a pride in the ownership of a fine weapon by a man consciously promoting his image as warrior; and pride in the craftsmanship of the skilled smith who created it.[31] Another inlaid knife, from the River Thames at Putney, bears the name *Osmund.*[32]

The Brussels Cross, an eleventh-century reliquary made to hold a piece of the so-called 'True Cross' on which Jesus Christ was believed to have been crucified, bears four personal names. Like the Alfred Jewel it has an inscription in Old English round the side, less prominent than that of the Jewel, but nevertheless visible and expensively executed in silver and niello.[33] The words include some poetic phrases on the crucifixion similar to words on The Ruthwell Cross and in *The Dream of the Rood,* together with *ÞAS RODE HET ÆÞELMÆR WYRICAN 7 ÆDELWOLD HYS BEROÞO[R] CRISTE TO LOFE FOR ÆLFRICES SAVLE HYRA BEROÞOR*, 'Athelmer and his brother Athelwold ordered this cross to be made for the glory of Christ for the soul of their brother Ælfric'. The names of patron/donors and the deceased Ælfric would surely be seen by every cleric who handled the cross, and the brothers would be prayed for. The name of the maker, like the maker of the Sittingbourne *seax* clearly a skilled smith, is inscribed on the back of the cross: *DRAHMAL ME WORHTE*, 'Drahmal made me'. Though the reverse was not as magnificent as the front, which though now damaged was originally jewelled, it is still fairly lavish, the oak wood core being covered with silver sheeting which is partially gilded. The back of the cross has its own iconographic programme including

the four Evangelists and the Lamb of God holding the Book of Judgement, and was probably displayed on some occasions, even used for teaching. If the cross was carried in procession,[34] the jewelled front would be visible to the congregation but the instructive back would be seen by the processing clergy following the cross bearer.

It seems that normally the proper place for the name of a craftsman, like the moneyer who struck coins, was the reverse of an artefact,[35] but makers' names, which are always masculine, could be ornamental or appear on a decorated surface. Arguably, the backs of the the Brussels Cross and the Sittingbourne *seax* were meant to be seen, but made to appeal to different audiences from the fronts. The back of the Brussels Cross bears a highly intellectual programme. In the case of the *seax*, though the decorative areas on each side are of similar size and shape, the maker's name is written larger and more clearly than the owner's, filling the decorative space, while the owner's shares its space with panels of ornament. The maker's side is attractive to a more literate eye.

The name of Bishop Frithestan, which shares the invisible position of Queen Ælfflæd's on the Cuthbert vestments, is, so far as I have been able to ascertain, unique in identifying the recipient of a gift. The bishop must have gained prestige from the dedication, and might have expected to benefit from the prayers of others who wore the vestments after his death. This perhaps did not happen. The fact that Athelstan was able to give them to the shrine of St Cuthbert suggests that the royal house reclaimed the gift from the Winchester minster.

As we have seen, male names, though visible, are sometimes cryptic; but if the names *Beagnoþ* on the *seax* and *Oshere* on the helmet are deliberately made secret, they are open secrets, puzzles inviting interpretation. There is a different kind of secrecy in the presence of a woman's name inscribed *inside* a gold and niello finger ring.[36] The ring is decorated with the Christian emblem of the *Agnus Dei*, 'The Lamb of God', in ninth-century style on its bezel. Lightly incised on the back of the bezel is the Old English-Latin inscription *EADELSVIÐ REG[I]NA* 'Queen Ethelswith', the name and title of a queen of Mercia (853-88), wife of King Burgred. Ethelswith belonged to the Wessex royal house which displayed a fondness for exhibiting personal names; she was King Alfred's sister and the daughter of King Ethelwulf.

At 2.6 cm the diameter of the ring is rather large for a woman's finger, but it could have fitted the thumb.[37] Whoever wore it, the inscription was hidden against the body, a private message for the wearer like the initials which are sometimes engraved inside a wedding ring today. The name and title are neatly and competently inscribed, but not ornamental. Was the ring essentially personal, Ethelswith's own possession

recording her marriage and resultant queenship? She must, surely, have had more spectacular manifestations of status than this. If, on the other hand, she was named as donor, the inscription might have been added to a pre-existing ring in the only possible space on the occasion of the gift.[38] In this position it lacked the force of the inscription on Ethelwulf's ring, and any added value and authority could only be made public by removal of the ring.

An engraved silver brooch from Sutton, Isle of Ely, dated to the eleventh century by its combination of late Viking and Anglo-Saxon decorative motifs, has a prayer and a curse against theft engraved on the back.[39] The words comprise two kinds of poetry, first an alliterative line in typical Old English style: *ÆDVWEN ME AG AGE HYO DRIHTEN*, 'Ædvwen owns me, may the Lord own her'. (The use of the feminine pronoun *hyo* identifies Ædvwen as female.) This is followed by two lines which rhyme: *DRIHTEN HINE AWERIE ÐE ME HIRE ÆTFERIE/ BVTON HYO ME SELLE HIRE AGENES WILLES*, 'May the Lord curse him who takes me from her, unless she gives me of her own will'. It is hard to imagine that anyone would want to steal such an ugly brooch, which is a degenerate in style and inferior in workmanship, though its design is intriguing, with the head of one of the quadrupeds doubling as a grotesque human face. The brooch is extremely big, however, considerably larger than earlier, more tasteful examples of the silver disc brooch type, and no doubt had considerable bullion value.[40] Similar statements of ownership-plus-curse occur in Latin and Old English wills.[41] Ædvwen cunningly attaches the deterrent formula to the precious object itself. We do not have to imagine a literate thief suddenly paralysed with fear when he turns the brooch over. The poetry is surely a protective charm secretly guarding the object, for the security of its owner.

A seal is a public statement of authority, functioning similarly in some respects to a name-bearing ring, but the seal is attached to a document and augmented in some cases by a portrait of the signatory. Most surviving seals and seal dies from the Anglo-Saxon period belonged to men, but I would like to consider one bearing a woman's name.[42] It carries the inscription *SIGILLVM GODGYÐE MONACHE D[E]O*[43] *DATE*, 'The seal of Godgytha, a nun given to God'. However, this seal-die is two-sided: the other face of the ivory matrix is the mould for another seal, bearing the name and image of a man, Godwin. The Godwin image is related to a well-known coin type of King Harthacnut, which dates it to the mid-eleventh century. There has been some attempt to establish Godgytha's side as the earlier, and hence the primary face, mainly on stylistic grounds, but the argument that she wears the fluttering draperies of the tenth-century Winchester Style is unacceptable. The engraving of the nun, who carries a book and has her right hand raised, is certainly not dissimilar in

positioning to the tenth-century painting of St Etheldreda in *The Benedictional of St Æthelwold*,[44] even to the spread fingers, and it is probably a standard image, but it is not characteristic of the Winchester Style. The projections beneath the figure's elbows are not floaty garments but a cushion, and though folds of the dress are shown, they are quite firmly depicted and lack the typical windswept look. There is one oddity about the depiction: Godgytha is bare headed. All the models of a holy woman in late Anglo-Saxon art would have shown her with covered head,[45] and it is one of the established facts of Anglo-Saxon costume history that nuns wore veils and veils were associated with nuns.[46] Was the seal carver so used to depicting bareheaded men that he began with the same spiky hair as Godwin, later modifying it to suggest long hair, loose or braided? Was the artist unaware that he was depicting a nun? Whatever the reason, the result is that Godgytha is *décoiffée,* a style shared only by personified Vices and immoral women. Her portrait, then, is presumably incorrect as well as lightly incised and clumsy. Godwin's image is more boldly carved, his lettering more expert; above all, the finely carved handle with its depiction of the Trinity is on Godwin's side of the matrix. His seal die is artistically superior to Godgytha's which suggests it was the primary carving. The ivory is walrus tusk from the Scandinavian seas. This material would have been rare and expensive. Does this explain why Godgytha's seal is on the back of Godwin's? Was it an economy measure to re-use an ivory matrix; or was the reason that, seals of women being apparently uncommon, Godgytha's juxtaposition to Godwin lent her authority? Perhaps he was her late father or husband – many Anglo-Saxon widows became nuns – and if so she may have literally inherited his status, which the re-use of his seal die represented.

In fact propinquity is a common element in all our case studies of inscribed women's names so far: Godgytha may have taken status from the relationship of her name to Godwin's; in the cases of the jewellery and vestments, propinquity of the inscriptions to the wearer was significant and in the cases of the ring and the vestments, proximity also to the religious emblems on the outer face. The names on the ring and the vestments may have carried regal prestige to the wearer, and the vestments might also, when worn by a celebrant, have transmitted blessedness to the patron. Propinquity does not, however, explain why the only Anglo-Saxon coins bearing the name of a woman – Cynethryth, Offa's queen – carry it on the reverse.[47] Anglo-Saxon coins normally carry the name and portrait of the king on the obverse and that of the moneyer who struck them on the reverse. When King Offa of Mercia (reigned 757-96) followed Roman or Byzantine[48] practice and had coins struck in the name of his queen, the name on the obverse (the 'portrait' side) was that of Offa's moneyer Eoba. The coins uniquely honour Cynethryth – she was, as far as we know,

the only Anglo-Saxon queen consort to have her own coinage – but keep her in secondary position. Can we deduce that, despite the popular modern belief that Anglo-Saxon women had greater status than their Norman successors,[49] even the most rich and powerful were deliberately subordinated? There is an obvious practical explanation for the placing of the names in that the rather long word 'Cynethryth' would not fit round the large bust chosen for the obverse of the coin,[50] but the shorter name of the moneyer slotted in there neatly. Whatever the reason, the result is the elevation of the name of the male moneyer in relation to the queen.

Women's names then are frequently consigned to the back. In searching for Anglo-Saxon artefacts with women's names on the major face I found some of the evidence ambiguous. Some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon examples of written names are on grave-stones in the cemeteries of early Northumbrian monasteries and convents. In the cemetery of the convent at Hartlepool, County Durham, there were several of these stones, small rectangular slabs apparently intended to be laid flat, each incised on one face with a cross and a woman's name, such as *Hildithryth*, *Hildigyth* and *Berchtgyd*.[51] However, the nineteenth-century excavators recorded that the stones were found buried in the graves, rather than resting on the surface, an observation supported by the lack of weathering on the slabs.[52] If the record is correct, though the names are on the major face of the artefact, they are another example of the woman's name being hidden.[53]

Why should the name be placed in the grave? Possibly for certain identification in case of exhumation. Both St Cuthbert, a Northumbrian bishop, and St Etheldreda, at one time a Northumbrian queen, were exhumed some years after burial when their bodies were found to be miraculously incorrupt. Both had led extremely ascetic lives and proof of sanctity was probably anticipated when they were exhumed. Perhaps the Hartlepool abbesses (if this is what they were) were also candidates for sainthood which was not pursued. There is another alternative, that these names were not written for the human eye to read, but for God on the Day of Judgement.

There are several name-bearing memorial stones from Lindisfarne, Northumberland, the site of the famous monastery of which St Cuthbert was once bishop, mostly carrying male names. One, rather surprisingly in this masculine context, is inscribed with a woman's name, *Osgyð*, which is written twice, once in runes, and below in Anglo-Saxon capitals. This stone is round-headed like traditional Egyptian *stelae*, and as exhibited, looks like an upright grave marker; but interestingly, Dominic Tweddle finds these Lindisfarne stones 'remarkably small and thin. If they stood upright . . . they must have been partially sunken into the ground, obscuring part of the decoration. Alternatively they may have been laid on the ground

over the grave . . . or actually in the grave as [apparently at] Hartlepool'.[54] If this stone were partially buried to keep it upright, the lower version of the name would be obscured; if laid flat in the grave, both versions would have been hidden.

Female names inscribed on free-standing crosses are or were visible, since the viewer could walk round the sculpture and view all sides; but female names seem to be separated from the primary face, that is, the face with figural sculpture. The almost-complete, eighth-century cross at Bewcastle, Cumbria, has the female name *KYNIBURUG* as one of two single-line runic inscriptions on the north face, which at the present day is the least noticeable side since it is adjacent to the church building. The obvious principal face, which has three panels of figure-sculpture, is much more extensively inscribed and has been claimed to include names of men significant in Northumbrian history, including sub-king Alcfrith, whose wife was named Cyniburg, which gives a tentative identification for *KYNIBURUG*. However the authenticity and interpretation of the long inscription, and hence the identity of the woman named, has been much disputed.[55]

A fragmentary, eighth- or ninth-century cross shaft from Hackness, East Yorkshire, carries what may be a female portrait on one face and on two other faces Latin inscriptions commemorating Abbess *OEDILBURGA*, as 'blessed forever' and 'most loving mother'.[56] Again a royal association has been suggested: Carol Farr plausibly argues that the woman named should be identified with Ethelburga, who brought Christianity to Northumbria from Kent on her marriage to King Edwin in 625, and who founded England's first nunnery at Lyminge in Kent on her widowhood in 633. Her descendants were distinguished abbesses at the famous convent of Whitby. Hackness was the site of a nunnery which was a daughter-house of Whitby, founded by St Hilda in 680.

Elisabeth Okasha notes an 'oddly positioned' Latin text containing a woman's name ('here lies the body of Fri[ð]burg, buried in peace') 'set in [a] panel in [the] thickness over [the round] head' on a later, southern piece of sculpture which has a decorated front. The stone, at Whitchurch, Hampshire, is dated ninth- to eleventh-century.[57]

Only a small number of women's names appear on the primary face of an artefact and sometimes these appear in company with male names. *Aethelgyth* is written with six other names, certainly or probably male, on a lead memorial plate, Flixborough II, South Humberside;[58] and the soul of the deceased *Gvnwaru* is mentioned in an inscription commemmorating *Vlf*'s erection of a church at Aldborough, East Yorkshire.[59] Women's names appearing alone on the primary face of any artefact are rare. There are two, probably female, names[60] that appear alone

engraved round the hoops of finger rings,[61] respectively, *BVREDRVD* and the sentence beginning *EAWEN MIE AH* 'Eawen owns me'. These names are not recorded elsewhere and nothing further is known of these persons.

A better-known name is recorded in a border inscription reading *ÆLFGIVV ME AH*, 'Ælfgivu owns me' on a small, silver disc from Cuxton, Kent. The function of the object, which has a central, openwork motif of a bird of prey clutching a smaller creature, is not clear.[62] Ælfgivu, or Ælfgifu, was the name of both an Anglo-Saxon queen and a royal mistress who enjoyed high status in the early eleventh century and who have inspired modern scholarly interest, particularly since the rise of feminist studies.[63] Queen Ælfgifu, who was of Norman birth and originally called Emma, took the English name Ælfgifu on her first marriage, in 1002, to King Ethelred ('the Unready'). Her second husband was the Viking usurper, King Cnut. She was the mother of two kings, Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor. She witnessed charters, was a patron of the church and, uniquely among English queens, appeared in a portrait miniature with her husband, King Cnut, where, incidentally her name is written, not so neatly or prominently as her husband's, but nevertheless very clearly recorded.[64] She commissioned a book, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, about herself, Cnut and her sons. She lived a very long time (died 1052) and was extremely wealthy. The other famous Ælfgifu was her rival, 'Ælfgifu of Northampton', King Cnut's mistress, mother of his son King Harold I ('Harefoot'), and regent for him in the kingdom of Norway. It might be either of these women who was still the subject of animated discussion in the 1060s, as depicted in the Bayeux 'Tapestry'.[65] It is tempting to link the named silver disc, like the named Hackness sculpture, with one of these unusually prominent and powerful women, but this probably stretches coincidence too far. If we accept David Wilson's dating of the disc to the tenth century,[66] it is a little early to be associated with the very famous ladies called Ælfgifu. However, recent research by Simon Keynes and Catherine Karkov makes it clear that Ælfgifu was a popular royal name in the tenth century, which appears repeatedly in the family tree of West Saxon monarchs.[67] Emma of Normandy would have been given this name on her marriage into the Wessex royal family specifically because it carried prestige. Therefore although the object may not have been associated with one of the figures who is still famous now, it may have belonged to a rich and well-born woman, perhaps a queen consort, who was important in her own day.

These openly displayed, isolated, names of women, *Ælfgivv* on a silver disc, and the more obscure *Bvredrvð* and *Eawen* on finger-rings, are in the minority. The names of others, [Queen] Ælfflæd, Queen Ethelswith and Ædvwen were inscribed on artefacts only to be concealed. The names of Godgytha and [Queen] Cynethryth were

consigned to the reverse faces of objects bearing men's names on the other side. Perhaps these women did not need or choose to display their names; yet they were written. The less certain cases of the recumbent grave stones, which might have been buried in the earth, similarly give mixed messages. The very purpose of inscribing the name of a dead person is to ensure that he or she be remembered; but burying the name suggests the person does not seek worldly fame.The names of *Oedilburga* and *Kyniburug* were written on the sides of the cross-shafts which commemorate them and *Friðburg* over the top of her memorial stone; was it not considered proper to inscribe them on the principal face?

What does the corpus of female names and the fact that so many of them were inscribed only to be concealed add to the debate about the status of women in the Anglo-Saxon world? The little we know about the lives of Ælfflæd, Ethelswith and Cynethryth is because of their associations with kings. Christine Fell notes that Hildithryth, Hildigyth, Oedilburga and a Cyniburg are listed as women 'who should be remembered at the altar' in the ninth-century Lindisfarne/Durham *Liber Vitae*[68] but we cannot know if it was their saintliness or their benefaction which earned them this place. We know nothing of Ædvwen and Godgytha. The male names of Anglo-Saxon history were openly recorded in high-profile works by historians such as Bede, Asser and a succession of chroniclers. Female names recorded by Bede reflect his subject matter of ecclesiastical history, such as Queen Ethelburga, St Hilda, St Etheldreda and her sister Seaxburg. Women simply do not feature in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and it is only Queen Emma and Queen Edith, who commissioned texts, who are really well known from the late Anglo-Saxon period. Recovering the names of women and their contributions to history is far from straightforward, but we now recognise the energetic contribution women made to the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church and its missionary houses,[69] the feminine 'dynasties' in early nunneries[70] and the role of the queen in post-Benedictine Reform religious life.[71] We know of Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, because she took on a man's role on behalf of her husband and in support of her brother King Edward the Elder of Wessex.[72] Information about women as property owners can be teased out of documents such as wills and records of land grants and law suits.[73] On the whole, however, the day to day life of women remains obscure. Elisabeth Okasha notes the lack of inscriptions commemorating female commissioners of churches, memorial stones and other objects, and that this absence is inconsistent with the documentary evidence for female founders of religious houses and commissioners of churches.[74] Her conclusion points to an Anglo-Saxon world in which women were neither assertive[75] nor oppressed, but one in which 'depressingly . . . male interests were paramount and where women and their rôles were drawn and

delimited through male eyes and from a male perspective'.[76]

I see the evidence of female names, albeit concealed, in more positive terms. The men whose names were crafted into weapons and other artefacts were, in different degrees, public figures: monarchs, warriors or skilled smiths whose inscribed names might inspire, intimidate or demonstrate their renown. These were probably not roles that Ælfflæd and our other subjects aspired to. Yet the very fact that the woman's name was inscribed, unseen but readily revealed for authority or protection, indicates a power and self-recognition in these women, which is otherwise hidden from history.

Godgytha, though 'a nun consecrated to God' must have had considerable worldly responsibility and regular communication with distant people if she required a personal seal matrix, a category of object more often associated with high-ranking men. Was she an unusual, even controversial woman? Ælfflæd was not only religious enough to give expensive vestments to the Church, she was also a discriminating patron who commissioned a great work of art, in the forefront of western European fashion. Ædvwen, too, was a wealthy patron of the arts, though her designer's achievement is less than great. Ædvwen commissioned a poetic inscription for her brooch, a text that reveals her piety and faith in the protective power of the almightly against the theft of her secular jewellery. The Trewhiddle Style *Agnus Dei* ring shows us that, in the ninth-century court circle of Queen Ethelswith, religion could be combined with expensive elegance, a far cry from the rather grim asceticism Bede ascribes to St Etheldreda two centuries before. Thus these objects with their discreet names have much to tell us if we are willing to listen.

NOTES

*This essay developed from a conference paper, 'The hidden name of woman: invisible Anglo-Saxons', read at a session titled 'The Spectatorship of Knowledge: Invisible and Illegible in Late Roman and Medieval Art' sponsored by The International Center of Medieval Art at the 89th College Art Association Conference held in Chicago in March 2001. I am grateful to the session organizers, Genevra Kornbluth and Carol Neuman de Vegvar, for their helpful suggestions and to the Kress Foundation for a travel award. An expanded version of the paper, under the present title, was given as a public lecture at Texas Woman's University in May 2001. The lively questions and discussion which followed have to some extent directed the present version, and I would like to express my appreciation for that input. I am also grateful to Elisabeth Okasha who read the revised paper in typescript and made several useful criticisms and suggestions.

[1] Unlike the disputed resting places of other Anglo-Saxon saints, St Cuthbert's is 'generally accepted'; John Crook, 'The architectural setting of the cult of St Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral (1093-1200),' *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093-1193,* ed. by David Rollason, Margaret Hervey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), pp. 235-50 (p. 235).

[2] The coffin was certainly or probably opened on the following documented occasions. The body was revested at the first translation of 698. The relics of other saints were added at the evacuation of Lindisfarne in 875. The tomb was possibly opened for the future Edward the Elder some time before King Alfred's death in 899 and certainly for Athelstan in 934 and perhaps on another occasion; also for Edmund in 944 or 945. Eadred (reigned 946-55) also visited the shrine. A distinguished southern cleric, probably Bishop Ælfwold of Sherborne, visited and allegedly conversed with the saint in the tenth century. The relic-collecting priest Ælfred Westou opened it in the eleventh century, adding the remains of St Bede and probably a mitre. The tomb was opened at the translation of 1104 and ransacked at the Reformation, probably in 1539. It was opened in 1827 and re-examined in 1899; *The Relics of St. Cuthbert* ed. by C. F. Battiscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 2-114. The finds are treated in detail in this volume. See also *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. by Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989). The vestments are in Durham Cathedral, England. All other artefacts discussed in this paper are in the British Museum, London, England, unless otherwise stated.

[3] R. Freyhan, 'The place of the stole and maniples in Anglo-Saxon art of the tenth century,' in Battiscombe, pp. 409-32, pls XXXIII-XXXIV.

[4] The inscriptions on stole and maniple are not identical. The letters are set out differently, but the words are the same.

[5] The identification was made by Raine, witness to the excavation. Battiscombe's alternative suggestion of Ælflæd, or Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians (p.13 note 3), has not received support.

[6] Athelstan's benefactions including *I stolam cum manipulo* were recorded in the anonymous *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* (Section 26); *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, ed. by Ted Johnson South (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), p. 64. The text is also printed in *Symeonis monachi Opera omnia*, ed. by T. Arnold, Rolls Series (2 vols, London: Longman,1882-85), 1, 211 and translated in Battiscombe, p. 33.

[7] 'In Mediterranean art, from the fifth century onwards, the figures of the twelve apostles were frequently inscribed with their names'; Ernst Kitzinger, 'The Coffin Reliquary', in Battiscombe, pp. 202-304 (p. 268). On Cuthbert's coffin only SS Peter and Paul are distinguished iconographically. The naming may occasionally seem tautologous, for example on the stone carving, Ipswich I, in the church of St Nicholas, Ipswich, Suffolk, where St Michael and the dragon are named in addition to the descriptive sentence 'Here St Michael fights (*or* fought) against the dragon' (Elisabeth Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), No. 58, pp. 82-83, pl. 58), but generally it would act as a trigger to anyone who did not immediately recognize the characters from the graphics.

[8] See Elisabeth Okasha, 'The commissioners, makers and owners of Anglo-Saxon inscriptions,' *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 7 (1994), 71-77.

[9] I am grateful to Susan L. Ward for drawing my attention to the practice of praying while vesting, which became formalised during the later Middle Ages. The point is developed in her forthcoming paper 'Saints in Split Stitch: Representations of Saints in *Opus Anglicanum* Vestments'.

[10] Apart from coins. There are a small number of names of contemporary persons in manuscripts, identifying figures illustrated, naming scribes and in the unique case of a Gospel Book (Stockholm, Royal Library MS A. 135), naming the husband and wife who had ransomed the book from the Vikings. Names are also found on seal dies and on grave-stones, examples of which are considered below. Metalwork, which survives in considerable quantity, has yielded relatively few examples. Elizabeth Coatsworth and Michael Pinder, *The Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith: fine metalwork in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002), p. 220, state that 'Of the . . . thousands of Pre-Conquest objects of fine [i.e. gold] metalwork, only fifty-one have inscriptions'. Not all of them include names. I am grateful to Drs Coatsworth and Pinder for allowing me to read part of their book in typescript and for providing a number of useful ideas and

references.

[11] Though some Anglo-Saxon names are still in use (*Eadweard* and *Eadgyth* survive in the forms Edward and Edith, for example) the gender association of others is not immediately obvious. It may be deduced from textual context, which may include for example a patronymic ('son of') or profession ('nun'); otherwise it is generally assumed that the biological gender of a person corresponds to the grammatical gender of their name. Elisabeth Okasha gives the examples of *Aelfgifu*, with the grammatically feminine element *gifu* and *Aelfraed* with the grammatically masculine *raed*; Elisabeth Okasha, 'Anglo-Saxon Women: the Evidence from Inscriptions', *Roman, Runes and Ogham: Medieval Inscriptions in the Insular World and on the Continent*, ed. by John Higgitt, Katherine Forsyth and David N. Parsons (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2001), pp. 79-88 (p. 80).

[12] Male names appear 4.5 times more frequently on inscriptions than female; Okasha, 'Anglo-Saxon Women', p. 81.

[13] Illustrated and discussed in London, British Museum Exhibition Catalogue, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900*, ed. by Janet Backhouse and Leslie Webster (London: British Museum, 1991), No. 243, pp. 268-69, where the photograph is wrongly numbered 244.

[14] He was King of Kent from 828 and reigned in Wessex from at least 839.

[15] In the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England; discussed and illustrated in Backhouse and Webster, *The Making of England*, No. 260, pp. 282-83.

[16] There have been other functions suggested, for example that this and two similar objects are terminals of staffs of office, but I am convinced by the traditional interpretation.

[17] In The Castle Museum, York, England; Dominic Tweddle, *The Anglian Helmet from 16-22 Coppergate*, *The Archaeology of York*, ed. by Peter V. Addyman, 17.8 The Small Finds (1992), as reconstructed pp. 942-45, Fig. 408 a-d.

[18] The Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, helmet has two scenes which are believed to reflect the cult of Woden, as well as heads of the boar, a beast associated with Thunor and much used as a protective emblem. This helmet also has dragon heads. The Wollaston, Northamptonshire, and Benty Grange, Derbyshire, helmets have free-standing boar figures as crests. The Benty Grange helmet also has a Christian cross on the nose-piece.

[19] For example in Backhouse and Webster, *The Making of England*, No. 47, pp. 60-62.

[20] The sideways lettering could be simply the result of the artist writing the inscription from left to right on a strip of metal that was then turned sideways. Lack of anticipation of the finished result is not uncommon on, for example, Anglo-Saxon stone carvings executed flat and subsequently erected. The helmet inscription may be reversed

because it was engraved by an illiterate person who set the template the wrong way round, or because the strips of metal bearing the inscription were attached wrong-side up, resulting in letters which were not only retrograde but also repoussé when they should have been incised; see the comments by Elisabeth Okasha in Tweddle, p. 1013.

[21] London, British Museum Exhibition Catalogue, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, ed. by Janet Backhouse, David H. Turner and Leslie Webster (London: British Museum,1984), No. 94, pp. 101-02.

[22] Raymond I. Page strikes a note of caution; 'I am prepared to accept that runes were sometimes used to enhance magical activities, and even to suspect that they may originally have been a magical or esoteric script, without wanting to think them essentially magical during the Anglo-Saxon era', *An Introduction to English Runes* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 14.

[23] See Gale R. Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1981), pp. 28-29, 59.

[24] Page (p. 15), describes three runic inscriptions as 'magic gibberish' and about a dozen others as of uncertain meaning.

[25] Ralph W. V. Elliott, *Runes: an introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 76. An early example is the runic inscription which transliterates as 'Luda repaired this brooch' on the back of a brooch found in a grave of the conversion period, which was probably repaired about the middle of the seventh century; John Hines, 'The runic inscription on the composite disc brooch from Grave 11,' in *Excavations on the Norwich Southern by-Pass Part III The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Harford Farm, Markshall, Norfolk*, East Anglian Archaeology Report, 92, ed. by K. Penn (Gresenhall: Norfolk Archaeology Unit, 2000), pp. 81-82.

[26] In some cases there may have been a subtle distinction between what was thought appropriate to be written in Roman script and what might be written in runes. For example, on the Ruthwell Cross (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland), an eighth-century Northumbrian stone carving, the captions to the panels of figure sculpture, which mostly derive from the Bible and are in Latin, are carved in Latin letters, while the poetic text, which concerns the crucifixion but is uncanonical, is in the Old English language, and carved in runes. Runes occur on Anglo-Saxon coins from the sixth to ninth centuries, identifying moneyers or non-royal 'sponsors of issues'; see Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European coinage. I. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 158; Hines, 'Runic inscription,' pp. 81-82; Coatsworth and Pinder, *Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith*, p. 220 n. 63.

[27] Since the fighting knife came into fashion in the seventh century, when some graves were still furnished with grave-goods, there are examples which were buried with

their owners. Some of these were carried in sheaths, suspended from the body in various positions. See for example, Vera I. Evison, Appendix to John Musty, 'The excavation of two barrows, one of Saxon date, at Ford, Laverstock, nr. Salisbury, Wiltshire,' *Antiquaries Journal*, 49 (1969), 98-197 (pp. 114-16).

[28] Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Golden Age*, No. 95, pp.102-03 (one side only illustrated). Both sides are shown in David M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork 700-1000 in the British Museum*, Catalogue of Antiquities of the Later Saxon Period Volume I (London: British Museum, 1964), No. 80, pl. XXX.

[29] Wilson (*Metalwork*, p. 173) translates the first inscription 'Geberht owns me' adding 'The meaning of the initial letter S is unclear'; The personification of an artefact in its inscription is a common device in Anglo-Saxon art (discussed in Thomas A. Bredehoft, 'First person inscriptions and literacy in Anglo-Saxon England,' *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 9 (1996), 103-10). It is related to the prosopopoeia found in Old English poems such as *The Dream of the Rood* and certain riddles.

[30] In this and other cases I have used the convention of representing the Old English letter *wynn* with W.

[31] Inscribing the maker's name ensured both fame for the craftsman and prestige for the patron who could afford the work of a well-known smith. The practice of smiths 'advertising' is discussed in Coatsworth and Pinder, *Art of the Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith*, pp. 221-22.

[32] Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Golden Age*, 102.

[33] In the Cathedral of Saint-Michel, Brussels, Belgium; Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Golden Age*, No. 75, pp. 90-92 and colour pl. XXIII.

[34] The foot of the cross extends into a shaft, indicating that it was once mounted, perhaps on a wooden carrying pole.

[35] Thus the name of the repairer, *Luda*, was added to the Harford Farm brooch (note 25, above) and the maker's name is recorded (*WVDEMAN FECID*) on the back of a coin brooch from Canterbury, Kent, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Wilson, *Metalwork* , pp. 35, 101). An exception is the maker's name prominently placed on the decorated surface of a censer-cover from Pershore, Worcestershire (Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Golden Age*, No. 74, p. 90). I am grateful to Elizabeth Coatsworth and Michael Pinder for drawing my attention to these examples.

[36] Wilson, *Metalwork*, No. 1, pp. 117-19, Fig. 8 and unnumbered figure, pl. XI.

[37] Christine Fell has other suggestions: '. . . unless it was designed deliberately in order to slide over gloves or arthritic knuckles, its size suggests that it was intended for the male hand, and the name on it intended to record giver not owner'; Christine Fell, Cecily Clark and Elizabeth Williams, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England and the impact of 1066*

(London: British Museum, 1984), p. 94.

[38] The suggestion is in keeping with Elisabeth Okasha's observation that the state of preservation of the text inside the ring implies that the ring was not worn much after its engraving, and therefore the text may slightly post-date the ring; Okasha, *Hand-List*, p. 113.

[39] Wilson, *Metalwork*, No. 83, pp. 174-77, Fig. 34, pls XXXI, XXXII; R. I. Page 'The Inscriptions' Appendix A in Wilson, pp. 86-9. The relevant inscription is not the roughly scratched pseudo-runic nonsense on the central riveted silver strip, but the more carefully executed lettering round the circumference of the object.

[40] The diameter is between 14.9 and 16.4 cm. The Strickland Brooch is 11.2 cm and the Fuller Brooch 11.4 cm.

[41] Page, 'Inscriptions', p. 87 and note 7.

[42] Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Golden Age*, No. 112, pp. 113-14.

[43] Elisabeth Okasha's suggestion. Backhouse, Turner and Webster have *D[OMIN]O.*

[44] Robert Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination, 9 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pl. 28.

[45] The majority of female images represent the Virgin Mary. An uncovered head is very rare on an image of a woman in late Anglo-Saxon art, and indicative of sin (see Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 141). This may not have been so in earlier art. The portrait on the Hackness sculpture discussed below, which is possibly non-Maryan, 'seems to have long hair'; Carol Farr, 'Questioning the monuments: approaches to Anglo-Saxon sculpture through gender studies', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England: basic readings*, ed. by Catherine E. Karkov, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England, 7 (New York: Garland, 1999), pp. 375-402 (p. 382); John Higgett is more precise; 'The hair . . . hangs in a plait over the shoulder', in *British Academy Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, III, York and Eastern Yorkshire*, ed. by James Lang (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 137.

[46] Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, p. 144.

[47] Versions of the coin are illustrated in Grierson and Blackburn, No. 1132, pl. 52; and Backhouse and Webster, *The Making of Anglo-Saxon England*, No. 215, p. 248. I am grateful to Dr James Booth, University of Hull, for discussing these coins with me.

[48] Grierson and Blackburn (p. 280) suggest that information about coins of the Byzantine Empress Irene may have reached England, though there is no direct copying.

[49] Christine Fell (Fell, Clark and Williams, pp. 13-14), attributes the dissemination of this view to Doris Stenton (D. S. M. Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (London and New York: Allen & Unwin, Macmillan, 1957).

[50] This is not a true portrait and is very stylised. Some versions are 'virtually identical

with those on [Eoba's] coins of Offa' (Grierson and Blackburn, p. 280). Although some scholars have assumed the bust represents Cynethryth (Marian Archibald in Backhouse and Webster, *The Making of England*, p. 247, discussing a version in the British Museum collection, calls it a 'female head grafted on to the usual Offa fourth-century style Roman bust') there are no distinctive feminine features about it; it probably represents Offa.

[51] *British Academy Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, I, County Durham and Northumberland*, ed. by Rosemary J. Cramp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 7; Hartlepool 1 (St Hilda's church): No. 433, p. 98, pl. 84; Hartlepool 2: (Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle upon Tyne) No. 430, pp. 98-99, pl. 84; Hartlepool 6: (Durham Cathedral): No. 444, pp. 100-01, pl. 85.

[52] Hartlepool 8 (British Museum, London) inscribed with the incomplete name *-gyth* can probably be identified with the small square stone which the excavators found underneath the head of a skeleton: Cramp, *Corpus I*, p. 101.

[53] It is interesting to note that two similar markers, Hartlepool 3 and 5, naming both a man and a woman (*Vermund* and *Torhsuid*) are weathered: Cramp, *Corpus I*, pp. 99, 100.

[54] Priory Museum, Lindisfarne, Northumberland. Dominic Tweddle in Backhouse and Webster, *The Making of England*, No. 71, pp. 103-04.

[55] R. I. Page, 'The Bewcastle Cross' (1960) reprinted in R. I. Page, *Runes and Runic Inscriptions: collected essays on Anglo-Saxon and Viking runes*, ed. by David Parsons (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), pp. 47-70; *The British Academy Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, II, Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands*, ed. by Richard N. Bailey and Rosemary Cramp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 12-22, 71. I am grateful to Catherine Karkov for pointing out that the Bewcastle cross conformed to my thesis.

[56] Farr, pp. 380-92, pl. 14.1; Hackness 1 (church of St Peter): Lang, pp. 135-41, pls. 454-63, 466.

[57] Okasha, *Hand-List*, No. 135, pp. 125-26.

[58] Elisabeth Okasha, 'A second supplement to *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-runic Inscriptions*, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 21 (1992), 37-85, No. 193 (pp. 46-7).

[59] Okasha, *Hand-List*, p. 47.

[60] From Swindon, Wiltshire; Wilson, *Metalwork*, No. 85, p. 178, pl. XXXII; No provenance; Wilson, No. 145, pp. 205-06, pl. XLII.

[61] Late Anglo-Saxon finger-rings are a particularly fruitful source of inscriptions, usually arranged decoratively on the outside, some of them, like Ethelwulf's ring discussed above, exhibiting the names of men. They include a ring from Llysfaen, Wales, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, with the name *Ahlstan* (Wilson, *Metalwork*, p. 75) and another from Lancashire with 'Ædred owns me Eanred engraved me'; Idem, No. 30, p.

141, pl. XIX.

[62] Wilson, *Metalwork*, No. 14, pp. 129-30, pl. XVII. Although described as a brooch in the account of its purchase in the British Museum Register, the disc has no evidence of a pin across the back.

[63] See M. W. Campbell, 'Queen Emma and Ælfgifu of Northampton: Canute the Great's women,' *Medieval Scandinavia*, 4 (1971), 66-79; Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: queenship and women's power in eleventh-century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

[64] London, British Library MS Stowe 944, fol. 6v; *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester: British Library Stowe 944, together with leaves from British Library Cotton Vespasian A. VIII and British Library Titus D. XXVII*, ed. by Simon Keynes, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 26 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1996).

[65] David M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), pl. 17.

[66] Wilson, *Metalwork*, No. 14, pp. 129-30, pl. XVII. Wilson does not give any grounds for this dating, and there seem to be few comparable objects, but he is the highest authority. Wilson specifically dismisses R. A. Smith's suggested association of the object with Queen Emma as 'highly hypothetical'.

[67] I am grateful to Professors Karkov and Keynes for unpublished information.

[68] Fell, Clark and Williams, pp. 121-22.

[69] Christine Fell, 'Some implications of the Boniface correspondence,' in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. by Helen Damico and Alexandra H. Olsen (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 29-43; Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: sharing a common fate* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992).

[70] Mary Dockray-Miller, *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2000).

[71] Deshman, pp. 204-07.

[72] F. T. Wainwright, 'Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians,' in Damico and Olsen, *New Readings*, pp. 44-55.

[73] See Fell, Clark and Williams, *passim*.

[74] Okasha, 'Anglo-Saxon women', pp. 85-86.

[75] The word is taken from Fell, Clark and Williams, p. 21.

[76] Okasha, 'Anglo-Saxon women', p. 87.

Ancrene Wisse and the Life of Perfection

Bella Millett

The early Middle English guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*, has traditionally been studied in departments of English rather than history. In recent years, however, there has been increasing interest in its institutional context, and what it can tell us about the history of women in the religious life. In particular, it has been seen as reflecting a common pattern of institutional development during the 'Medieval Reformation', the 'slide into cenobitism' of originally anchoritic groups; but the internal evidence of the text suggests that the relationship of both the author and his audience to traditional monasticism was more problematic than this interpretation assumes.

There are some difficulties in using *Ancrene Wisse* as a source of historical information; even after a century and a half of research, its exact date, localization, authorship, and audience have not been conclusively established. The balance of the evidence increasingly suggests an original date of composition after 1215,[1] and the revised version in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, which mentions visits by Dominican and Franciscan friars, must have been written after 1224, when both orders had established themselves in England. The dialect of the early manuscripts points towards an origin in the West Midlands, probably in northern Herefordshire or southern Shropshire. The internal evidence of the work suggests that its author was a regular cleric, following the Rule of St Augustine, and that its audience changed as time went on: the original version was composed for three well-born sisters, who 'in the flower of your youth renounced the joys of the world and became anchoresses',[2] but the revised version in Corpus 402 includes a passage which addresses a larger group of women, 'twenty now or more'.[3] Beyond these basic points, however, researchers have had to depend on limited and often ambiguous circumstantial evidence to identify a specific historical and institutional context.

In recent years the most widely accepted theory, closely argued by Eric

Dobson in his influential 1976 study, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse*,[4] has been that *Ancrene Wisse* was written by an Augustinian canon, a member of the Victorine house at Wigmore Abbey in northern Herefordshire. Dobson argued further that the larger group of women addressed in Corpus 402 had become a more formally-organized religious community based on the nearby nunnery, Limebrook Priory, which is later recorded as a house of Augustinian canonesses: 'the twenty or more anchoresses, though they did not live in one place, nevertheless constituted a single community under a prioress and subject to the Augustinian Rule'.[5] If this were the case, *Ancrene Wisse* would offer a relatively late example of the recurring tendency of the 'Medieval Reformation' mentioned above, the 'slide into cenobitism' from anchoritism; Sally Thompson, drawing on Dobson's account in her 1991 study of post-Conquest English nunneries, *Women Religious*, takes it as suggesting 'that the transition from a group of anchoresses to a community of nuns was an easy process, with no rigid lines of demarcation dividing the different forms of vocation',[6] and Janet Burton makes a similar point in her 1994 survey of post-Conquest monastic and religious orders in England.[7] It is open to question, however, whether this particular group of anchoresses ever actually made the transition to a cenobitic life. In the period when *Ancrene Wisse* was written, external circumstances were less favourable to such a move than they would have been at an earlier stage of the 'Medieval Reformation'; and the textual revisions made for the larger group of women do not provide convincing evidence for a change in their institutional status.

By the early thirteenth century, two factors had made it increasingly difficult for women to enter religious communities. One was decreasing financial support for nunneries; as Bruce Venarde has shown, after a peak in the 1160s, the number of foundations and re-foundations of religious houses for women dropped sharply, and (at any rate in England and Wales) continued to decline until the 1230s.[8] The other was the increasing reluctance of existing religious orders to take responsibility for the *cura monialium*, a problem exacerbated by the prohibition of the foundation of new orders by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.[9] A recurring feature of the 'Medieval Reformation' was the tendency for newly-founded male religious orders to move from the active encouragement of women members to a growing unwillingness to accept the financial, pastoral, and disciplinary responsibilities involved in their support – by the late 1220s even the Dominicans had renounced 'the care or custody of nuns or any other women' as an impediment to their preaching mission.[10] It would be oversimplifying to claim that the position was uniformly bleak: the official renunciation of the *cura*

monialium by some orders, including the Premonstratensians, Cistercians, and Dominicans, was not always followed through in practice, and the secular clergy and the laity provided alternative sources of patronage. Nevertheless, it is possible that the anchoresses addressed in *Ancrene Wisse* should be grouped with the increasing number of women across Europe who were adopting the solitary life as much from necessity as from choice. Brenda Bolton,[11] Ann Warren,[12] and Patricia Rosof[13] all link the sharp rise in female lay-anchoritism in the early thirteenth century with the shortage of available places in women's religious houses; and although Sharon Elkins has claimed that 'in 1215, religious women lived in a vast network of monasteries, so widespread that women of all social strata, in every part of England, could easily enter religious life',[14] this does not seem to have been the case for the Welsh Marches. In 1215, Cheshire, Shropshire, and Herefordshire could offer between them only three under-endowed nunneries, offering in total perhaps twenty places. The only nunnery in Cheshire was the Benedictine priory of St Mary in Chester, a mid-twelfth-century foundation. Little is known of its early history, but from the late fourteenth century onwards it is recorded as supporting between twelve and fourteen nuns, and records surviving from 1244 onwards indicate chronic financial problems (in 1253, the nuns complained to Queen Eleanor that they were so poor they had to beg daily for their food).[15] The only nunnery in Shropshire was St Leonard's Priory, Brewood (Brewood White Ladies), a late-twelfth-century foundation of Augustinian canonesses, 'a small, poor house' which 'normally supported about five nuns with the prioress'.[16] Limebrook Priory in Herefordshire, also a late-twelfth-century foundation, was still smaller, too poorly endowed before the early 1250s to support more than two or three nuns.[17] A second Herefordshire house, Aconbury Priory, founded in 1216, was rather better endowed, but seems in its initial stages to have been a hospital, and to have maintained its commitment to the care of the poor and sick for some time after its conversion to a single-sex priory of Augustinian nuns in 1237.[18]

The revised version of *Ancrene Wisse* in Corpus 402 cannot be used to demonstrate that its audience of anchoresses had overcome these obstacles and become an established community of nuns (whether based on Limebrook or elsewhere). One of the main passages used by Dobson to support his case, the addition addressing the larger group of women, can be interpreted quite differently, as emphasizing their extra-monastic status. It is inserted after an exhortation to the original anchoresses to live on good terms with each other, 'so that you may always be bound together with the unity of one heart and of one

will, as it is written about our Lord's dear disciples: *The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul* [Acts 4. 32]'.[19]

> *Pax uobis:* þis wes Godes gretunge to his deore deciples . . . 3e beoð þe ancren of Englond, swa feole togederes (twenti nuðe oðer ma – Godd i god ow mutli), þet meast grið is among, meast annesse ant anrednesse ant sometreadnesse of anred lif efter a riwle, swa þet alle teoð an, alle iturnt anesweis ant nan frommard oðer, efter þet word is. For-þi 3e gað wel forð ant spedeð in ower wei; for euch is wiðward oþer in an manere of liflade, as þah 3e weren an cuuent of Lundene ant of Oxnefort, of Schreobsburi oðer of Chester, þear as alle beoð an wið an imeane manere, ant wiðuten singularite, þet is anful frommardschipe, lah þing i religiun, for hit towarpeð annesse ant manere imeane þet ah to beon in ordre. Þis nu þenne, þet 3e beoð alle as an cuuent, is ower hehe fame; þis is Godd icweme; þis is nunan wide cuð, swa þet ower cuuent biginneð to spreaden toward Englondes ende. 3e beoð as þe moder-hus þet heo beoð of istreonet. | [fol. 69^{v}] 3e beoð ase wealle; 3ef þe wealle woreð, þe strunden worið alswa. A weila, 3ef 3e worið ne bide Ich hit neauer! 3ef ei is imong ow þe geað i singularite, ant ne folheð nawt þe cuuent, ah went ut of þe floc, þet is as in a cloistre þet Iesu is heh priur ouer, went ut as a teowi schep ant meapeð hire ane into breres teilac, into wulues muð, toward te þrote of helle – 3ef ei swuch is imong ow, Godd turne hire in to floc, wende hire in to cuuent, ant leue ow þe beoð þrin swa halden ow þrin þet Godd, þe hehe priur, neome ow on ende þeonne up into þe cloistre of heouene.[20]
>
> [*Peace be with you:* this was God's greeting to his dear disciples . . . You are the anchoresses of England, in such a large group (twenty now or more; may God increase you in good), that most peace is among, most unity and constancy and community of united life according to a rule, so that you all pull together, all turned one way and none away from each other, so it is said. For that reason you are advancing well and making good progress; because each of you is turned towards the other in one way of living, as if you were a single religious

> community of London and of Oxford, of Shrewsbury or of Chester, where all are united in one common way of life, and without singularity, which is individual waywardness, a shameful thing in the religious life, because it disrupts the unity and common way of life that there should be in an order. Now this, then, that you are all like one community, gives you your high reputation; this is pleasing to God; this has recently become widely known, so that your community is beginning to spread towards the border of England. You are like the mother-house from which they are generated. You are like a spring; if the spring grows muddied, the streams grow muddy too. Oh, if you grow muddy I could not bear it! If there is anyone among you who goes her own way, and does not follow the community, but goes out of the flock, which is as if in a cloister over which Jesus is the high prior, goes out like a straying sheep and wanders on her own into the thicket of brambles, into the wolf's mouth, towards the throat of hell – if there is anyone like that among you, may God turn her back to the flock, guide her back into the community, and grant to you who are in it so to keep yourselves inside that God, the high prior, may finally take you up from it into the cloister of heaven.]

There is no doubt that the author here is praising his audience in terms of what could be seen as a distinctively monastic, rather than anchoritic, ideal, 'community of united life according to a rule'. The text which he takes as his starting-point, Acts 4. 32, is invoked in the 'Rule of St Augustine'; and Ludo Milis, in his careful study of the 'slide towards cenobitism' of those twelfth-century groups of hermits who became Augustinian canons, sees the acceptance of 'the communal ideal inspired by the Acts of the Apostles', together with the adoption of a Rule, as a marker of the final, 'cenobitic' phase.[21] But the quotation from Acts 4. 32 is part of the original version of *Ancrene Wisse*; and there is no reason to suppose that the rule mentioned in the addition is anything other than the anchoresses' original, strictly unofficial guide to the anchoritic life, *Ancrene Wisse* itself.[22] Dobson's conclusion, 'the passage can only mean that the twenty or more anchoresses, though they did not live in one place, nevertheless constituted a single community under a prioress and subject to the Augustinian Rule',[23] takes its rhetoric too literally. There is no clear evidence either here or elsewhere in the

revised text in Corpus 402 (even in its extensively-modified version of Part 8, which deals with the anchoresses' outward observances), that the institutional context of the group had changed. The revisions continue to assume an anchoritic rather than communal life, and there is no mention of a prioress; as in the original version, it is assumed that the anchoresses are supervised by a male spiritual director (*meistre*).[24] The point the author is making in the passage quoted above seems to be rather that the women are exceptional *as anchoresses*, observing a common rule and functioning as a community in spite of their solitary way of life; they successfully emulate the virtues of cenobitic life outside its official structure. The passage is constructed around a series of similes, '*as if* you were a single religious community', '*like* one community', '*like* the mother-house', '*as if* in a cloister over which Jesus is the high prior'; what is being described is not a real but a virtual cloister.

There are reasons, then, for questioning the recent consensus on the institutional context of *Ancrene Wisse*; the women it addresses are not necessarily recapitulating a twelfth-century pattern of progression in the religious life, from anchoritism to cenobitism. I have suggested elsewhere that their situation may reflect instead a distinctively thirteenth-century development, the informal, extra-monastic collaboration of lay-anchoresses and friars. In recent years, the evidence has increasingly suggested a Dominican rather than Victorine origin for *Ancrene Wisse*. As Dobson himself noted, its legislative elements show the influence not of the Victorine *Liber ordinis* but of a different Augustinian tradition, the regulations developed by the Premonstratensian canons and later adopted by the Dominicans, and its closest parallels are with the earliest Dominican constitutions. Dobson suggested that these parallels might be explained by Victorine anticipation of Dominican practices; but subsequent research has broken the links he identified with Victorine tradition, and it now seems more likely that the parallels indicate direct influence.[25] This would be consistent with the general treatment of the religious life in *Ancrene Wisse*, which reveals a more ambivalent, sometimes even antagonistic, attitude to traditional monasticism than the contextualization discussed above would suggest. There is no doubt that the Dominicans owed much to both the institutional forms and the spirituality of earlier monasticism, and *Ancrene Wisse* reflects these influences, with a particular debt to two Cistercian writers, Aelred of Rievaulx (whose mid-twelfth-century rule for anchoresses, *De Institutione Inclusarum,* is one of its main sources) and Bernard of Clairvaux. However, the development of the Dominican order was also driven to some extent by a reaction against the structures and values of

traditional monasticism. The Dominicans' links with an existing tradition of extra-monastic reform may help to explain why the concept of the life of perfection in *Ancrene Wisse* is not wholly based on monastic models, and in some cases seems even to be defined in opposition to them.

The tension emerges most clearly from the discussion in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* of the meaning of *religiun*, the Middle English equivalent of Latin *religio*. In the early thirteenth century, the word *religio* had a variety of senses, some of them conflicting;[26] the author focuses particularly on the tension between two of these senses. The earlier and more general one has been usefully defined by a French scholar:

> In Christian Latin, *religio* is the life of faith, realizing and proving itself in action, above all in the exercise of charity, the first commandment of the Gospel: 'Pure and immaculate *religio* before God and the Father is this: visiting orphans and widows in their tribulation and keeping oneself unspotted from this world' [James 1: 27].[27]

From the early Middle Ages onwards, however, *religio* also came to be used in a more specialized sense, as a description for the monastic life, and the adjective derived from it, *religiosus*, became a near-synonym for 'monk', since monks were seen as followers of the religious life *par excellence*. During the period of the 'Medieval Reformation', this usage was also extended to cover the members of more recently-established types of religious order. Canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 neatly illustrates in its wording how far the more specialized sense of *religio* had developed by the early thirteenth century:

> Ne nimia *religionum* diversitas gravem in ecclesia Dei confusionem inducat, firmiter prohibemus, ne quis de caetero novam *religionem* inveniat, sed quicumque voluerit *ad religionem converti*, unam de approbatis assumat. Similiter qui voluerit *religiosam domum* fundare de novo, regulam et institutionem accipiat de *religionibus* approbatis . . .[28]
> [So that too much diversity *of religious orders* should not introduce serious confusion in the Church of God, we strictly forbid anyone to establish a new *religious order* in the future; anyone who wishes *to take up the religious life* should adopt

> one of the approved forms instead. Similarly, anyone who wants to found a new *religious house* should accept a rule and organization from the approved *religious orders* . . .]

The canon both reflects and responds to the major institutional changes of the previous two centuries, during which a widespread movement of religious enthusiasm had produced an increasing variety of religious ways of life, either modifications of traditional forms or newly developed. The passage assumes a variety of rules (*regulae*), of which the commonest would be the Rule of St Benedict, followed by most (though not all) monastic houses, and the 'Rule of St Augustine', followed by regular canons; in addition, it takes for granted the existence of different religious orders, groups of houses whose common practice was defined by more specific regulations (*institutiones*). But it also attempts to restrict this variety, both defining and delimiting the acceptable forms of religious life. The word *religio* (which is used here interchangeably to mean 'religious way of life' and 'religious order') carries a clearly-defined technical sense: *religio* involves the renunciation of the world (as the phrase *ad religionem converti* suggests),[29] the adoption of a rule, and the acceptance of the regulations of a particular religious order. This definition could be seen as no more than a reflection of contemporary institutional realities; Jacques Hourlier, in his study of the legal and institutional position of religious in this period, comments, 'With the exception of marginal elements, hermits and others, every male or female religious of the classical period [1140-1378] belongs to an order.'[30] But the provisions of Canon 13, forbidding the foundation of new orders and actively discouraging any attempts to redefine further the nature of the religious life, inevitably raised problems for those who were, for one reason or another, marginal to the existing system.

This applies, in different ways, to both the author and the audience of *Ancrene Wisse*: the author because of his association with a newly-developed order whose central preaching mission set it apart from more traditional forms of religious life, the audience because of their borderline status as lay-anchoresses. The earliest mendicant orders did succeed in gaining Papal approval after the Fourth Lateran Council: the Dominicans in 1216 adopted the Rule of St Augustine and a (considerably modified) form of the customs of the Premonstratensian canons, and the Franciscans managed to bypass the requirements of Canon 13 altogether, receiving an approved Rule of their own in 1223.[31] The effect of Canon 13, however, was to marginalize further those

religious who did not belong to an approved order. Hourlier comments on the tendency for the members of religious orders from the twelfth century onwards to be marked off increasingly from the secular clergy and laity by their habit, their behaviour, and their outlook, common features more significant than the differences in clothing and observance between monks, canons, and mendicants: 'As a result, a wider gap opens up between regulars and other religious, solitaries, hermits, whom [canon] law seems to neglect a little.' He adds, 'In reality, canon law does not forget solitaries; but their condition by definition does not require general legislation; all it needs is a few principles and personal regulation, left to the control of the local authority'.[32] Neither the author nor the audience of *Ancrene Wisse*, however, seems to have found this situation wholly satisfactory. The author is pessimistic about the quality of pastoral care available to the anchoresses: in Part 2 he says:

> To sum gastelich mon þet ȝe beoð trusti upon – as ȝe mahe beon o lut – god is þet ȝe aski read . . . *Set multi ueniunt ad uos in uestimentis ouium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces* . . . Worltliche leueð lut, religiuse ȝet leas.[33]
>
> [It is a good idea for you to ask some spiritual man that you trust – and there are few that you can – to give you advice . . . *But many people come to you in sheep's clothing, while inside they are ravening wolves* [see Matt. 7. 15, 24. 5, 11]. . . Trust seculars little, religious still less.]

In a passage added in revision, this warning is qualified, but only by a warm recommendation of Dominican and Franciscan friars, who are also exempted from the special permission required for other visitors.[34] The anchoresses themselves seem to have been uncomfortably conscious of their marginal status as religious – an unease apparently shared by those around them. The author tells us in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* not only that the anchoresses had requested a Rule from him (in itself a standard introductory *topos* to this kind of work) but that they had complained that people kept asking what order they belonged to, and whether it was 'white' or 'black'.[35] They had taken formal vows of chastity, obedience, and stability of abode, and the author consistently refers to them as *religiuse*. But as lay-anchoresses, entering the anchor-house directly from the world rather than (in the more traditional manner) from a nunnery, they were not attached to any religious order; they did not follow an approved Rule and

customs, and had no distinctive habit. This problem is directly addressed in the *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse*, which takes the nature of the religious life as its central theme, discussing not only what constitutes a rule but the broader concepts of *religio* and *ordo*.

The dominant theme of the *Preface* is the importance of inner disposition rather than outward observance. The author begins by a discussion of the term *riwle* (Latin *regula*), concentrating on two kinds of rule: the 'Inner Rule', the divine commands governing the heart, which 'everyone must keep, and you above all',[36] and the 'Outer Rule', the humanly-devised regulations governing physical observances ('how you should eat, drink, dress, say your prayers, sleep, keep vigil').[37] He emphasizes that the 'Outer Rule' only exists to serve the 'Inner Rule', as a maid serves her lady. Its prescriptions may be modified, and the anchoresses are advised against vowing to observe them; it has significance only as a means to an end. He then turns to the question of what is meant by *religio* and *ordo*:

> 3ef ei unweote easkeð ow of hwet ordre ȝe beon – | [f. 3^{r}] as summe doð, [ȝ]e telleð me, þe siheð þe gneat ant swolheð þe flehe – ondswerieð: of Sein Iames, þe wes Godes apostel ant for his muchele halinesse icleopet Godes broðer. 3ef him þuncheð wunder ant sullich of swuch ondswere, easkið him hwet beo ordre, ant hwer he funde in Hali [W]rit religiun openluke[r] descriue[t] ant isutelet þen is i Sein Iames canonial epistel. He sei[ð hwet] is religiun, hwuch is riht ordre. *Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem hec est: visitare pupillos et viduas in necessitate sua, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc seculo*; þet is, 'Cleane religiun ant [wið]ute [w]em is iseon ant helpen [widewen ant feder]lese children, ant from þe [w]orld [w]iten him cleane ant unwemmet.' Þus Sein Iame descriue[ð] religiun ant ordre. Þe leatere dale of his sahe limpeð to reclusen; for þer beo[ð] twa dalen, to twa manere þe beoð of religiuse. To eiðer limpeð his dale, as ȝe mahen iheren. Gode religiuse beoð i þe world summe, nomeliche prelaz ant treowe preachurs, þe habbeð þe earre dale of þet Sein Iame seide; þet beoð, as he seið, þe gað to helpen [wi]d[ewen ant fea]derlese children. Þe [saw]le is widewe þe haueð forloren hire spus, þet is, Iesu Crist, wið eni heaued-sunne. Þe is alswa federles þe haueð þurh his sunne forloren þe Feader of heouene.

Gan iseon þulliche ant elnin ham ant helpen wið fode of hali lare – þis is riht religiun, he seið, Sein Iame. Þe leatere dale of his sahe limpeð to ower religiun, as Ich ear seide, þe witeð ow from þe worlt ouer oþre religiuse cleane ant unwemmet. Þus þe apostle Sein Iame, þe descriueð religiun, nowðer hwit ne blac ne nempneð he in his ordre.[38]

[If any ignorant person asks you what order you belong to – as you tell me some do, straining out the gnat and swallowing the fly – answer: of St James, who was God's apostle and called God's brother because of his great holiness. If such an answer seems strange and unorthodox to him, ask him what constitutes order, and where he could find the religious way of life [*religiun*] more clearly described and explained in Holy Scripture than it is in St James's canonical epistle. He defines religious life and true order. *Pure and immaculate religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their need, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world* [James 1. 27]; that is, 'Pure and immaculate religion is to visit and help widows and fatherless children, and keep oneself pure and unspotted from the world.' This is how St James describes religious life and order. The second part of what he says applies to recluses; because there are two parts, corresponding to the two different kinds of religious. Each kind has its own part, as you may hear. Some people in the world are good religious, especially prelates and true preachers. The first part of what St James said applies to them; they are, as he says, those who go to help widows and fatherless children. The soul is a widow who has lost her spouse, that is, Jesus Christ, through any mortal sin. Those are also fatherless who through their sin have lost the Father of heaven. Going to see such people and comforting them and helping them with the nourishment of holy instruction – this is true religion, says St James. The second part of what he says applies to your kind of religious life, as I said before, keeping yourselves pure and unspotted from the world more than other religious. So the apostle St James, describing religion, mentions neither white nor black in his order.)

The author goes on to point out that the earliest hermits, male and female, wore no distinctive habits, although they could be seen metaphorically as 'black but comely' (Cant. 1. 4), black outside and white within; and that 'this is what the religious life consists in, not in the wide hood or the black cape, or in the white rochet or in the grey cowl'.[39] He concedes, echoing a passage from the Prologue to the Premonstratensian / Dominican regulations which itself echoes the 'Rule of St Augustine', that uniformity of habit in a religious community may have a purpose as an outward indicator of *cor unum et anima una*, the 'one heart and one soul' that its members should share;[40] but he argues that unless the unity is there in the first place, it signifies 'fraud and hypocrisy'[41] instead, and that in any case there is less need of such external indicators for anchoresses, who are concealed from the public gaze.

The treatment of the concept of *religio* in this passage consciously exploits the tension between its older, more general sense and its newer and more specialized meaning. This emerges particularly from the author's interpretation of James 1. 27. The standard medieval interpretation of this verse goes back to Bede; it can be found in his commentary on James's epistle,[42] and, more fully elaborated, in *De tabernaculo et vasis eis*:

> Haec habet longitudinem, cum perseverantiam nobis coeptae religionis . . . insinuat. Et bene longitudo duorum est cubitorum quia actualis nostra conversatio in duabus maxime virtutibus consistit, misericordia videlicet et innocentia: dicente apostolo Jacobo: Religio . . . saeculo. In eo namque quod pupillos ac viduas in tribulatione eorum visitare praecipit, cuncta quae erga proximos necesse habentes, misericorditer agere debemus, ostendit: in eo vero quod immaculatos nos ab hoc saeculo custodire admonet, universa in quibus nos ipsos caste vivere oportet, exprimit.[43]
>
> (This [table] has length, when it encourages us to persevere in the religious way of life we have undertaken . . . And it is appropriate that it is two cubits long, because our active way of life consists mainly of two virtues, that is, mercy and innocence; as the Apostle James says, *Religio . . . saeculo*. For when he advises us to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, he shows that we should compassionately carry out all our duties to our neighbours; and when he exhorts us to keep

> ourselves unspotted from this world, he refers to all those respects in which we ourselves should live chastely.)

Bede's interpretation here holds in balance the broader and narrower senses of *religio*. Although he links the verse with perseverance in the monastic vocation ('perseverantiam . . . coeptae religionis'), and applies it to the way of life of the monks ('nostra conversatio'), he also sees it as defining the virtues of the active life (*actualis*). In Bede, as in early medieval writers generally, the active life was not seen as opposed to the contemplative life, but as a necessary foundation for it; it was an ideal to be followed by all Christians, both within and outside the monastery.[44] However, an increasing tendency in the later Middle Ages to associate the active life with those living and working in the world, and the contemplative life with enclosed religious (whether cenobitic or anchoritic),[45] made the relationship of James's definition of *religio* to the monastic life more problematic. Some twelfth-century Benedictine writers attempted to reclaim it for monasticism by reading the first half of the verse either metonymically (as love of one's neighbour in general) or allegorically,[46] and relating the second half particularly to monasticism: Bernard of Clairvaux linked it to the renunciation of the world involved in *conversio* to the monastic life,[47] and his fellow-Cistercian Isaac of Stella argued that 'because in practice it is difficult to lead one's life in the world without being contaminated by it, it is also necessary on this account to flee from the world'.[48] Writers outside the Benedictine tradition, however, sometimes applied the verse partly or wholly to other ways of life; the regular canons Haymo of Halberstadt and Gerhoh of Reichersberg linked the reference to 'widows and orphans' to the obligation of priests and bishops to protect the poor,[49] and Gerhoh also applied the verse as a whole to the laity, as a 'rule of the disciples' sustainable even by married laypeople, living in their own homes, as opposed to the more demanding 'apostolic rule' (*regula apostolorum*) of communal religious life and the renunciation of personal property implied by Acts 4. 32.[50] It could also be used to argue specifically against the identification of *religio* with monasticism, or with the regular life in general. Arno of Reichersberg in his defence of the regular canons, *Scutum canonicorum,* maintained that manual labour, coarse and inadequate clothing, and being bitten by fleas were not essential requirements for a truly religious life (*vera religio*), and that the prescriptions of James 1. 27 could be carried out as well by the regular canons as by monks, 'whatever colour of clothes they wear'.[51] The secular cleric Peter of Blois, attacking a regular canon who had criticized his work, claimed that he did not wish to deny the greater

spiritual security of the religious way of life (*religio*) compared with the secular (*nostra saecularitas*), but nevertheless cited James 1. 27 as an affirmation of the validity of the secular life ('not everyone is obliged to fight in the army of regulars'),[52] arguing that inner disposition was more important than *habitus et tonsura*, and that Martha's occupation had its value as well as Mary's.[53]

The interpretation of James 1. 27 in *Ancrene Wisse* reflects these tensions, but does not exactly follow any earlier model. Its reading of the first half of the verse is unusual both in its interpretation as referring to the care of souls (rather than to the practical support of one's flock, the corporal works of mercy, or love of one's neighbour in general), and in in its emphasis on preaching. It is probable that the author is borrowing here from a different exegetical tradition, drawing on Jerome's allegorical reading of two other Scriptural texts which mention widows and orphans, Psalm 145. 9 ('The Lord . . . will raise up the orphan and widow') and Isaiah 10. 2 ('That widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless'). Jerome interprets the first as 'He will raise up the orphan who had lost his father, God, through sins. And he will raise up the widow . . . that is, that soul which had lost her husband, Christ',[54] and the second as 'Every heretic writes iniquity, so that he may deceive the poor and humble of the people'.[55] The author's reading of the second half of the verse is also unusual in the emphasis it lays on anchoritism as the religious life *par excellence* (a point normally applied, as in the Benedictine Rule, only to those anchorites who had graduated from a monastic training, and not usually linked with this verse). The effect of his interpretation is to produce a distinction between two ways of life, one active, one contemplative, rather than the single ideal of the active life envisaged by Bede. The author says that these ways of life belong to 'two kinds of religious', but he is not necessarily referring only to *religiosi* in the narrower sense; although monks and (more particularly) regular canons might engage in preaching and pastoral care, the phrase *prelaz ant treowe preachurs* looks like an echo of the Latin collocation, *praelati et praedicatores*, traditionally used to describe the secular clergy. He seems rather to be reasserting the value of extra-monastic forms of *religio*, with traditional monasticism (*religio* in the narrowest sense) almost disappearing into the gap between 'prelates and true preachers' on the one hand and the anchoresses, who keep themelves unspotted from the world 'more than other religious', on the other.

Another modification of earlier material in the same direction can be found at the beginning of *Ancrene Wisse* Part 6, on Penance, in the author's adaptation of Bernard of Clairvaux's sixth sermon in Lent.[56] Although the author claims that

'nearly all of this is what St Bernard says',[57] and often follows his original closely, his version of the sermon makes significant changes to the emphasis of the original.

Bernard tells his audience of monks that there are three levels (*gradus*) of detachment from the world: as *peregrini*, as *mortui*, and as *crucifixi*. Those who are like pilgrims in the world may keep themselves unspotted from it, but can still be distracted by its pains and pleasures; those who are dead to the world are also dead to its pains and pleasures, and alive only to Christ; those who are crucified to the world willingly reject its pleasures and embrace its pains, because they, like St Paul, have been 'caught up into the third heaven'. Bernard concludes, 'Let each of us consider which level he is at, and try to make progress from day to day', and he adds that this applies particularly in Lent; monks are the household troops of God, fighting permanently against the Devil, but in Lent the 'general army' of the Church joins the battle, 'even the ignorant' (*et ipsi rudes*), so monks should make a special effort. In Bernard's sermon, the three levels of detachment from the world are differentiated spiritually, not socially: they all apply to his audience of monks ('Let each of us consider which level he is at'). Those who are not part of this spiritual élite are mentioned only briefly, and in slightly contemptuous terms (*et ipsi rudes*).

In *Ancrene Wisse*, however, the three spiritual levels are also aligned with different ways of life. The *peregrini* are defined as 'holy people who, although they are in the world, are in it as pilgrims . . . those people who have worldly property and are not attached to it, but give it away as it comes to them, and travel light without baggage, as pilgrims do, towards heaven':[58] that is, they are identified with seculars (it is not clear whether the author has in mind the laity, the secular clergy, or both), who, unlike regulars, were allowed to own personal property. The *mortui* are identified with religious in general: 'So properly every religious is dead to the world, but nevertheless alive to Christ'.[59] As for the *crucifixi*, 'this is the anchoress's level'.[60] Unlike Bernard, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* does not present this level as marked off from the previous two by mystical experience; instead, he stresses its penitential nature, so that it becomes less an inner disposition than an outward way of life, the anchoress's inclusion and the austerities she practises. Although he retains Bernard's hierarchy of good, better, and best, there is still some implicit devaluation of monastic spirituality in comparison to other, extra-monastic ways of life. At one extreme, the monks are displaced by 'holy people . . . in the world', who had no place in Bernard's categorization; at the other, anchoresses are set above other religious. The monks'

monopoly of spiritual distinction is replaced by a three-term system which seems to allow them a place only on the second of its three levels.

Giles Constable, in his study *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, defines the essential feature of the 'Medieval Reformation' as 'the application of monastic life to all people, and the interiorization of monastic values and spirituality . . . There was a common concern at that time, and especially in the period from about 1100 to 1160, with the nature of religious life and the ideal of personal perfection. A set of values as well as a way of life, embodied in various institutions, was at the heart of the movement of reform, which can be seen as an effort to monasticize first the clergy, by imposing on them a standard of life previously reserved for monks, and then the entire world.'[61] But the treatment of the life of perfection in *Ancrene Wisse* reflects a more ambivalent attitude to the monastic ideal than this summary suggests; it seems to involve not just the diffusion of an existing ideal to new circles, but a conscious attempt to reclaim *religio* (defined as the life of perfection) from its identification with traditional monasticism. Precedents for this approach can be found from the earliest stages of the 'Medieval Reformation'. It might involve simply an appropriation of monastic values and practices by reformers who appealed over the authority of established monastic rules to that of the New Testament and the Desert Fathers; but it could also entail a reassertion of the value of extra-monastic forms of religious life, such as peripatetic preaching, or an eremitic life entered directly from the world rather than from the monastery.[62] The mid-twelfth-century *Life* of Norbert of Xanten, founder of the Premonstratensian canons, reports that when he was denounced at the Council of Fritzlar in 1118 for preaching without authorization and wearing a religious habit to which he was not entitled (he was a secular canon at the time), he defended his preaching by an appeal to James 5. 20 (which asserts that saving souls can cover a multitude of sins) and his *religio* by citing James 1. 27.[63] The hermit Stephen of Muret (*c.* 1054-1124/5) is said in the mid-twelfth-century prologue to the Grandmontine rule to have advised his semi-eremitic followers to observe the precepts of the Gospel, 'so that to those who ask what profession you have made, or what rule or order you belong to, you can say that you follow the first and principal rule of Christian religious life (*religionis*), that is, the Gospel, which is the fount and origin of all rules';[64] John of Salisbury commented on the Grandmontine order, 'Some have Basil, some Benedict, some Augustine as their master, but these have only Lord Jesus Christ.'[65]

During the early and mid-twelfth century, the tendency was for extra-monastic religious movements to be assimilated to traditional monastic structures

(as in the case of both the Premonstratensians and the Grandmontines); the 'slide into cenobitism', initiated by the need of growing communities for firmer organization, a rule to perpetuate their chosen way of life, and financial security,[66] was actively facilitated both by the Church authorities, who saw the formation of enclosed orders as an effective means of containing the activities of the reformers and their followers,[67] and by lay patrons, who valued the spiritual prestige conferred by the new communities.[68] By the early thirteenth century, however, the gap between extra-monastic religious movements and traditional monasticism had widened, with a proliferation of new forms of religious and semi-religious life less easy to accommodate, either in principle or in practice, within existing structures – a development recognized but not effectively halted by the Fourth Lateran Council's prohibition of new orders. An early Dominican *exemplum* recorded by Stephen of Bourbon (who joined the order *c.* 1223) reflects a mendicant redefinition of the life of perfection in terms of preaching rather than monasticism: a Dominican novice who was being encouraged to by some monks to transfer to their order 'asked them whether the Lord Jesus Christ had given us a pattern of right living which excelled all others, and whether his own conduct was to be our rule. They said "Yes". "So", he replied, "when I read that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a white monk or a black monk, but a poor preacher, I want rather to follow in his footsteps than in those of anyone else."'[69] The *Preface* to *Ancrene Wisse* refers its audience of lay-anchoresses to the model of the early desert solitaries, whose *religio* was defined not by wearing black or white habits, but by keeping themselves unspotted from the world, following 'the order of St James'. And the reforming preacher James of Vitry in his *Historia Occidentalis*, composed during the early 1220s, extends the image of the 'virtual cloister' beyond its use in *Ancrene Wisse* to cover seculars (including the laity) in general:

> Non solum hos qui seculo renunciant et transeunt ad religionem regulares iudicamus, sed et omnes Christi fideles, sub euangelica regula Domino famulantes et ordinate sub uno summo et supremo Abbate uiuentes, possumus dicere regulares.[70]
>
> [We do not consider regulars (*regulares*) only those who renounce the world and go over to a religious life (*ad religionem*), but we can also describe as regulars all the faithful of Christ who serve the Lord under the evangelical rule and who live in an ordered way (*ordinate*) under the one highest

and supreme Abbot.]

It is clear from the discussion of the various secular 'orders' (*ordines*) that follows that James is not thinking only of specifically 'monastic' virtues or habits of life as practised, to a greater or lesser degree, by the secular clergy or pious laity; his emphasis is more on their devoted performance of the roles proper to their station in life, as preachers, fighters, or workers in the world. After pointing out that 'clerks and priests living in the world have their own rule and the observances and regulations proper to their order',[71] he goes on to list the 'orders' of married, widows, and virgins, as well as soldiers, merchants, farmers, craftsmen, 'and various other kinds of people [who] have their own various rules and regulations (*regulas et institutiones*) according to the various kinds of talent granted to them by God', explaining that the body of the Church must be composed of a variety of different people with different occupations, 'so that the true Joseph [i.e., Christ as head of the Church] may be clad in a coat of many colours, and the queen [i.e., the Church as his bride] may stand at his right hand wearing multicoloured garments'.[72] He adds that in his opinion no *religio* or *ordo* of regulars, however strict, is as much valued by God as 'the order of priests faithfully and carefully keeping watch over their flock'.[73] There was nothing new in James's time about the idea that all Christians could be seen as belonging to their own 'orders', each carrying its own duties and obligations.[74] More significant is James's rhetorical exploitation of the tension between the older, more general sense of *ordo* and its more recent and specialized sense of 'religious order.' Like the author of *Ancrene Wisse,* James plays on the ambiguity of the terms *ordo*, *religio*, and *regula*, reclaiming them from their increasing contemporary specialization for the Christian community as a whole, and using the metaphor of the 'virtual cloister' to offer a less exclusive and hierarchical model of the life of perfection. Instead of the uniformity that 'the application of monastic life to all people' might be taken to imply, he celebrates variety; his imagery presents the Church as *uarietate circumdata*, clothed not in black or white but in many colours.

Of all the writers quoted above, the one who shows the closest similarities in both style and approach with the author of *Ancrene Wisse* is James of Vitry, and James's better-documented life and works may help to illuminate the historical and intellectual context from which *Ancrene Wisse* emerged. Both men were influenced by the Paris-based movement of pastoral reform initiated by Peter Cantor and his circle;[75] both supported extra-monastic groups of religious women (in James's case, the Beguines of the diocese of Liège); both separated the

roles of contemplative religious and preachers;[76] and both were enthusiastic advocates of the mendicants (James saw the Dominicans as a branch of his own order, the Augustinian canons). The ambivalence towards traditional monasticism which characterizes *Ancrene Wisse* can be better understood in the context of the broader European movement of reform reflected in James's works, a movement impatient with the deficiencies of the contemporary clergy (both religious and secular), closely involved with preaching and pastoral care, and actively supporting the development of extra-monastic forms of religious life. Taken in isolation, the emphasis in *Ancrene Wisse* on the unimportance of outward forms for true *religio* could be seen as no more than an appropriate consolatory *topos* for an audience who were dissatisfied with their borderline status as *religiosae*; or alternatively, as Constable explains it, 'a collective topos of good will and tolerance', emphasizing how much different forms of the religious life had in common.[77] But *Ancrene Wisse* is more than a *liber confortatorius*, and its approach to the religious life is less eirenic than Constable's reading implies; the evidence of the work as a whole suggests that its author is not simply reasserting but redefining the nature of the life of perfection.

NOTES

[1] See Bella Millett, *Ancrene Wisse, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature 2 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 7-13, for discussion and references.

[2] 'ine blostme of ower ȝuweðe uorheten alle wor[l]des blissen and bicomen ancren', *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle, edited from Cotton Nero A. xiv* by Mabel Day, EETS 225 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 85/26-27.

[3] 'twenti nuðe oðer ma'; see *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Ancrene Wisse, edited from MS. Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402* by J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS 249 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), fol. 69^{r}/14, p. 130. All references to *Ancrene Wisse* are to Corpus 402, unless otherwise indicated; the quotations and translations are from the edition of Corpus 402 on which I am currently working.

[4] E. J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

[5] Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, p. 270.

[6] Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 31.

[7] Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 91.

[8] Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 180.

[9] See pp. 59-61 below.

[10] The 'cura vel custodia monialum vel quarumlibet aliarum mulierum' was prohibited by the General Chapter in 1228, and again, in stronger terms, in the mid-1230s; see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn, 1961), trans. by Steven Rowan (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), ch. 5, § 2, pp. 92-109.

[11] Brenda M. Bolton, 'Some Thirteenth Century Women in the Low Countries: A Special Case?', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, 61 (1981), 7-29.

[12] Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), ch. 2.

[13] Patricia J. F. Rosof, 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Peaceweavers: Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 2, ed. by Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols, Cistercian Studies Series 72 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 123-44.

[14] Sharon K. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 164.

[15] See *A History of the County of Chester*, ed. by B. E. Harris, VCH (London: Oxford

University Press, 1980), 3, 146-50.

[16] Marjorie M. Chibnall, in *A History of Shropshire*, ed. by A. T. Gaydon, VCH (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 2, 83-84.

[17] See Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, ch. 4.

[18] See Thompson, *Women Religious*, pp. 50-52, and Mary Scott, 'A Herefordshire nunnery: a calendar, with introduction, of the Aconbury Cartulary', M. Phil. thesis, University of Southampton, 2001; H. J. Nicholson, 'Margaret de Lacy and the Hospital of St John at Aconbury, Herefordshire', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 629-51, argues that it was not a hospital in the early stages but an enclosed community, but this is not the most obvious reading of the written evidence.

[19] 'þet ȝe beon aa wið annesse of an heorte ant of a wil ilimet togederes, as hit iwriten is bi ure Lauerdes deore deciples: *Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una.*' Corpus 402, fol. 69^{r}/9-12.

[20] Corpus 402, fols 69^{r}/12-69^{v}/11.

[21] Ludo Milis, 'Ermites et chanoines réguliers au XII^{e} siècle', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale,* 22 (1979), 39-80, p. 63.

[22] On the 'unofficial' status of *Ancrene Wisse* as a Rule, see further Bella Millett, 'The Genre of *Ancrene Wisse*', in *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Yoko Wada (Cambridge: Brewer, forthcoming).

[23] Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse,* pp. 267-70.

[24] It is possible that a single *meistre* was responsible for the larger community; an addition only in Corpus 402, fol. 117^{r}/18-19, advises the anchoresses to refer potential quarrels to *him þe loked ham alle* ('the man who supervises them all').

[25] See Bella Millett, 'The Origins of *Ancrene Wisse:* New Answers, New Questions', *Medium Ævum,* 61 (1992), 206-28, and '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours', in *Writing Religious Women*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 21-40.

[26] See Peter Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of "Religion"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 36 (1985), 351-69, and Réginald Grégoire, '"Religiosus": Étude sur le vocabulaire de la vie religieuse', in *A Giuseppe Ermini*, Studi Medievali, ser. 3, 10 (3 vols), vol. 2 (Spoleto, 1970), 415-30.

[27] 'En latinité chrétienne, la *religio* sera la vie de foi, se concrétisant et se vérifiant dans les actes, surtout dans l'exercice de la charité, première commandement de l'Évangile: "Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem haec est: visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc saeculo."' Grégoire, '"Religiosus"', p. 417.

[28] Canon 13, *De novis religionis prohibitis*, in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. by Giuseppe Alberigo et al. (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973), p. 242.

[29] On *conversio*, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 15.

[30] 'À l'exception des éléments marginaux, ermites et autres, tout religieux ou religieuse de l'époque classique, appartient à un ordre.' Jacques Hourlier, *L'Age classique 1140-1378: Les Religieux*, Histoire du Droit et des Institutions de l'Église en Occident, 10 (Paris: Editions Cujas, 1974), p. 357.

[31] On Innocent III's facilitation of the acceptance of both orders, see Brenda M. Bolton, 'Via Ascetica', in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition*, ed. by W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 187-91.

[32] 'Par voie de conséquence, un fossé plus profond se creuse entre les réguliers et d'autres religieux, isolés, les ermites, que le droit semble un peu négliger. En réalité, le droit n'oublie pas les isolés; mais leur condition m'me n'appelle aucunement une législation d'ensemble: elle se suffit de quelques principes et d'une réglementation personnelle, laissée au contrôle de l'autorité locale.' Hourlier, *Les Religieux*, p. 531.

[33] Corpus 402, fol. $16^{r}/27$-$16^{v}/10$.

[34] See Corpus 402, fols $16^{v}/13$-$17^{r}/2$ (also in the earlier of the two French translations of *AW*); and Corpus 402, fol. $112^{v}/11$-12.

[35] i.e. more or less strict – the white habit, for both monks and canons, indicated a greater degree of austerity. See Corpus 402, fols $2^{v}/28$-$3^{r}/2$.

[36] 'euch mon mot . . . nede halden, ant ȝe ouer alle.' Corpus 402, fol. $2^{v}/12$-13.

[37] 'hu eoten, drinken, werien, singen, slepen, wakien.' Corpus 402, fol. $1^{v}/5$-6.

[38] Corpus 402, fols $2^{v}/28$-$3^{v}/1$.

[39] 'Her-in is religiun, nawt i þe wid hod ne i þe blake cape, ne i þe hwite rochet ne i þe greie cuuel', Corpus 402, fol. $3^{v}/17$-19.

[40] Acts 4. 32, as cited in the 'Rule of St Augustine'; see *Les Statuts de Prémontré au milieu du xii^e siècle*, ed. by Pl. L. Lefèvre and W. M. Grauwen, Bibliotheca Analectorum Praemonstratensium, 12 (Averbode: Praemonstratensia, 1978), p. 1, and *De Oudste Constituties van de Dominicanen*, ed. by A. H. Thomas, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 42 (Louvain: Bureel van de R. H. E. Universiteitsbibliothek, 1965), p. 311. The allusion was first noted by Dobson, *Origins of Ancrene Wisse*, pp. 19-20.

[41] 'trichunge ant a fals gile', Corpus 402, fol. $4^{r}/10$-11.

[42] Bede, *Super Epistolas catholicas expositio*: *Super divi Jacobi epistolam*, ch. 1, *PL* 93.18.

[43] Bk. 1, ch. 6, *PL* 91. 407.

[44] See Bede, *Hom.* 8, *PL* 94. 48: 'Namque activa [vita] non solis in coenobio monachis, sed et cuncto . . . populo Dei generaliter ingredienda proponitur.'

[45] See the detailed study, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', in Giles Constable,

Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-141.

[46] The black Benedictine Godfrey of Admont explained the 'orphans' as the senses, the 'widows' as bodily actions or affections; see his *Homiliae dominicales, Hom.* 50, *PL* 174. 363-64, and *Hom.* 68, PL 174. 480.

[47] *Sermones de diversis, Sermo* 11, *Sancti Bernardi opera,* vol. VI, 1, *Sermones* III, ed. by J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1970), 126.

[48] 'Sed quoniam actu difficile est in saeculo conversari, et ab eo non contaminari, etiam propter hoc fugiendum a saeculo', *Sermo* 25, *PL* 194. 1773.

[49] Haymo of Halberstadt, *Hom.* 88, *PL* 118. 522; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De aedificio Dei,* ch. 12, *PL* 194.1230.

[50] 'Isti, si recte vivunt visitando pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, et immaculatos se custodiendo ab hoc saeculo, etsi non currunt cum apostolis . . . ambulant tamen cum eorum discipulis sub custodia mundae et certae religionis', *De aedificio Dei*, Ch. 42, *PL* 194. 1299.

[51] 'Cujusque coloris utantur vestibus', *Scutum canonicorum, PL* 194. 1496.

[52] 'Non oportet omnes regulari militiae manum dare.'

[53] *Invectiva in depravatorem operum Blesensis*, *PL* 207. 1121.

[54] Pupillum suscipiet, qui patrem deum perdiderat per peccata. Et uiduam suscipiet . . . hoc est, eam animam, quae Christum uirum perdiderat', *Tractatus* 59 *in Psalmos*, *PL* 26. 1252.

[55] 'Omnis haereticus scribit iniquitatem, ut pauperes et humiles populi decipiat', *Commentarii in Isaiam*, Bk. 4, *PL* 24. 133.

[56] *Sermo* 6 *in Quadragesima*, *Sancti Bernardi opera* IV, *Sermones* I, ed. by J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1966), 377-80.

[57] 'for al meast is Sein Beornardes sentence', Corpus 402, fol. 94^{r}/27.

[58] 'hali men þe, þah ha beon i þe world, ha beoð þrin as pilegrimes . . . þeo men þe habbeð worltlich þing ant ne luuieð hit nawt, ah ȝeoueð hit as hit kimeð ham, ant gað untrusset lihte, as pilegrimes doð, toward heouene', Corpus 402, fols 94^{v}/13-14, 95^{r}/6-9.

[59] 'Þus riht is euch religius dead to þe worlde, ant cwic þah to Criste', Corpus 402, fol. 95^{r}/27-28.

[60] 'þis is ancre steire', Corpus 402, fol. 95^{v}/7.

[61] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, pp. 7, 6.

[62] See Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 68-74.

[63] 'Si de religione impetor, "Religio munda. . .'", *Vita S. Norberti*, ch. 8, *PL* 170. 1270.

[64] 'ut quaerentibus cuius professionis, uel cuius regulae cuiusque ordinis, uos esse dicatis Christianae religionis primae et principalis regulae, Euangelii scilicet, quod omnium regularum fons est atque principium', *Regula Stephani Muretensis, Prol., CCCM* 8. 67.

[65] 'Alii Basilium, alii Benedictum, hi Augustinum, at isti singularem magistrum habent Dominum Jesum Christum', *Polycraticus,* bk. 7, ch. 23, *PL* 199. 699. On the Grandmontines as an *ordo peculiaris,* unwilling to be categorized as monks, canons, or hermits, see Carole A. Hutchinson, *The Hermit Monks of Grandmont*, Cistercian Studies, 118 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), pp. 45-46.

[66] See Milis, 'Ermites et chanoines', pp. 57-62.

[67] See Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (2nd edn, 1961) trans. by Steven Rowan (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), ch. 1, § 2.

[68] See, e.g., Jane Herbert, 'The Transformation of Hermitages into Augustinian Priories in Twelfth-Century England', in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition*, ed. by Shiels, pp. 131-45.

[69] *Anecdotes historiques tirés d'Étienne de Bourbon*, ed. by A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, 1877), § 74, trans. by Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 139.

[70] *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. by John Frederick Hinnebusch, Spicilegium Friburgense 17 (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1972), ch. 34.

[71] 'Habent enim clerici et sacerdotes in seculo commorantes regulam suam et proprias ordinis sui obseruantias et institutiones.'

[72] 'ut tunica polimita uerus Ioseph induatur [see Gen. 37. 3] et regina uarietate circumdata a dextris eius consistat [see Ps. 44. 10 (Septuagint)]', *Historia Occidentalis*, ed. Hinnebusch, ch. 34.

[73] 'ordo sacerdotum super gregem suum fideliter et sollicite uigilantium', *Historia Occidentalis,* ed. Hinnebusch, ch. 34.

[74] See Constable, *Three Studies*, III: 'The Orders of Society', particularly the discussion of this passage from James of Vitry, pp. 330-31.

[75] See Bella Millett, '*Ancrene Wisse* and the Conditions of Confession', *English Studies*, 80 (1999), 193-215.

[76] For a thorough analysis of the development of James's views on this topic, see Jessalynn Bird, 'The Religious's Role in a Post-Fourth-Lateran World: Jacques de Vitry's *Sermones ad status* and *Historia Occidentalis*', in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 90 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 209-29.

[77] Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, p. 172.

Naming of Parts in 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent': Lessons in Rhetoric

Angela Woollam

'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' is one of the twenty-three refrain lyrics that are found together at the end of the late fourteenth-century Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet.a.1) and that are found in the same order in the slightly later Simeon manuscript (London, British Library, Additional 22283).[1] The lyric can be more precisely dated through a probable historical allusion. If, as seems likely, the fifth stanza refers to the persecution and murder of a Carmelite friar, Brother John Latimer, at the hands of parliament, the poem was written in 1384 or shortly thereafter.[2] 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' is also one of the eight Vernon refrain poems that are attested in later manuscripts other than the Simeon: a redaction exists in Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.9.38, dated to the middle of the fifteenth century. The Trinity redaction omits the third and fourth stanzas, reverses the order of the fifth and sixth, and includes many variants. In his descriptive index of the Trinity manuscript, A. G. Rigg argues that although the Trinity version of the poem 'is unusually corrupt and often fails to make sense[,] . . . [t]he editorial practice of SV makes it likely that the order and number of stanzas in [Trinity] represent the original'.[3] The 'editorial practice' Rigg refers to is that hypothesized by Carleton Brown and others, of a Vernon scribe or compiler who took liberties in editing his material.[4] John Burrow has recently granted that Rigg 'may be right', and suggested that stanzas three and four in the Vernon text may be from the hand of the same interpolator who added stanzas to two other Vernon refrain lyrics: 'Euere to þonke god of al', and 'Þis world fareþ as a Fantasy'.[5] In Burrow's view, all of these stanzas 'exhibit a peculiarly learned and curious mind, with an interest in the concrete exemplifying instance'.[6]

Andrew Wawn, however, arguing that the Trinity scribe found the text 'difficult' and 'interesting', posits the primacy of the Vernon text of 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent', and a close reading of the lyric provides thematic and

structural evidence that the Vernon version, though not without its share of textual difficulties, is likely closest to the original.[7] Professor Burrow's argument that stanzas three and four are later additions, likely written by the same person who interpolated material into the other two Vernon lyrics, is based on two factors: the stanzas incorporate vivid exempla, and are written in a 'learned and knotty' style.[8] On closer look, however, that 'learned and knotty' style can be seen pervading the entire lyric. Its pervasiveness becomes apparent once we glimpse the poem's hitherto unrecognized, and quite remarkable, rhetorical self-consciousness. That self-consciousness involves the speaker using parts of his speech as specimens, and then other parts to comment on those specimens.[9] He oscillates between demonstrating and criticizing sycophantic speech, and in doing so his speech is covert and compressed, 'learned and knotty', throughout. Certain particular stylistic traits in stanzas three and four also appear elsewhere: stanza three concludes with a syntactical modulation of the refrain similar to that at lines 60 and 84, and the idiom of beginning a sentence with 'Let' or 'For let', used twice in the two stanzas (27, 38), is used elsewhere (19, 49). Moreover, the vivid exemplum in stanzas three and four participate in the oscillation between specimen and commentary, for it demonstrates the use of 'paynted words' that the speaker elsewhere disparages (16, 65). Although there may be a single interpolator in the Vernon texts of 'Euere to þonke god of al' and 'Þis world fareþ as a Fantasy', it is likely not the case with 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent.' The Trinity text of the poem, with its loss of stanzas and its lexical and syntactical obscurities, occludes the poem's rhetorical self-consciousness.

The phrase 'hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' became 'the central aphorism of the literature of truth-telling and articulate citizenship in late medieval English'.[10] Given the range of potential denotations of 'schente', from 'disgraced' (*MED* s.v. shenden v. 3a) to 'killed' (*MED* s.v. shenden v. 4a), the phrase provides a vivid means of presenting problems arising from the paucity of adequate counsel caused by hostility to criticism on the part of recipients of advice, and by selfish desires to maintain social prestige on the part of counsellors. In the later fourteenth century, complaints of the silencing of truth-tellers increased, in response to the deteriorating tolerance for admonishment and counsel in various realms of society. In the political realm, the voice of the 'articulate citizen' was becoming stronger, while governments attempted to curtail, sometimes with violence, the criticism that these citizens might make.[11] This shutting down of exhortative mechanisms in the political realm was reflected in society at large, as laws against speech that verged on the slanderous were

extended to the 'protection' of all.[12] In the clerical realm, complaints abounded of friars and clerics who obscured the truth of the gospel through 'glossing'.[13]

The theme of the injured soothsayer was elaborated in different literary genres, as Andrew Wawn has so thoroughly shown. The dangers involved in counselling also prompted authors to use various rhetorical strategies to make criticism less explicit, or more pleasing, to the recipients. In addressing issues of governance, authors resorted to, for example, prophecy (such as *The Bridlington Prophecy*), allegory (such as *The Tale of Melibee*), and mirror of princes (such as *The Regiment of Princes*). 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' is unique in the way it both explicitly treats the theme of the injured soothsayer and at the same time dramatizes the ethical issues pertaining to the use of rhetoric in admonitory discourse. Its speaker becomes a character that dramatizes the position of Hoccleve, of John of Bridlington, or of Chaucer, trying to advise an audience that could very well harm him if it is displeased with what it hears. The poem, which can perhaps best be labelled a 'dramatic oratorical address', raises questions currently being explored in regards to known Middle English authors of political advice. To what degree is the literature being written for private advancement as opposed to public good? To what degree is the poet writing to please, rather than criticize, a wayward governing body? Is the apparent rhetoric consciously constructed or is it expressive of a hegemonic ideology or a personal desire?[14] In its rhetorical self-consciousness, 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' dramatically foregrounds key theoretical issues regarding the efficacy and the ethics of using rhetoric in discourses of complaint and advice.

Although the poem is anonymous, the speaker in 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' is 'embodied'. By 'embodied', I mean that his manner of speech portrays him as having a physical presence in a particular setting.[15] In this case that setting is an oratorical scenario. The voice not only takes on the quality of a character, but it also gives the sense that that character is speaking in a specific social setting, addressing an audience that threatens to harm anyone who dares to give advice. Although the speaker does sometimes forthrightly exhort, he more often uses rhetorical figures, and thereby demonstrates the kind of mystification of meaning in which sycophants engage when trying to give advice, in order to protect themselves.

In the way its voice becomes embodied into a character, the poem shares some similarities with the didactic confessional satires from Harley 2253 and other earlier manuscripts: 'The Papelard Priest' (*IMEV Suppl.* 2614.5) from London, British Library, Additional 45896, 'A Satire on the Consistory Courts'

(*IMEV* 2287) and 'The Man in the Moon' (*IMEV* 2066) from London, British Library, Harley 2253.[16] Carter Revard labels these the lyrics 'dramatic monologues', and argues that in each one the speaker 'is not the poet but a 'character' and its satire is secondary to its revelation of its speaker's nature'.[17] For example, the satire of the moral corruption of the consistory courts in 'A Satire on the Consistory Courts' is 'secondary to the self-satirizing revelation of its speaker's character'.[18] The speaker is a servingman, a household retainer, accused of having carnal knowledge of a woman and not marrying her. He maintains that he has been slandered, but his speech gradually reveals that he is guilty. The speaker's speech gradually builds him up as a character, and in that way, the speaker becomes somewhat 'embodied'.

But the kind of 'embodied' speaker evident in 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' is different still. What further distinguishes this poem is the speaker's explicit identification of the situational irony he is involved in, and of the rhetorical figures he is using. The speaker, very much an oratorical teacher, enacts different forms of duplicitous speech, and points to them, directly and indirectly, as specimens to support his 'lesson' (95).

The incorporation of linguistic specimens complicates the nature of the lesson and the ethos of the speaker. From one perspective, the specimens are presented as the unfortunate consequence of hostility to soothsayers in society, and thereby support a lesson in morality. From another perspective, the specimens, and the way the teacher consciously marshals them, are presented as examples of how to use rhetoric to admonish effectively, and thereby constitute a lesson in rhetoric. So long as a divide can be maintained between the teacher's stable, authoritative voice and the artful voices of his specimens, the two perspectives are relatively complementary: he is clearly using rhetoric to demonstrate how 'not' to speak. As so often in such multi-vocal texts, however, the divide between voices is porous. When the teacher identifies his whole performance as a specimen, as he does most remarkably in his final words, his selfless objectivity is brought up for question, the lesson is recast on another level, and the two perspectives are brought into tension.

The presence of linguistic specimens also produces a poem that has a more linear structure than has been recognized. John Burrow finds that any given Vernon refrain poem's 'thought will tend to be radial rather than linear. Instead, that is, of a sequence of argument from stanza to stanza, one finds each stanza relating independently to the thought expressed by the refrain, like spokes to a hub'.[19] In fact, although stanza five, and possibly six, in 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal

be schent' exist as arguments of their own, the remaining six stanzas, including the two that comprise the exemplum, form three argumentative pairs. The first two stanzas and the last two stanzas present the most clear-cut instances of direct rhetorical pointing. In each of these pairs, pointing directs attention back and forth between the stanzas. The final two stanzas, moreover, enact a grand finale, exposing in a more exaggerated and direct form the situational irony of the speaker.

The address opens in the voice of a sycophant who blatantly misleads by advising people to 'plese' this 'wikked world' (5). The teacher's voice then enters at the beginning of the second stanza, pointing to what has gone before with an indicative 'Þus' (13). This is the first of the teacher's many uses of indicative pronouns and adverbs to situate what he is saying at a given moment in reference to other parts of his discourse, which are pointed to as examples, causes, or effects of specific styles of speech. As so often in the lyric, there is some ambiguity about what is being pointed at. 'Þus' (13) may identify the proverbial statement of the refrain as the reason for the widespread use of verbal deceit, but it also tends to identify the preceding speech as an example of how 'þe soþe [is] kept in close'. Stanza two then proceeds to describe forthrightly the duplicity of sycophants and the social pressures that define modes of speech.

From here the poem moves on to the two stanzas that do not exist in the Trinity version and, again, the authenticity of these stanzas is supported by the fact that their speaker's manner of speech, and his self-consciousness about it, enact the situational irony evident in the rest of the poem. In the metaphoric language of stanzas three and four, the speaker ironically uses the 'painted words' that he elsewhere disparages (16, 65). He develops a poetic conceit of moral decay as physical sickness, through the complementary metaphors of false and deceitful words as noxious food which causes sickness, and a moral guide as a physician who is needed to restore health. Lines 25-26 present an explicit metaphor of moral corruption as internal bleeding. That injury is identified later on as being the result of the self-protecting 'counsellor' who 'fedes' his lords lies and flattery ('flaterynge' (30), 'lesynges' (32) and 'blaundise' (34)). This sycophantic activity is also presented as resulting in a particular kind of injury: making the lord 'blent' (34). '[B]lent' signifies most readily here as 'to impair or destroy (someone's insight, discernment, moral sense or natural feeling), mislead' (*MED* s.v. blĕnden v.(1) 2. (a)). The corporeal metaphor, however, educes the physical sense, 'to deprive of vision, make blind' (*MED* s.v. blĕnden v.(1) 1. (a)).

The next stanza develops the corporeal conceit by spelling out how moral

exortation can reform a person through a metaphor of the soothsayer as a 'leche' nursing a 'wounde' (38). This metaphor functions as a figurative description of the process of moral healing effected through admonitory discourse. But does this complex figuration inculpate the speaker for using the 'peynted wordes' he criticizes elsewhere? The irony of the speaker's style accords with the tensions created elsewhere in the address through the techniques of impersonation and pointing, which makes it highly likely that stanzas three and four come from the same poet's hand.

After the straightforward criticism of stanza five and six, the final two stanzas return to the oscillation between demonstration and commentary evident in the first two stanzas. Specimens in the penultimate stanza are identified more explicitly from within the stanza, and possibly from the preceding stanza as well. '[Þ]is gyle' (71) may refer to the verbal duplicity indicated throughout the poem, but it may also point forward to the next two stanzas, which provide illustrative specimens. Stanza seven contains two specimens, and identifies them as 'saumples': 'Such saumples we han and oþer two' (80). 'Such saumples' likely refers back to lines 73-79 as one example. There the teacher impersonates a profligate blithely declaring his *carpe diem* attitude, until being suddenly shocked into a moment of awareness as he remembers the impending final judgement: 'I drede hit draweþ to domes-day' (79). One of the 'oþer two' 'saumples' immediately follows line 80. The teacher impersonates a soothsayer who, on the verge of locating the root of society's malaise in children's upbringing, breaks off, suddenly realizing the danger he faces in criticizing – 'But hos seiþ soþ, he schal be schent' (84).

Even without the recasting of voices ushered in at the poem's end, the status of the two 'saumples' in stanza seven is vexed. Unlike the unequivocal profligate dramatized in the opening of the poem, these dramatic monologues enact psychological shifts. The first begins as a profligate urging dissolute behaviour, but his sudden shift to self-awareness reverses his initial endorsement of immorality. The second begins as a candid soothsayer, but his sudden shift to restraint compromises his character by revealing traits of a sycophant. The two cannot both be examples of a compromised soothsayer or of a regretful profligate; yet the fact that they are categorized together as 'saumples' indicates that in some respect they are equal. Their parity, it seems, can reside only at one remove from the teacher's impersonation: they are both examples of a soothsayer who resorts to rhetorical, dramatic means to teach his 'lesson', impersonations of a soothsayer using impersonation. The 'gyle' being pointed to in stanza six and exemplified in

stanza seven, then, is not, or at least not only, the guile used selfishly by people intending to mislead, but the artful, rhetorical techniques resorted to by soothsayers. The moral status ascribed to those techniques, however, is still difficult to peg. Perhaps most strongly, the teacher suggests that soothsayers resort to rhetoric only out of a selfish desire to protect themselves. But he may also be suggesting that soothsayers incorporate artful techniques out of a selfless desire to guide people in leading a good life, and that their efforts are endorsed by the Horatian advice *miscere utile dulci* (to combine the useful with the pleasant). The ambivalent designation of the 'saumples' is compounded in the teacher's final self-reflection.

The second of the two 'saumples' promised in stanza seven occurs at the end, when the speaker points to himself: 'Þis lesson lerneþ alle at me' (95). Exactly what this 'lesson' is, however, is unclear. The teacher's self-reflection may be ironic, or it may break down the stability of his teaching 'character', which, by positing a firm point of reference up against which irony can be measured, enables irony. The teacher would seem to be forwarding himself as an example of the lack of self-awareness and trustworthiness in society, by implying that he cannot see his 'oune defaute' (90) and that no one can 'trust' him (91). From one perspective, this self-inculpation is ironic, because the very act of identifying himself implies self-awareness: the teacher thereby exposes his previous statement as a fallacy of false generalization. On the other hand, the self-inculpation registers an admission of defeat, a moment of psychological awareness similar to that in 'I drede hit draweþ to domes day' (79). From this second perspective, the teacher's incorporation of rhetorical tactics that spice his 'lesson' is presented as evidence of his 'defaute': he suggests that his speech is sycophantic. In this suggestion he aligns his whole performance with the 'saumples' in the previous stanza, and the ambivalent status accorded to the soothsayers in those 'saumples' is accorded to him. A question looms at the end: does this teacher incorporate artful techniques out of a desire to help, or merely to protect himself? The answer depends, to some degree, on whether or not one finds a decisive divide between the teacher's 'real self' and his dramatic persona. There are moments when he would appear to be speaking forthrightly, for example in the exemplum of the 'pore prechour' (49-60). Or is he there just impersonating another, earnest way of speaking? Should the divide between the teacher's 'real self' and his dramatic persona be found, the poem would stand as a lesson in rhetoric as well as a lesson in morality. Should, however, one find that the teacher's 'real self' collapses into his dramatic persona, the poem would

present a moral lesson along with a negative view of rhetoric. Even in the latter condition, however, rhetoric must be at least somewhat condoned, if paradoxically so, given the effectiveness of the moral lesson it enables.

The array of possible endings to this poem exhibits most intensely its fluid, open status. There are, no doubt, more and different ways of understanding the end, and the poem as a whole, than those suggested here. Still, there appears to be no way of eradicating the paradoxes and ironies. Altogether, with its various attitudes, the speech presents an ambivalent view of the teacher's ethos and of the status of rhetoric. From one perspective, in pointing to his performance as a lesson the teacher avers that he is compromising himself by using verbal dalliance instead of candidness; he thereby dispels rhetoric from having any useful purpose. From another perspective, he presents himself as one who is in control of his speech, and who is making claims that rhetoric can serve constructive purposes. The poem's fluidity makes it difficult to say for certain what it 'means', as desirable as that may be for many reasons.

This fluidity is enhanced when we imagine the staging of the lyric. The ambiguities in the text would inevitably have spilled over to create a more or less conflicted moment of individual and social consciousness in the present audience. The performance of 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' would transform the poem from a dramatic monologue into a dramatic oratorical address, in which the whole communicative scenario would take on a quasi-fictional aura. In reciting the poem, the reader would be performing, and the 'real' social occasion of delivery would be turned into a drama in a way that incorporated the audience into a quasi-dramatic role. The speaker would play the role of the dramatic teacher (lending the tension between the teacher's 'real' and 'fictional' personae yet another dimension), and the present audience would be cast into the role of the audience implied by the speaking character, that is, an audience pressuring the teacher into either cloaking his admonition or concealing it altogether. Insofar as the teacher would identify himself as one who will be 'schent' for telling the 'soþe', he would imply that he is bound to suffer by the very audience he is addressing. In subtly casting the audience as persecutors, the performance likely would have created a sombre moment of social and individual consciousness. That sombreness, however, would have had a more or less sharp ironic edge, depending on how it was performed. A forthright charge of the audience's villainy might well have issued in an ironic tone, as might a performance that educed the potential comedy of the impersonations: the address could then have issued in the reverse effect of constructing the audience as individuals who are above the

corruption of those whom it criticizes, and who most certainly will not 'schend' the teacher for telling the 'soþe'. But even then the tone of the moment likely would have been conflicted, given the niggling suggestion that the reason why the audience will not harm the teacher is because he has resorted to guile. In all the various ways in which the audience's response may have been defined, the experience of the drama itself would have had a fundamental heuristic and admonitory effect. Those present would be incited to reflect on their role as the audience implied by the address, and their awareness of how they were being depicted would have effected an experiential 'lesson'.

In light of the foregoing reading, it seems reasonable to entertain the possibility that readers and scribes intervening between the poem's authorial text and the Trinity version either failed to tease out its voices and consequent ironies, or censored its rhetorical technique. In addition to the loss of stanzas three and four, many variations in Trinity can be explained as stemming from efforts to present a mono-vocal text, and they almost always result in a flatter text.

In the first stanza, for example, the first person pronoun is missing in line 3 of the Trinity text, which effectively shifts the discourse from a dramatic impersonation to a description of the problem, spoken by a third-person, authoritative voice. Lines 47-53 in Trinity maintain some element of the dramatized profligate who experiences a sudden awakening as in its Vernon parallel (V 73-79), though the full impact of the speaker's motives for speaking is decreased by changing the initial 'Siþen' (V 73) to 'There for' (T 47). The second of Vernon's dramatic 'saumples' in that stanza, however, is reduced to direct statement in Trinity. Vernon's 'so' (83) may denote 'in the following manner' (*MED* s.v. sō adv. 2a. (a)), 'to such an extent' (*MED* s.v. sō adv. 8. (a)), or 'so very, exceedingly' (*MED* s.v. sō adv. 9a.): its function is uncertain in Vernon because of the break in thought effected with the retracting 'But' of the next line. In Trinity, however, the function of this 'so' (56) is unequivocally *MED* meaning 2a.(a): it points forward to the refrain as a text that children are 'tawght', a text which is paradigmatic of teachings that encourage sycophantic behaviour. Although this is itself a clever modulation of the refrain's function, it destroys the original dramatic monologue and obscures the logical argument that unfolds in reference to such 'saumples' of dramatic techniques. The precise pointing separating the two 'saumples' in stanza seven is also lost as Trinity replaces the word 'saumples' (V 80) with 'warnyngys' (T 54), and the explicit enumeration and direction 'and oþer two' (V 80) to the indefinite 'one or twoo' (T 54). The word 'saumples' exudes a suggestiveness that is key to the poem's rhetorical self-

consciousness: it identifies parts of the address not according to their apparent function – as 'warnyngs' – but to their technique of demonstration. As we have seen, that identification raises uncertainty over what the 'saumples' are demonstrating, and consequently over what the 'lesson' finally is.

In addition to the erosion of the poem's logical structural complexity effected by Trinity's change of 'saumples' to 'warnyngs', another form of lexical replacement in Trinity results in loosening the semantic texture and structure of the poem. The best example of this is Trinity's substitution of 'norissched' (V 83) with 'tawght' (T 56). 'Norissched' denotes most precisely here 'to bring up (a young person), foster, raise' (*MED* s.v. norishen v. 5a. (a)). The word, however, exudes two different resonances in this context. It alludes to 'noriture', a component of the education programme provided for children in royal or noble households. 'Noriture' denoted instruction which led to the attainment of social graces, and it also included athletic, musical and perhaps literary pursuits.[20] Specified with reference to an elite educational programme, this critique of children's upbringing stands as an analogy for that of the lord's 'sacratarie' (29), as an anti-courtly complaint: the teacher avers that now children are being flattered and deceived instead of instructed, and are also learning to use their skill in courtly etiquette to manipulate and exploit. The charge is further inflected as an anti-court critique by the fact that it draws upon, and effectively magnifies, the governing conceit of Vernon's stanzas three and four. The most literal meaning of '[n]orissched', 'supplied with food or drink, feed' (*MED* s.v. norishen v. 1. (a)) also resounds, and suggestively equates the teaching that children receive with the noxious 'flaterynge' (30), 'lesynges' (32), and 'blaundise' (34) of the lord's 'sacratarie' (29), all of which cause moral disease.

As well, although the final two stanzas of Trinity are in the same order as those in Vernon, the sequence lacks cohesion because the pointing performed by 'oþer two' (V 80), which in Vernon prepares the audience for one, final 'saumple' is lost with the indefinite 'one or twoo' (T 54).

As well as explaining the greater authenticity of the Vernon text over the Trinity text, the rhetorical self-consciousness of 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' inflects the corpus of Middle English complaint literature and fictions of advice. For one, it represents another sub-genre, that of the dramatic oratorical address. Other lyrics take up the subject of truth-telling, most of which are later, and many of which are written in the same stanzaic refrain form. The most well-known group of these is from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 102, a miscellany of political and complaint poetry compiled in the early years of the fifteenth

century.[21] Some of these lyrics involve an acknowledgement by the speaker of the dangers he faces in telling the truth, and thereby make some dramatic use of the fiction of an embodied speaker.[22] When present, however, that pose is only resorted to for a few lines, and in all cases the speakers continue earnestly, despite their acknowledgement of impending harm, and without any extensive attempt to cloak their advice, or their earnestness. 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' stands apart from these in its extensive playfulness. But 'Hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent' does something other than represent a sub-genre in the tradition of complaint and advisory literature in later medieval England: it dramatizes the ethical issues surrounding the relation between author and audience, and surrounding the legitimate and effective use of rhetoric, in all the other works in that tradition.[23]

NOTES

[1] The usual number of Vernon refrain poems is twenty-three, which numbers those appearing together in the last section of the manuscript (section V), on folios 407a through 412v. The whole series appears in *Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript, Volume II*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 117 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901), pp. 658-735. All but 'Þat selden I seiȝe Is sone forȝete' (*IMEV* 5) appear in *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown, rev. by G. V. Smithers, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp. 125-205. Kenneth Hunter's Ph.D. dissertation provides a diplomatic transcription of the lyrics from the Vernon manuscript, and lists textual variants 'of substance' ('The Vernon Lyrics' [Birmingham, 1978]). Five lyrics without refrains also appear among the group of twenty three: '*Deus caritas est*' (*IMEV* 678), 'Of alle floures feirest fall on' (*IMEV* 2607), 'Crist ȝive vs grace to loue wel holichirch' (*IMEV* 606), '*Ave Maris Stella dei Mater Alma*' (*IMEV* 1081), and '*Sit laus deo patri summo Christo decus.*' The group of twenty-three refrain lyrics and five lyrics without a refrain appears in the same order in the Simeon manuscript, on folios 128b-133b. Two additional lyrics follow the group in the Simeon manuscript, one with the refrain 'But he sey soth he schal be schent' (*IMEV* 4135) and another in the same eight-line stanza but without the refrain, which Furnivall and Hunter call 'A Morning Thanksgiving and Prayer to God' (*IMEV* 1369). The former is edited in *Minor Poems*, pp. 740-43, and in *Religious Lyrics*, pp. 205-08. The latter is edited only in *Minor Poems,* pp. 744-46.

[2] Among others, John Burrow refers to this incident as a means of dating the poem, 'The Shape of the Vernon Lyrics', in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 187-99 (p. 188). Brother John Latimer was brutally tortured and killed for telling the king that the Duke of Lancaster was plotting against his life. The circumstances of his telling and his final days are reported in *The Westminster Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by C. Hector and B. F. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 68-81.

[3] A. G. Rigg, *The Glastonbury Miscellany of the Fifteenth Century: A Descriptive Index of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS.0.9.38* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 52.

[4] *Religious Lyrics*, pp. xx-xxi. Other arguments for a 'Vernon interpolator' are listed by A. I. Doyle, 'The Shaping of the Vernon and Simeon Manuscripts', in *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 1-13 (p. 9, fn. 34). It should be noted that some of the studies Doyle lists do not clearly support the theory. Nita Scudder Baugh, for example, in her study of the affiliation of the Vernon/Simeon text of *The Debate of the Body and Soul* with the text of London, British Museum, MS. Additional 37,787 writes:

> It has often been thought that Vernon's scribe was an editor and made changes in the text. The existence of Additional proves that at least in the

> text of the Body and Soul the changes must have been made in a parent MS. from which all three descend directly or ultimately. (*A Worcestershire Miscellany Compiled by John Northwood, c. 1400: Edited From British MS. Add. 37,787* (Philadelphia: [n.p.], 1956), p. 45.)

More recently, O. S. Pickering has written: '[i]t is now agreed that such editing can hardly be attributed to the scribe, and . . . it is uncertain to what extent it can be attributed to the compiler or organizer of the volume.' ('The Enduring Popularity of Thirteenth-Century Verse: The *Estoire del Evangelie* and the Vernon Manuscript', in *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake*, ed. by Geoffrey Lester (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 317-33 (p. 325).)

[5] Burrow, pp. 192-93, 197-99.

[6] Burrow, p. 199.

[7] Andrew Wawn, 'Truth-telling and the Tradition of *Mum and the Sothsegger*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 13 (1983), 270-87 (p. 276).

[8] Burrow, p. 193.

[9] Andrew Wawn points to one moment of dramatic feigning in the poem, but attributes it partly to scribal corruption: 'The penultimate verse mimics, no doubt as much by accident as by design, what might be charitably called the psychic drama and muddle of the truth-teller', p. 275.

[10] Wawn, p. 273. Wawn notes certain fifteenth-century compilations in which the proverb is found: *Douce Proverbs,* the *Rylands Proverbs*, and the *Middle English Distichs* of British Library MS 37049 (p. 274). It is item S492 in B. J. Whiting's *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

[11] Judith Ferster describes factors that contributed to the increase in discourse critical of governing bodies. She also outlines the systems that were put in place to curtail that criticism (*Fictions of Advice: the Literature and Politics of Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 15-38).

[12] Ferster cites evidence showing that 'ecclesiastical and local courts offered places where people could sue each other over speech', p. 32.

[13] Closer to the end of the fourteenth century, anticlerical complaints against glossing became more strictly identified as emanating from the Lollards. See, for example, the excerpts from Lollard writings recorded by Anne Hudson in *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Tests and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 274-75. Hudson dates the Lollard writings between 1384 and 1414 (*English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 10). Wendy Scase shows how complaints against glossing were not necessarily factional, grounded as they were in the Franciscan

tradition which held that the vow of poverty included a renunciation of 'intellectual dominance' (*The New Anticlericalism in 'Piers Plowman'* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 78-83). Scase includes an excellent account of the various meanings of 'glos' in anticlerical complaints of the later fourteenth century, p. 82.

[14] For instance, recent criticism argues that opportunism is the motivating force behind Chaucer's moral platitudes: see Paul Strohm's 'The Textual Environment of Chaucer's 'Lak of Steadfastnesse', in his *Hochon's Arrow: the Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1992), pp. 57-74. Much has also been written lately of how authors writing for Henry V are not working out of disinterested principle, but are engaged in aggrandizing the regime by complying with Henry's scheme of 'royal self-representation.' The idea is developed most thoroughly by Paul Strohm in *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[15] The way I use the term 'embodied' here differs from the way it is used in modern critical theory, and especially in feminist writing. In critical theory, 'embodied' defines the physical, material aspect of the thinking subject. The term is used with a consciousness that the Western intellectual and cultural tradition has valorized the *disembodied* intellect, at the expense of degrading the body or overlooking the impact material conditions have on a subject.

[16] 'The Papelard Priest' was edited by A.H. Smith in 1951 in 'The Middle English Lyrics of Additional MS 45896', *London Mediaeval Studies*, 2.1 (1951), 45-67 (pp. 42-45). 'The Man in the Moon' and 'A Satire on the Consistory Courts' (now entitled, more representatively, 'On the Ecclesiastical Court') are printed in *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages: an Anthology*, ed. by Thorlac Turville-Petre (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 32-33, 28-31.

[17] Carter Revard, 'The Lecher, The Legal Eagle, and the Papelard Priest: Middle English Confessional Satires in MS Harley 2253 and Elsewhere', in *His Firm Estate: Essays in Honour of Franklin James Eikenberry*, ed. by Donald E. Hayden (Tulsa, OK: University of Tulsa, 1967), pp. 54-71, (p. 57). Revard credits E. T. Donaldson for pointing out to him the self-satirizing nature of all the poems, p. 70, fn. 12.

[18] Revard, p. 62. Thorlac Turville-Petre discusses the implications that the self-satirizing speaker has for the implied audience of the poem, 'English Quaint and Strange in "Ne mai no lewed lued"', in *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry*, ed. by O. S. Pickering (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 73-83.

[19] Burrow, p. 189.

[20] The other educational component was known as 'lettrure', which involved training in reading, writing, languages, and history. A very good discussion of the education of children at court is provided by Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 71-91.

[21] The twenty-four lyrics are printed in *Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems*, ed. by

J. Kail, EETS o.s. 124 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901). In his introduction, Kail shows how the poems refer to topical issues, and frequently to discussions in parliament. The group has also received commentary by R. H. Robbins, 'Middle English Poems of Protest', *Anglia*, 78 (1960), 193-203. Robbins suggests that the poems were written for wealthy supporters of the king, p. 198.

[22] See, for example, the opening four lines of a later poem with the title '*De Veritate & Consciencia*' (*IMEV* 3120) ('The Middle English Verse in MS Wellcome 1493', ed. by George Kane, *London Mediaeval Studies* 11 (1951), pp. 61-65); and similarly the opening of 'Treuthe, Reste, and Pes' (*IMEV* 817) from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 102 (*Twenty-Six Political and Other Poems*, ed. Kail, pp. 9-14.). Likewise, in the macaronic poem known as 'On the Times' (*IMEV* 3113), likely written in the autumn of 1380, the speaker gestures slightly to the dangers he faces in giving advice, in the opening lines, 'Syng y wolde, butt, alas! / *decendunt prospera grata*' (James M. Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1996), pp. 140-46).

[23] It is a pleasure and an honour to thank a number of people for their help with this article: Professor Ralph Hanna, Professor David Jeffrey, Professor Nicholas von Maltzahn, and Professor Eyvind Ronquist. The research was supported by doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, for which I am very grateful.

Hos seiþ þe soþe, he schal be schent

Text and Date: The poem exists in three manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng.poet.a.1 (3938), Vernon Manuscript; London, British Library, Addit. 22283, Simeon Manuscript; Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.9.38 (1450). The Vernon and Simeon manuscripts are dated circa 1385-95 and contain almost identical versions of the poem. The Trinity manuscript is fifteenth-century. It omits stanzas III and IV, sets the rest in the following order – I, II, VI, V, VII, VIII, and includes many variants which weaken the sense. The present is a punctuated and articulated edition of the Vernon text. Variants in the Simeon and Trinity texts are listed.

Editions: There are three previous editions based on the Vernon manuscript: Hermann Varnhagen, *Anglia* 7.2 (1884), 301-04; F. J. Furnivall, *Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, Part 2, EETS o.s. 117 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901), pp. 683-86; Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 152-54. Kenneth Hunter's D. Phil. dissertation – 'The Vernon Lyrics' (Birmingham, 1977-78) – contains a transcription from the Vernon manuscript and a list of all textual variants. An edition of the Trinity College version can be found in A. G. Rigg's D. Phil. dissertation, 'An Edition Of A Fifteenth-Century Commonplace Book (Trinity College, Cambridge, MS 0.9.38)' (Oxford, 1965), Vol. 1, 35-37; Vol. 2, 255-59.

I. 'Þe mon þat luste to liuen in ese
Or eny worschupe her to ateyne,
His purpos I counte not worþ a pese,
Witterli, but he ordeyne
Þis wikked world hou he schal plese
Wiþ al his pouwer and his peyne.
3if he schal kepe him from disese
He mot lerne to flatere and feyne –
Herte & mouþe loke þei ben tweyne,
Þei mowe not ben of on assent –

4 **Witterli** Truly **ordeyne** devises, prepares
9 **tweyne** two

And ȝit his tonge he mot restreyne,
For hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schente.'

II. Þus is þe soþe ikept in close,
And vche mon makeþ touh and queynte
To leue þe tixt and take þe glose.
Eueri word þei coloure and peynte:
Summe þer aren þat wolden suppose
For no tresour forte ben teynte
Let a mon haue not to lose:
He schal fynde frenschipe feynte.
Summe þat semen an innocent,
Wonder trewe in heore entent,
Þei beoþ agast of eueri pleynt,
For hos seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent.

III. Þe wikked wone we may warie,
Þat eueri mon þus inward bledes.
Let a lord haue his corlarie,
He schal wel knowe of al his dedes.
Þauȝ he be next his sacratarie,
Wiþ flaterynge his lord he fedes
And with sum speche he most him tarie,
And þus with lesynges him he ledes;
To gabben his lord most him nedes
And with sum blaundise make him blent:
To leosen his offys euere he dredes,
For ȝif he soþe seiþ he schal be schent.

14 **makeþ touh and queynte** speaks or writes elaborately, deceptively
18 **teynte** attained
25 **wone** evil
27 **corlarie** sycophant
32 **lesynges** lie
33 **gabben** deceive

IV. And al is wrong, þat dar I preue,
For let a mon be sore iwounde,
Hou schulde a leche þis mon releeue
But ȝif he miȝte ronsake þe wounde?
For þauȝ hit smerte & sumdel greue,
3it most he suffre a luitel stounde;
3if he kneuh of his mischeue,
With salues hi miȝte make him sounde.
Were grace at large þat liþþe ibounde
Hap and hele mihte we hent;
Lac of leche wol vs confounde
For hos seiþ soþe he schal be schent.

V. For let a frere in Godes seruise
Þe pereles to þe peple preche,
Of vre misdede & vre queyntise
Þe trewe tixt to telle and teche,
Þauȝ he beo riht witti and wyse
3it luytel þonk he schal him reche,
And summe þer ben þat wol him spise
And bleþely wayte him with sum wreche;
Þis pore prechour þei wolen apeche
At counseyl and at parliment,
But ȝif he kepe him out of heore cleche
For his soþ saw he schal be schent.

39 **leche** doctor
40 **ronsake** examine
41 **smerte** be painful
42 **stounde** while
45 **liþþe** The word is 'lippe' in the Vernon manuscript, where it is commonly read as a scribal error for 'liþþe'.
46 **Hap and hele** happiness and health
50 **pereles** perils
51 **queyntise** deceit
54 **reche** receive
56 **wreche** punishment

VI. Seþþe þe tyme þat God was boren
Þis world was neuer so vntrewe;
Men recchen neuer to ben forsworen
To reuen þat is hem ful duwe;
Þe peynted word þat fel biforen
Behynde hit is anoþer hewe;
Whon Gabriel schal blowe his horn
His feble fables schul hym rewe;
Þe tonges þat such bargeyn gon brewe
Hit weore non harm þouȝ þei were brent;
Þus þis gyle is founde vp of newe
For hos seiþ soþ he schal be schent.

VII. 'Siþen the soþe dar no mon say
For drede to geten him a fo,
Best I holde hit, in good fay,
Let o day come anoþer go,
And mak as murie as we may
Til eueri frend parte oþur fro –
I drede hit draweþ to domes day!'
Such saumples we han & oþer two:
'Now knowes a child boþe weole & wo
Þat scholde ben an innocent,
Whil it is ȝong is norissched so –
But hos seiþ soþ he schal be schent.'

VIII. Þis world wol han his wikked wone,
For soþe hit wol non oþer be;
His cursede cours þat is bigonne,
Þer may no mon from hit fle;
Þat haþ longe among vs ronne,
His oune defaute mai he not se;

63 **recchen** care **ben forsworen** break an oath
64 **reuen** regret
90 **defaute** flaw, sin, sinfulness

Þe fader trust not to þe sone,
Ne non to oþer in no degre;
Falshede is called a sotilte,
And such a nome hit haþ hent.
Þis lesson lerneþ alle at me:
Ho seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent.

Textual Notes
and Variant Readings in Manuscripts

V = Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng.poet.a.1 (3938), Vernon Manuscript
S = London, British Library, Addit. 22283, Simeon Manuscript
T = Cambridge, Trinity College, O.9.38 (1450)

Heading T: Hoso sayth the truth shall be shente
1 Þe . . . to] T: Who so wyll
2 Or eny] T: And hys; her . . . ateyn] T: woll not alayne
3 His] T: And; I . . . pese] T: the contray not to dyspleyse
4 Witterli] T: Certes; he] T: he wull
5 hou . . . schal] T: he muste
6 and] T: & all; peyne] T: mayne
7 schal] T: wyll
8 flatere] T: flatery
9 loke] S: ko; loke . . . tweyne] T: he muste refrayne
10 Þei . . . of] T: That it be noght at
11-12 T: omitted
13 soþe] T: sede
14 vche] T: euery; mon] V interlined by corrector; touh] T: it thowght
15 To] T: They; take] T: takyth
16 Euer̲i] T: Wyth euery; þei coloure] T: y colouryd
17 aren̲ þat] T: beth men
18 no] S: non; forte . . . teynte] T: that woold be attaynte
19 T: Yff thow sey ofte yn there prese
20 He schal] T: Thow schait it; frenschipe] T: bothe febell &

21 Summe] T: Som ther beth; an Innocent] T: a seynte
22 Wonder] T: And wonder
23 eueri pleynte] T: eche compleynte
24 For hos] T: And who; þe] T: omitted
25-48 T: omitted
45 lippe] S: liþþe
After 48 T inserts lines 61-72
49 For] T: omitted; in] T: omitted; seruise] T: lawe
50 pereles] T: perell
51 T: Of here doyng and of here sawe
53 T: Som there byth woll be full fawe
54 T: Fayne of hym to take wreche
55 T: Hym to pryson to hong or drawe; summe] S: summen
56 T: Wyth outyn ryght they wolde hym reche; wreche] S: wrenche
57 prechour] T: frere
58 At] T: Yn; and at] T: or yn
59 out] T: omitted
60 For . . . sawe] T: Who seyth soth
61 Seþþe] S: Seiþe T: Nevyr syth; þe tyme] T: omitted; boren] T: y bore
63 Men . . . neuer] T: A man reccheth noght; forsworen] T: forsoore
64 þat . . . ful] T: the ryght there it ys
65 T: They peynte here woordys feyre a fore
66 is] T: ys of
68 T: Suche bargenys schall hem sore a rewe
69 bargeyne gon] T: bargenys
70 non . . . þouȝ] T: no charge thought
71 þus] T: omitted; gyle] T: gyse; vp] T: omitted
72 For hos] T: Who
73 Siþen] T: There for no man; no mon] T: omitted
74 For . . . to] T: Leste he
75 Best . . . hit] T: There for y rede yow
76 come] T: come &
77 mak] T: make we
78 frend] T: man
79 drede] T: leue
80 saumples] T: warnyngys; & oþer] T: one or
81 knowes] T: omitted; boþe] T: can; T: This line was copied in error after

line 83, the error being indicated in the margin by the corrector
82 þat] T: By skylle he
83 Whil . . . ȝong] T: yn hys yowthe he; norissched] T: tawght
84 But hos] T: Who
85 world] T: wykkyd world; wikked] T: omitted
86 For soþe] T: y wys; oþer] T: other wyse
87 cursede] T: omitted; þat . . . gonne] T: a monge vs so long hathe ronne
88 may] T: ys; hit] T: hyt may
89 T: Thys it fallyth by all and summe
90 His . . . not] T: Noman hys fawtys can a
92 Ne] T: Nother; to] T: tyll
93 Falshede] T: Falsnes; called] T: holde
94 T: Yn what man that it ys lent
95 alle at] T: ye of
96 þe] T: omitted
After 96, S: Explicit . A song . Ho seiþ þe soþe he schal be schent.

'. . . a purse fulle feyer': Feminising the Body in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*

Liz Herbert McAvoy

One short and startling passage from Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* (hitherto referred to as the Long Text) is rendered all the more remarkable because of its being attested to in only two witnesses, namely MS Paris, Bibliotèque Nationale fonds anglais, 40 (P),[1] one of the three extant versions of the complete Long Text, and in MS London, Westminster Cathedral Treasury, 4 (W),[2] a version which consists of edited highlights of the Long Text. The passage in question, describing as it does the act of human defecation, has largely been ignored or overlooked by commentators in spite of its delicate treatment of a problematic subject and its absence from the two other extant manuscripts of the complete Long Text:

> A man goyth vppe ryght, and the soule of his body is sparyde as a purse fulle feyer. And whan it is tyme of his nescessery, it is openyde and sparyde ayen fulle honestly. And that it is he that doyth this, it is schewed ther wher he seyth he comyth downe to vs to the lowest parte of oure nede (pp. 306-07).

Whilst there is no doubt about the authorial status of this passage,[3] its omission from the two other Long Text manuscripts would suggest that various copiers of the text felt it necessary to edit out this passage, possibly either for purposes of decorum, or because they failed to recognise the centrality of its thematic and pictorial relevance to the whole work. In the opinion of one recent editor of the Long Text, Marion Glasscoe,[4] many of the passages which appear in P but not in S1 'do not make significant additions to the meaning', implying therefore that they were deliberately edited out (p. ix). Glasscoe also asserts that compressed and awkward sections of S1 are successfully expanded and clarified in P (p. x).

However, neither of these explanations adequately explains the omission in S1 and S2 of this remarkably vivid and evocative passage. Similarly, Glasscoe later speculates that other omissions in S1 and S2 could be attributed to scribal error (p. ix), which although highly likely in the examples which she quotes to substantiate her claim, does not serve to explain why the singular passage under discussion should not be included in the Sloane manuscripts, or indeed the earlier more autobiographical, less analytical Short Text.[5] Surprisingly, although she notes in her edition (based on S1) the textual location of the omission and proceeds to quote it in full as an endnote (p. 9), she fails to comment on its content or the fact of omission itself. Two more recent editors, Edmund College and James Walsh, whose edition of the Long Text is based on P, have been slightly more helpful but, although glossing some of the passage's terminology as we shall see, nevertheless fail to comment on its lack of inclusion in other manuscripts (pp. 306-07). Such an oversight has been common to most of the other influential editors of the manuscripts since the beginning of the twentieth century,[6] except for Hugh Kempster, a recent editor of the Westminster manuscript, who considers the commonality of the passage to both W and P as evidence of a likely 'close relationship between P and W' (p. 182). The failure of other commentators to comment on the appearance or absence of this passage or its import in the manuscripts is therefore something which I hope this article will go some way to rectify.

As I have suggested, I consider this passage to be of considerable thematic and imagistic importance within the body of Julian's writing and would assert, moreover, that it connects closely with its central theme of the Motherhood of God, providing further illustration of Julian's use of female-associated imagery in order to construct an effective hermeneutic for the understanding and explication of her divine insights.[7] I will argue that, in her use of the image of the 'fine purse', Julian is subtly re-inscribing the female upon what is ostensibly an image of the universal male body, and asserting the equal value of the female as an expression of, and a means of accessing, the divine.

To my knowledge, the absence of this passage from the only extant copy of Julian's Short Text too has also never been commented on in spite of the fact that the main differences between the Short and the Long texts have received considerable attention.[8] The immediate and personal nature of the Short Text, with its autobiographical references and tentative exploratory imagery, contrasts with and yet informs the authoritative and theologically confident Long Text.[9] I have argued elsewhere in some detail that Julian's developed and integral use of

the motherhood matrix in her Long Text can be traced back to her experimentation with and interweaving of female-associated language and imagery as exemplified everywhere in the Short Text. Similarly, I have also shown the extent to which the Long Text's parable of the Lord and Servant, also absent from the Short Text because of Julian's original failure to understand its implications, is dependent on female imagery and attributes for its impact, which results in the feminising of the figure of the Lord and again connects it with Julian's famous perception of the Motherhood of God.[10] The clarifying lens of a further revelation in 1388, fifteen years after her initial visionary experiences, whose final teaching would be 'loue is oure lordes menyng' (p. 733), facilitates Julian's detailed and insightful exegesis of this parable, illuminating for her the concept of God's eternal presence everywhere, even in sinful humanity:

> We have in vs oure lorde Jhesu Cryst vp resyn, and we haue in vs the wrechydnesse and the myschef of Adams fallyng. Dyeng by Cryst we be lastynly kept, and by hys gracyous touchyng we be reysed in to very trust of saluacyon . . . and this is his owne werkyng in vs . . . (p. 547).

Earlier, the maternal behaviour of the parable's lord towards his servant has illuminated for Julian God's essential androgyny: '(God) is our fader, and god enjoyeth that he is our moder, and god enjoyeth that he is our very spouse, and our soule his lovyd wyfe' (p. 546) and that he is immanent in everything, even in moments of seeming abandonment and wretchedness. Like the fallen child/servant/Adam/Christ of the parable, humankind is never separated from him. Such a radical perception of God's immanence serves to accentuate for Julian the beauty of all God-given human activity, even that arising from 'the lowest parte of oure nede'. The seeming degradation of the servant as he wallows and flounders in the filthy 'slade' into which he has fallen, and Julian's salvific interpretation of this fall, are thus reminiscent of the image of the excreting human under discussion here.

Julian's explicit use of this basic human urge and necessity as an exegetical *exemplum* in the Long Text is something which she also seems to have carefully avoided in the Short Text, as I have intimated. At the point in the Short Text where we would expect to find the inclusion of this passage,[11] Julian instead presents us with the more familiar and sanitised image of the embodied Christ as the 'clethyng' of humanity: 'for love wappes vs and wyndes vs . . . (and) hynges

aboute vs for tendyr loove . . . ' (p. 43). In an image which is evocative of the office of the mother swaddling her new-born child, Christ is represented as the ultimate fleshly mother who wraps us in himself and holds us tightly within. It is therefore likely that in this initial version of her experiences, Julian is choosing not to confront the image of defecating humanity which she recalls in the later text, but instead is interpreting the 'lowest parte of oure nede', in terms of the vulnerable new-born child who is wholly dependent on the mother for survival. This claim is further substantiated by the fact that Julian incorporates the same image of the embodied and embodying Christ immediately after the 'fine purse' passage in the Long Text, telling us:

> For as þe body is cladd in the cloth, and the flessch in the skynne, and the bonys in þe flessch, and the harte in the bowke, so ar we, soule and body, cladde and enclosydde in the goodnes of god . . . (p. 307).

Similarly, Julian's exegesis of the parable in the Long Text makes much of the synonymy between the flesh of humanity and that of the living Christ and is similarly dependent upon imagery of clothing:

> And oure foule dedely flessch, that goddys son toke vppon hym, whych was Adams olde kyrtyll, streyte, bare and shorte, then by oure savyoure was made feyer, new whyt and bryght and of endlesse clennesse . . . (p. 534).

Thus, it is likely that both the Parable of the Lord and Servant and the passage in question are additions made by a more confident and enlightened Julian writing her Long Text following her secondary visionary experience of 1388.

Both of these passages are also wholly typical of a deviation on the part of Julian from the traditional discourses of *contemptus mundi* found in the works of many other writers of the Middles Ages such as Innocent III in his meditation on the corrupt body, *De Miseria Condicionis Humane,* Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing* or even the author's diatribe in the *Ancrene Wisse* about the frailness of the (female) flesh.[12] Indeed, in its correlation with the parable of the Lord and Servant, it is possible to read the extract under discussion as forming part of Julian's important celebration of the salvific potential of the female as exemplified more explicitly in her fully

developed depiction of God as Mother in the Long Text, and also as providing a subtle response to traditional discourses which have relegated human, and particularly female, flesh to the realm of the sinful.[13]

Closer examination of the passage substantiates this claim further. In their edition of this text Colledge and Walsh footnote 'soule' as deriving from the OE 'sufol' meaning 'cooked, digested food' (p. 306). Both the NED and the MED show that the use of this word was rare and Colledge and Walsh suggest that by Julian's time it had probably become 'doubtless obsolescent' (*sic*). Indeed, the editors of this edition also show that earlier translators of this manuscript have almost all erroneously translated the word 'soule' as 'soul', rendering the passage confusing at the very least. The question therefore arises why Julian in this context should choose to make use of a word which had all but fallen from use, particularly in view of the fact that she uses its homophone elsewhere on many occasions to refer to the human soul.[14] It seems unlikely that the alteration is attributable to the scribe, in spite of a predilection for attempting to give the manuscript an appearance of antiquity (p. 8), and particularly in view of the fact that its inclusion actually confuses rather than clarifies meaning. Colledge and Walsh suggest that the word possibly dropped out of use because of this confusion with its homophone (p. 306), a confusion of which surely someone with Julian's literary ability would have been aware. That leaves us to conclude that her use of this word, in spite of the obvious risk of misunderstanding, is wholly deliberate, and if so we must also conclude that she wished to associate in the mind of her reader the normally repugnant image of excreta with that most beautiful and quasi-divine human attribute – the human soul.

Julian's use here of the image of the body's waste, however, contrasts radically with its counterpart in the *Ancrene Wisse,* with which, as an anchoress, Julian would probably have been familiar:

> I þe licome is fulðe & unstrengðe. Ne kimeð of þ vetles swuch þing as þer in? Of flesches fetles kimeð þer smeal of aromaz oðer of swote basme? Deale drue sprit len beoreð win berien. Breres rose blostmen þi flesch hwet frut bereð hit in alle his openunges. Amid te menske of þi neb þ is þe fehereste deal bitweonen muðes smech & neases smeal ne berest tu as twa priue þurles? Nart tu icumen of ful slim? Nart tu fulðe fette ne bist tu wurme fode? (pp. 142-43)

Whether Julian knew this passage or not, here the anonymous author renders quite explicit a conventionally dualistic attitude to the body and repugnance at its natural functions, something entirely absent in Julian's version. However, we can also detect in the *Ancrene Wisse* an implicit feminisation of the polluted body by means of the rhetorical questions specifically directed at its female audience. Such feminising of the imagery is also detectable in Julian's account but for a very different purpose, as I will illustrate, and both extracts invoke reminiscence of the famous pronouncement on woman by the influential Odo of Cluny in the tenth century who considered her to be *saccus stercoris* – a bag of filth or excrement:

> All beauty consisteth but in phlegm and blood and humours and gall. If a man consider that which is hidden within the nose, the throat, and the belly, he will find filth everywhere; and, if we cannot bring ourselves, even with the tips of our fingers, to touch such phlegm or dung, wherefore do we desire to embrace this bag of filth itself.[15]

Such an emotive image would certainly seem to be informing the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* and it is this conventional image of the female which Julian successfully manages to destabilise in her account through her unique manipulation of its implications.

Traditional attitudes towards human defecation and its association with the 'filth' of the female body are undermined from the onset by Julian's strategic use of the words 'feyer' and 'honestly', which assert her non-dualistic insight that all parts of the human body, be it digested food or the immortal soul, are equally as valued in the sight of God, who not only gives us the ability to excrete what is physically detrimental to us but also allows us to purge ourselves of what is spiritually damaging. The adjective 'feyer' was a common epithet, often used in connection with angels or the Virgin, but according to the MED was also more commonly deployed in the context of women rather than men. Indeed, Margery Kempe's use of the word is almost always in a feminine context:[16] she uses it in connection with the Virgin on at least three occasions in her narrative (p. 20, p. 209, p. 252) once in the context of her marriage to the Godhead (p. 87), and on several occasions to refer to a 'feminine' building such as a church or religious house (e.g. p. 59, p. 27). The application of 'feyer' to the defecating body in Julian's text may then have the effect of rendering it feminine in this context.

Moreover, the association between food and the female body is one which Carolyne Bynum has examined exhaustively and, as she illustrates, it was a concept which was to be found at the very core of medieval socio-religious thinking.[17] This being so, the digested food here which is expelled by the 'feyer' purse of the body is likely to have been devised to have more than a passing association with the feminine. Thus, the 'soule' held within a possibly feminised human body is represented by Julian as being as much a reflection of God's glory as is his maternal caring for the homophonic human soul. The author's aesthetic depiction of the act of defecation is thus wholly in keeping with her ability to transform the earthy and ugly into the beautiful and sublime, as she also does, for example, in her copious use elsewhere of the image of the feminised and salvific blood of Christ,[18] and more specifically in her description of a decaying human body, 'a swylge stynkyng myrre,' which through grace is transformed into a 'fulle feyer creature,' who 'glydyd vppe in to hevyn' (p. 623).

From close examination of fourteenth-century applications of the word 'purse' as listed in the MED,[19] it would appear that Julian's use of it here is also highly unusual. Interestingly, most contemporary figurative and colloquial deployment of this word was to denote specifically male genitalia.[20] For example, and as we might expect, it is used by Chaucer's Wife of Bath to allude to both the sexual and pecuniary assets of her various husbands:[21]

> I have wedded fyve, of which I have pyked out the beste,
> Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste
> (p. 105, ll. 39-49b).

Similarly, in an earlier usage in Jean de Meun's *Le Roman de la Rose* the 'purse' is directly associated with the penis and testicles:

> Ainz qu'il muirent puissent il perdre
> E l'aumosniere e les estalles
> Don il ont signe d'estre malles!
> Perte leur viegne des pendanz
> A quei l'aumosniere est pendanz! (ll. 19666-70)
>
> [May they suffer before their death the loss of their purse and testicles, the signs that they are male! May they lose the pendants on which the purse hangs.][22]

One usage which comes close to Julian's, however, appears in a little-known manuscript, MS Wel. 564, in which is to be found an incomplete and anonymous late fourteenth-century translation of an anatomical text by Henri de Mandeville whom we are told was 'þe kyngis chef maister/surgian of ffraunce'.[23] Here, in an exposition of the excretory functions of the human body, we find the description: 'He haþ twoward his neþer ende foure lacertis þe whiche openeþ þe Ers and closiþ as a purs is opened & schittiþ wiþ hi þwongis' (fol. 39r, col. 1). As in Julian's account, this anatomical description of the act of defecation is explicated in terms of the opening and shutting of a purse, but in this latter account the author's use of the all-inclusive 'he' to describe the subject of this human activity has the effect of categorising the human body as masculine. Julian's description however, and its concomitant insight can be read in terms of a subtle incorporation of the feminine into what initially appears to be a traditionally masculinised depiction of the human body, resulting in the creation of a type of androgyny wholly in keeping with Julian's concept of her genderless 'evencristen' and her male-female God. She rejects the possibility that God could despise any part of humanity, even those parts which humanity despises about itself, which includes the female and her dangerous body.

Julian's non-dualist attitude as exemplified in this extract, would also suggest at least an acquaintance with the surprising tolerance to the human body shown by the influential Thomas Aquinas. Rejecting the extreme dualism of earlier theologians such as Augustine and the aforementioned Odo of Cluny, in his *Summa Theologiae*[24] Aquinas admits to the pleasures inherent in those two most insistent of human impulses, eating and sexual activity, which he recognises 'to oure body longyth in kynde' (p. 307). In this context, Aquinas asserts the need for temperance rather than abstinence, firstly 'because they (these actions) are so profoundly natural to us', (*sunt magis nobis naturales,* 141, 7, p. 30) and secondly because 'they are about things highly needful for human life' (*quia earum objecta magis sunt necessaria praesenti vitae*). Aware that overindulgence in these activities can lead to sin, Aquinas nevertheless concedes that excess of indulgence and pleasure is not always spiritually threatening and can, in fact, provide the most sublime expression of divine love.[25] Thus, the acts of consumption and of intercourse possess the potential to represent the life of virtue and beauty. For Aquinas, the aesthetic and the ethical are intrinsically linked and pleasure invoked by the beauty of food and human (hetero)sexual love are predicated upon the need for individual survival. In this context then, and in view of the more main-stream contemporary belief in the sexual insatiability of the female, it is also possible to

read Julian's 'fine purse' passage not only as comprising a subtly confident Thomist defence of the workings of the human body, but possibly as a vindication of the female body in particular because of its traditional association with the corrupt and unruly flesh.

This suggestion is further substantiated by the equal applicability of the image of the purse to depict the womb of the female, which in turn permits the expulsion of the menses or of new human life, both prevalent images in Julian's writing.[26] Again, in MS Wel. 564 we find several examples of the word 'purse' being employed in a Middle English text as a euphemism for the female sexual organs, but most often this is within a masculine context. The first example reflects the Aristotelian and Galenic notion of the female organs as being an inverted reflection of the male:

> Þe secunde doctrine . . . schal treten of Ossium, þat is to seie, þe cheste or þe purs of þe cod or ballokis. The balloc coddis ben official membris . . . and of wommen it is y-callid a purs for curtesie (fol. 45r, col. 1).

Similarly we find: 'þe self matrice is as þe Osse or bursa testiculorum, þat is to seie, þe balloke cod of a man' (fol. 41v, col. 1).[27] However, the most explicit connection between the female sexual organs and the opening purse is to be found in a more extended passage from the same manuscript which concerns itself with the anatomy of the vagina and the womb:

> I þe same maner as ben þe rose leeues or þa þe rose leues be fully sprad or ripe and so þei beþ schett togideris & constreyned riȝt as a pursis mony, so þat no þing may passe out of it but þe urine aloone til þe tyme com of childynge (fol. 42r, col. 2).

In spite of the rarity of usage in an explicitly female context, the appearance of the purse simile in this manuscript could suggest that Julian was possibly familiar with such a usage and recognised within it a potential for subversion through a feminised deployment of what seems to have been primarily a masculine image.[28] In this last example the author describes the female organs in terms of a fragrant and aesthetically attractive flower more often associated with courtly love. Here, the purse, rather than being a disparaging colloquialism, becomes an image of tender care and protection, serving to help preserve the unborn child within the

mother. So too in Julian's account, the precious and God-given soule/soul is housed and protected within the womb-like 'purse' of the human body until its timely opening returns the soule/soul to God, its creator. In this context and in view of the fact that the 'fine purse' passage immediately precedes a depiction of Christ as the swaddling clothes of a new-born baby, as we have seen, it would seem that the image of the opening and shutting purse is integral to the theme of pregnancy and childbirth, again a central concept in Julian's writing, particularly in the Long Text. For example, in her famous exposition of Christ as our mother, Julian represents Christ as the perpetually pregnant mother: 'and oure sauyoure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne . . .' (p. 580). The birth of humanity into eternal life will come about via the opening womb of Christ, its mother, and both his nurturance of us within his 'womb' and his birthing of us into eternity are ultimate expressions of his maternal love for us, and constitute the culmination of Julian's feminisation of the Trinity in her text. Elsewhere, too, Julian has depicted us as encased within the womb of Mary because of the synonymy of our flesh with that of Christ: 'Thus oure lady is oure moder, in whome we are all beclosyd and of hyr borne in Crist' (p. 580). The inclusion of Mary as our birthing mother serves to explicitly and unequivocally further feminise Christ because of the synonymy of her flesh with his, and in this context the image of the opening and shutting body in question can certainly be read as a feminised one. Similarly, by giving birth to Christ through divine ordinance, Mary has become an agent for the re-opening of the 'womb' of heaven, which according to tradition was initially closed to humanity by the disobedience of our first mother, Eve.[29] The opening and shutting womb, therefore, becomes a reification of the Mary/Eve antithesis and it is significant in this context that at no point in her text does Julian attribute blame to Eve, who is singularly absent from Julian's re-telling of the Eden story in the Parable and from the text in general. By ignoring her, Julian exonerates her from blame. Indeed, according to Julian's theodicy, the fall of mankind and the onset of sin is as much a part of the salvific process as is the birth of Christ from a human mother. This is, of course, wholly in keeping with Julian's positive, indeed celebratory, treatment of the female and in full accordance with her daring insight that 'Synne is behouely' (p. 405). For Julian, both transgression and transcendence are necessary in order to attain eternal salvation. Like the opening and shutting purse and the opening and shutting womb, there must be both a shutting and opening of understanding, a concept which she explicates both in terms of blindness: 'in the servant was shewde the blyndnesse and the myschefe of Adam's fallyng', and insight: 'and in

þe servant was shewde þe wysdom and the goodnesse of goddys son' (p. 549). By imposing none of the traditional blame upon Eve, Julian implicity restores her and her 'open' womb to the hierarchy of salvation alongside that of the corporeally 'sealed' Mary. Thus, the startling image of the 'fine purse' of the body becomes a symbol of Eve, of Mary, of Christ, of Julian and of general humanity. In this way it is transformed into a multivalent symbol which attests to the centrality of both sin and redemption within the salvific process and, by means of her expansion and exploitation of the purse's more common colloquial association with the male sexual organs and the application of it in a way which is also suggestive of the womb, Julian creates another powerful image of feminised masculinity. In turn, this serves to reinforce her primary insight into God as our Mother for which she is best known, and the unconventional trope through which she chooses to relay this information is the subtly feminised and certainly wholly redeemed act of human defecation.

Thus, as I have shown, within this image of the delicate purse with its continual opening and shutting, Julian has recognised the potential for further vindication of the female as possible representative of the human, and for assertion of her equal value within the divine hierarchy. This passage therefore, far from being an irrelevancy to be overlooked within the text, should be read as an integral part of the female hermeneutic which the writer utilises in order to express her wholly unique insight into the love of a masculine-feminine God for an androgynous humankind.

NOTES

[1] This is the manuscript used for the edition by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (eds), *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978). All quotations to the Long Text will be taken from this edition and page numbers will appear in the text. The decision of these editors to use this manuscript has been a source of contention amongst other scholars who have commented on its apparently amateurish construction. For a brief overview of this debate see Ritamary Bradley, 'Julian of Norwich: Everyone's Mystic', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England* ed. by William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 139-40. The other extant manuscripts of the Long Text in its entirety are London, MS British Museum Sloane 2499 (S1) and London, MS British Museum Sloane 3705 (S2). In addition, excerpts from the Long Text appear in London, MS Westminster Cathedral Treasury 4 and in MS St. Joseph's College, Upholland. Of these two, the passage to be examined appears only in the Westminster manuscript, for a recent edition of which see Hugh Kempster, 'Julian of Norwich: The Westminster Text of *A Revelation of Love*', *Mystics Quarterly*, 23.4 (December 1997), 177-245. All references to this version will be from this edition and page numbers will appear in the text.

[2] Recent editors of both the Short and the Long Texts are at odds about from which manuscript branch this early sixteenth-century Westminster text derives. Frances Beer, editor of the only extant Short Text manuscript (London, MS British Museum Additional 37790), known as the Amherst manuscript, suggests that the Westminster version parallels the Paris version (*Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1978], p. 13), whereas College and Walsh state '(The Westminster manuscript) derives from an ancestor which it shares with SS but not with P' (p. 27).

[3] On this point I am grateful to Nicholas Watson, current editor of a forthcoming edition of the *Revelations*, for helping to clarify my thinking and for commenting on the evident authenticity of this section.

[4] Marion Glasscoe (ed.), *A Revelation of Love* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993).

[5] The so-called Short Text is generally considered to be Julian's initial response to her experiences and is extant in one manuscript only; see n. 2 above.

[6] As well as those editors mentioned see, for example, Grace Warrack (ed.), *Revelations of Divine Love* (London: Methuen, 1901); Dundas Harford, *Comfortable Words for Christ's Lovers* (London: H.R. Allenson, 1911); Roger Huddleston, *Revelations of Divine Love Shewed to a Devout Ankres by Name Julian of Norwich* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1927); James Walsh, *The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich* (London: Harper,

1961).

[7] I have previously examined in some detail the use to which Julian puts the theme of motherhood in her texts in an article, ' "The moders service": Motherhood as Matrix in Julian of Norwich', *Mystics Quarterly*, 24.4 (December 1998), 181-97.

[8] A helpful comparison is to be found in Nicholas Watson, 'The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Divine Love*', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 637-83, in which Watson examines both texts closely in order to reassess hitherto accepted dates of composition. Other comparisons are to be found in Beer, *Revelations*, pp. 22-25 and Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, pp. 59-67. See also Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) for a detailed analysis of Julian's development from visionary to theologian as evidenced in the differences between the two texts.

[9] For a most useful essay on Julian's exploratory use of maternal imagery in the Short Text see Sarah McNamer, 'The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*', *Mystics Quarterly*, 15.1 (1989), 21-28.

[10] Again, for an exposition of this, see McAvoy, '"The moders service"'.

[11] The obviously place for the inclusion of this passage in the Short Text would be at the beginning of Chapter 4, p. 43.

[12] For the writings of Innocent III see, *Lotario dei Segni: De Miseria Condicionis Humane*, ed. by Robert E. Lewis, The Chaucer Library (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978). For an example of Walter Hilton's treatment of this theme, see Leo Sherley-Price (ed.), *Walter Hilton: The Ladder of Perfection* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 177. An example of the anonymous *Cloud* author's attitude towards the flesh can be found in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson, EETS o.s. 218 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 113. For a particularly acerbic diatribe against the body, and the female body in particular, see *Ancrene Wisse*, EETS o.s. 294, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), Part Four (pp. 92-153), which considers the dangers of fleshly and spiritual temptations.

[13] Again, I am grateful to Nicholas Watson for his comments to me on this issue.

[14] For example, *A Book of Showings*, p. 307, l. 47 and p. 308, l. 50.

[15] *Patrilogia Latina*, ed. by J.P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844-1864), vol. 133, col. 556, as cited in G.G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 1, 528.

[16] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sandford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS o.s. 212 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).

[17] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of*

Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1987).

[18] For an examination of such imagery, again see McAvoy, '"The moders service . . . "'.

[19] See also Juhani Norris, *Names of Body Parts in English, 1400-1500* (Tuusula: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1988).

[20] I am grateful to Monica Green for pointing out to me that there is no reference in Norris, *Names of Body Parts*, of this word being used to denote either excretory functions or female genitalia.

[21] *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 105, ll. 39-49b.

[22] *Le Roman de la Rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun*, ed. by Ernest Langlois, Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris: 1927). The English translation is taken from Charles Dahlberg, *Romance of the Rose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

[23] MS Wel. 564 fol. 46r, col. 1. This manuscript was the subject of an article by a previous owner, Joseph Frank Payne (1840-1910), 'On an Unpublished English Anatomical Treatise of the Fourteenth Century', which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* (1896), 1, 200-03.

[24] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 43, *Temperance (2a 2ae)*, trans. by Thomas Gilby, O. P. (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1963).

[25] For a detailed analysis of Aquinas on temperance see Elizabeth B. Keiser, *Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia: The Legitimation of Sexual Pleasure in* Cleanness *and its Contexts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), especially pp. 17-42 and 93-107.

[26] On this, see McAvoy, '"The moders service"', especially pp. 188-91.

[27] Again, I am grateful to Monica Green for pointing me towards a sixteenth-century text known as *'The Boke Mad [by] a Woman Named Rota'*, in which a prolapsed womb is described as 'hangeynge downe lyke a greatt purs' (Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 403 [V.3.1], an. 1544). Although this usage differs from Julian's in that it is an analogy of appearance rather than of function, it is likely that its opening and shutting function is informing the author's use of the simile.

[28] Alexandra Barratt comes to this conclusion about Julian's likely familiarity with gynaecological texts in her essay, '"In the Lowest Part of Our Need": Julian and Medieval Gynecological Writing', in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Sandra McEntire (New York and London: Garland, 1998), pp. 240-56.

[29] For a detailed and comprehensive account of the Eve/Mary antithesis in Catholic

theology, see Maurice Hamington, *Hail Mary: The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), especially pp. 126-55.

'Meditacyon' or 'Contemplacyon' ?
Margery Kempe's Spiritual Experience and Terminology

Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa

Since the discovery of the *Book of Margery Kempe*[1] in 1934, commentators have criticised her lack of serenity and suspected the credibility of her spiritual experience. David Knowles, among others, thought Margery 'improperly' classed among the English mystics.[2] But over the past twenty years, a growing body of scholarship on medieval female spirituality has led to the re-evaluation of the *Book* within the genre of devotional literature.[3] A close reading shows that the *Book* is not the paltry record of an eccentric laywoman but manifests some distinctive aspects of later medieval piety through its accounts of Margery's meditative experience. Margery's meditational experience is illuminated by understanding a change in the laity's spiritual experience in the Middle Ages, and the *Book* unfolds a creative experience of memory in which meditation functions specifically as a spiritual mnemonic.

Margery is considered a vivid representative of a new class of the devout laity with access to vernacular books on the contemplative life. She mentions 'Hyltons boke' (chap. 17, p. 39, line 23) in an interview with Richard of Caister and also recounts that Hilton's book was one of those books of contemplation that an unnamed priest read to her.[4] This experience of contemplative literature seems to have laid the foundation for her spiritual progress: 'Thus, thorw heryng of holy bokys & thorw heryng of holy sermownys, sche euyr encresyd in contemplacyon & holy meditacyon' (chap. 59, p. 144, lines 5-7).

Her account shows a change in lay devotion 'from its anti-intellectual key, with a heavy emphasis on the recitation of set prayers and passive attendance at ritual, to the ideal of devout literacy',[5] which consists of meditative prayer and the reading[6] of books describing the contemplative life.

This new emphasis on contemplation and the pursuit of the mixed life is incorporated into the ideal of the devout layperson by Nicholas Love, who

recommends reading Walter Hilton in his *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* in 1410:

> Whereof & oþer vertuese exercise þat longeþ to contemplatif lyuyng, & specialy to a recluse, & also of medelet life, þat is to sey sumtyme actife & sumtyme contemplatif, as it longeþ to diuerse persones þat in worldly astate hauen grace of gostly loue; . . . lete him loke þe tretees þat þe worþi clerk & holi lyuere Maister Walter Hilton þe Chanon of Thurgarton wrote in english by grete grace & hye discrecion; & he shal fynde þere as I leue a sufficient scole & a trew of alle þees. Whos saule rest in euerlastyng pese; as I hope he be ful hye in blisse, ioynede & knyt without departyng to his spouse Jesu, by perfite vse of þe best part þat he chase here with Marie. Of þe which part he graunt vs felawchipe'.[7]

Love's recommendation of Hilton's *Treatise on the Mixed Life*[8] seems to represent the Carthusian Order's approval of admitting lay-people to the practice of contemplation and the reading of books.[9] As Love's example shows, the change in the laity's spiritual experience could have produced a devout laywoman such as Margery, for whom meditation and contemplation were central to the progress of her spiritual life.

Importantly, her meditative experience involves unique psychological processes, the subtlety of which is conveyed by a variety of terms. Denise Despres situates Margery's meditations in the Franciscan spiritual tradition and suggests that her visual meditations and her ability to recreate Scripture constitute a creative act of recollecting a life.[10] But Margery's meditational experience accompanies more complicated psychological processes than being explained solely by the Franciscan tradition. Gunnel Cleve explores the terminology for Margery's spiritual experience: she examines the various meanings Margery attaches to the noun 'dalyawns' and the verb 'dalyin' by looking at context and situation. But the scope of her research covers only a limited area of Margery's terminology.[11] To date, therefore, there has not been a comprehensive analysis of Margery's spiritual experience and the various terms she uses for the experience. What follows are an analysis of what we can recover of her psychological processes and an examination of the terminology she employs to describe her spiritual experience.

The Psychological processes of Margery's spiritual experience

Writing the *Book* with her amanuensis, Margery recalls her meditational experience: she reports her meditations in retrospect, after having practised them and having considered their meaning for twenty-five years or so.[12] This 'remembering' process creates two problems for our examination of the *Book*. As she states in her Proem, she does not use chronological order to recount her experience. Since she writes as the matter comes to her mind, the flow of the *Book* sometimes drifts, and the way she narrates is occasionally accompanied by abrupt leaps and repetitive accounts. Yet, despite the structural problem, what comes to Margery's mind relates in large measure to her account of her unique meditative experience. We can also speculate on the extent to which Margery actually did meditate in particular ways at the times she says she did, and on the amount of reconstruction and insights she adds. The intense meditation she describes at the holy sites during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, for example, reflects the impact the pilgrimage had on her.[13] But what she recounts is not necessarily autobiographical. It might be shown as an intensely emotional experience which renews her spiritual perception of the Redemption.

As Margery belongs to the tradition of affective devotion which encourages the use of the faculty of imagination, the way she conveys her meditational experience is affected by her highly visual imagination, itself effected by her intense power of emotional concentration. As I have noted, Margery is most influenced by the Franciscans' imaginative meditation, elaborated in the *Meditationes* and transmitted to Margery through Nicholas Love's translation, the *Mirror*. The *Meditationes*, probably written by a Franciscan, Giovanni de Cauli, popularized ideas about the value of compassion and provided the laity with an example of systematic meditation on the life of Christ according to the Canonical Hours. It also constantly encouraged an imaginative participation in the events of Christ's life by employing one's senses and imagination.

Moreover, in Margery's imaginative meditation, the relationship between the earthly and the spiritual worlds is so close that they continually overlap because she finds the Incarnation always present in her life: there is no clear demarcation between the present and the eternal. Through her imagination she is instantly transported to an eternal present. This peculiar dramatisation of her imaginative experience might be explained by the symbolic system in which 'the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is

simultaneously something . . . and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event'.[14]

Significantly, her meditation seems to have a kind of 'cross-over' status: although Margery's meditation initiates an experience willed imaginatively, it becomes the means by which Margery recieves divine illumination or visionary insight. As she increasingly engages in visual and participatory meditation, she experiences the intense reality of God present in her life and conceives her meditative experience as an interplay between her will and His grace. At the same time, Margery puts layers of interpretation on her meditations as she gains understanding over the years of her life. The recollected meditation mirrors the way she grasps its meaning after considering her life in the light of that meditative experience. For example, through the process of reflection, Margery realises that what she had experienced in Jerusalem plays a crucial role for her spiritual progress.[15] Her meditation thus constitutes a vital process of self-knowledge, which is distinguished by a revelatory quality which might be compared with what Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, calls 'spots of time'.[16]

Furthermore, Margery's meditations are nurtured in a matrix of Church teaching, devotional literature, liturgy, ritual and iconography, all interacting with one another; this matrix gives us a glimpse into the symbolic interactions between clerical intellectual spirituality and lay piety. Moreover, the visual aspect of her meditation suggests that Margery makes significant use of medieval iconography as a spiritual mnemonic to express herself. Her visual meditation nurtures the affective dimension of her piety and preserves the memory of her meditative experience in an immediate way. Detailed analysis of verbal and visual iconography shows that concrete images are linked to a sophisticated context of medieval iconography and that the images' subtle and abstract implications add peculiar richness to the significance of her meditation.

For example, in chapter 85, Margery recapitulates earlier meditations coloured by vivid visual imagination. As Margery sees the Virgin watching the cross raised from the ground, she feels that 'sche sey owr Lord standyng ryght up ouyr hir so ner þat hir thowt sche toke hys toos in hir hand & felt hem, & to hir felyng it weryn as it had ben very flesch & bon' (chap. 85, p. 208, lines 21-24). This image evokes not only the iconography of the Crucifixion, i.e. *Stabat Mater*, but also medieval depictions of the Last Judgement in which the Virgin intercedes on behalf of sinners just below the bare feet of Christ in 'majesty'.[17]

Through these intricate psychological processes, Margery chooses and

relocates the events of her life in relation to her meditations. Five major meditational experiences are very important for her progress; they are roughly categorised into two kinds of experience which run through the whole Book: one that appears in a scene or a well-defined sequence with the use of visual imagination; the other that is understood as Christ's discourse or meditative colloquies between Christ and Margery. The sequence of meditation on the early life of the Virgin and infant Christ (chapters 6 and 7), meditations during the Jerusalem pilgrimage (chapters 28 and 29), the sequence of meditation on the Passion in the context of the Easter liturgy (chapters 78-81), and meditation on the Purification of the Virgin (chapter 82) are highly visual and imaginative, while Christ's long discourse on Holy Communion is presented in monologue (chapter 86). In-between the meditative blocks, she apparently intersperses spiritual colloquies with Christ. Nevertheless, the colloquies are the means by which she grows in her awareness of how her life is bound with Christ.[18] Each meditation that Margery embeds in the chronological movement of her life significantly illuminates her inner spiritual progress. To convey this unique spiritual experience, Margery chooses the terms available to her. In the next section I examine what she means by the terms with which she describes her meditational experience.

Margery's terminology for her spiritual experience

In the Proem, Margery enumerates various types of spiritual experience:[19]

> For euyr þe mor slawnder & repref þat sche sufferyd, þe mor sche incresyd in grace & in deuocyon of holy medytacyon of hy contemplacyon & of wonderful spechys & dalyawns whech owr Lord spak and dalyid to hyr sowle, techyng hyr how sche schuld be despysed for hys lofe . . . Sche knew & vndyrstod many secret & preuy thyngys whech schuld beffallen aftyrward be inspiracyon of þe Holy Gost. (Proem, p. 2, lines 29-38)
> Sche xuld don wryten hyr felyngys & reuelacyons & þe forme of her leuyng þat hys goodnesse myth be knowyn to alle þe world. (pp. 3-4, lines 32/1-2)

The words '*meditacyon*', '*contemplacyon*', '*wonderful spechys & dalyawns*' and

'felyngys & reuelacyons' relate her inner spiritual experience. As she compares the gift of contemplation and devotion with the bliss of heaven, the inner spiritual experience which she describes with these various terms seems to be central to the salvation of her soul. Christ gives a glimpse of heaven when he says: 'Þer [in heaven] þu schalt se wythowtyn ende euery good day þat euyr I ȝaf þe in erth of contemplacyon, of deuocyon, & of al þe gret charite þat I haue ȝouyn to þe to þe profyte of thyn euyn-cristen' (chap. 64, pp. 157-58, lines 36-38/1-2).

There is, however, a certain ambiguity in her use of these terms. It is helpful to examine more broadly the terminology that Margery uses for her inner spiritual experience and to categorise her idiosyncratic terms for the various meditations in the *Book*. First, I explore *'meditacyon'* and *'contemplacyon'*, which Margery groups together or uses alternatively; these terms seem to play a pivotal role in her meditative experience. But it is often difficult to distinguish these terms in the medieval period. *The Middle English Dictionary* provides a definition of the terms in a medieval religious context: 'meditacyon' is described as 'meditation, contemplation; devout preoccupation; devotions, prayer';[20] 'contemplacyon' as 'religious meditation, contemplation of the Divinity and the divine order'.[21] The terms overlap in the Middle Ages as well as being used distinctively: medieval writers did not always distinguish the terms they used to talk about the inner spiritual experience, although they distinguished the activities. In some contemporary examples, contemplation designates meditation in terms of devotional practice: 'Blessid ben the clene of herte, for thei schulen see God, ȝee thei schulen first seen hym here by contemplacioun, that is to seye, by goode thouȝtes and desyres and goode undurstondynges'.[22] John Gower also overlaps the meaning of the two terms: 'With worthi knyhtes environed / The king himself hath abandoned / Into the temple in good entente . . . Wher as with gret devocioun / Of holi contemplacioun / Withinne his herte he made his schrifte'.[23]

By contrast, in modern mystical theology, theologians rigidly separate the activities and the terms: they distinguish between willed and conscious 'meditation' and a higher kind of knowledge of God which is felt to be experienced through a supernatural virtue or gift and which is generally called 'contemplation'. Modern theology defines meditation as a form of mental prayer which employs the interior faculties – 'the memory, the imagination, the emotions, the intellect, in influencing the will, and the will itself in its corresponding affective acts and resolutions',[24] and which proceeds by discursive steps. But contemplation is intuitive rather than discursive: it is 'the intuitive experience of union with God through the activity of faith, charity, and the gifts

of wisdom and understanding'.[25]

Meditation in the Middle Ages grew in a monastic milieu where those vowed to the contemplative life fostered techniques of contemplation which consist of reading, meditation and prayer. Having developed from meditation, contemplation attempts to transcend the activities of imagination and intellect through an intuitive concentration on the divine. Importantly, in the wave of affective piety in the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux placed the practice of meditation in a broader context of contemplation, which is governed by personal striving for perfection through a three-stage programme for spiritual growth.[26]

Bernard argues that those who pursue the contemplative life can be led to the higher stage of spiritual union particularly through meditating on Christ's humanity:

> The soul at prayer should have before it a sacred image of the God-man, in his birth or infancy or as he was teaching, or dying, or rising, or ascending. Whatever form it takes this image must bind the soul with the love of virtue and expel carnal vices, eliminate temptations and quiet desires. I think this is the principal reason why the invisible God willed to be seen in the flesh and to converse with men as a man. He wanted to recapture the affections of carnal men who were unable to love in any other way, by first drawing them to the salutary love of his own humanity, and then gradually to raise them to a spiritual love.[27]

This passage asserts that the sensory and emotional devotion to Christ's humanity in meditation can be transformed into spiritual love – the goal of contemplation in God. Affective meditation on the events of Christ's life elicits the meditator's compassion and initiates a process of moral reform. As a soul moves from the elementary stage to the higher stage of spirituality in meditation, it reaches the point at which meditation gives way to contemplation.

Bernard argues further: 'Perhaps, too, we have here those puzzling reflections seen by the Apostle in the mirror and fashioned, as I have said, by angelic hands from pure and beautiful images, which I feel bring us in contact somehow with the being of God, that in its pure state is perceived without any shadow of corporeal substances'.[28] Through meditation on the holy manhood of Christ, the mystic is ultimately led to contemplation without the aid of corporeal

or visual images of any kind until s/he transcends the physical by recognising the divine image in the corporeal.[29] The meditation thus culminates in the wholly spiritual contemplation of Christ's divinity and in a glimpse of the mystical and beatific vision of heaven.

In the *Form of Living*, which dates from the last year of Richard Rolle's life (1348-49), he discusses active and contemplative life and regards contemplation as a transcendent experience – 'gifen of Goddes godenes'.[30] He makes a clear distinction between meditation and contemplation by assigning them a lower and higher role in contemplative experience:

> Contemplatife lyf hase twa partyes, a lower and a heer. Þe lower party es meditacion of haly wrytyng, þat es Goddes wordes, and in other gude thoghtes and swete, þat men hase of þe grace of God abowt þe lufe of Jhesu Criste . . . Þe hegher party of contemplacion es behaldyng and ȝernyng of þe thynges of heven, and joy in þe Haly Gaste, þat men hase oft.[31]

Furthermore, Rolle asserts the superiority of contemplative experience: contemplation is 'a wonderful joy of Goddes luf, þe whilk joy es lovyng of God, þat may noght be talde',[32] for it is 'a syght, and þai se intil heven with þar gastly egh'.[33]

In *Emendatio Vitae*, in defining approaches to contemplation, Rolle again distinguishes between contemplation and meditation: 'Contemplatyfe lyfe or contemplacion has thre partys: Redyng, Prayer, & Meditacion. In redynge, god spekis to vs; In prayer, we speke to god; In meditacion, awngels to vs cum down & techis vs, þat we erre nott. In prayer þa go vp & offyrs owr prayers to god, Ioyand of owr profett, þat ar messyngers be-twix god & vs'.[34] Notably, Rolle here says that angels come down during meditation to help in the move towards contemplation. Rolle further argues that 'Meditacion in god & godly þingis, aftyr prayer and redynge is to be takyn, qwher is þe halsynge of rachell . . . To meditacione, longis inspiracion of godd, vndirstandynge, wysdome & syghynge'.[35] Following the contemplative tradition in which Rachel represents the contemplative knowledge of the love of God, Rolle clearly points to this mediating function of meditation. Thus, for Rolle, meditation is a means to receive the transcendent gift of contemplation.

In the fourteenth century, however, as the practice of meditation on the

suffering of Christ was increasingly recommended as a devotional practice appropriate for the devout laity, meditation practised by professed contemplatives as the initial step towards contemplative union was separated from contemplation.[36] This change in the role of meditation and that of contemplation appears in Nicholas Love's translation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, in which he disregards contemplation and recommends meditation on the life of Christ as a devotional practice appropriate for those in the active life. However, in Book I of the *Scale of Perfection*, Hilton uses the term 'contemplation' to cover meditative experience. Presenting three stages of contemplation, he argues that 'the second part of contemplation lies principally in affection, without the understanding of spiritual things'.[37] Although he uses the term 'contemplation', 'this second part is modeled after the affective program articulated by Bernard; meditation on the humanity of Christ brings about contrition and prepares the meditator for a more spiritual love'.[38] Hilton mentions various kinds of meditation associated with the second part of contemplation. He divides the second part of contemplation into lower and higher degrees, and says that in this lower second part of contemplation those who practise it sometimes experience a special fervour of love and spiritual sweetness.

Hilton extends to those in active life the possibility of attaining the lower, second part of contemplation, which was preserved for those who pursue the contemplative life: 'Men of active life may by grace have the lower degree of this feeling when they are visited by our Lord, just as strongly and as fervently as those who give themselves entirely to the contemplative life and have this gift'. But he also argues that for those in active life 'it does not last very long: it comes and goes as he wills who gives it'.[39]

The higher degree, on the other hand, 'can be had and held only by people who are in great quietness of body and soul'[40] and it is exclusively for those vowed contemplatives. The higher degree of the second part of contemplation leads the meditator to the third part of contemplation that corresponds to the spiritual union usually identified with contemplation on the divinity. Hilton, then, uses the term 'contemplation' both for meditation on the humanity of Christ, and for contemplation of his divinity.

Margery's terminology seems to be grounded in this tradition in which the terms 'contemplacyon' and 'meditacyon' may both overlap and be distinct. In the *Book*, meditation and contemplation are introduced as the first of the devotional practices according to a new set of instructions Christ gives Margery on her conversion: Christ 'rauysched | hir spyryt' (chap. 5, p. 16, lines 31-32),[41] forgives

her sins to the uttermost point and starts the first long colloquy: 'thynk swych thowtys as I wyl putt in þi mend. . . Þan schalt þow ly stylle & speke to me be thowt, & I schal ȝefe to þe hey medytacyon | and very contemplacyon' (p. 17, lines 27-31).

In the first sequence of meditation, Margery consciously directs herself to meditation: 'An-oþer day þis creatur schul[d] ȝeue hir to medytacyon, as sche was bodyn be-for, & sche lay stylle, nowt knowyng what sche mygth best thynke'(chap. 6, p. 18, lines 9-11). At his command to think on his Mother, 'a-noon sche saw Seynt Anne . . . þan sche preyd Seynt Anne to be hir mayden & hir seruawnt' (chap. 6, p. 18, lines 15-17), and she meditates on the early life of the Virgin and on the infancy of Christ. Noticeably, she describes this spiritual experience as one of 'beheldyng al þe processe in contemplacyon' (chap. 7, p. 19, line 27), and she lists 'medytacyon' and 'contemplacyon' together: 'many swet thowtys & hy medytacyons & also hy contemplacyons, sumtyme duryng in wepyng ij owyres & oftyn lengar in þe mend of owyr Lordys Passyon' (chap. 7, p. 19, lines 36-38).

'Meditacyon' and 'contemplacyon' recur especially in the context of the meditation on the Passion. Margery recalls that soon after her conversion in Advent she had the meditation on the Passion focused on the manhood of Christ: 'An-oþer tyme, as þe creatur lay in hir contempplacyon in a chapel of owr Lady, hir mynde was ocupijd in þe Passyon of owr Lord Ihesu Crist, & hyr thowt verily þat <she> saw owr Lord aperyn to hir gostly syght in hys manhod with hys wowndys bledyng' (chap. 85, p. 207, lines 14-18). In an interview with Richard of Caister, she reveals that meditation on the Passion is the core of her meditative experience – 'sche was fed and comfortyd wyth holy medytacyons & specyal in þe mende of owyr Lordys Passyon' (chap. 17, p. 39, lines 3-5).

Margery also uses the term 'contemplacyon' for her intense meditation on the Passion during her vigil in the Church of Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: 'Befor hir in hyr sowle sche saw hym veryly be contemplacyon . . . sche saw veryly & freschly how owyr Lord was crucifyed. Beforn hir face sche herd and saw in hir gostly sygth þe mornyng of owyr Lady' (chap. 28, p. 68, lines 10-11 and 16-19).[42] On Mount Calvary, 'sche had so very contemplacyon in þe sygth of hir s[owle] | as yf Crist had hangyn befor hir bodily eye in hys manhode' (p. 70, lines 5-7). Her characteristic crying first occurred in that contemplation, and it continued for ten years in contemplation. She recounts that the cries 'come neuyr wyth-owtyn passyng gret swetnesse of deuocyon & hey contemplacyon' (p. 69, lines 18-19).

In her meditation on the Passion in the context of the Easter liturgy,

Margery first describes that 'sche had many an holy thowt of owr Lordys Passyon & beheld hym in hir gostly syght as verily as he had ben a-forn hir in hir bodily syght' (chap. 78, pp. 184-85, lines 34/1-3). Then, she recounts that 'an-oþer tyme sche saw in hyr contemplacyon owr Lord Ihesu Crist bowndyn to a peler . . . Sithyn sche went forth in contemplacyon þorw þe mercy of owr Lord Ihesu Crist to þe place þer he was naylyd to þe Crosse' (chap. 80, p. 191, lines 4-5 and 33-35). Similarly, on Easter morning, Margery was 'in hir contemplacyon wyth Mary Mawdelyn' (chap. 81, p. 197, line 11).

'Contemplacyon' and 'meditacyon' are also used to describe other kinds of religious meditation. The Purification is envisioned during 'þe contemplacyon in hir sowle þat sche had in þe beholdyng of owr Lord Ihesu Crist' (chap. 82, p. 198, lines 8-9). 'Sche thowt in hir sowle þat sche saw owr Lady ben purifijd & had hy contemplacyon' (lines 26-27) in beholding other women purified of their childbirth. When she saw weddings, 'a-non sche had in meditacyon how owr Lady was joynyd to Ioseph & of þe gostly joynyng of mannys sowle to Ihesu Crist' (chap. 82, pp. 198-99, lines 36/1-2).[43]

These examples show how Margery's personal terminology relates to her meditational experience. Although medieval mystical theology contends that one transcends all images formed in the imagination in a contemplative experience, Margery frequently uses 'contemplacyon' to indicate the affective meditation on the life of Christ. She does not distinguish between 'medytacyon' and 'contemplacyon', but uses the terms to indicate any spiritual experience that takes place through affective imagination. Moreover, her use of 'contemplacyon' echoes that of Hilton, in his description of the second part of contemplation – meditation on the humanity of Christ. These examples lead us to see that Margery's 'contemplacyon' is closely related to 'meditacyon', and that both terms especially relate to her compassion for the humanity of Christ.

Relevant to her visual meditation is the term 'vision', which she uses to describe her experience of seeing vision and hearing Christ and the saints speak to her.[44] In a Middle English religious context, the word 'vision' indicates a supernatural manifestation and a vision experienced either by a waking person, especially as a divine revelation or also as a delusion or by a sleeping person as a symbolic, prophetic, or monitory dream.[45] As Rosalynn Voaden notes, 'in nearly all cases these visions and locutions feature Christ, the Virgin Mary, the saints, or angels'.[46] Although Margery does not use the term 'vision' about the experience, she opens her *Book* with a vision of Christ, who 'aperyd to hys creatur . . . in lyknesse of a man . . . seyd to hir þes wordys . . . And a-noon, as he had seyd þes

wordys, sche saw veryly how þe eyr openyd as brygth as ony levyn, & he stey up in-to þe eyr' (chap. 1, p. 8, lines 14-15 and 19-23). When she confides her spiritual experience and privileged relationships with Christ, the Virgin and the saints to Richard of Caister, she recounts: 'owyr Lady spak to hir mend . . . [saints] aperyd to hir sowle & tawt hir how sche xuld louyn owyr Lord' (chap. 17, p. 39, lines 28-32). The mystical events include not only a vision but also an audition, which is granted to her in the form of a heavenly melody.[47]

Occasionally Margery does use the term 'vision'. When Christ tells her that he will pray the Virgin to beg for Margery, who is then destitute in Rome, she has a vision of the Virgin: 'Than on a nyth sche say in vision how owyr Lady, hir thowt, sat at þe mete wyth many worshepful personys & askyd mete for hir. And þan thowt þis creatur þat owr Lordys wordys wer fulfilled gostly in þat vision, for he behestyd þis creatur a lityl be-forn þat he xuld preyn hys modir to beggyn for hir' (chap. 38, p. 93, lines 15-20). She also uses 'vision' for her highly visual meditation on the Passion. When she is punished by horrible temptations, she compares the bitter experience with a glorious vision and high meditations on the manhood of Christ that she used to embrace: 'as sche beforn had many gloryows visyonys & hy contemplacyon in þe manhod of owr Lord . . . ryth euyn so had sche now horybyl syghtys & abhominabyl' (chap. 59, p. 145, lines 5-8).

In reviewing her meditational experience soon after her conversion in Advent, she recounts a vision of Christ she had in sleeping: it led her to a meditation on the Passion:

> An-oþer tyme, þe seyd creatur beyng in a chapel of owr Lady sor wepyng in þe mynde of owr Lordys Passyon & swech oþer gracys & goodnes as owr Lord ministryd to hir mynde, & sodeynly . . . sche was in a maner of slep. & a-non in þe syght of hir sowle sche sey owr Lord standyng ryght up ouyr hir . . . thorw þes gostly sytys hir affeccyon was al drawyn in-to þe manhod of Crist & in-to þe mynde of hys Passyon. (chap. 85, p. 208, lines 16-27)

Noticeably, she identifies this affective meditation as 'visyons': 'As is wretyn be-forn, þes maner of visyons & felyngys sche had sone aftyr hir conuersyon' (chap. 85, p. 208, lines 29-30), most especially in Lent before the Jerusalem pilgrimage. She also recounts a similar experience of seeing the Virgin: 'An-oþer tyme, as þis creatur | was in an hows of þe Frer Prechowrys . . . hir ey-ledys went a lityl to-

gedyr wyth a maner of slep, & sodeynly sche sey, hir thowt, owr Lady in þe fayrest syght þat euyr sche say' (chap. 85, p. 209, lines 15-19).[48]

These examples suggest that Margery's vision could be considered as a spiritual or imaginary vision distinguished by seeing or hearing things with the spiritual senses. It is most conveniently interpreted as an imaginative vision according to the Augustinian analysis of vision as corporeal, imaginative, and intellectual. 'Imaginative vision is a phantasm supernaturally caused in the imagination without the aid of the sense of sight'.[49] This psychological process explains what is going on when Margery reports that she saw Christ, the Virgin, and the saints in her spiritual eyes, or had a vision of them.

Another distinct form of meditative experience for Margery is spiritual colloquy with Christ. She describes it as 'wonderful spechys & dalyawns' which, in a religious context, signifies 'serious, edifying, or spiritual conversation; communion'.[50] Held in an intimate and homely manner, holy dalliance and meditative discourse are the characteristic form of her communication with Christ. After her conversion Christ undertakes a new enterprise of supervising her spiritual life: he speaks to her, commands her in her mind, and consoles her in dalliance. Margery first uses the term, 'dalyawns', in reporting an intense spiritual experience caused by a tribulation in her life. When she is accused as a false Lollard in Canterbury, she prays to Christ and is eventually rescued by two young men. Then she enters a period of contemplation:

> Than aftyr þis sche was in gret rest of sowle a gret whyle & had hy contemplacyon day be day & many holy spech & dalyawns of owyr Lord Ihesu Cryst . . . wyth many swet terys of hy deuocyon . . . how hir hert mygth lestyn þat it was not consumyd wyth ardowr of | lofe, whych was kyndelyd wyth þe holy dalyawns of owyr Lord whan he seyd to hir many tymes, 'Derworthy dowtyr, lofe þow me wyth al þin hert . . . þow wer a chosyn sowle . . . a peler of Holy Cherch'. (chap. 13, p. 29, lines 11-23)

Grouped together with 'contemplacyon', 'dalyawns' is presented as a direct experience with Christ that comes in her 'contemplacyon'. Moreover, 'dalyawns' is the means by which God puts love into her soul and assures her that she is chosen as his beloved: it is a kind of communication that emanates from God to convey His love for Margery.[51]

Furthermore, 'dalyawns' and 'dalying' cluster around her pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to Rome, where her mystical marriage to the Godhead takes place.[52] Cleve argues that through close contact with the sites of Christ's life on earth, Margery is increasingly preoccupied by her identity as the bride of Christ, and suggests that 'dalyawns' expresses the relationship that God has with her through mystical marriage.[53] As 'dalyawns' is defined in a secular context as 'amorous talk or to-do; flirting, coquetry; sexual union',[54] its secular semantic values seem to colour its spiritual use in Margery's matrimonial imagery, although Margery seeks, by means of this term, to express spiritual love. Importantly, 'dalyawns' also occurs in contemplation during Holy Communion which Christian mysticism has traditionally interpreted as the spiritual marriage of the human soul to God through the sacrament of the eucharist:[55] 'in þat Chapel sche had so hy contemplacyon & so meche dalyawns of owr Lord' (chap. 56, p. 138, lines 26-28); she cries at Communion because she feels abundance of love in it.

God's 'dalyawns' recurs in 'contemplacyon' and 'meditacyon' in Margery's later years when she is spiritually transformed through her meditative experience:

> Whan sche beleuyd þat it was God & no euyl spiryt þat ȝaf hir so mech | grace of deuocyon, contricyon, & holy contemplacyon, þan had sche so many holy thowtys, holy spechys, and dalyawns in hir sowle . . . Sche vndirstod hem bettyr in hir sowle þan sche cowde vttyr hem. ȝyf on of hir confessowrys come to hir whan sche ros vp newely fro hir contemplacyon er ellys fro hir meditacyon, sche cowde a telde hym meche thyng of þe dalyawnce þat owr Lord dalyid to hir sowle. (chap. 83, pp. 201-02, lines 28-32 and 38-40/1-3)

Margery also describes dalliance as sweet: 'The sayd creatur lay ful stille in þe chirch, heryng & vndirstondyng þis swet dalyawnce in hir sowle as clerly as on frende xulde spekyn to an-oþer' (chap. 87, p. 214, lines 14-16).

As she reviews her meditative experience, she judges that she was strengthened in her faith in God through dalliance: 'Of þis maner speche and dalyawnce sche was mad mythy & strong in þe lofe of owr Lord & gretly stabelyd in hir feith & encresyd in mekenes & charite wyth oþer good vertuys' (chap. 87, pp. 214-15, lines 36/1-3). As Cleve argues, 'dalyawns' contains a wide

variety of semantic values applicable to spiritual marriage.[56] Nevertheless, these examples from Margery's later years suggest that she uses 'dalyawns' not only to illuminate the matrimonial aspects of her relationship with God but to convey her spiritual experience which is synonymous with the manner of devotional life bestowed on those who are assiduous in contemplative experience.

Margery's inner spiritual experience includes *'felyngys & reuelacyons'*. Through her conversion, she is chosen to receive 'reuelacyon': ' "I byd þe gon to þe ankyr at þe Frer Prechowrys, & schew hym my preuyteys & my cownselys whech I schewe to þe". . . [Sche] schewyd hym þe reuelacyons swech as wer schewyd to hir' (chap. 5, p. 17, lines 31-36). This passage suggests that her 'reuelacyon' is synonymous with God's secrets and counsels, as the *MED* defines it 'the communication or disclosure of spiritual doctrine, mystical truth, divine precepts, historical events, etc. by God through Christ, the Holy Spirit, a saint, etc.'.[57]

Revelation as privileged spiritual experience empowers Margery as a mouthpiece of God. For example, when she persuades her husband to make a sacramental vow of chastity, she tells the Bishop of Lincoln with authority that she was commanded in her soul by Christ to wear white clothes: 'And, yf ȝe clothyn me in erth, owyr Lord Ihesu Cryst xal clothyn ȝow in Heuyn, as I vndyrstond be reuelacyon' (chap. 15, p. 34, lines 12-14). She uses 'reuelacyon' synonymously with 'felyngys' which, in a religious context in the medieval period, is defined as 'spiritual or mystical awareness or insight' and 'intuitive knowledge or foreknowledge; divine prescience'.[58] Margery's own account shows that she has a prophetic gift: she is able to foretell future events including natural occurrences and to see the secrets of people's hearts and more. For example, in her interview with Richard of Caister, she tells 'her felyngys whech sche had be reuelacyons boþen of qwyk & of ded & of hys owyn self' (chap. 17, p. 39, lines 14-16). God sends Margery to a lady who asks her about her husband in purgatory; Margery answers that the sufferings in purgatory can be reduced by a pious act such as almsgiving.[59]

More importantly, after Margery is fully empowered by Christ, who assures her that her status is equivalent to that of maidenhood, she recounts more of the prophetic revelations she has received from God: 'Many ¦ mo swech reuelacyons þis creatur had in felyng . . . Sche had sumtyme so gret trubbyl wyth swech felyngys . . . And þan aftyr hir turbele & hir gret fere it xuld ben schewyd vn-to hir sowle how þe felyngys xuld ben vndyrstondyn' (chap. 23, pp. 54-55, lines 27-28 and 38/1-5). 'A rygth notabyl matere of þe creaturys felyng' (chap. 25,

p. 58, lines 25-26) also occurs in this period. She prophesies that a chapel will not be granted baptisms and purifications: 'sche had be reuelacyon þat þei xuld not haue it . . . þe inspiracyon of owyr Lord was be experiens preuyd for very sothfast & sekyr in þe forseyd creatur' (chap. 25, p. 60, lines 6-7 and 15-17).

The various terms Margery chooses to relate her spiritual experience give a glimpse into the complexity of the inner processes that enrich the account of her meditative experience.[60] More importantly, in the context of later medieval use of the terms 'contemplation' and 'meditation', Margery's use of language reveals something of the dynamics of spiritual illumination open to the devout laity. By being alert to the nuances of meaning in the terms Margery uses, we learn the nature of her devotion and, by implication, that available to the laity in the later medieval period. Furthermore, for Margery these terms are the means by which she can effectively translate her personal experience and inner struggle into a creative work and show how God works through her, over time, in the details of her life. Margery's use of the terms shows that although only privileged contemplatives are granted contemplative visions, the laity can participate in a meditational experience by which they grow closer to God and foster their understanding of the love of God.[61]

NOTES

[1] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, vol. 1, EETS o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940; repr. 1961), hereafter the *Book* in the text and BMK in endnotes. All citations to Margery Kempe are from this edition and will be followed by chapter, page and line number.

[2] David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), pp. 148-49.

[3] See Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and the World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Gail M. Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), esp. chapters 2 and 3; Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[4] See BMK, chap. 58, p. 143. Barry Windeatt speculates that 'Kempe's reference to Hilton's work also embraces his *Epistle on the Mixed Life*, for this exposition . . . has a relevance for Kempe's own vocation, although there are no evident verbal reminiscences in the *Book* of Hilton's writings'. See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 'Introduction', p. 10.

[5] Hilary M. Carey, 'Devout Literate Laypeople and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Later Medieval England', *Journal of Religious History*, 14 (1986-87), 361-81 (p. 372).

[6] Sometimes reading would actually mean being read to. See Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 76-108.

[7] *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition Based on Cambridge University Library Additional MSS 6578 and 6686*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent, Garland Medieval Texts, 18 (New York: Garland, 1992), p. 124, lines 31-44.

[8] *The Scale of Perfection*, Book I, addressed to a recluse, excludes the term 'mixed' and discusses only the active and the contemplative lives, while the *Mixed Life*, addressed to a feudal lord, introduces the mixed life.

[9] The practice was further approved by the whole church through Archbishop Arundel's licence. See Carey, p. 373. The popularity of these contemplative texts is attested by those fourteenth- and fifteenth-century wills which include them in a list of bequests. See Margaret Deanesly, 'Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Modern Language Review*, 15 (1920), 349-58.

[10] Denise L. Despres, 'The Meditative Art of Scriptural Interpolation in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Downside Review*, 106 (1988), 253-63 (p. 262). See also Despres, *Gostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1989).

[11] See Gunnel Cleve, 'Margery Kempe's "Dalyawns" with the Lord', in *Neophilologica Fennica: Société Néophilologique 100 ans*, ed. by Kahlas Tarkka Leena (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1987), pp. 11-21.

[12] Julian continued to be given inward teaching about the meaning of her visions for twenty years. She incorporates in the Long Text her growth in understanding over those twenty years. See Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe, 3rd rev. edn, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), chap. 51, p. 74 and chap. 86, p. 135.

[13] See BMK, chap. 28, p. 70, lines 9-17.

[14] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 74.

[15] See BMK, chapter 57 for the meditation that takes place in the context of Holy Week.

[16] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book XII in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, The Oxford Anthology of English Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 223: 'There are in our existence spots of time, / That with distinct pre-eminence retain / A renovating virtue, whence, depressed / By false opinion and contentious thought, / Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight, / In trivial occupations, and the round / Of ordinary intercourse, our minds / Are nourished and invisibly repaired; / A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced, / That penetrates, enables us to mount, / When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen'.

[17] See, for example, 'Last Judgement, and angels with Instruments of the Passion', London, Estate of Major J.R. Abbey, J.A. 7398, fol. 57, reproduced in Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts: 1390-1490*, Part I &II, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), Part I, Ill. 225; Part II, pp. 176-78, cat. no. 56. It depicts the Virgin and St John the Baptist kneeling below Christ.

[18] See my doctoral thesis, '*The Book of Margery Kempe*: A Study of the Meditations in the Context of Late Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy and Iconography' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2001).

[19] Margery gives a similar list in her interview with Julian: 'sche dede & schewyd hir þe grace þat God put in hir sowle of compunccyon, contricyon, swetnesse & deuocyon, compassyon wyth holy meditacyon & hy contemplacyon, & ful many holy spechys & dalyawns þat owyr Lord spak to hir sowle, and many wondirful reuelacyons' (chap. 18, p. 42, lines 9-14).

[20] *Middle English Dictionary* (hereafter *MED*), ed. by Hans Kurath, Sherman Kuhn, and Robert Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954-), Part M.2, p. 255.

[21] *MED*, Part C.5, p. 555.

[22] *The eygte blessynges of Jhesu Crist, Reliquiae antiquae: Scraps from Ancient Manuscripts, Illustrating Chiefly Early English Literature and the English Language*, ed. by

Thomas Wright and James O. Halliwell, 2 vols (London: William Pickering, 1841-1843; repr. New York: AMS, 1966), I (1841), 39.

[23] John Gower, *'Confessio Amantis'*, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. by G.C. Macaulay, EETS e.s. 81/82, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1900; repr. 1969), II, Book 8, 435, lines 1833-39.

[24] *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (hereafter NCE), 18 vols (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 'meditation', IX, 620.

[25] NCE, 'contemplation', IV, 258.

[26] See Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-27.

[27] Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermo 20.6, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. by Kilian Walsh and Irene M. Edmonds, 4 vols (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971-1980), I (1971), 152. For the Latin text, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum, Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. by J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957-), 1-2 (1957-1958).

[28] Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermo 41.4, *On the Song of Songs*, II (1976), 207.

[29] Cf. Thomas H. Bestul, 'Antecedents: The Anselmian and Cistercian Contributions', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. by William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 1-20 (pp. 12-13).

[30] Richard Rolle, *The Form of Living* in *English Writings of Richard Rolle: Hermit of Hampole*, ed. by Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), chap. 12, p. 117, line 16.

[31] Rolle, *Form of Living*, chap. 12, p. 118, lines 35-42.

[32] Rolle, *Form of Living*, chap. 12, p. 118, lines 46-47.

[33] Rolle, *Form of Living*, chap. 12, p. 119, line 69.

[34] Richard Rolle, *The Mending of Life, or The Rule of Living* in *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, trans. by Richard Misyn and ed. by Ralph Harvey, EETS o.s. 106 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896; repr. Millwood, NY: Kraus, 1973), chap. 12, p. 127, lines 2-7.

[35] *The Mending of Life*, lines 8-10 and 14-15.

[36] See Baker, pp. 29-30.

[37] Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, trans. by John P. H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), Book I, chap. 5, p. 80, hereafter *Scale*.

[38] Baker, p. 31.

[39] *Scale* I, chap. 6, p. 81.

[40] *Scale* I, chap. 7, p. 81. Margery reviews her meditative experience in chap. 87 and recounts that she had 'contemplacyon' in great quietness of soul through long exercise.

[41] 'Ravishen' means 'to transport (somebody into an ecstacy, a vision, contemplation, etc.)'. See *MED*, Part R.1, p. 179.

[42] Windeatt argues that this is the culmination of all the preceding absorption in hearing and practising meditation upon the Passion. See *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Windeatt, p. 163, n. 2212.

[43] According to *MED*, ' haven in meditacioun' means ' to ponder something, contemplate something; also, pray for (the soul of somebody)'. See Part M.2, p. 255.

[44] Instead of using the term 'vision', she sometimes reports that she sees Christ in her ghostly sight.

[45] *MED*, Part V, p. 647.

[46] Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1999), p. 16.

[47] See BMK, chap. 3, p. 11.

[48] See also BMK, chap. 85, pp. 206-08.

[49] NCE, 'visions', XIV, 717.

[50] *MED*, Part D.1, p. 827.

[51] See Cleve, ' "Dalyawns" with the Lord', pp. 12-17.

[52] See BMK, chap. 30, p. 74; chap. 35, p. 86, etc.

[53] See Cleve, p. 20.

[54] *MED*, Part D.1, p. 827.

[55] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 117. *Bl Henry Suso: Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours*, trans. by Edmund Colledge, The Fathers of the Church: Mediaeval Continuation, IV (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 275.

[56] Cleve, p. 21.

[57] *MED*, Part R.4, p. 617.

[58] *MED*, Part F.1, p. 474.

[59] See BMK, chap. 19, pp. 46-47.

[60] As the spiritual nucleus of her existence, her meditational experience affects the way she handles the events of her life in her creative act of recollecting them. See my doctoral thesis.

[61] I am grateful to Marion Glasscoe for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this paper.

Revaluing Vernacular Theology: The Case of Reginald Pecock

Sarah James

Reginald Pecock is the most controversial 'orthodox' theological figure of the fifteenth century. As the bishop of St Asaph he preached in support of absentee and non-preaching bishops in the late 1440s, and as the bishop of Chichester he achieved the dubious distinction, in 1457, of being the only bishop to be formally accused of heresy during the century. The religious, philosophical and educational concerns and convictions which Pecock developed throughout his career are available to modern readers in a number of substantial prose treatises, all those extant being in the vernacular.

In this essay I argue that the study of Pecock's writings challenges two connected and widely held beliefs about religious writing in the fifteenth century. The first of these beliefs is that theological writing in the vernacular was *prima facie* regarded as heretical; the second is that official intolerance of theological debate was widespread and resulted in the decline of vernacular theology into cautious and derivative dullness. Such views have been proposed and elaborated by distinguished medievalists such as Jeremy Catto, Anne Hudson, Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson.[1] Thus on the subject of the use of the vernacular, Hudson suggests that 'by the time of bishop Alnwick's investigations in 1429, knowledge even of the elements of religion, of the creed, the Pater noster or the Ave in English constituted accepted evidence of heresy'.[2] Catto, on the question of official suppression of theological debate, asserts that during the reign of Henry V 'we can see a confident, coherent religious leadership emerging . . . systematic in its attempt to control opinion and establish a measure of orthodoxy'.[3] Dissenting voices have been few; while David Lawton has gone some way to redressing the specific accusation of dullness in English poetry, he notes that in so doing he is attempting to reverse a 'consensus of earlier criticism that saw fifteenth-century English poets as reverse alchemists transmuting Chaucerian gold into Lydgatean lead'.[4] Fifteenth-century prose, especially

theological prose, remains largely unrehabilitated, and the present paper offers an assessment of the small corpus of Pecock's texts with such rehabilitation in mind.

In Section I, I examine the heresies which Pecock abjured following his trial in 1457. I then consider his works more broadly in the light of the supposed dangers of the vernacular and of theological argument mentioned above, and hope to demonstrate that the received opinion of these dangers requires considerable modification.

I

Pecock's biography may be briefly summarised.[5] Born (possibly in Wales) in the late fourteenth century, he was at Oriel College, Oxford, by 1414. In 1424 he received the benefice of St Michael's Church, Gloucester, a position he resigned in 1431 in order to take up the post of Master of Whittington College, London. In 1444 he was provided to the see of St Asaph, and in 1450 he was translated to Chichester. In the autumn of 1457 he was accused of heresy, tried and found guilty; he abjured in December of that year. Other legal processes relating to his trial continued during the following year, and early in 1459 he was confined to Thorney Abbey, where he was deprived of writing materials; he may have died shortly afterwards.

Although Pecock appears to have been a prolific writer, only six texts survive: *The Donet, The Folewer to the Donet, The Poore Mennis Myrrour, The Reule of Crysten Religioun, The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy* and *The Book of Faith*.[6] Dating the texts is difficult, as Pecock was in the habit of working on several books simultaneously and was an indefatigable corrector and reviser. However, a rough chronology can be suggested, attributing the *Reule* to 1443, the *Donet* and *Poore Mennis Myrrour* to the period 1443-49, the *Repressor* to 1449, the *Folewer* to 1453-54 and the *Book of Faith* to 1456-57.[7] Each of the texts survives in only a single manuscript.[8] This is perhaps unsurprising; as a convicted heretic Pecock had to watch the burning of his books at St Paul's Cross in December 1457, and later in the same month there appears to have been a second burning in Oxford.[9] It is quite possible that other, lower profile bonfires took place. However, if a letter subsequently sent by Edward IV to Pope Sixtus IV in 1476 is to be believed, Pecock's writings were certainly not entirely eradicated by actions taken in the immediate aftermath of his trial:

> [A]fter the death of the said Reginald, the writings and treatises composed by him multiplied in such wise that not only the laity but churchmen and scholastic graduates scarcely studied anything else, so that the pestiferous virus circulated in many human breasts.[10]

What is perhaps rather surprising is that the texts which survive are all vernacular; Pecock frequently refers to his writings in both Latin and English, and one might suppose that the vernacular texts would be the very ones which the authorities would most wish to eliminate. Yet one of the manuscripts – that of the *Repressor* – appears to be the actual copy produced for inspection during Pecock's trial, which may suggest that the Archbishop of Canterbury or some other person closely involved with the trial decided to preserve at least some of Pecock's work.[11]

An examination of Pecock's alleged heresy would seem to start most usefully from a review of his abjuration of December 1457, which lists the heresies of which he was found guilty. Pecock appears to have abjured twice, first in Latin at Lambeth on 3rd December, and then in English at Paul's Cross the following day; it is worthy of note that within this second, vernacular abjuration the heresies themselves are recorded in Latin, and read as follows:

> Quod non est de necessitate salutis credere quod Dominus noster Ihesus Christus discendit ad inferos;
> Item, quod non est de neccessitate salutis credere in Spiritum Sanctum;
> Item, quod non est de neccessitate salutis credere in Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam;
> Item, quod non est de neccessitate salutis credere in sanctorum communionem;
> Item, quod Ecclesia vniversalis potest errare in hiis que sunt fidei;
> Item, quod non est de neccessitate salutis credere et tenere quod illud quod consilium generale et vniversalis Ecclesia statuit, approbat seu determinat in fauorem fidei et ad salutem animarum est ab vniversis Christi fidelibus approbandum et tenendum et quod reprobat, determinat seu condempnat esse fidei catholice vel bonis moribus contrarium ac ab eisdem pro

> reprobato et condempnato esse credendum et tenendum. [12]
> [That it is not necessary for salvation to believe that our Lord Jesus descended to Hell;
> Item, that it is not necessary for salvation to believe in the Holy Spirit;
> Item, that it is not necessary for salvation to believe in the Holy Catholic Church;
> Item, that it is not necessary for salvation to believe in the communion of saints;
> Item, that the universal Church is able to err in matters of faith;
> Item, that it is not necessary for salvation to believe and to hold that those things which a general council of the universal Church ordains, approves or determines in favour of the faith and for the preservation of souls, should be approved and held by all of those faithful to Christ, and that those things which it reproves, determines against or condemns as contrary to catholic faith or against good habits, are thereby to be believed and held to be reproved and condemned.]

An examination of Pecock's works in the light of these confessed heresies is, on the whole, a frustrating and rather unproductive experience. Only the first of the listed heresies is unequivocally demonstrable; in his discussion of Christ's redemptive role in the *Donet*, the descent to Hell is omitted:

> . . . he suffrid peynful passioun and hard deeþ vndir pounce pylate, bi departing of his soule from his body, but euer wiþoute eny hurte to his godhede; which body also laie deed in þe supulcre, and was aȝen quykened in þe iije daie to lijf bi aȝen coupling of þe bodi to þe soule (p. 88, ll. 1-5).

In the *Book of Faith* Pecock, using the structure of a dialogue between father and son, debates this point of faith specifically. The questioning son notes that 'þe doctour sutel' – Duns Scotus – considers Christ's descent into Hell to be 'an article of necessarie feiþ'.[13] Pecock in the persona of the learned father disagrees, arguing that this article of the Apostles' Creed did not originate with the apostles themselves. He proves that it was a later interpolation by pointing out that Augustine omits it from his treatise on the articles of faith.[14] Since the article did

not come into existence until after the time of Augustine, Pecock reasons that the requirement to believe in the descent to Hell must arise from some later ruling of the Church. However, just prior to this point in the book Pecock has demonstrated that the Church, while it may introduce new observances, cannot and should not invent articles of faith which are not attested by Scripture:

> [I]t semeþ þat þe clergie ouȝte not induce or constreyne þe oþere peple in [to] bileeue and feiþ of oþer pointis and articlis as vpon þe feiþ of whom is hanging oure saluacioun: þan ben expressid in þe litteral sense of holi scripture (fol. 125v).[15]

Thus Pecock demonstrates to his own satisfaction that belief in the descent into Hell is unnecessary to salvation, and is described as an article of faith erroneously, since it lacks Scriptural grounding. It is notable that while such an argument seems perilously close to Lollard views concerning the primacy of Scripture, his accusers chose not to charge him with holding those views on Scripture himself.

That Pecock was guilty of the second of the listed heresies cannot be confirmed by a study of his extant works; indeed, in the *Repressor* he specifically asserts his belief in the Trinity: 'thre persoones ben oon God' and 'God is iij. persons' (I, 39 and 83). In the *Donet* he discusses the nature of God in some detail:

> God is oon being, oon substance infinite . . . iij persoonys, fadir, sone and holy goost; of whiche persoonys þe first, which is þe fadir, bigetiþ and bringiþ forþ euerlastingli þe secunde persoon, whiche is þe sone; and boþe þe first persoone and þe secunde bringen forþ and spiren euerlastingli þe iije persoone, which is þe holy goost. And þerfore þe fadir is not þe sone, neiþir þe fadir is þe holi goost, neiþir þe sone is þe fadir or þe holi goost. and alle þese bringyngis forþ ben doon withynne þe same substaunce, withynne þe same beyng, and in þe same godhede (p. 85, ll. 4-5 and 9-18).

This understanding of the nature of God seems entirely inconsistent with the suggestion that Pecock did not consider it necessary to believe in the Holy Spirit. Likewise the fourth heresy is also refuted in the *Donet*: 'y bileeue þe comunyng of

seintis or of holy men to be' (p. 104, ll. 4-5). This last reference arises during a discussion of the Apostles' Creed, and although Pecock is prepared to question the attribution of authorship, he has no doubts as to the value of the Creed itself: 'þe crede of þe apostlis ben þe al hool noumbre of alle þo articlis to be bileeuid' (p. 104, ll. 28-30).

The other three heresies abjured by Pecock are perhaps less easily dealt with; Green suggests that they 'may be based on the general tenor of Pecock's thought' rather than on anything specifically mentioned in his writings.[16] Of course, since the extant texts probably represent only a small proportion of his total output, these charges may relate to points raised in texts which are now lost. However, it is possible to identify likely sources for the heresy allegations in the *Book of Faith.*

The third heresy charge may have its root in a rather complicated passage on the nature of belief, arising from the son's assertion that the Apostles' Creed requires Christians to believe in 'þe general holi chirche in erþe' (fol. 89r). The father qualifies this assertion with a distinction:

> [I]t is not oon and þe same forto trowe a þing to be and forto trowe to þe same þing . . . y may and ouȝte bileeue þe feend to be and ȝitt y ouȝte not þerbi forto bileeue to þe feende (fol. 112r).

With this distinction in mind, it is clear that the article of the Apostles' Creed requires no belief 'oþer þan þis þat oon holi vniuersal chirche is and what folowiþ þerof' (fol. 112r); it specifically does *not* require Christians 'forto bileeue to þe holi vniuersal chirche þat is to seie forto bileeue þat þe holy vniuersal chirche seiþ and techiþ trouþe' (fol. 112v). In other words, while it is necessary to believe in the existence of the holy universal Church, there is no requirement to believe in the pronouncements of that Church. Pecock suggests that this article originated as an anti-heresy strategy, intended to suppress the establishment of diverse churches by insisting on belief in a single Church (fol. 113r). The logic of the distinction which Pecock employs is seemingly irresistible, although the conclusion is surely one of the most astonishing at which he could have arrived.

Thus Pecock appears technically to be innocent of the third charge, although it is unsurprising that he should find himself misunderstood; at the same time he does appear to have condemned himself as regards the fifth charge, concerning the Church's ability to err in matters of faith. However, the latter

should be considered along with the sixth heresy, since both relate to the capacity of ecclesiastical authority to err. Again the *Book of Faith* is our starting point, this time at the point where the father suggests that attempts to convert heretics sometimes involve claims that 'þe clergie namelich gaderid togidere in a general counseil may not erre and faile aȝens eny article of feiþ neþer may determyne amys aȝens trewe feiþ'; such attempts are, he believes, doomed to failure 'for þis conclusioun is so vnlikeli to be trewe' (fols 2r-v). Pecock may appear to have convicted himself with such a statement, but it does need to be read in context; for him, 'it is not al trewe þat bi holi men is in parchimyn ynkid', since all men are by their nature fallible (fol. 26v). Thus the Church and its councils are bound to err from time to time, and therefore the Church must always be prepared to examine its beliefs to make sure they are in accordance with the true faith. This examination, if carried out in a properly self-critical manner, would result in the speedy detection and correction of any errors. Even so, the duty of Christians is quite clear to Pecock: 'we owen to bileeue and stonde to sum seier or techer which may faile while it is not knowe þat þilk seier or techer þeryne failiþ' (fol. 3v). So alongside the acknowledgement of the Church's fallibility lies an admonition to Christians to retain their belief in that fallible Church; hence while the fifth and sixth charges of heresy may technically be correct, it is only at the expense of a certain degree of decontextualisation. Kelly takes a rather different view of the *Book of Faith*; he suggests that it is

> a piece of special pleading, an argument specially devised for a particular purpose . . . The whole book is one of those logical exercises dear to the scholastic heart: supposing the Church may err, can we still prove that the laity ought to obey it?[17]

This suggests that the *Book of Faith* is actually an extended exercise in devil's advocacy, rather than a reflection of the beliefs, doubts and questions which Pecock may actually have had about ecclesiastical authority. I am not entirely convinced by this view, since Pecock, far from presenting it as a supposition, makes it abundantly clear that he believes the Church can err:

> [W]hat euer god affeermeþ to be trewe: is nedis trewe. and so trewe: þat it is to be preferrid in credence aboue what þe chirche in erþe and þe chirche in heuen may determyne into þe contrarie (fol. 44v).

Furthermore, the vernacularity of the text may caution us to be wary of ascribing to it such a sophistical purpose. Traditionally such exercises were the preserve of the learned and Latinate, and while, as we shall see, Pecock was prepared to push back the boundaries of vernacular writing, his choice of language was always a conscious decision. Nevertheless, Kelly's conclusion is the same as that which I have suggested: while Pecock may be guilty in the strict sense of having cast doubt on the Church's infallibility, a broader examination of context and intention would reveal that his position is underpinned by a firmly orthodox conviction that the laity should believe the pronouncements of the clergy, whether true or otherwise.

On the basis of the above it appears that only the first of the charges is obviously justified, and at least two are directly contradicted in Pecock's writings, despite his confession and abjuration. We might also note that no direct reference appears to have been made, either to Pecock's use of the vernacular, or to the wider issue of the validity of theological debate. In view of the critical consensus concerning the centrality of these issues in fifteenth-century textual production, these omissions require explanation, and it is to this that I now turn.

II

If we examine Pecock's extant works and his references therein to his other writings, now lost, we can identify two main concerns. The first, which is central to the *Donet*, the *Folewer*, the *Poore Mennis Myrrour* and the *Reule*, is broadly educational; the second, which is addressed in the *Repressor* and the *Book of Faith*, is answering Lollard critique of the contemporary Church and its practices. Although these concerns may appear very distinct, they frequently overlap. Pecock sought to examine and clarify the rules of Christian faith, to codify them and present them in a unified body of writings which would be accessible to ordinary Christians. In embarking on such a project, Pecock was following a practice which had been allowed and indeed positively encouraged by the established Church since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which had formalised the requirement for annual confession. This in turn led to the production of numerous confessional manuals to assist the process. Many theological handbooks in the vernacular followed, including Pecham's Lambeth Statutes of 1281 and Thoresby's Catechism of 1357.[18] After Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions of 1409, however, new projects along these lines may have been of

doubtful legitimacy.[19] Nor was it simply a question of the changing climate of the times; as Kelly notes, even before 1409 vernacular theology was 'expected to be of a dogmatic rather than an analytic kind' (p. 40, n. 2). But there was another more immediate reason for Pecock's undertaking. As academic Wycliffism gradually transformed itself into Lollardy, the education of the laity, specifically with regard to the Scriptures, became a major concern of the heretics. Anne Hudson notes the concern of contemporary churchmen that Lollards were operating 'schools and conventicles', and there is some evidence to suggest that the Lollard emphasis on the authority of Scripture at times resulted in surprising levels of literacy.[20] In his role as defender of orthodoxy, Pecock realised what many of his contemporaries apparently did not – that if Lollards were busily engaged in the education of converts to their own heretical beliefs, then the ecclesiastical establishment should be equally busy educating orthodox believers and those already tempted by and/or practising heresy. Thus in his four 'educational' texts he was concerned with preventing the spread of heresy, while in the two more polemical works he hoped to cure those already 'infected' with Lollardy.

In order for his project to succeed, certain conditions were required: Pecock needed to address the problem of language, and he also needed to establish a structure and style which would best fit his didactic intentions. The linguistic choice, of course, was between Latin, the traditional language of theological discourse, and the vernacular, which has since come to be regarded as *prima facie* evidence of heresy. In fact Pecock had recourse to both Latin and English for his texts, and it is clear that the decision to use the vernacular for any given work was a conscious one; it is equally clear that he recognised that such decisions were likely to be challenged. In the *Folewer* he offers a rather curious justification for discussing the use of Common Wit in the vernacular:

> Certis, þis mych wolde not y haue write here in lay tunge, ne were þat y hope þis present book schal be translatid into latin tunge; And parauenture, if y schulde abstene me here now fro writyng herof in lay tunge, y schulde neuer write it, neiþer in lay tunge neiþer in latyn tunge (p. 29, ll. 31-36).

This odd passage suggests that Pecock recognised a distinction between topics suitable for discussion in the vernacular and those more appropriately addressed in Latin. Nevertheless, this would not prevent him treating the latter in English, if

the alternative was not to write about them at all. Yet this apparent reasonableness glosses over what is rather a radical practice; Pecock chooses to produce this 'learned' material in English first, and only later, if at all, will he translate it into Latin.

In the prologue to the *Reule of Crysten Religioun*, Pecock offers a different justification for using the vernacular; here it is not the subject-matter but the intended audience which determines the language he will use:

> If eny man wole aske and wite whi þis present book and þe bookis to hym perteynyng y make in þe commoun peplis langage, herto y answere þat þis present book, and alle oþere bookis to him longing maad in þe comoun peplis langage, ben so maad principali forto adaunte, rebuke, drive doun and conuerte þe fonnednes and þe presumpcioun of ij soortis of peple (p. 17).

The two sorts of people Pecock has in mind are those who rely for religious authority entirely on vernacular versions of the New Testament, and those who also accept other vernacular writings, which Pecock regards as 'teching vnsauerily, vnseemely, vnformaly, rudely, boistoseli, vnsufficiently, suspectly . . . vntreuly and perilosely' (p. 18), as authoritative – in other words, the Lollards. A third group of people will also benefit from reading his works: 'weel disposid men of þe lay partie' will receive doctrine from them and will be stirred to greater devotion to God and his laws (p. 19). These three categories of target audience confirm Pecock's twin objectives of answering Lollardy and providing orthodox Christians with instruction suited to their needs. The lack of instruction for the orthodox is detrimental to faith, and 'dooth miche sorow among simple lay peple, yuel lad forth bifore and wors confermed bi a wickid scole of heretikis, which is not ȝit al quenchid' (*Repressor*, I, 44). So Pecock calls for a 'schort compendiose logik . . . [to be] deuysid for al the comoun people in her modiris langage', enabling people to understand formal arguments and to recognise when conclusions follow and when they do not (I, 8). This is consistent with Pecock's belief in the importance of reason, a point to which I shall return later.

As we have seen, the education of laymen had a long and orthodox history, but it did also have certain unforeseen consequences. The most dangerous of these in the eyes of the established Church was the increased production of vernacular texts on theological matters, an increase which Arundel's 1409

Constitutions sought to contain. However, the example of Pecock should encourage us to consider the question of the relationship between heresy and the vernacular more closely. If the arguments of Hudson, Watson and others are correct, Pecock's extensive use of the vernacular would appear to be an obvious and amply-attested example of heresy. Hudson suggests that Arundel's seventh Constitution, banning the unauthorised translation of Scripture into English, was extended in practice to cover all theological writing in the vernacular, while Watson argues that fifteenth-century vernacular theology is restricted by the Constitutions primarily to translations, and is cautious and limited in scope.[21] Yet at no point in Pecock's trial is there any evidence that his use of the vernacular in itself was questioned.

Hudson suggests that a consciousness of the dangers of the vernacular arose as early as the 1380s; the first mention of Wycliffite writings in English as well as Latin appears to date from 1388.[22] From this starting point debate continued until, in 1409, Arundel issued his Constitutions (drafted two years earlier), which clearly demonstrated the importance of the vernacular to contemporary conceptions of heresy. Hudson concedes that scholars might be overestimating the connection between heresy and the vernacular, but concludes that this is unlikely. She offers the case of Pecock as proof of such a connection: 'If lollardy were to be refuted, then Pecock conceived that it could only be refuted by means of the medium the heretics themselves used, the English language'.[23] She cites the evidence of Thomas Gascoigne to demonstrate that the use of the vernacular was the reason for Pecock's downfall.[24] However, while we have already seen that Pecock did indeed use the English language specifically for its impact on the Lollards, the charges laid against him make no mention of his choice of language. This may suggest that he is not the best possible subject to demonstrate Hudson's point. Furthermore, while Gascoigne certainly has strong objections to Pecock's use of English, he does not seem to me to provide compelling evidence that use of the vernacular was the main concern of those who initiated action against Pecock:

> [E]t magnae causae movebant clericos et dominos temporales *multum contra eum, sc. quod scripsit altas materias, i.e.* profundas, in Anglicis, quae pocius abducerent laicos a bono quam ex vero simili plures ducerent ad bonum.[25]
>
> [And great causes stirred many clerks and temporal lords against him, for instance that he wrote high, that is, weighty,

> matters in English, which rather led lay people away from good than led a like number to good.]

Where does this leave our examination of links between the vernacular and heresy? Certainly in the case of Pecock the authorities chose not to raise the question of his use of the vernacular, even if they considered it important.[26] Of course, this is not to suggest that there was never perceived to be a connection between heresy and use of the vernacular, but caution needs to be exercised when relying upon such a connection. While it may have been of great importance, for example, at the start of the century, or in the diocese of a particular bishop, it is quite possible that it became less so over time, or under a different bishop. We may also need to reconsider Hudson's assertion that the seventh Constitution was interpreted more widely than its terms suggest; while in some circumstances the authorities may have extended the idea of Scriptural translation to include all theological writing, however mundane, the evidence of Pecock's works indicates that this was certainly not the case by the mid-fifteenth century. In addition, we should remember that the Constitutions prohibited *unauthorised* Scriptural translation rather than Scriptural translation *per se*; one of the great early-fifteenth century vernacular theological works is Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (1410), a text which contains translations of passages from Scripture and extensive biblical commentary. This text appears to have gone through a process of approval by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and may even have been produced for the specific purpose of establishing such an approval procedure.[27] Thus we should be wary of jumping to any conclusions based on a writer's use of the vernacular, without a close consideration of other circumstances affecting the text's production.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that the use of the vernacular made Pecock's works available to a much wider audience than would have been the case had they been written in Latin, and that those works contained within them references, sometimes very detailed, to heretical beliefs. Pecock's intention, as we have seen, was to defeat the Lollards by comprehensively answering their arguments in a language they could understand, but this method could prove to be a double-edged sword. If heretics could read the *Repressor* and see their arguments defeated, orthodox Christians could also read the book and learn more about Lollard views. The linguistic accessibility required to convert heretics might also serve to create them. Thus this particular example of the use of Lollard techniques against Lollardy itself proves to be extremely problematic in practice.

The fact that the list of heresies appears in Latin in the English abjuration demonstrates that this possibility was not lost upon the ecclesiastical authorities; they had no wish to hear Pecock repeat his allegedly heretical tenets in a language which could be understood by most of the people present in the crowd.

III

The structure which Pecock favoured for his educational project was that of dialogue or debate; of the six extant texts, five are in the form of a dialogue between a father and son, while the sixth, the *Repressor*, utilises a structure of argument and counter-argument that has much the same effect. The heretical possibilities opened up by the use of the dialogue form are considerable, and Pecock is conscious of its dangers; in the *Book of Faith* he seeks to protect himself from possible detractors:

> Also siþen y haue chose forto make summe of my bokis in foorme of a dialog bi togider talking bitwixe þe sone and þe fadir. y wole loke aftir þat þo bokis haue þe fauour which such dialogazacioun or togider talking and clatering ouȝte haue and may haue. which fauour perauenture sum hasty vnconsideres schulen not aspie. and schulen þerfore perauenture þe soner impugne (fol. 9r).

It is worth pausing to consider this passage for a moment. Pecock characterises his preferred structure as 'dialogazacioun or togider talking and clatering', a series of descriptions with an unusually suggestive semantic range. 'Dialogazacioun' is a neologism, a recognition by Pecock that the vernacular lacked a precise term for the process he had in mind.[28] Its novelty would surely have struck a contemporary reader; it appears to suggest that these texts will offer something different, something never before seen. 'Togider talking' is much more neutral, whereas 'clatering' is quite definitely a pejorative term.[29] It may seem odd that Pecock should introduce such a negative term into his self-justification (the *MED* compilers certainly appear to have been troubled by it), but I believe that this is precisely the point. It is not only 'dialogazacioun or togider talking' but also 'clatering' which 'ouȝte haue and may haue' his readers' 'fauour'. For Pecock, vain, foolish and even heretical arguments should be discussed just as much as those of

established orthodoxy, if only that they may be refuted. But the peculiarity of the passage extends further: 'ouȝte haue' suggests that such 'fauour' is denied, a position which we might expect given Arundel's eighth Constitution, which forbids the repetition of heretical views, even if they are repeated only for the purpose of refuting them.[30] Yet 'may haue' appears to indicate that there is in fact no prohibition in place. Thus this passage renders problematic the assumption that the fifteenth-century authorities would not tolerate theological debate.

It is in the *Repressor* – the book which owes least to the outward form of dialogue – that Pecock is most in need of his readers' 'fauour', because it is in that text, highly controversial in subject matter, that he loses the protection afforded by a hypothetical questioner. Instead of the enquiring son (who in the other books rarely ventures into doctrinally problematic territory), Pecock goes directly to the arguments of the Lollards themselves, setting them out in full before refuting each of them. The book is structured around eleven 'gouernaunces' for which members of the clergy are blamed by the 'comoun peple' (I, 4); these 'gouernaunces' include the use of images in worship; pilgrimages; clerical ownership of property; and the religious orders, all of which were criticised by the Lollards. Thus, for example, we find Pecock rehearsing a series of fifteen arguments against images and pilgrimages. The first of these notes that images are often justified as 'reminding' signs, but points out that Scripture is itself such a sign, and a much better one (I, 191-92). In response to the counter-argument that images are books for the unlettered, there is an uncompromising proposal for reform: 'It myȝte be ordeyned that alle men and wommen in her ȝongthe schulden leerne forto rede writingis in the langage in which thei schulden lyue and dwelle' (I, 192). The third argument is similarly forceful. It is wasteful to expend greater cost and labour on a less perfect thing than on a more perfect thing, and an 'vnquyk stok or stoon' is less perfect than a 'lyuyng man' (I, 193). The list of arguments develops until it is difficult to remember that these are positions which Pecock intends to argue *against*, and the sense of confusion is exacerbated by the absence of even the thinly characterised 'son' to pose the questions and remind us which side is 'right'. As is the case in other texts with a more formal dialogic structure, the very structure designed to refute the views of heretics necessarily provides a space within which those views are allowed to be aired freely and comprehensively.

In the midst of such confusion it would be easy for a reader, particularly one already unsympathetic to Pecock's project, to assume that Pecock was writing in support of Lollard beliefs. Even the subsequent replies to the arguments do not necessarily help; with his characteristic verbosity, love of detail and tendency to

digress, Pecock's explanations can obscure as much as they reveal. The Lollard allegation that some men treat images as though they are gods meets with a lengthy response describing the heathen belief that gods could enter images, the problems of heathen and Jewish reliance on the judgement of reason, the assertion that after Christ all heathens and Jews have only believed in a single deity, and the concession that those who disapprove of images are entitled to do so, as long as they do not hinder those who disagree with them (I, 244-54). The response is certainly not without relevance but requires careful examination and a determination to maintain a grasp of the argumentative thread in the face of numerous distractions, and this is typical of the text as a whole. Yet there is no evidence that the direct recitation of Lollard arguments led to any of the heresy charges which Pecock subsequently abjured. There are no accusations that he denounced images or pilgrimages, disapproved of clerical possessions or the religious orders. Thus it seems that, however confusing the *Repressor* can be and no matter how intrinsically hazardous the dialogue form, Pecock's accusers were able to recognise controversial positions put forward for the sake of argument and chose not to accuse him of heresy merely for repeating the words of others. Given the wording of Arundel's eighth Constitution, this omission is, I think, highly significant. Pecock's methodology in the *Repressor* also casts serious doubt on any suggestion that theological debate, even of highly contentious issues, was effectively suppressed at this time.

Having selected a language and structure best suited to his didactic purpose, Pecock acknowledges that laymen have differing mental capacities and any attempt at their instruction must take account of this; thus a teacher must 'se to þe capacite of þe leerners' and, where necessary, 'tempre his foorme of techyng and his maner of forþ settyng aftir þat þe capacite and receyuabilnes of þe leerners may bere' (*Folewer*, pp. 12, l. 11 and 13, ll. 7-9).[31] To this end Pecock is willing to produce simplified versions of his work for less able audiences. For example, the *Poore Mennis Myrrour* is a simpler and cheaper version of the *Donet*:

> Not wiþstondyng þat I haue maad þe first parti of þe book clepid 'þe donet of cristen religioun' to be of litil quantite þat welniȝ ech poor persoon maye bi sum meene gete coost to haue it as his owne; ȝit, in to þe moor eese of þe persone poorist in hauer and in witt, I haue drawen þis now folewyng extract or outdrawȝt fro þe first parti of þe seid 'donet'.[32]

To aid those unaccustomed to reading complex theological treatises, Pecock offers advice on how to read his works; for example, he acknowledges that the *Donet* contains certain difficulties, and proposes a solution:

> If eny man be discounfortid for hardnes of þe mater or of þe langage [. . .] turne he into þerof þe viij^{e}, ix^{e} and x^{e} chapitris; and aftirward he haue þese seid chapitris red, y truste to god and to þilk reeders resonable will þat he schal receyue into his laboure chereful counfort, him helping, and his drede and dispeir fer awaie putting and banysching (p. 2, ll.17-18 and 21-25).

Further practical suggestions are given elsewhere; in the *Folewer* he advises those who find the start of the book too hard to 'lepe ouer' to the *Reule* until their minds are more capable (p. 14, l. 30). Such a practice is justifiable 'ffor so doon clerkis in dyuynyte, and so þei musten needis do, and ellis in bookis of dyuynyte þei schulden neuer þryue' (p. 30, ll. 14-16). Pecock here appears to be treading on rather dangerous ground, implying that even learned clerks may not understand everything they read, and also drawing a parallel between lay and clerical reading practices. Laymen following his advice are just like clerks, not bound by the tyranny of the page but free to roam through texts at will. Two different types of boundary are thus under threat here. The integrity of the page and indeed the book, with its sequential argumentative structure, is undermined by the reader's exercise of choice as to what he will read, and in what order. At the same time the boundaries between clerical and lay, learned and uneducated, begin to dissolve. Yet the evidence that Pecock actively sought such dissolution of boundaries is ambiguous; indeed, the opposite seems at times to be the case. For example, in the *Book of Faith* he asks his readers to read the whole book before arriving at any conclusions about it, because 'y drede hasti iugementis' (fol. 6v). He asks that

> [. . .] erring persoonys take longe leiser forto sadli and oft ouer reden þo bokis vnto tyme þei schulen be wel aqueyntid with þo bokis [. . .] and not forto haue in oon or ij. tymes a liȝt superficial ouer reding or heering oonly (fol. 5v).

Other authors similarly offer their readers recommendations or instructions on how to read. For example, in the *Miller's Prologue* Chaucer invites those who do

not wish to hear the Miller's scurrilous story to 'Turne over the leef and chese another tale'.[33] By contrast, at the beginning of *The Cloud of Unknowing* there is a clear instruction to read sequentially and completely:

> I charge þee & I beseche þee, bi autorite of charite, þat ȝif any soche schal rede it [this book], write it, or speke it, or elles here it be red or spokin, þat þou charge hem, as I do þee, for to take hem tyme to rede it, speke it, write it, or here it, al ouer. For, parauenture, þer is som mater þerin, in þe beginnyng or in þe middel, þe whiche is hanging & not fully declared þer it stondeþ; & ȝif it be not þere, it is sone after, or elles in þe ende. Wherfore, ȝif a man saw o mater & not anoþer, parauenture he miȝt liȝtly be led into errour. & þerfore, in eschewing of þis errour boþe in þiself & in alle oþer, I preye þee par charite so as I sey þee.[34]

What we seem to have here is a distinction between different ideas of authorial authority; the *Cloud* author's prescriptive regime contrasts with what we might regard as Chaucer's greater liberalism. It is arguable that Chaucer is in fact adopting this liberal stance as a ploy to tempt his readers, promising them an especially salacious tale under the pretence of warning them away from it. Of course, he is not at this point in the *Canterbury Tales* pursuing an overtly theological project, and this may offer him more latitude to be liberal. For Pecock, however, there is a tension between, on the one hand, a degree of liberalism which his educational aims seem to demand, and on the other, a more prescriptive instinct which seeks to control the reading process in order to ensure that he is understood correctly. Hence the conflicting instructions to read everything but also to skip to other parts of the text, or to another text entirely, if any particular section proves too difficult. But when we examine Pecock's apparent flexibility more closely, it is found to be strictly limited in scope; he does not allow his reader to browse without restraint, but instead seeks to impose an alternative syllabus upon him. Thus, in the passage from the *Donet* quoted earlier, the reader in difficulties is referred specifically to the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters for elucidation; the prospect of reader-controlled study is opened up only to be immediately circumscribed.

While Pecock clearly desires the comprehension of his readers, it is also important to him that such comprehension should not be achieved too easily; in

the *Folewer* he notes that difficult vernacular works will demonstrate to laymen the need for mediation and education by clerks. Indeed, the humbling of readers is another function of vernacular writings, which can cause laymen to be 'tamyd and repressid and chastisid fro pride and fro presumpcioun' (p. 8, ll. 8-9). Thus we can see that there are important conflicts at the heart of Pecock's educational project. He recognises the need for the education of the laity, and for that education to be designed with the varied abilities of different sectors of the laity in mind. He is equally concerned that his exposition of complicated theological matters should be properly understood. Nevertheless, another part of the purpose of such education is to demonstrate the inferiority of the laity, and their dependence on the clergy. That this should be so is not particularly surprising: genuine as his commitment to education obviously was, Pecock was also a clergyman and keen to uphold the dignity of clerical status. Paradoxically, however, lay readers can only become capable of recognising their own deficiencies and the corresponding superiority of the clergy in the process of becoming less deficient – by reading. Thus these texts share a characteristic noted by Ralph Hanna III in a discussion of the Lollard 'Vae octuplex':

> The Englishness of Lollard texts exists [. . .] to destroy the very nature of clericism itself, its claim to be an exclusive form of knowledge and its effort to constitute that exclusivity both linguistically, as Latin itself, and spatially, as a property of the organized learned library [and] reconstitutes learnedness as potentially available to every person.[35]

Pecock seems to be aiming at precisely this effect in his educational works, even as he emphasises the need for the clericism the works themselves are abrogating. Hence his own claims for his work are undermined as he simultaneously attempts to appropriate clerical discourse to lay use, and to mark it off as separate, requiring special training not available to laymen. This self-consuming conflict is never openly articulated in the texts, and remains a potent source of hermeneutic tension.

Having addressed the questions of language, structure and the mental capacities of his readers, Pecock was aware that economic obstacles remained to be overcome if his project to educate the orthodox and defeat heresy was to succeed. We have already seen that he produced the *Poore Mennis Myrrour* as an easier and cheaper version of the *Donet*, but in the *Book of Faith* he proposes a

more far-reaching solution to the problem:

> It is not ynouȝ þat þe few bokis be writen and made and leid vp or rest in þe hondis of clerkis þouȝ fame and noise be made greet to þe seid lay peple of suche bokis and þat þo bokis schulde opene to hem þat þei erren: but þo bokis musten be distributid and delid abrood to manye where þat nede is trowid þat þei be delid . . . prelates and oþer myȝty men of good . . . musten at her owne cost do þo now seid bokis to be writun in greet multitude and to be wel correctid and þanne aftir to be sende and to be ȝouun or lende abrood amonge þe seid lay persoonys where nede is trowid to be (fols 5r-6r).

Such a proposal was not merely fanciful; Pecock was associated with John Carpenter and John Colop, both of whom were involved in the circulation of 'common-profit' books.[36] Carpenter also founded the Guildhall Library in London as part of the Richard Whittington bequests. Pecock was a beneficiary of Carpenter's 1441 will, from which he received twenty shillings. As well as making twenty-five specific book bequests, Carpenter provided that:

> [I]f any good or rare books shall be found among the said residue of my goods, which, by the discretion of the aforesaid Master William Lichfield and Reginald Pecok, may seem necessary to the common library at Guildhall, for the profit of the students there, and those discoursing to the common people, then I will and bequeath that those books be placed by my executors and chained in that library.[37]

Thus Pecock was in a position to facilitate the dissemination of texts which he identified as a crucial element of his educational project, although it is not clear whether he was able to make use of these connections in order to distribute his own writings more widely.

We have seen that neither Pecock's use of the vernacular nor his pursuit of controversial theological debate directly gave rise to allegations of heresy against him. Given that this is so, it may be interesting to consider whether some other factor in his work might have led to those allegations. I therefore turn my attention to another key feature of Pecock's writings – his reliance on reason – to

see whether this can shed any light on his prosecution for heresy, before briefly considering the circumstances which may have resulted in his trial.

IV

Let us now consider Pecock's overtly anti-Lollard works, the *Repressor* and the *Book of Faith*, and the specific methodology he deploys to defeat the heretics. In the *Book of Faith* Pecock identifies two principal causes of error in 'þe lay peple whiche ben clepid lollardis': the first is '[o]uer myche leenyng to scripture and in such maner wise as it longiþ not to holi scripture forto receyue'; the second is '[s]etting not bi forto folowe þe determynaciouns and þe holdingis of þe chirche in mater of feiþ' (fols 4r-v). Pecock considers the removal of these causes of error to be 'þe profitablist labour whiche myȝte be doon', and he notes that he has written the *Repressor* to address the first cause, while the *Book of Faith* is intended to deal with the second (fol. 4v).

In seeking to meet Lollard objections to the established Church, Pecock recognises that it is not enough simply to assert the truth of the Church's teachings, since the Lollards do not accept the authority of the Church:

> [M]anye of þe lay peple whiche cleuen and attenden ouer vnreulili to þe Bible . . . protesten and knowlechen þat þei wolen not fecche and leerne her feiþ at þe clergie of goddis hool chirche in erþe. neiþer þei as for leernyng and kunnyng of her feiþ wolen obeie to þe clergie or to þe chirche (fol. 1r).

Pecock therefore proposes to proceed by appealing instead to reason in order to persuade the Lollards of their errors. Such a strategy was not new; Aquinas also recognised the futility of appeals to Scripture against pagans, since they did not acknowledge Scriptural authority, '[u]nde necesse est ad naturalem rationem recurrere, cui omnes assentire coguntur' ['whence it is necessary to return to natural reasoning, which all people are inclined to approve'].[38] Early in the *Repressor* Pecock outlines a 'doctrine taken schortli out of the faculte of logik' – the syllogism (I, 8). This is crucial to his deployment of the judgement of reason throughout this and his other works, and accordingly he is anxious that people should understand it perfectly:

> Wherfore certis if eny man can be sikir for eny tyme that these ii. premyssis be trewe, he mai be sikir that the conclusioun is trewe; thouȝ alle the aungelis in heuen wolden seie and holde that thilk conclusioun were not trewe. And this is a general reule (I, 8).

With this striking choice of expression Pecock demonstrates that the syllogism is an infallible instrument of truth, and once it has been accepted as such it can be used to test any statement and uncover previously undiscovered truths. This applies as much to matters of faith as anything else, as he stresses in the *Book of Faith*: 'þe leernyng and knowing of ech treuþe and conclusioun of feiþ muste nedis be hadde and gete bi argument which is a sillogisme' (fol. 11v). The wording here is important: Pecock is quite clearly saying, not that syllogisms *may* be applied to faith, but that they *must* be if the Christian is to be certain of the truth.

That Pecock intends to be understood in this way is clear if we examine the early stages of the *Repressor*, which discuss the inadequacies of Scripture as the sole or primary means of establishing the truths of faith.[39] Pecock begins by asserting that Scripture cannot be the sole ground of truth, since it does not define many things pertinent to faith, such as matrimony and usury. The fact that Scripture does not define these things demonstrates that they pre-existed Scripture, and hence are not grounded in it. By contrast, the book of natural reason is 'writen in mennis soulis with the finger of God' and thus must pre-exist and ground every other truth (I, 20). Logically, therefore, wherever Scripture and reason are at variance, Scripture 'ouȝten be expowned and be interpretid and brouȝt forto accorde with the doom of resoun' – not the other way around (I, 25-26). Thus Scripture is not the ground of all truth, although it may bear witness to the truth and exhort men to follow it. This appears to establish the primacy of reason, both by virtue of its pre-dating Scripture and also because it is not man-made but created by God.

However, matters are rather more complicated than this, and reason and Scripture are both equally necessary in establishing truths of faith. God ordained Scripture to witness moral truths of the law of nature, and also to ground articles of faith. Articles of faith must be grounded in Scripture because they cannot be grounded in the judgement of man's unaided reason; divine revelation is required. Nevertheless reason is still implicated in the process, although we need to turn briefly to the *Book of Faith* for the clearest exposition of reason's involvement.

Here Pecock notes that when ascertaining the truth concerning articles of faith, reason is not applied to the causes, effects or circumstances of the said article, but rather to whether God shows or affirms the article to be true; if he does, then the article must be true, since God cannot lie (fol. 16r). Thus even in respect of articles of faith it is possible and indeed necessary to proceed syllogistically.

Returning to the *Repressor* and the counter-argument that reason, being fallible, should be subordinate to Scripture, Pecock replies that all human faculties are necessarily prone to error, but God, being merciful, will forgive us, providing we make the best use of reason that we can, and will accept the will for the deed. As an alternative response Pecock suggests that we should be referring not to reason but to *judgement* of reason, which is expressed in syllogisms – and since syllogisms can never be wrong, judgement of reason must be infallible. A further counter-argument suggests that Scripture is inherently more worthy than reason and should therefore have primacy. Pecock points out that Scripture only grounds articles of faith and not natural law, and since the greater part of God's law is grounded in natural law, it is right that Scripture should accept a subordinate role:

> [A]lle tho trouthis and conclusions Holi Writt takith and borewith out of moral lawe of kinde, and ben not hise as bi grounding, and founding, and prouyng, but oonli bi rehercing, witnessing, and denouncing; and open ynow it is that the grounder and prouer of treuthis is in hem worthier than the rehercer of hem (I, 82).

I have followed this argument at some length because it is important to understand why Pecock gives primacy to reason over Scripture, and also to appreciate that he does recognise limits to the powers of reason in matters of faith. The unadorned claim that Pecock privileges reason may appear shocking until we realise that for him reason is a God-given faculty, that which separates men from beasts and proves that we are created in God's image. Scripture, by contrast, is a man-made entity, existing within historical time and subject to all the limitations of a created thing. So, for example, those who rely exclusively upon the authority of the New Testament are in error, because when the Gospels were written, praising Scripture and recommending its use, much of the rest of the New Testament had not been written (I, 60). How, then, can it safely be relied upon? The logic is indisputable and provides a sound rebuttal of a favoured

Lollard belief.

Indeed, Pecock's methodology has been designed specifically to respond to Lollard arguments in a manner which the Lollards themselves are bound to accept. By positioning the syllogism at the heart of his dialectic he establishes the infallibility of reason and a way of testing that infallibility. The privileging of reason over Scripture in all matters other than those of faith, and the need for the acquiescence of reason even in matters of faith, demonstrates that reason is the prime authority. As reason is the very tool which Pecock will use against the Lollards, this demonstration of its primacy is critical to his chances of success. The fact that Scripture must be interpreted in a manner which is in accordance with reason establishes the fallacy of Lollard reliance on Scripture as the sole source of authority. Thus by a dialectical process not, perhaps, very different from that favoured by Lollards themselves, Pecock is able to present what he must have considered to be an unanswerable argument against Lollard beliefs.[40]

Unfortunately it is an argument as likely to win enemies among the orthodox as among heretics, because while it disposes of the Lollard reliance on Scripture, it does so at the expense of elevating reason to a new status. Pecock himself is aware of the danger of this position and attempts to avoid it by emphasising the layman's need for clerkly mediation:

> Ful weel ouȝten alle persoones of the lay parti not miche leerned in moral philsophi and lawe of kinde forto make miche of clerkis weel leerned in moral philsophi, that tho clerkis schulden helpe tho lay persoones forto ariȝt vndirstonde Holi Scripture (I, 46).

The clerical counsellors should, he stresses, be carefully chosen; poor counsellors are a great cause of heresy (I, 87-89). If learned clerks are unavailable, then he suggests that laymen should read vernacular books, especially those written by himself (I, 47). To be fair to Pecock, such self-recommendation is probably indicative of his genuine belief in the value of his own works, although the publicity may also have been welcome.

Although it is clear that Pecock's reliance on reason may not have endeared him to the ecclesiastical authorities, is there anything in that reliance that could, in mid-fifteenth-century England, be considered heretical? While his apparent down-grading of the status of Scripture seems to carry some taint of heresy, from a purely practical point of view there seems to be little hope of grounding a

charge of heresy in the bald fact that reason is accorded privileged status. For such a charge to succeed it would surely be necessary to examine examples of how reason is applied to theological matters, and demonstrate that these applications give rise to heretical results. Pecock's extant writings suggest that such an examination would offer little scope for accusations against him. Although he asserts that Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with reason, he does not deny the role of divine inspiration in establishing articles of faith, nor does he ignore Scripture as the place divinely assigned for grounding those articles. The evidence of the heresies abjured by Pecock may suggest that his accusers did not find anything specifically related to the primacy of reason which they could formulate into a charge of heresy against him. However, there is another possible reason for their silence on this matter. It is difficult to imagine how the authorities could condemn Pecock for promoting reason over Scripture without appearing to take the opposite view themselves, and privileging Scripture over reason. Yet the assertion of the primacy of Scripture was one of the most prominent characteristics of Lollard belief. Thus by formulating charges against Pecock the orthodox Church might find itself appearing to endorse heretical views. Nevertheless as I now argue it seems clear that this aspect of Pecock's work was particularly unpalatable to those in authority.

The legal process against Pecock appears to have begun with a letter sent by Viscount Beaumont to the king in June 1457, which warns of 'conclusyons labored and subtilly entended to be emprented in mennes herts by pryvy by also unherd meenes to the most pernicyous and next to pernicyon of our faith'.[41] Beaumont has no doubt as to the source of these dangers:

> [T]his pecok this Bisshop of Chichester thurgh presumption and curiosite demed by hym in his own wytte but it soner be extincte and undirstond and by your myght and comaundment to the archiebissop and prelates and doctours examined and yf that be provid so assisted and punished by you (pp. 584-85).

Whatever the real motivation for initiating proceedings against Pecock – a question to which I shall return – it is surely significant that Beaumont stresses his 'presumption and curiosite demed by hym in his own wytte'. Even if reliance on reason is not in itself heretical, it is a habit of mind which is regarded as highly suspicious, the mention of which is likely to stimulate the king to act. That he, or those close to him, did act is of course clear from the ensuing events. The charges

brought against Pecock and recorded in his abjuration do not refer to the question of reason directly, but the thrust of Beaumont's accusation is preserved in the preamble to that abjuration:

> [. . .] I Reignolde Pecok, Bisshop of Chichestre [. . .] confesse and knowlage that I haue before tyme, presumeng of myn owne natural witte and preferring the natural iugement of raison before th'Olde Testament and the Newe and th'auctorite and determinacion of oure modre Holy Chirche, haue holden, feeled, writen and taught othrewise than the Holy Romane and Vniuersal Chirche techeth, preecchethe and obserueth.[42]

This seems to confirm the suspicion that, while the authorities found it either impossible or undesirable to formulate a charge of heresy directly caused by Pecock's reliance on reason, nevertheless that reliance was an aspect of his behaviour which contributed to his downfall.

However, although Pecock did indeed rely heavily on reason, it would not be quite correct to suggest that he had an excessive level of confidence in his own natural wit. While his grand educational project may seem arrogant and his belief in the value of his own works excessive, he is at pains throughout his writing to assure the reader that he is ready to submit to the correction of his superiors. The *Donet*, for example, begins with a lengthy disclaimer:

> [Y] make protestacioun þat it is not myn entent forto holde, defende, or fauoure, in þis book, or in enye oþire bi me writun, or to be writun, in latyn or in þe comoun peplis langage, enye erroure or heresie or enye co[n]clusioun whiche schule be aȝens þe feiþ or þe lawe of oure lord god. and if enye such it happe me to write or offre or purpose or holde, defende, or fauoure, bi enye vnauisidnes, hastynes, or ignoraunce, or bi eny oþire maner, y schal be redi it to leeue, forsake and retrete, mekely and deuoutli, at þe assignementis of myn ordinaries, fadris of þe chirche (pp. 3, l. 20 - 4, l. 4).

He goes on to ask that he be judged, not by his words alone, but by his meaning, 'siþen an errour or heresye is not þe inke writen, neiþir þe voice spokun, but it is þe meenyng or þe vndirstondyng of þe writer or speker signified bi þilk ynke

writen, or bi þilk voice spokun' (p. 4, ll. 9-12). In the *Folewer* he advises his readers that all his conclusions are 'sette forþ bi wey of profre [. . .] and not as for a proof vttirli' (p. 6, ll. 6-7, 18). Later in the same text he asks his readers for their aid in improving his work:

> If eny man schal kunne answere bettir to þese argumentis, or to eny oþire maad, or whiche schal be maad, aȝens my doctrine, y wole preie him forto so helpe myn entent. And if eny man schal kunne correcte and amende or fille my doctrine, y schal preye him of þilk help, and þanke him for it (p. 210, ll. 28-32).

Of course this may be mere window-dressing, an example of rhetorical self-deprecation designed to engage his readers' sympathies, but in view of Pecock's complete capitulation at his trial, including his abjuration of heresies of which he was clearly not guilty, it seems more likely that he was genuinely aware of the contingent nature of many of his conclusions and acknowledged the possibility of correction.

V

It is to the circumstances of Pecock's trial that I now briefly turn. Detailed accounts of the proceedings and the immediate aftermath are available elsewhere, and I will only provide an outline chronology here.[43] In June 1457 Beaumont wrote to the king, urging that action be taken against Pecock. On 22nd October Archbishop Bourgchier wrote to the clergy of Canterbury province, ordering them to cease public denunciations of Pecock as his case was *sub judice*.[44] On 11th November Pecock's books were presented for examination at Lambeth. Pecock abjured his heresies at Lambeth on 3rd December and at Paul's Cross on 4th December. He was absolved and restored to his former state as Bishop of Chichester, and on 13th June 1458 Pope Calixtus III issued a mandate ratifying these actions.[45] In September 1458 Henry VI wrote to Archbishop Bourgchier, declaring that Calixtus's mandate was contrary to the Statute of Praemunire 1353; by the end of the month, the king had ordered that Pecock should be offered a pension if he would agree to resign. By January 1459 this appears to have happened, since Pope Pius II issued a bull appointing John Arundel to Chichester.[46] In April 1459 Pius II ordered an enquiry into Pecock's 'relapse', of

which he had been informed by the King and Queen of England.[47] Some time after this Pecock was confined at Thorney Abbey and deprived of writing materials.[48]

We have seen that the charges brought against Pecock were a mixed bag of the justified, the doubtful and the plainly untrue, yet he confessed to them all. We have further seen that other features of his writings were ignored, even where they may have offered more secure grounds for a heresy charge. The impression made by these curious facts is that of a hastily convened, ill-conceived trial in which the substance of the charges was less important than the fact that they were laid at all, encouraging some commentators to search for political motives behind the action against Pecock. For example, Kelly sees the downfall of Pecock (whose Suffolk connections he takes for granted) as advantageous for the Yorkist party.[49] However, it is difficult to find any proof of a connection between Pecock and Suffolk; furthermore, since Beaumont, whose letter started the trial process, was a Lancastrian and very close to the queen, this seems to indicate that the interest in degrading Pecock emanated from the royal party. Scase suggests that the trial was in fact a reassertion of royal strength over senior clerics, and perhaps especially over the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose promotion to the archiepiscopate took place during the Duke of York's first protectorate.[50] Scase further suggests that 'heresy was linked with the threat of civil disorder and the loss of the monarchy's authority in the minds of Pecock's enemies', and hence it was necessary to act swiftly and decisively to re-establish royal control.[51] This argument is convincing, but I would like to suggest some further explanations for some of the more puzzling aspects of the case.

In June 1457, when Beaumont wrote his letter, the royal party was enjoying a renewed sense of power.[52] The king had joined the queen at Coventry in the autumn of 1456, removing the focus of political authority from London. It seems clear that the queen regarded this as an opportunity to diminish the influence of the Duke of York and the conciliar rule which he represented, replacing it with direct royal authority administered through herself.[53] This may well have appeared an opportune time for a reassertion of royal power over the clergy, particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury, and perhaps Pecock merely had the misfortune to be a rather controversial bishop in Bourgchier's province.[54] However, the French raid on Sandwich in August 1457 changed everything, as the king returned to London to attend to the national emergency. Some commentators suggest that Henry VI remained the effective political power during autumn 1457, but Watts notes that the business conducted by the Great

Council at this time appears more indicative of a return, albeit temporarily, to a conciliar and possibly even Yorkist regime.[55] Thus although proceedings against Pecock were commenced at a time of royalist ascendancy, by the time they fell to be dealt with the political climate had altered substantially. This may explain Bourgchier's warning to his clergy that they should not denounce Pecock – a measure he was surely not obliged to take, and which may indicate a lack of appetite for the action. Further, it may explain the curious nature of the charges drawn up against Pecock. Most importantly, this could be the reason for Pecock's willingness to confess to heresies of which he was not guilty; aware that the trial was simply the final stage of a political process largely superseded by events, and confident (wrongly, as it turned out) that his confession would have no long term adverse consequences, might he not have been persuaded to co-operate simply to conclude matters? His speedy absolution and restoration certainly suggests that Bourgchier had no significant reservations about his suitability as Bishop of Chichester.

This political interpretation of the circumstances of Pecock's trial may also explain the venom with which he was pursued during 1458-59, as the royal power once again re-established itself against the Yorkists. Having watched their plan for the reassertion of authority over the clergy fail to produce any long-term effects whatever, the royal party appears to have taken up the fight against Pecock once more. As the reversal of political fortunes of the autumn of 1457 was itself reversed over the following year, so it was at last possible to secure Pecock's ruin.

VI

While political motives may well have been highly important in determining Pecock's fate, it cannot be denied that in his writings he had given his detractors ample opportunity to accuse him. What is perhaps surprising is that he continued his career for as long as he did before being formally investigated. This may indicate that the political circumstances were not appropriate for such an investigation prior to 1457, but it is hard to believe that no earlier opportunity had presented itself. More convincingly, perhaps it demonstrates that the ecclesiastical authorities were more willing to tolerate both the use of the vernacular and the expression of diverse opinions at this time than has traditionally been supposed. After all, during the preaching controversy of the late 1440s Pecock certainly had many opponents, but he was given the opportunity to explain his position to

Archbishop Stafford and no further action appears to have been taken.[56] Furthermore, there is no indication that Archbishop Bourgchier would have been anxious to institute proceedings against Pecock, had it not been for the exertion of royal influence. We might speculate that Bourgchier would in fact have had some sympathy with Kelly's view of Pecock's works: 'In all this there is little that is strikingly novel, nothing that is heretical, though there is much that might be the subject of theological disputation'.[57] Kelly is too sweeping in his assessment; there are certainly elements of Pecock's writings which are technically in contravention of Arundel's Constitutions. But it is noteworthy that the mid-fifteenth-century ecclesiastical hierarchy was in no rush to accuse him, either because it acknowledged the value of debate upon theological matters, even in the vernacular, or, in the case of Pecock's privileging of reason, because it found it impossible to formulate a heresy accusation which would not reflect badly upon itself.

Thus Pecock's writings indicate a level of toleration of the use of the vernacular, and an acceptance of analytical discussion of theological matters, which may surprise us. Pecock's aims, and the methodology he adopted in order to achieve them, betray indebtedness to the very heresy they were designed to destroy. His ideal of education was shaped in response to the Lollard emphasis on the same thing, and his choice of language was a concession not only to lay people generally, but more specifically to Lollard resistance to the use of Latin: he could not hope to reach them unless he employed their own favoured medium. His appeals to the primacy of reason, while on one level opposed to Lollard veneration of Scripture, nevertheless might also seem to give countenance to the Lollard emphasis on the possibility that each lay person could arrive at his own understanding of matters of faith, without the need for clerical mediation. The use of the dialogue form, and the elaborate argumentative structure of the *Repressor*, both served to provide a textual space within which Lollard opinions could be expressed, perhaps in greater detail and with more consistency than would have been possible even for some Lollard polemicists.

Pecock was writing in this way over a period of some fifteen years, perhaps longer, before any attempt was made to prevent him, and when such an attempt was made, it appears to have been motivated more by political than doctrinal considerations. This must surely compel us to modify our view of the fifteenth century as a time when the use of the vernacular and engagement in challenging theological debate were not to be tolerated. Even if this were true under some circumstances, for example in the period immediately following the

issue of Arundel's Constitutions, it seems clear that by the early 1440s, when Pecock began to produce his writings, a more tolerant approach was evident among the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The case of Pecock demonstrates that we cannot take for granted a simplistic view of textual production in the fifteenth century; rather, a more discriminating approach is required, which will recognise the fluid nature of the boundary between the orthodox and the heterodox, the acceptable and the intolerable. The current critical consensus needs to be dissolved, so that fifteenth-century vernacular theology can be viewed afresh in its diversity, and released from the bonds of 'dullness' which have bound it for so long.

NOTES

I am indebted to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for funding the research presented in this article.

[1] See Jeremy Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', in *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. by G. L. Harriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 97-115 (pp. 97-98); Anne Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', in *Lollards and Their Books* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), pp. 141-63 (first publ. in *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), 261-83); Anne Hudson, 'Wyclif and the English Language', in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 85-103; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 30-31, 117, 166; Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3-5, 12, 214; Nicholas Watson, 'The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 637-83 (pp. 665, 681); 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.

[2] Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 31. The records of Bishop Alnwick's investigations are printed in *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. by Norman P. Tanner, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

[3] Catto, 'Religious Change', p. 97.

[4] David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH*, 54 (1987), 761-99 (p. 761).

[5] The standard biography is V. H. H. Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945); much useful additional material is to be found in Thomas Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock: A Contribution to his Biography' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Manchester, 1945). For a convenient summary, see Wendy Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, Authors of the Middle Ages 8 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996).

[6] Kelly identifies a further fifty-one works which Pecock refers to as having been, or to be written: Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', pp. 92-152 and Appendix VI.

[7] This chronology makes use of the various suggestions of Pecock's editors. See *The Donet*, ed. by Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS o.s. 156 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. xvii-xviii; *The Folewer to the Donet*, ed. by Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS o.s. 164 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. xvi; *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. by Churchill Babington, Rolls Series 19, 2 vols (London: HMSO, 1860; repr. 1966), I, pp. xx-xxii. Kelly is broadly in agreement with these dates: Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', Appendix VI.

[8] The manuscripts are: *The Book of Faith*, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.45; *The*

Donet, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 916; *The Folewer to the Donet*, London, British Library, MS Royal 17 D.ix; *The Poore Mennis Myrrour*, London, British Library, MS Addit. 37788; *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk.iv.26; and *The Reule of Crysten Religioun*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.519.

[9] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, pp. 102, 108.

[10] *Calendar of State Papers*, Venice, I, no. 451, pp. 134-35.

[11] Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk.iv.26, fol.190v, bears an inscription suggesting that the manuscript was exhibited at Lambeth on 11 November 1457; the dating of the inscription is, however, uncertain.

[12] Pecock's abjurations are preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 789, fols 303^{v}-304^{r}, and are printed in Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, pp. 132-34. All translations from Latin are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[13] Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.45, fol.126r. Duns Scotus discusses belief in the articles of faith in his commentary on Peter the Lombard's *Sentences*; see *Librum Tertium Sententiarum*, distinction XXV, quaestio 1, point 4, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. xv (Paris: Vivès, 1894). I am indebted to Dr Christopher Page for his assistance in locating this and the following reference.

[14] The treatise in question is probably the *Sermo de symbolo ad catechumenos*, which omits the descent to Hell; see *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, vol. xlvi (Paris: Brepols, 1969), pp. 181-99. However, Augustine does mention the descent to Hell elsewhere in his works: see, for example, J. P. Migne (ed.), *Epistola CLXIV*, *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols (Paris, 1844-71), vol. 33, cols. 709-18.

[15] This text has been edited by J. L. Morison as *Reginald Pecock's Book of Faith* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose, 1909). I have been unable to consult a copy of the printed edition, and accordingly references are to Trinity College MS B.14.45. Standard abbreviations are expanded without notice and I have used the manuscript punctuation throughout.

[16] Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, p. 60.

[17] Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', pp. 181-82.

[18] These have been printed as *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth, EETS o.s. 118 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901).

[19] For Arundel's Constitutions see *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, ab Anno MCCCL ad Annum MDXLV*, ed. by David Wilkins, 4 vols (London: [n. pub.], 1737), III, 314-19.

[20] Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 136-37 and 174-84. See also the statute *De haeretico comburendo* (1401), which refers to heretics who 'conventiculas et confoederationes

illicitas faciunt, scholas tenent et exercent' ('conduct illicit conventicles and gatherings, hold and administer schools'): Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae*, III, 252.

[21] See Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', pp. 148-49, and Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', pp. 830-32. It is worthy of note that Watson describes Pecock, along with Capgrave, Bokenham and Lydgate, as 'somewhat marginal' to his discussion, although without explaining why (p. 833).

[22] Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', p. 150.

[23] Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', p. 159.

[24] Hudson, 'Lollardy: The English Heresy?', p. 160.

[25] Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, intro. by James E. Thorold Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), p. 214.

[26] It should be noted that the mandates of the Archbishop of Canterbury (October 1457), Pope Calixtus III (June 1458) and Pope Pius II (April 1459) all mention Pecock's English writings without any suggestion of reproof concerning his use of the vernacular: see Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, Apps. 2/vi, 4/i and 4/iii.

[27] See Nicholas Love, *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition Based on Cambridge University Library Additional MSS 6578 and 6686*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent, Garland Medieval Texts No.18 (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. xxiv-xxv and xlv-xlvi for a discussion of this possibility.

[28] While the word 'dialogue' is well-attested in literature before Pecock, this reference to 'dialogazacioun' in the *Book of Faith* is the only example of the word mentioned in the *MED*.

[29] The *MED* offers three definitions of 'clatering': (a) clattering, clanging; (b) noisy chattering, idle talk or argument; (c) dialogue. But the only citation in support of definition (c) is this very passage by Pecock. The verb 'clateren' from which 'clatering' is clearly derived has definitions ranging from 'to clatter' through to 'to talk noisily or too much' and even 'to betray (secrets), spread (slander)', but there is no suggestion of a positive or even neutral meaning.

[30] The Conclusion reads: 'Quod ne quis conclusiones, propositiones, bonis moribus adversantes, asserat [. . .] etiamsi quadam verborum aut terminorum curiositate defendi possint' ['That no one should assert conclusions or propositions opposing good habits [. . .] even if they are able to be defended with curiousness of words or terms']: see Wilkins, III, 317.

[31] This principle would have been available to Pecock from Boethius. It is both explained and practised by Lady Philosophy in her dealings with the stricken narrator; see *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library 74 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973; first publ. 1918), Book I, V, p. 165; Book II, I, p. 177; Book II, V, p. 199.

[32] Reginald Pecock, 'Poore Mennis Myrrour', in *Donet*, Appendix I, p. 226.

[33] Chaucer, *The Miller's Prologue* in The *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1(A), l. 3177.

[34] *The Cloud of Unknowing and related treatises*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson (Exeter: Catholic Records Press, 1982), p. 1, ll. 22-31.

[35] Ralph Hanna III, '"Vae octuplex", Lollard socio-textual ideology, and Ricardian-Lancastrian prose translation', in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Rita Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 244-63 (p. 246).

[36] See Wendy Scase, 'Reginald Pecock, John Carpenter and John Colop's "Common-Profit" Books: Aspects of Book Ownership and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century London', *Medium Aevum*, 61 (1992), 261-74 (pp. 261-65).

[37] Thomas Brewer, *Memoir of the Life and Times of John Carpenter* (London: Arthur Taylor, 1856), pp. 143-44.

[38] St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, ed. by Ceslai Pera *et al*, 3 vols (Rome: Marietti, 1961), vol. I, I, ch. 2 (11b).

[39] This long and complex section runs from I, 8-104.

[40] For examples of Lollard dialectic see 'Sixteen Points on which the Bishops accuse Lollards' and 'Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards' in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997; first publ. Cambridge, 1978). Somerset appraises Lollard and orthodox dialectic in *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*; for a critique of Lollard practice see Hanna, '"Vae octuplex"'.

[41] *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Report XII, App. ix - The Manuscripts of the Duke of Beaufort, K. G., the Earl of Donoughmore, and Others (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1891), p. 584.

[42] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, App. 6/i.

[43] See Green, *Bishop Reginald Pecock*, pp. 49-69; Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', pp. 201-40; Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, pp. 103-16.

[44] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, App. 2/vii.

[45] *Calendar of Papal Letters*, 1455-64, pp. 76-78.

[46] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, App. 4/ii.

[47] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, App. 4/iii.

[48] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, App. 6/vi.

[49] Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', pp. 193-94. For Suffolk's prominence in the royal household during the 1440s, and his subsequent banishment without trial, see John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 216-54.

[50] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, p. 104.

[51] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, p. 105.

[52] For a detailed study of this period see Watts, *Henry VI*, pp. 331-50.

[53] Watts, *Henry VI*, pp. 335-37.

[54] Archbishop Thomas Bourgchier and his brother Henry, Viscount Bourgchier, were associated with York's conciliar regime: see Watts, *Henry VI*, p. 333, n. 304.

[55] For Henry VI as the significant power during the autumn of 1457, see P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 180-81; for the opposing view see Watts, *Henry VI*, pp. 342-43.

[56] Scase, *Reginald Pecock*, p. 96.

[57] Kelly, 'Reginald Pecock', p. 163.

Language and Regional Identity in the York Corpus Christi Cycle

M. L. Holford

The remarkable series of publications on Middle English associated with Angus McIntosh and his colleagues, particularly the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, has yet to be fully utilized by literary and cultural historians.[1] Not only does the *Atlas* enable a previously unprecedented degree of subtlety and precision in the dialectal analysis of literary and other texts, but it is rich with implications for the study of late medieval social and cultural identities at local, regional and national levels. This article is an attempt to pursue these themes through an analysis of dialectal variation in the surviving civic register of the York Corpus Christi cycle.

Two decades ago the cycle's most recent editor pointed out that 'a detailed study of the language of the York Plays remains to be made',[2] and his comment still holds true, in spite of the availability of the play manuscript in facsimile, and the publication of a concordance to the cycle.[3] This article does not attempt to offer the detailed study that Beadle called for, but aims to explore in detail a hitherto neglected aspect of the manuscript's language: dialectal variation. Not only is this topic central to any discussion of the language of the cycle as a whole, but it relates to several issues of wider importance: the vagaries of late medieval scribal practice; the history of late medieval English; and attitudes to the play cycle on the part of the guilds who produced it and the civic authorities who sponsored and oversaw it.[4]

I shall show that the manuscript's main scribe displays a remarkably inconsistent attitude to spellings characteristic of Northern Middle English, tolerating them for a brief stretch of the manuscript but apparently avoiding them elsewhere. The result is a manuscript significantly less local in character than the guild originals of the pageants would have been. The scribe's erratic behaviour may be related to an ambivalence about local language evident in the

documentary material produced by York's civic administration. It may be possible to distinguish guild and civic versions of the cycle, and to identify the latter as part of a more general project of defining civic identity in opposition to perceptions of the local or regional.

The linguistic context

Language and identity in the late medieval north

Linguistic diversity in late medieval England was usually understood in terms of 'countries'. Such 'countries' might be counties: Caxton, for example, observed that 'that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another', and there are references to the 'rude English' of Kent in the fifteenth century. Linguistic 'countries' could also be regional areas, such as East Anglia.[5] Most commonly, however, Middle English linguistic diversity seems to have been conceptualized in terms of northern and southern English, and linguistic distinctiveness became an important element in medieval ideas of the north. In the early fourteenth century Higden's *Polychronicon*, drawing on William of Malmesbury, referred to what Trevisa translated as the 'scharp, slitting, frotynge and unschape' language of those north of the Humber (*frotynge* being a word that Trevisa used elsewhere with reference to pigs).[6] A distinctive and apparently comic northern dialect is a feature of some early sixteenth-century jestbooks, such as *A Hundred Merry Tales*, whose northern *miles gloriosus* is characterized by his language as well as his *braggadocio*.[7] Not all writers were so hostile, but neutral observations of linguistic variation were also often couched in terms of north and south. A witness in a marriage dispute at York in 1364 was declared unreliable because his manner of speaking varied between southern English, northern English and Scots,[8] and the compiler of material in Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114 (*c.* 1450) apologised for his style as 'umwhile soþeren, oþerwhile norþen'.[9]

The distinction between northern and southern English was made by northerners as much as southerners, and as well as being used to denigrate the north, it could become the focus of regional solidarity. A well-known passage in the religious treatise *Cursor Mundi* (*c.* 1300-25) refers to translation from 'sotherin englis' to 'our aun / Langage o northrin lede'.[10] In a less chauvinistic context, the cartulary compiled by Thomas Anlaby, of Anlaby near Hull, around 1450 included an etymology of the family's name deriving from the situation of

their manor: 'be an lake' or by a lake. Thomas explained that the name was also found in the form *Onlakby*, where '"on" ys southdryn spech'.[11] The natural spelling of the family's name and the name of its seat are, in contrast, recognized as northern: identity is created through the awareness of linguistic difference.

The Second Shepherds' pageant from the play cycle associated with Wakefield provides further suggestive evidence - perhaps particularly significant in relation to late medieval drama - that linguistic distinctiveness could serve as a focus for regional identities. One character's use of southern dialect forms and inflated diction is met by a chorus of disapproval which culminates in the instruction to 'take outt that Sothren tothe / And sett in a torde!'[12] The episode constructs northern language - implicitly, the language of the plays themselves - as an important marker of local identity. This is an emphasis that can also be found in modern critical commentary on medieval drama, such as Mills's argument that 'the local speech-form, like local topographical and contemporary allusions, is a major link between the drama and its community'.[13] As this article will show, however, the situation is rather more complicated.

Dialectal Variation in Middle English

Comments about northern and southern English, and the association of dialect with local or regional identity, are of course not unique to the later medieval period. What is distinctive about this period is the absence of a written standard English, as a result of which linguistic variation is consistently reflected in written as well as spoken English. The details of this written variation were clarified immensely by the publication of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* in 1986.[14] What remains much less clear is the degree to which contemporaries were familiar with the nature of regional written variation, how far tolerance of non-local spellings could extend, or how such questions related to the ideas of northern and southern English outlined above. Some of these issues have been approached through study of manuscript glosses and annotations, of translations between Middle English dialects, and of contemporary imitations of different dialects: particularly the manuscript tradition of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*.[15] Much work remains to be done, however, and the results could cast much light on the issue that has tended to dominate the study of later Middle English: the question of its standardization.

Although it is well known that written linguistic diversity decreased

significantly in the fifteenth century, the causes of this shift are not yet fully clear. An influential essay by M. L. Samuels argued that the language of documents produced by royal administration increasingly functioned as an 'incipient standard' in the fifteenth century, and this position has found a forceful exponent in John Fisher.[16] Sceptics have noted both that the internal consistency and external influence of 'Chancery English' are debatable, and that some writers, such as Capgrave, avoided notable 'provincialisms' but chose to replace them with more widely-distributed regional forms rather than those characteristic of state English.[17] Undoubtedly, the abandonment of regional spellings proceeded at differing speeds, in differing ways and for different reasons, from place to place and from text to text. For present purposes it is perhaps sufficient to observe that such a shift can be widely observed by approximately the second half of the fifteenth century, and not only in texts of a documentary nature.[18] This is the period in which the bulk of the surviving manuscript of the York play cycle was produced.

The York cycle: the production of the manuscript and variations in scribal practice

The text of the York cycle is preserved in London, British Library MS Additional 35290. This manuscript was written by four scribes, two of the late fifteenth century (designated A and B by Beadle) and two of the sixteenth (designated C and D). It is an official civic 'register' of the cycle which was compiled from the guilds' 'original' copies of their pageants; the lengthy period over which the manuscript was copied seems to have resulted both from the dilatoriness of some guilds in supplying their pageants, and from changes in the performance of the cycle itself.[19] Scribe C, who has been identified as John Clerke, 'under-clerk' to the city of York, copied pageant 4 (between 1557 and 1559), part of pageant 7, and pageant 17 (*c.* 1567); and Scribe D copied pageant 46A (*c.* 1559).[20] Between 1463 and 1477 Scribe A copied the opening quire of the manuscript, containing the first three pageants in the cycle, and Scribe B copied the rest of the cycle, including a second copy of the third pageant, that of the Cardmakers. (The structure of the manuscript is summarily set out in Table 2.) It is on the work of this last scribe, responsible for the majority of the manuscript, that the following discussion will concentrate.

It is common to distinguish three types of scribal response to an exemplar

in a dialect that is not the copyist's own: he may (a) leave its language more or less unchanged; (b) translate it into his own kind of language; or (c) do something between the two.[21] Earlier discussions of Scribe B's language have argued that he attempted to reduce the dialectal diversity of his exemplars by translating them into forms that reflected his own linguistic preferences.[22] It has been argued that this parallels his efforts 'to produce a dignified volume of homogeneous appearance, which no doubt befitted the importance of the play in civic eyes'.[23] As a consequence neither the extent of the variation in Scribe B's language, nor its implications, have received the attention they deserve. Before we turn to this linguistic variation, however, a brief discussion of other variations in his scribal practice will be useful.

Layout, decoration and script

Most of the significant variations in the layout, script and decoration of the different pageants have been identified and discussed by Beadle and Meredith. Firstly, there are a number of irregularities in the presentation of the earlier pageants in the manuscript: in the techniques used to separate the speeches of different characters, in the format of character-designations, and in the presentation of pageant-titles.[24] Beadle and Meredith see these irregularities as a reflection of Scribe B's initial uncertainties in finding a suitable layout for his material, and infer both that these pageants were the first to be copied, and that they were probably copied in the order in which they appear in the manuscript.

Secondly, Beadle and Meredith note a number of differences between the presentation of pageants prior to and after the beginning of quire q (fol. 124, the second folio of pageant 26). Most noticeably, rhyme brackets are used in the earlier, but not the later section; there are also differences in the decoration of catchwords, in the layout of the alliterative long line, and in the use of virgules and of speech-rules. However, the layout of pageant 33 (fols. 180r-87v), although it is in this later section of the manuscript, is characteristic of pageants in the earlier section. The most obvious interpretation is that this pageant was copied before the other texts in the later quires of the manuscript. (Curiously, however, pageant 33 does not begin a new quire: it runs from the third leaf of quire z to the third leaf of quire &.) So while the opening pageants suggest sequential copying, it is clear that some parts of the manuscript were *not* copied sequentially.[25]

Beadle and Meredith also comment on Scribe B's script, in which both

Secretary and Anglicana forms of *a* and *r* are used, and *þ* can signify both <þ> and <y>. However, they do not point out that Scribe B's use of *þ* varies noticeably in different sections of the manuscript. At the beginning of scribe B's work, *þ* and *y* are used in their historically correct functions, and continue to be distinguished until pageant 11, with the exception of pageant 8. Thereafter *þ* is used with varying frequency to represent <y> as well as <þ>: *þ* for <y> is very common after pageant 18 and almost exclusive in pageants 21 to 30 and 42 to 47.

The significance of these variations is twofold. Firstly, they indicate that while the opening pageants in Scribe B's section of the manuscript were probably the first to be copied by him, we cannot assume that in the manuscript as a whole the current sequence of pageants reflects the order in which they were copied. Equally importantly, scribal variation suggests that Scribe B was prepared to experiment with altering the format of his exemplars: such alterations, in turn, suggest his developing ideas about the kind of writing and layout appropriate to the cycle register. Both these points, I will argue, hold true of Scribe B's linguistic variation. In fact, variation between *þ* and *y* for <y> has dialectal as well as palaeographic implications. Benskin has shown that the 'correct' distinction of *y* and *þ* is characteristic of southern scribes, while northern and East Anglian copyists use the single character *y* to represent both <þ> and <y>.[26] Scribe B's use of the characters can be understood as a shift from a correct to a 'hypercorrect' use of the letters which, as we shall see, has significant parallels with his attitude to other northern and southern linguistic markers.

Language

The most dramatic variation in Scribe B's language consists of the various spellings of 'shall' used in different sections of the manuscript.[27] We can group these into spellings beginning with *sch-*, with *sh-* and with *s-*. In late medieval English, the first two forms are largely found south of the river Humber, while the third occurs largely north and east of a line from the Wash to Morecambe Bay.[28] In Scribe B's work, *sch-* spellings are most common, but only become predominant from pageant 18; *sh-* spellings appear especially in pageants 3B, 5 to 7, and 16G, and sporadically in pageants 8 to 9 and 14 to 16M; while northern *s-* spellings are either the only or the predominant forms between pageants 8 and 16M, and in pageant 33.[29] (All occurrences of *s-* spellings are listed in table 1.) I shall refer to pageants containing *s-* spellings as a 'northern' group in the cycle.

Middle English spellings of 'should' have a comparable geographical distribution, and are combined with 'shall' on some of the *Linguistic Atlas* maps, although there is evidence that northerly *suld* is less common than *sall*.[30] It is certainly less frequent in Scribe B's output: it appears only in pageants 11 to 13 and 33, and only in 12 and 33 is it more common than *s(c)h-* spellings. *Schuld(e)*, like *schall(e)*, is the preferred form after pageant 18. Pageant 14, as well as lacking *s-* spellings for 'should', shows the first re-appearance of *s(c)h-* spellings for 'shall'. Thus, within the northern group of pageants, it seems that we can identify a 'core' group (11 to 13 and 33) whose regional language is particularly marked.

This is supported by the distribution of other northerly linguistic variants in Scribe B's repertoire. For example *fra* 'from', a spelling very rarely found south of the Humber, is used line-internally by Scribe B only in pageants 9 to 13 and 33.[30] *Twa* 'two', which has a similarly northern distribution, is used line-internally only in pageant 13.[31] Northern *eftir* 'after' is used by Scribe B only seven times, of which six are in pageants 8, 10 and 12.[32] Likewise *bathe* 'both' is used in rhyme elsewhere in the cycle, but appears in mid-line position only in pageants 12 and 13; and *haly* 'holy' is found eight times out of eleven between pageants 11 and 13.[33] A number of other northern spellings also cluster in these pageants. For example, *er(e)* 'are' appears twelve times out of twenty-four in pageants 11 to 13, and a further ten in pageant 33; *walde* 'would' is found thirteen out of eighteen times in pageants 10 to 13 and twice in 33 (once in rhyme).[34]

In summary, the language of pageants 8-16G and 33 is more northerly than the rest of the cycle in a number of respects; there is a decrease in the use of these northerly forms after pageant 13; and northerly forms seem to be concentrated in pageants 11-13. Even in these pageants, however, northerly forms are usually found alongside less local variants. Thus *wolde* 'would' is also used in pageants 10 to 13 and 33, and is, in fact, more common than *walde* in all but pageant 11. Furthermore, one of the occurrences in pageant 33 is in a rhyme sequence (*walde/halde/folde/wolde*) which may suggest that Scribe B altered an originally more northern form.

There are some striking correlations between linguistic and non-linguistic variation in Scribe B's output. The distinctive language of pageant 33 in relation to the later section of the manuscript suggests, like its distinctive layout, that it was copied before the other pageants in the later quires of the manuscript: the appearance of *sulde* and *þ* for <y> associates it linguistically with pageant 12.[35] There is also a correlation between the linguistic change to *sch-* spellings for

'shall' and 'should' in pageant 18 and a marked increase in the use of *þ* for <y>. On the other hand, the dramatic changes in pageant layout from quire q onwards, including the abandonment of rhyme-brackets, are not accompanied by any striking changes in spelling practice. How are we to account for the somewhat incoherent appearance of Scribe B's work?

Explaining variation

There are two ways of explaining either linguistic or non-linguistic variation in the cycle manuscript. On the one hand, it may derive from differences in the guilds' originals which have been carried through into the register; on the other, it may reflect changes in Scribe B's own scribal practice, and thus his developing ideas about the nature of the volume he was compiling.

Some aspects of Scribe B's language do seem to derive from his exemplars. Certain linguistic variants appear only in certain pageants, or are used sporadically throughout the manuscript with no apparent pattern. For example, the spelling *os* 'as' appears in the cycle manuscript only in pageant 8;[36] *ony* 'any', a spelling which is most common in the south-east midlands but is also recorded in more northerly and westerly texts, is found only in pageant 16G.[37] More frequent in Scribe B's output, but still no more than sporadic, are the spellings (largely northern and eastern) *qw(h)-* for 'wh-', which also appear in pageant 8, as well as being scattered elsewhere throughout the manuscript.[38] This kind of variation is most plausibly explained as reflecting the dialectal diversity of the guild originals. Some peculiarities of layout in the manuscript, such as the spaces left for ornamental initials in pageant 12, probably have similar origins.

On the other hand, it seems highly unlikely that the entirety of Scribe B's behaviour can be explained as exemplar-dependent. Aspects of his practice, as we have seen, vary within as well as between pageants and are closely related to the structure of the register itself: most noticeably the changes of layout at the beginning of quire q. It is hardly plausible that the exemplar would have changed so dramatically at exactly that point: instead, features such as the abandonment of rhyme-brackets must reflect changes in Scribe B's own attitudes to the manuscript he was compiling. This is confirmed by a rather careless treatment of rhyme-brackets in the preceding pageant (for example, none are drawn on fols. 118r or 119r).

It could still be the case that Scribe B was willing or able to experiment

with altering the layout of his exemplars, but that he exercised less freedom with regard to their language. It is true that linguistic changes are less clear-cut and absolute than changes in layout. Linguistic variation also seems to occur in relation to particular pageants rather than cutting across them according to the structure of the manuscript. Thus, only pageants 10-13 exclusively use the northern *sall* 'shall', but it is not clear that they form a distinct section in the manuscript. Pageant 10 begins a new quire (d) and a singleton (fol. 47) has been inserted after quire e to receive the end of pageant 12. The insertion of a singleton is unusual for Scribe B: as Beadle and Meredith comment, it gives pageants 10-12 the appearance of a self-contained unit. In linguistic terms, however, this unit is neither self-contained (pageant 13 is linguistically very similar) nor entirely homogeneous (the first appearance of *þ* for <y> is in pageant 12). Nor does the shift away from northerly spellings in pageants 16G and 18 relate to the structure of the manuscript. In 16G, *sall* and *shall* each appear both in quires h and I: the relative frequency of *sall* on fol. 68r most probably reflects only inconsistent translation at the beginning of a pageant. This may suggest that Scribe B's exemplars had a greater influence on his linguistic behaviour than on other aspects of his scribal practice.

However, Scribe B's language cannot be seen as entirely reflecting the various guild originals. There are a number of indications that pageants whose language in the register copies is not markedly regional originally contained more northerly spellings. Occasional northern forms in later pageants – such as the isolated appearances of *sall* in pageants 22, 23 and 28 – may reflect the continued presence of regional linguistic forms in the guild exemplars, some of which escaped Scribe B's translation. The evidence of rhymes, although not always straightforward, is also suggestive.[39] It is important to note that rhymes suggest a good deal of dialectal diversity in the guild originals, including a number of more southerly forms.[40] Nevertheless, many rhyme sequences must at one stage have been based around northern spellings.[41] In the form in which these appear in the register, however, many of these sequences reflect Scribe B's line-internal preferences for less northerly forms. Such sequences may already have lost some of their northerly character in the guild originals, but a comparison of the texts copied by Scribes A and B shows that it is unlikely that Scribe B's exemplars were characterized by the consistent avoidance of northernisms.

The register contains copies of pageant 3 made by Scribes A and B respectively. Scribe A's language is of a more northerly aspect than Scribe B's and it is noticeable that he preserves some northern rhymes that Scribe B changes (B:

is/liknesse; A: *es/liknes*; B: *broode/made*; A: *brade/made*; B: *where/more* A: *whare/mare*). Given that Scribe B's copy of the pageant uses *is* and tends to avoid *a* spellings of ON, OE ā (*gost*, Scribe A *gast*) and other northerly spellings such as *warlde* (Scribe B *worlde*), it is likely that Scribe A's copy of the pageant is generally closer to the language of the guild original.[42] We may draw two important conclusions from this comparison: Scribe B's language cannot be assumed to be derived from the language of his exemplars, and he may have had a southerly rather than northerly idiolect or 'spontaneous usage'.[43] This reasoning presumably lies behind the terse comment in the *Linguistic Atlas* that the language of Scribe B is 'apparently from considerably far S[outh] of York.'[44]

In summary, although some elements of linguistic variation in Scribe B's output probably reflect the diversity of his exemplars, the broader linguistic groupings in the manuscript which have been identified above seem more likely to derive from an inconsistent policy of scribal 'translation'. As we saw above, pageants 3B and 5 to 7 share certain similarities of layout and were probably the first group to be copied. Comparison with Scribe A's copy of pageant 3 suggests that Scribe B diluted the northerly language of these texts. Having decided on a standard format around pageant 7, however, the scribe also seems to have adopted a different approach to the language of the pageants he was copying. This involved, at least initially, an abandonment of the translation he had attempted in the earliest pageants. Pageants 8 to 16M and 33 are distinguished from the rest of Scribe B's work in containing a large number of northern spellings; in particular *s-* spellings of 'shall' and 'should' as opposed to less regional spellings with *s(c)h-*. Pageants 8 to 9, 14 to16M, and 16G contain varying proportions of *s-* and *s(c)h-* spellings and mark transitional stages in Scribe B's linguistic behaviour, while pageants 10 to 13 are particularly northern in character. It may even be that the originals of these pageants were at one stage less northerly than the surviving versions.[45]

This group of pageants also witnessed a significant change in Scribe B's script. In pageant 11 he ceased to distinguish consistently between *þ* and *y*, but rather than adopting the northern convention of writing *y* for <þ>, he used *þ* with increasing frequency for <y>. This becomes particularly marked in pageant 18, where the *sch-* spellings that are to predominate in the later parts of the manuscript first become common. It may be that Scribe B's understanding of *þ* and *y* was disturbed by the occurrence of *y* for <þ> in his exemplars: what can be

described as hypercorrection in his later use of *þ* seems to relate to his decreasing tolerance of northern spellings. This may have resulted from a general shift in the exemplars themselves – we need to remember that Scribe B's work may have taken place over as long as fourteen years – although we have seen evidence that the language of guild exemplars remained northerly in at least some respects. After pageant 18 there is a relative consistency about Scribe B's language, although he continued to alter other aspects of his exemplars, such as their layout, and continued to vary in his use of *y* and *þ*.

Within this series of broad changes the sequence of individual pageants is not always clear. We noted above, for example, that pageant 8 is uncharacteristic of earlier pageants in its use of *þ* and *y*. The suggestion that it was written after its neighbours might be supported by some clear differences in the handwriting between pageant 8 and pageants 7 and 9; by the lack of any decoration around the catchword on fol. 22v; and by the undecorated speech rules used in pageant 8. Several of these factors combine to associate pageant 8 with pageants 12-14.[46] An analysis of the manuscript's language may, then, help us to understand the manner in which it was compiled; but such analysis also raises wider implications.

Civic language, guild language, and regional language

As some earlier scholars perceived, northern linguistic forms are almost conspicuous by their absence from Scribe B's work, but this absence is not total or complete. Over forty folios of the manuscript are characterized, to a greater or lesser degree, by northern forms. Clearly, Scribe B was familiar with and to some extent tolerant of such spellings, which must have continued to occur in his exemplars. In the final section of this paper, I shall suggest a context in which his erratic linguistic practice might be placed.

The cycle manuscript was produced for York's civic authorities, probably as part of the increased civic vigilance over the production of the cycle that developed in the later fifteenth century.[47] Although there is no evidence that it was produced by a civic scribe, it is similar in some respects to contemporary civic registers of documentary material. In contrast to the manuscript of the Towneley cycle, with its continuous, largely unannotated text and elaborate strapwork decoration, the York register is, like the city's records, a working volume, with running titles used for ease of reference, blank space for potential additions, and a good deal of later annotation.[48] The first reference to the

manuscript in the civic records (in 1527) makes it clear that it is the responsibility of a civic official, the common clerk, and describes it as a *registrum* – the term used to denote the city's other volumes of record.[49] Likewise, the copying of pageants into the manuscript was known as 'registering', and the entry of documents in other record books was described in the same way.[50] Furthermore, two of the sixteenth-century pageants, and many of the annotations in the manuscript are the work of John Clerke, who also wrote many contemporary civic records.[51] The civic associations of the manuscript are therefore clear, and may shed light on the language of its principal scribe. For while the inconsistency of Scribe B's 'translation' of his exemplars is difficult to parallel in other literary manuscripts,[52] it shows some similarity to the linguistic behaviour of York's civic scribes in the fifteenth century.[53]

Middle English material in the surviving fifteenth-century York civic registers may be roughly divided into three periods.[54] Documents copied at York in the 1420s and 1430s, the work of at least five different scribes, use northern forms such as *sall*, *suld*; *bathe* 'both', *fra* 'from', *alde* 'old'; present participle *-and*; *mykill* 'much', *swylk* 'such', *whylk* 'which.'[55] By the mid-fifteenth-century (*c.* 1443-*c.* 1467), certain of these northern forms have been replaced – for the most part – by more widespread variants: for example, *shall* instead of *sall*, *fro* instead of *fra*, *-ing* instead of *-and*. The replacement of other northerly forms is more erratic. From the mid-fifteenth century, *such* is preferred to *swilk*, but *mykill* 'much' continues to be used. Indeed, both *ilk* 'each' and *mykill* continue to be found in documents from the later fifteenth century (1470 onwards).[56] This group of documents is, in fact, marked not by any greater avoidance of northern forms, but rather by a significant increase in the use of forms of restrictedly southern distribution, such as *eny* 'any', *nat* 'not' and *tofore* 'before' (usually as a preposition).[57] In fact, even what seem to have been strongly-marked northern forms do not die out completely: a few entries in the 1490s contain the present participle in *-and*, and a contemporary scribe (perhaps the common clerk Robert Plumpton) used *suld* and *sal* as well as *shuld* and *shall*. But by the end of the fifteenth century such spellings are unusual, and occur in entries whose language has lost regional colour in many other respects.[58]

This is a brief summary of a difficult body of material whose analysis is not straightforward. A large number of different scribes are involved, all with rather different linguistic preferences. In the later part of the fifteenth century no scribe's work can be followed for long enough to observe changing usage, as is possible, for example, with some of the Paston correspondents.[59] Linguistic

change cannot be shown to result from individual decision-making, but must be extrapolated from the output of several scribes, about most of whom little or nothing is known. However, the persistence of certain regional spellings in the records seems to indicate that the changes in the records' language are not due to the recruitment of less regional clerical staff (although this in itself would be of considerable interest), but to a deliberate attempt on the part of scribes to avoid what must sometimes have been their spontaneous usage in favour of less regional spellings. This hypothesis is supported by the occasional appearance of even marked dialectal forms, and by occasional corrections of regional to less regional forms.[60]

The evidence suggests, then, that by the mid-fifteenth century, York's civic scribes were uncomfortable with what have been described in a comparable context as 'old fashioned and provincial spellings'.[61] The intensity of this discomfort, as well as the linguistic features with which it was associated, evidently varied from person to person, as did the spellings which were adopted as substitutes. Nevertheless, we can infer that in the second half of the fifteenth century York's administration was characterized by uncertainty – and perhaps anxiety – as to what linguistic forms were appropriate for civic documents. The argument that the late-fifteenth-century York House Books are 'still written in a gritty Northern speech, full of dialect words . . . [and] of expressions obsolete in the south', with its implication of civic solidarity with regional language and indifference to standardizing pressures, is a serious over-simplification.[62]

There are a number of differences between the language of civic documentary material and the language of the cycle register. The proportion of northerly forms in the latter is generally greater than in the former, and some forms which appear to have been highly salient to the scribes of the registers seem to have been less marked to Scribe B. The most noticeable is the formation of the present participle in *-and*, which is hardly found after the early fifteenth century in the civic registers.[63] Although Scribe B's 'spontaneous usage' (to judge from the headings to some of the earlier pageants on fols 11r, 16v and 19r) was to use *-ing*, he seems to have had no compunction against reproducing the more dialectal form. Furthermore, whereas the civic scribes move, more or less steadily and consistently, from regional to less regional forms, Scribe B seems to have begun his work by avoiding northern forms, to have tolerated some of them for a while, and then to have avoided them again; in contrast to the hypothetical city clerk anxious to avoid the provincialisms of his 'spontaneous usage', Scribe B's spontaneous usage may have been for southerly rather than northerly forms.

Nevertheless, the civic administration's discomfort with northern Middle English, combined with its uncertainty as to precisely which linguistic features were to be avoided as provincial or imitated as prestigious, provides a suggestive context for Scribe B's inconsistent linguistic 'translation'.

Explanations of Scribe B's linguistic behaviour can only be hypothetical in the absence of biographical information or the identification of other manuscripts copied by him. But whatever the explanation, it is striking that much of Scribe B's work is distinguished by the relative absence of regional language. A connection between this absence and the civic associations of the cycle register seems to be supported by the only surviving non-civic text of a pageant, a copy of the guild 'original' of the 'Incredulity of Thomas' (pageant 41) dated *c.* 1525-50.[64] The language of the guild manuscript is in some respects less regional than that of Scribe B: for example, the present participle is formed with *-yng* rather than *-and*. The considerably later date of this manuscript must go a long way towards accounting for these and similar differences.[65] Despite its later date, however, the manuscript uses the spelling *suld* (l. 136). The presence of this northern form, so rare in Scribe B's work as to suggest that he avoided it assiduously in most of the register, provides further evidence that careful attention to spellings may be seen as characteristic of the civic rather than the guild versions of the cycle.

This seems to be born out by later additions to the register. It is true that the fragmentary pageant 46A, perhaps copied as late as 1559, contains a number of northerly spellings including *sulde*.[66] However, this must be balanced against the significantly more numerous sixteenth-century annotations which are concerned with decreasing the northerly language of certain pageants. Particularly striking is the treatment of pageant 8, where not only spelling (*lang*, *strang* changed to *long*, *strong*) but vocabulary (*must* substituted for *bus*) have been corrected. Pageant 46A demonstrates that the consistent avoidance of northerly language in the cycle manuscript was not natural or inevitable, even by the mid-sixteenth-century. Nevertheless, the sixteenth-century history of the manuscript tends to confirm and continue the avoidance of certain regional spellings initiated by Scribe B.

Where do we stand in relation to 'local speech-forms' and 'the drama and its community'? The language of the surviving texts can tell us little if anything about the dialect of the cycle in performance. What the texts do suggest, though, is a distinction between guild and civic attitudes to the language of the plays.

While the evidence is complex and rarely susceptible to dogmatic interpretation, the discussion above has shown that the civic copy of the cycle is characterized by relatively careful awareness of the language of the pageants, and by attempts to impose a certain uniformity on this language while reducing its regional colour. This process parallels those concerns with aspects of the pageants' presentation which have received more scholarly attention. On the other hand, both the cycle manuscript and the surviving guild text indicate that the guild originals of the pageants were not subject to such close scrutiny of language or layout, and must have continued to be characterized by much northerly language. We need to recognize that 'the drama and its community' were not monolithic, and that the cycle may have meant rather different things to the various institutions involved in its production. While the presence of local language in guild versions of the pageants is ambivalent in its implications, the widespread *avoidance* of such language in the civic copy does suggest that the identity of the civic oligarchy, in the cycle as elsewhere, might be constructed precisely against and in distinction to the region of which York was often seen as the capital.

This is not, perhaps, the conclusion one would expect to have reached, having begun with the celebration of local language implicit in the Towneley cycle: much of which, after all, derives directly from York. In fact, however, the Towneley manuscript poses exactly the opposite problem. We have already noted some of the ways in which its layout and presentation are more formal and lavish than the York register. Trusler pointed out that its language also 'shows much greater consistency and uniformity of usage than does York',[67] and despite the protests against Mak's 'southern tooth', its spellings are in many ways less regional than Scribe B's later usage. For example, Scribe B continues to use forms like *swilk* for 'such', whereas the scribe of the Towneley manuscript only uses the northerly *slyke* in rhyme, preferring to write *sich* elsewhere.[68] While Scribe B mostly preserved the dialectal inflection of the present participle in *-and*, the Towneley copyist consistently used *-ing*, again only keeping *-and* where it was required by rhyme. Why should a manuscript associated with a relatively minor urban community such as Wakefield be less regional in its language than one produced in York?

The question is difficult to answer because there are no surviving records from Wakefield which clarify the context of the Towneley manuscript's production. Its date and original ownership are both uncertain. The tendency of recent scholarship, however, is to date the manuscript relatively late, perhaps not earlier than 1500 and thus as much as a generation later than Scribe B's work. As

Trusler suggested, the Towneley scribe may also have been 'working from a manuscript that had already been compiled, instead of being faced, as was apparently the York scribe, by the task of copying and compiling simultaneously'.[69] Finally, of course, Wakefield is considerably south of York, and northern forms are thus less to be expected. A combination of these considerations seems to account for the language of the Towneley manuscript without invalidating the present explanation of Scribe B's linguistic behaviour.

Conclusions

Linguistic distinctiveness was an important constituent of northern identity in late medieval England, both for those inside and for those outside the region. While written linguistic distinctiveness decreased sharply over the fifteenth century, little is known about the motivation behind this change, or its relation to or impact on regional identities. This paper has suggested a way in which such questions might be approached, through a more detailed account of the language of the York Corpus Christi cycle than has hitherto been available. This has offered a new and fruitful perspective on Meg Twycross's question: 'quite how far the mystery plays of Northern England may have contributed to a sense of communal identity on a series of levels: at the small-group level of the trade guild, the larger level of the city, and possibly even the larger regional level of the North of England as opposed to the South.[70]

Twycross focussed on the former two aspects, arguing that the northern dialect of the York and Towneley cycles did not necessarily make them '*self-consciously* northern'.[71] As we have seen, however, the language of the manuscript's main scribe is far from homogeneous. While a significant part of the manuscript must reproduce fairly closely the northerly language of the guild originals, the preceding and following sections are characterized by less regional spellings which may in part reflect changes in the language of the scribe's exemplars but which also represent conscious acts of scribal translation. The civic copy of the cycle is distinguished by a general avoidance of regional language, which may be related to a comparable avoidance of northerly spellings in the later-fifteenth-century documentary materials produced by York's civic administration. In both cases, there is an effort to distinguish the civic from the local: to position civic identity as precisely not regional. The language of the York cycle – quite apart from its intrinsic interest for the history of later medieval

English – poses important questions about the place of the north in civic and guild identity at York, the importance of language as a constituent of these identities, and the role of the Corpus Christi cycle itself in articulating them.

TABLE 1: Distribution of variants of 'shall' in selected pageants. (All occurrences of *s-* spellings are shown.)

Pageant	*s-*	*sch-*	*sh-*
8	17	1*	6
9	25		5
10	35		
11	46		
12	29		[1]**
13	13		
14	5	2	2
15	7		2
16M	29		3
16G	6	3	32
18		6	3
19		23	4
20		18	5
21		15	2
22	1	17	
23	1	16	1
28	1	49	1
33	38		

* corrected from an original *sall* when the present lines 102-03 were relocated at rubrication.

**added in a later hand, l. 168.

TABLE 2: Structure of the manuscript

folios	quire	pageant	scribe if not B
1-8	[a*]	1-3a	A
9-16	[a]	3b-6	B and C
17-22	b	6-8	B and C
23-30	c	8-9	
31-38	d	10-11	
39-47	e	11-12	
48-55	f	13-14	
56-61	g	15	
62-69	h	16M	
70-77	i	16G and 18	
78-85	k	18-19	
86-93	l	20-21	
94-101	m	21-[22a]	
102-09	n	23-[23a]	
110-15	o	24-25	
116-23	p	25-26	
124-31	q	26-27	
132-37	r	27-28	
138-45	s	28-29	
146-53	t	29-30	
154-61	v	30	
162-69	x	30-31	
170-77	y	31-32	
178-85	z	32-33	

folios	quire	pageant	scribe if not B
187-91	&	33-34	
192-99	9	34-35	
200-07	xxvj	35-37	
208-15	xxvij	37-38	
216-23	xxviij	38-39	
224-31	xxix	40-17	B and C
232-40	xxx	17-42	C and B
241-48	xxxi	43-44	
249-56	xxxii	45	
257-64	xxxiii	46-47	
265-68	xxxiv	47-46a	B and D

Based on the diagram in *The York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xii-xv, to which the reader is referred for fuller information; the numbering of the pageants here corresponds to that used in *The York Play*, ed. by Beadle.

NOTES

I am very grateful to F. Riddy and A. Warner for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. The research on which it is based was funded by the British Academy.

[1] Angus McIntosh and others, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986; henceforward *LALME*). The General Introduction to volume 1 provides a useful outline of the history of Middle English dialectology, and an account of the techniques employed in the *Atlas* itself, with full references. For a more informal account of its production, and a response to some of the work's critics, see Michael Benskin, 'In reply to Dr Burton', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 22 (1991), 209-62.

[2] *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Arnold, 1982), p. 39, who lists the principal previous studies. References to pageants in the cycle are given according to the numbering of this edition, using Arabic rather than Roman; with the exception that the Masons' and Goldsmiths' pageants are distinguished as 16M and 16G.

[3] Gerald Byron Kinneavy, *A Concordance to the York Plays*, with a textual introduction by Richard Beadle (New York: Garland, 1986); *The York Play: A Facsimile of British Library MS Additional 35290 Together With a Facsimile of the* Ordo Paginarum *Section of the A/Y Memorandum Book*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith, Leeds Texts and Monographs Medieval Drama Facsimiles 7 (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1983). References to British Library MS. Additional 35290 are to the foliation of the facsimile.

[4] On these issues see, for example, P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Performing the Word of God: Corpus Christi Drama in the Northern Province', in *Life and Thought in the Northern Church c. 1100 - c. 1700: Essays in Honour of Claire Cross*, ed. by Diana Wood, Studies in Church History Subsidia 12 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 145-70; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government', in *The Government of Medieval York*, ed. by Sarah Rees Jones, Borthwick Studies in History 3 (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1997), pp. 141-63, the latter partly taking issue with Heather Swanson, 'The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 29-48.

[5] *Caxton's* Eneydos, *1490*, ed. by W. T. Culley and F. J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 57 (London: Trübner, 1890), p. 2; B. J. and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), K11; *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum*, ed. by Albert Way, 3 vols., Camden Society o.s. 25, 54, 89 (London, 1843-65), I, 1-3.

[6] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn and Robert E. Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956-2001; henceforward *MED*), s.v. *froten*; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. by Churchill Babington and Joseph

Rawson Lumby, 9 vols, Rolls Series 41 (London: Longman, 1869), II, 156; the work survives in over 120 manuscripts. Compare *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, ed. by N. E. S. A. Hamilton, Rolls Series 52 (London: Longman, 1870), p. 209.

[7] *Shakespeare's Jest Book: A Hundred Mery Tales*, ed. by Hermann Oesterley (London: J. B. Smith, 1866), p. 158

[8] D. M. Owen, 'White Annys and others', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker, Studies in Church History Subsidia 1 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 331-46 (p. 344); cited together with other examples by C. Clark, 'Another Late-Fourteenth-Century Case of Dialect Awareness', *English Studies*, 62 (1981), 504-05.

[9] Cited by A. I. Doyle, 'Reflections on Some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 14 (1983), 82-93 (p. 91 n. 16). A similar scribal distinction between 'Northarn' and 'Sutherne' is cited by Angus McIntosh, 'A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 1-11 (p. 8).

[10] *Cursor Mundi: A Northumbrian Poem of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS o.s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Trübner, 1874-1893), lines 20059-64.

[11] M. R. James, 'The Anlaby Cartulary', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 31 (1934), 337-47 (p. 340).

[12] *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, EETS s.s. 13, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), I, 135.

[13] David Mills, 'Preliminary Note: The Language of Medieval Drama', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by A. C. Cawley and others, Revels History of Drama in English I (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 69-78 (p. 75).

[14] See above, n. 1.

[15] See, for example, N. F. Blake, 'Wynkyn de Worde and the *Quatrefoil of Love*', *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen*, 206 (1969), 189-200; Thomas G. Duncan, 'A Middle English Linguistic Reviser', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 82 (1981), 162-74; J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeve's Tale*', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, (1934), 1-70; N. F. Blake, 'The Northernisms in The Reeve's Tale', *Lore and Language*, 3 (1979), 1-8.

[16] M. L. Samuels, 'Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology', *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 81-94, reprinted in Angus McIntosh and others, *Middle English Dialectology: Essays on Some Principles and Problems* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), pp. 64-80 (esp. pp. 66-77); John H. Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996). See also A. O. Sandved 'Prolegomena to a Renewed Study of the Rise of Standard English', in *So Meny People, Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Medieval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. by Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh: M. Benskin and M. L. Samuels, 1981), pp. 31-42; and for a full bibliography on the

subject, Laura Wright, 'Introduction', in *The Development of Standard English 1300-1800: Themes, Descriptions, Conflicts*, ed. by Laura Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-8 (pp. 7-8).

[17] P. J. Lucas, 'Consistency and Correctness in the Orthographic Usage of John Capgrave's *Chronicle*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 45 (1973), 323-55; N. Davis, 'The Language of Two Brothers in the Fifteenth Century', in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, ed. by E. G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 23-38; Jeremy Smith, *An Historical Study of English: Form, Function and Change* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 68-77.

[18] For its impact on some of the Paston correspondents, see N. Davis, 'A Paston Hand', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 3 (1952), 209-21; N. Davis, 'The Language of the Pastons', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 40 (1954), 119-44.

[19] Richard Beadle and Peter Meredith, 'Further External Evidence for Dating the York Register', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 11 (1980), 51-58. For the terms 'register' and 'original' see Peter Meredith, 'Scribes, Texts and Performance', in *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. by Paula Neuss (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 13-29.

[20] *York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, p. 16; for John Clerke see *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxi-iii, and Peter Meredith, 'John Clerke's Hand in the York Register', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 12 (1981), 245-71.

[21] *LALME* I, 13.

[22] Richard Beadle, 'The Textual Basis', in Kinneavy, *Concordance*, pp. xix-xxiii (p. xxii). See also *York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, p. 39; *York Plays*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. lxviii.

[23] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xx.

[24] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxiv-xxvii.

[25] *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, pp. xxiv-xxvii.

[26] Michael Benskin, 'The Letters <þ> and <y> in Later Middle English, and Some Related Matters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 7 (1982), 13-30.

[27] Supporting evidence for the following may be found in Kinneavy, *Concordance*.

[28] *LALME* I, dot maps 144-45, 148; IV, 37-40.

[29] Noteworthy, but not of direct interest for the present discussion, are the rarer forms *sill* at 28.92 (in rhyme), and *shull* at 43.66; the former is not attested in *LALME*. (The spelling is recorded in *OED*, without any illustrative quotation; the example from the York cycle is the only citation of the spelling in *MED*.)

[30] *LALME* I, dot maps 144-45 and 148; IV, 37-43

[31] *LALME* I, dot map 173; IV, 49; *LALME* I, dot map 548; IV, 272.

[32] *LALME* I, dot map 180; IV, 51-52.

[33] *Bathe*: *LALME* I, dot map 366; IV, 134; *haly*: *LALME* I, dot map 805; IV, 201.

[34] *LALME* I, dot maps 121 and 168; IV, 34 and 46-47.

[35] Compare Beadle and Meredith's association of pageants 11 and 33 on the basis of handwriting: *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xx.

[36] *LALME* I, dot map 628; IV, 61.

[37] *LALME* I, dot map 99; IV, 29.

[38] *LALME* I, dot maps 272-73; IV, 81.

[39] The study by J. H. Scroggs, 'A Phonological Study of the Riming Words of the York Plays' (unpublished MA dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1959), was interested in the rhymes as evidence for pronunciation rather than scribal practice but accepted that in a number of cases scribal interference must lie behind the forms in the register (see for example pp. 39, 46 and 54).

[40] A number of rhymes, for example, suggest original *is* rather than northerly *es* (*LALME* I, dot maps 134-35): 23.26-32 (*wys*/hominis/*mys*/*is*), 41.52-54 (*is*/*blis*). It is unclear whether *prophesieth*/*bright* (17.115-17), indicates original southerly inflection of third person plural present indicative in *-th* (*LALME* I, dot map 654) or scribal alteration of original weak preterite in *-t* (*LALME* I, dot map 655).

[41] For example, *froo*/omnia (43.34-36); *two*/visita/*ma*/*swa* (43.134-40); *sore*/*wore* ('were', subjunctive pl.)/*fare*/*euermore* (20.266-72); *-nesse*/*is*/*dresse*/*expres* (22.199-203).

[42] Relevant maps are: OE, ON *ā*: *LALME* I, dot maps 633-34; *warlde*, *worlde*: dot maps 290-91; *is*, *es*: dot maps 134-35; *whare*, *where*: dot maps 323-24.

[43] For 'spontaneous usage', see *LALME* I, 14.

[44] *LALME* I, 102.

[45] Note the rhyme *waa*/domino (11.405-07).

[46] Boxes around catchwords are found on fols 16v, 30v, 38v, 46v: that is, up to pageant 12, with the exception of pageant 8. Catchwords without boxes appear on fols 22v (pageant 8), 47v (the singleton containing the end of pageant 12) and 55v (pageant 14). (Thereafter follow two catchwords in boxes, fols 69v (pageant 16G) and 77v (pageant 18), and three without, fols 85v (before 20), 93v (21) and 101v (before 23); before decoration becomes standardized after quire p. See *York Play*, ed. by Beadle and Meredith, p. xviii.)

[47] Goldberg, 'Craft Guilds' (n. 4 above), pp. 158-59.

[48] *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile of Huntington MS HM 1*, ed. by A. C. Cawley and Martin Stevens, Leeds Texts and Monographs, Medieval Drama Facsimiles 2 (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1976).

[49] *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979; henceforward *REED: York*), I, 244; compare, for example, the description of York A/Y Memorandum Book (York City Archives

E20) in terms of the *maior registrum* and the *novum registrum.* (*REED:York*, I, xix)

[50] *REED: York*, I, 330-31 and 351; Meredith, 'Scribes, Text and Performance', p. 15; compare, for example, the oath taken by the York common clerk, 'all thinges that shall be enterd of Recorde ye shall truely enroull and Registre.' (York City Archives D1 (the Freeman's Register), fol. 1v.)

[51] See above, note 20.

[52] See M. L. Samuels, 'Langland's Dialect', *Medium Aevum*, 54 (1985), 232-47, reprinted in *The English of Chaucer and his Contemporaries: Essays by M. L. Samuels and J. J. Smith*, ed. by J. J. Smith (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 70-85 (82 n. 25); J. J. Smith, 'Spelling and Tradition in Fifteenth-Century Copies of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', in *The English of Chaucer*, ed. by Smith, pp. 96-113; Smith, *Historical Study of English*, pp. 73-75; J. J. Smith, 'Dialect and Standardisation in the Waseda Manuscript of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*', in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference 20-22 July 1995*, ed. by Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 129-43.

[53] See above, note 16.

[54] A study of the language of documentary and literary material from Yorkshire was made in Ida Baumann, *Die Sprache der Urkunden aus Yorkshire im 15. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätbuchhandlung, 1902), but this was reliant on printed material at a time when the majority of the Middle English York records had not been edited.

[55] These documents, which consist largely of guild ordinances and verdicts concerning disputed property, are contained in York City Archives, E20 (often referred to as the A/Y Memorandum Book), and have been printed in *York Memorandum Book Lettered A/Y in the Guildhall Muniment Room*, ed. by Maud Sellers, 2 vols, Surtees Society 120 and 125 (Durham: Andrews and Co., 1912-15); and in *A Volume of English Miscellanies Illustrating the History and Language of the Northern Counties of England*, ed. by James Raine, Surtees Society 85 (Durham: Andrews and Co., 1888); see also *LALME* III, 565 for an analysis of a lengthy memorandum of 1428 whose language is characteristic of these earlier documents. There are also some items in York City Archives E25 (the B/Y Memorandum Book), printed in *York Memorandum Book*, ed. by Joyce W. Percy, Surtees Society 186 (Gateshead: Northumberland Press, 1973). The best brief description of these civic manuscripts is *REED: York*, I, xviii-xx.

[56] In addition to the references given in n. 55 above, the third group of documents includes material registered in York's House Books. The earlier volumes, York City Archives, B1-B6, have been fully edited in *York House Books 1461-1490*, ed. by Lorraine C. Attreed, 2 vols (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), and later volumes are excerpted in *York Civic Records*, ed. by Angelo Raine and others, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119, 138 (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1939-78). A number of letters testimonial

against accusations of Scottish nationality, printed in *English Miscellany*, ed. by Raine, are more northern in language: they are not of civic origin and have been excluded from this analysis.

[57] *LALME* I, dot maps 98, 276 and 362; IV, 29, 82 and 124-28.

[58] For *-and* see *York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 206, 208 and 210. The second scribe's work is found in York City Archives, B7: see for example fols 37r (printed in *York Civic Records*, ed. by Raine and others, II, 70), 39v, 51v-52r, 56v, 60v, 65r. Entries in other hands in this volume use *shuld* or *shall*: see for example fols 39A, 44r, 48v, 55v; but note also the appearance of *sall* in a record of the Linenweavers' ordinances on fol. 20v of York City Archives, B1 (*York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 42).

[59] See above, note 18.

[60] See above, note 58; examples of corrections are the change of *als-als* to *als-as*, York City Archives, B1, fol. 69v (see *York House Books*, ed. by Attreed, I, 124, where the second *als* is misread as *ale*), and the change of *gyf* to *geue*, in the paper volume bound into the A/Y Memorandum Book, fols 26 and 27 (see *York House Books*, II, 712 and 714). For the more southerly associations of the latter forms in these pairs, see *LALME* I, dot maps 629 and 630; IV, 62; IV, 181-82.

[61] Davis, 'A Paston Hand', p. 219.

[62] D. M. Palliser, 'Civic Mentality and Environment in Tudor York', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 78-115 (p. 99).

[63] The only exceptions are noted above, n. 58.

[64] A. C. Cawley, 'The Sykes MS of the York Scriveners' Play', *Leeds Studies in English*, n. s. 7 (1972), 45-80 (for the date, p. 45).

[65] See Cawley's comparison of the language of the two versions, 'Sykes MS', pp. 54-56.

[66] For the date see *York Plays*, ed. by Beadle, pp. 462-63, noting that the handwriting might suggest a date earlier in the sixteenth century.

[67] Margaret Trusler, 'The Language of the Wakefield Playwright', *Studies in Philology*, 33 (1936), 15-39 (p. 36).

[68] *LALME* III, 622-23 gives an analysis of the language of the pageants attributed to the 'Wakefield Master', which seems to be characteristic of the manuscript as a whole, with the exception of the pageant *Suspencio Iude*, which is in a different hand and more dialectal language. For the association of the Towneley cycle with Wakefield, and the date of the manuscript, see *Towneley Plays*, ed. by Stevens and Cawley, pp. xix-xxii and xv.

[69] Trusler, 'Language', p. 39.

[70] Meg Twycross, 'Civic Consciousness in the York Mystery Plays', in *Social and Political Identities in Western History*, ed. by Claus Bjørn, Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Copenhagen: Academic Press, 1994), pp. 67-89.

[71] Twycross, 'Civic Consciousness', p. 67.

Review Article

Medieval Gentlewoman: Life in a Gentry Household in the Later Middle Ages, by ffiona Swabey. New York: Routledge, 1999. xiii + 210pp. hb: 0-415-92511-8. (illustrations: 13 colour and 48 B/W)

The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint, by Gail Ashton. Routledge Research in Medieval Studies. New York: Routledge, 2000. viii + 176pp. hb: 0-415-18210-7.

Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture: Virginity and its Authorizations, by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. xvi + 314pp. hb: 0-19-811279-3.

The last two decades have witnessed significant changes in the scholarly approaches to medieval studies; in particular, readers of medieval women's histories, especially, have benefited from the broadening of the critical field through the application of such diverse strategies as new historicism, gender criticism, audience theory, and feminist materialism. Combining a wide range of methodologies and approaches, the three volumes under consideration in this review present an important cross-section of recent work in the area, and furthermore, make significant contributions both individually and collectively to our knowledge of the ways in which real medieval women might have negotiated the social and textual expectations they encountered in their daily lives.

ffiona Swabey's *Medieval Gentlewoman: Life in a Gentry Household in the Later Middle Ages* is a lush, well illustrated account of the events, expenses, and routine life of one noblewoman's household in the early years of the fifteenth century. The story of Alice de Bryene, born c. 1360, daughter of Sir Robert de Bures, married c. 1375 to Sir Guy Bryan (eldest son of Lord Guy Bryan) and widowed in 1386, makes an important contribution to the developing picture of late medieval English women's social history. Working mainly from the household financial records for 1412-13 (previously published in 1931),[1] Swabey weaves a tale out of the details of the daily life of this wealthy East Anglian householder: the supplies purchased to clothe and maintain her family and to support her estate, the visitors to her household and her table, the meals served

her dependents and guests, the salaries paid to her administrators, officers and labourers. Alice, as revealed in Swabey's tale, was a formidable and public female figure: widowed (she did not remarry) for 49 years, she successfully managed estates of over 6000 acres (spread between East Anglia, Dorset and Gloucestershire), manoeuvred the constantly changing political climate, interacted with the social and religious communities around her as employer and patron, and lived through what may have been – in religious, political and social terms – the most challenging period of the English Middle Ages.

Swabey's methodology in this study is revealed early on in the book. In contrast to the traditions of the discipline of history – described in the introduction as 'circumscribed by a style sometimes called the male discourse, which, if not exactly patriarchal, seems occasionally to contain elements of medieval scholasticism' – Swabey has sought to combine the 'rigorous' research of facts and details with 'the need to tell a story' (8). It is this desire to uncover the 'flavour of life in a medieval household' which motivates the shape and tone of much of the book (8): chapters build on the expected categories of household, family, lifestyle, entertaining and political and religious influences. The central focus, however, remains solidly the daily life of Alice's estate; that is, Swabey's picture of medieval life is grounded in the comings and goings – as exciting or as humdrum as they may be – of one woman's household.

The household accounts available to Swabey are certainly rich in detail, though, as she admits, they are also significantly limited. What survives, beyond a substantial number of bailiff's reports, some few receivers' reports and stewards' accounts and a variety of deeds (all important but not actually rich in the kind of detail required to flesh out the personal history of an individual), is the daily record book kept by Alice's steward and covering the accounting year from Michaelmas (29 September) 1412 to the following Michaelmas in 1413 (2, 11) along with a shorter account from 29 March to 30 April 1412. The statistical details pulled from these accounts (that, for instance, 16,500 meals were served at the household in the year 1412-13 [11], or that twice the household employed a harper, but hired minstrels four times in the same year [92]) are combined with other records of other medieval women to build the picture of Alice de Bryene. Thus, the woman elaborated in this study is both specific and generalised, a necessary result, according to Swabey, of the vagaries of women's history, especially the paucity of surviving records relating to women's lives. In this way, she proposes, her composite portrayal of the woman called Alice may 'provide an exemplar from which to trace the pattern of other women's lives' (6).

However, Swabey's determination to provide a fuller narrative of Alice de Bryene's life than the surviving records allow for means she must engage in more than just a composite construction – she must, as it turns out, engage in the speculation of fiction. Or, in her own words: 'there is still much missing, and so I shall sometimes invite you to speculate with me about Alice de Bryene's private world in the hope that it will provide a looking-glass in which to view the lives of both men and women of her time' (6). This strategy is not necessarily an unacceptable one; social historians, especially of women, have often resorted to carefully considered speculation about the meaning of specific facts. However, for Swabey, at least on occasion, this becomes the justification for imaginative meanderings along the lines of 'Imagine it is mid-morning on Friday 7 October 1412' (9), or, in a description of the possible marriage negotiations arranged for the union of Alice and Sir Guy, 'The family are all waiting at the porch of the church, the wedding guests assembled' (39). Most telling, in the epilogue imagining Alice's old age, Swabey invites the reader to 'Picture her as she makes her way towards the church, hear her thoughts' (168). This movement between the construction of Alice based on the careful elaboration of detail implicit in much historical work and the imaginative re-creation of the emotions and responses of the medieval character has some serious repercussions for the tone of the book. It struggles, somewhat, to locate its audience: is it a 'rigorous' history of late medieval lay-women's lives, or is it a coffee-table book, as the many, often beautiful but frequently irrelevant, illustrations suggest? Having said that though – that its specific audience is not always clear – it seems likely that one of the strengths of this book may be that large parts of it may in fact appeal to both specialist and generalist audiences.

As a widow and a patron living in the vibrant literary community of East Anglia, Alice de Bryene embodies exactly the sort of late medieval woman who would have provided an audience for the hagiographical texts discussed in Gail Ashton's *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint*. Unfortunately, the details of Alice's life which might shed light on her decision and strategy to remain unmarried for almost half a century are of necessity hard to pin down (Swabey 49-51), and the East Anglian literary community of which she could hardly have been ignorant does not seem to surface in the daily record accounts. East Anglia was home to Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, John Capgrave, John Lydgate and Osbern Bokenham, all writers contemporary with the fifteenth-century widow. Nevertheless, recent scholarship on late medieval women's reading habits demonstrates that (in the words of Carol

Meale) 'religion was by far the dominant reading interest of medieval women'[2] and that, furthermore, laywomen acting as patrons and readers may have been instrumental in the development and dissemination of such texts.[3] Both Gail Ashton's and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's studies share a common focus – that is, the saints' lives popular with women readers – and though their approaches are fundamentally different, both texts are certain to be important contributions to the area of medieval women's literary history.

The first title in the Routledge Research in Medieval Studies series, Ashton's book examines female hagiography through the lens of French feminist theory, primarily that of Luce Irigaray, but including as well Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. She describes her focus as the 'frequently neglected series of vernacular texts of medieval female hagiography produced by men during the period 1200-1500 for a range of audiences' (1); the specific texts are selections from Mirk's *Festial* (c. 1382-90), John Capgrave's *Life of St Katherine of Alexandria* (c. 1445), the *Early South English Legendary* (c. 1270s-80s), Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (1443-1447), Caxton's *Golden Legend* (c. 1483), and three of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (c. 1390s): *The Man of Law's Tale* (the story of Custance), *The Clerk's Tale* (the story of Griselda), and *The Second Nun's Tale* (the story of St Cecilia). Though only one of the *Canterbury Tales* is in fact a hagiographical narrative, the other two, Ashton's argues, depict 'the lives of what might be termed secular saints or holy women in the style of hagiographical romance' (47). Not all of the texts she refers to can justly be described as 'neglected', it seems to me, given the numbers of significant studies available in recent years;[4] in fact, one real concern I had with this book is that it did not take full advantage of the incredible of range of work published in the area since 1995.

Ashton deploys 'a French feminist notion of sexual difference' (3) in her analysis of the tension between the male writer and the female saint he literally 'speaks' in a form of 'holy ventriloquism' (122). The French feminist model enables the reader 'to hear beneath the univocality of the masculine another discourse, another harmony' (161); more explicitly, Ashton's argument is that these female saints' stories 'are inherently fissured and unstable texts', containing within them 'a doubled discourse, the "heard" and dominant, intended one – masculine – and a feminine voice that reveals itself *differently* that puts pressure on the masculine generic one, and is as much a part of the *vitae* as that other' (4; her emphasis). Accordingly then, the first part of Ashton's study is dedicated to establishing the 'univocality' of the male-authored female hagiographies,

demonstrating how each 'reveal a common narratorial pattern imposed upon female saints' lives by their male biographers', and further that each, though unique, is 'authenticated largely by a reductive masculine voice', a voice whose task is to confirm 'patriarchal and clerical authority' (55). The second part of the book consists of Ashton's rereading of these texts through exposing the fissures and the gaps which render the whole unstable.

Because of the work's insistence on 'univocality', the different versions of the lives of the individual saints are often collapsed into one narrative pattern. This is especially true for two of the lives, those of saints Cecilia and Katherine, which are repeatedly shown to be deeply fissured texts. Certainly, many of the versions of, for instance, the life of St Katherine share key or central narrative characteristics, so Ashton's emphasis on a 'master narrative' (with all the gendered implications of that term) makes good sense. However, there are important factors at play in the production of each that seem glossed over in her consideration, even though as she acknowledges in her conclusion, 'individual characteristics and different audiences partially detract' from the univocality her argument has insisted on. We should question, it seems to me, the unproblematised comparison of texts across a wide span of English history (from the thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth centuries), or of texts across broad generic boundaries (is the Clerk's tale of Griselda fully comparable to, for instance, lives in the *Early South English Legendary*?), but especially, of texts whose intended audiences might have had expectations as radically different as, for instance, that of *Mirk's Festial* and Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen. Mirk's Festial* was composed for a clerical audience, and thus the legends in the collection are notably orthodox and frequently antifeminist; Bokenham composed several of the narratives in his legendary at the express wish of influential female patrons, and his relationship to them figures largely in his selection of narrative events. In her focus on the male writer and the female saint, Ashton all but ignores the role the (frequently female) reader plays in the creation of meaning in the text. Nevertheless, her articulation of the concept of 'holy ventriloquism' is a significant one, and her study of the relationship between male writer and the female subject of the hagiographic narratives provides an important complement to other work in the area. Furthermore, this book is an necessary demonstration of the applicability of contemporary literary and feminist theory to medieval texts, and is likely to be an influential model for other studies.

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture: Virginity and its Authorizations* also takes as its focus the representation of

virginity in a variety of saints' lives, but in this case, in texts from the Anglo-Norman period of post-Conquest England. A vastly ambitious and fully realised study, Wogan-Browne's book is a much anticipated culmination of long research (the depths of which is revealed in the nearly 750 rich and detailed footnotes); as the first full-length study of women's literary culture in the twelfth and thirteenth century, it is certain to set the standard for not just post-Conquest England or Anglo-Norman studies, but all continuing work in the area of medieval women's literary histories.

The jumping off point for this multi-layered study is an Anglo-Norman manuscript (London, BL, MS Addit. 70513, *olim* MS Welbeck I.C.i) from the Augustinian priory of Campsey in Suffolk; this manuscript is the 'largest extant compilation of Anglo-Norman [saints'] lives known to have been owned by a female community' (6). Compiled in the thirteenth century, internal evidence places the manuscript at the Campsey nunnery by the early fourteenth century (7). As Wogan-Browne describes, this collection is of fundamental importance to our assessment of Anglo-Norman women's literary history, for it bridges all categories of women's participation in literary culture: not only does it 'include texts of all the hagiographic works currently known to have been composed by women,' but it also 'was very probably commissioned by a noblewoman, Isabella, Countess of Arundel', and furthermore, it 'certainly contains saints' lives of individual and collective female patronage' (7). The manuscript combines saints of universal (for instance, Catherine of Alexandria), local (for instance, Faith, culted in East Anglia) and national importance (for instance, the three British abbesses, Etheldreda, Osith and Modwenna), virgin martyrs and married saints, post-Conquest English and Anglo-Saxon figures, and female and male saints (6-9). One of the far reaching significances of the selection of lives in this manuscript, as Wogan-Browne argues, is that 'its texts link the two major female communities of Barking and Campsey', through the inclusion of the texts known to have been composed or supported by the women at Barking (for instance, Clemence of Barking's *Vie de sainte Catherine*) (10). Furthermore, the selection of saints is important precisely because 'it embodies overlaps in lay and professed female reading also found in many more kinds of books and texts in the post-Conquest centuries' (11), and as such, then, provides an essential piece of the picture of medieval women's literary history often overlooked in other studies which mostly begin their discussions of vernacular literature and women readers with the later Middle Ages.

The Campsey manuscript provides the crucial starting place for Wogan-

Browne's discussion of the literary culture of women in Anglo-Norman England; more precisely, Wogan-Browne uses the lives' separate depictions of virginity to theorise about the uses twelfth and thirteenth-century women (professed and lay, virgin, widowed or married) made of the models of virginity – and virginity's corresponding cultural extension, enclosure – presented to them. Not only for the career virgin, the power of virginity had significance for a broad range of women, and each chapter addresses one aspect of that premise beginning with the tradition of virginity and moving through the ways women readers appropriated the 'authorising' power in their own private and public lives, and culminating in the textual power women writers of virginity narratives deployed. Wogan-Browne's reading of the saints' lives, and of the women who read them and grappled with the depictions of virginity found within them, is complex and provocative, and her assessment of the male clerics implicated in the production of some of the texts is also multivalent. For instance, in a discussion of St Faith and the male writer, Wogan-Browne resists settling for the 'displaced clerical heterosexual desire' reading, and persuades the reader towards an argument mindful of 'a much richer range of desires and social relations', one which allows for the possibility of 'a conceptualization of personhood that deserves more investigation, not assimilation to our own assumptions' (79).

This is one of the real strengths of this rich and compelling study: Wogan-Browne reveals and persuades at every turn, and yet simultaneously manages to foster an excitement at the possibilities to be found in the implications of her conclusions. For instance (and it is impossible to adequately illustrate this in an example or two), in an early chapter on the tradition of virginity, she writes 'The history of enclosure is thus a history of women's choices as well as of women's difficulties' (32). Or, she writes, in reference to the violence inherent in the virgin martyr narratives, 'some representation of agency is possible in female suffering, viewed as a gift to God' (125). Both of these provocative statements, like her larger arguments – for instance, on the application of the virgin model to non-virgin women, or the importance of the virgin's 'dotality' in Anglo-Norman depictions – have significant implications for the discussion of women's literary cultures and the history of female representation in the religious writing of the Middle Ages. This book is a must-have for all readers interested in medieval women's histories: it is rich and authoritative, but also deeply encouraging of continued research and discussion in the area.

JACQUELINE JENKINS UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

NOTES

[1] *The Household Book of Dame Alice de Bryene*, ed. by Vincent Redstone (Bungay, Suffolk: Paradigm Press, 1984), originally published for the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History (Ipswich: W. E. Harrison, 1931). These household accounts have also been the subject of previous study, for instance Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Late Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), though, as Swabey points out, none of the earlier work has focussed on Alice de Bryene herself.

[2] Carol Meale, '"alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch and frensch": Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England', *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 128-58 (p. 137). See also Felicity Riddy, '"Women Talking about the Things of God": A Late Medieval Sub-Culture', in ed. Meale, *Women and Literature,* pp. 104-27.

[3] See, for instance, Susan Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', *Signs* 7.4 (1982), 742-68; see also Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[4] See for instance the work of Karen Winstead (on Capgrave, among others), Katherine J. Lewis (on St Katherine), Sheila Delaney (on Bokenham), Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (on various female virgin martyr narratives) or Anne Clark Bartlett (on male writers for female readers) to name but a few.

Reviews

The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt: An Edition of the Old English Text with Modern English Parallel-Text Translation, ed. by Hugh Magennis. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002. xii + 260pp. ISBN pb: 0-85989-672-2: Price: pb: £13.99.

A new edition of the Old English version of the *Life* of Saint Mary of Egypt has long been a desideratum. Many scholars are still working from Skeat's edition of the text in *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*.[1] Hugh Magennis's new edition in the Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies series is, therefore, very welcome. With a comprehensive and useful Old English glossary, a substantial introduction, and parallel texts and translations of both the Old English *Life* and its Latin source, this edition should prove invaluable for students at all levels. In this, it lives up to the expectations which have come to be attached to the editions in the Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies series. The translations are accurate and readable, and, together with the glossary and commentary, provide students with an excellent aid to reading the original. At the same time, the introduction provides a valuable guide to the development of Mary's legend, the composition and transmission history of the Old English translation, and the style and language of the Old English text.

More advanced scholars will also find much of interest in the introduction, in particular the discussion of the manuscript context of the Old English *Life*, and the possible socio-religious contexts for the reception of this text in late Anglo-Saxon England. Magennis's argument that the emphasis on contemplation and the eremitical life in this text would have been felt undesirable within Benedictine Reform circles is fairly convincing. He is also no doubt correct to see the text as originating in an Anglian context, and his location of the extant manuscripts of the *Life* within an 'eclectic tradition of transmission of vernacular Christian writing' (p. 22) in late West Saxon circles is a tantalising indication of directions in which research on this and other anonymous Old English hagiographical texts might be pursued.

His Latin text also deserves mention, for this is not simply a reprint of one of the early printed editions on which we are obliged to rely for so many Latin hagiographical texts. As Magennis himself points out, he has not produced a critical text, but his edition does at least provide a readily-available printed text of

the version of the *Life* of Saint Mary of Egypt which appears in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary. He also provides a collation of this text with a version which appears in a tenth-century manuscript which was probably in Anglo-Saxon England. This provides a very useful starting point for a consideration of the transmission and use of the *Life* in Anglo-Latin contexts.

This is, then, a very usable and stimulating edition. One might, however, quibble with one or two matters of detail. It is a slight shame that a Latin glossary is not provided in addition to the Old English glossary; since the introduction rightly emphasises the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the Old English *Life*, and particularly of an understanding of the Latin sources of Old English hagiography, it would seem desirable to encourage closer study of the Latin text by including a glossary in addition to the translation. On the other hand, students using this edition are likely to be working within the discipline of English Language and Literature, and may not be equipped to read Latin, while scholars are unlikely to need a glossary in order to read the Latin text. It may also be the case that the policies of the Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies series preclude the inclusion of such a glossary.

The editorial policy adopted in editing the Old English text also seems a little inconsistent. The text given here is based on London, British Library, Cotton MSS, Julius E VII, fols 122^{v}-136^{r}, the manuscript used by Skeat as the basis of his edition. Although the other two manuscripts of the text have also been used, Magennis points out that 'no attempt has been made to use these to provide a critical edition of the work as originally produced by the Old English writer' (p. 57). This is neither an unreasonable nor an uncommon editorial policy, but since better readings from the other manuscripts are used in some cases and ignored in others, the resulting text falls somewhere between a record of a particular instance of manuscript reception and a radical critical text. For example, the Cotton Julius reading 'þeawas' (p. 58, line 17) is replaced with the clearly correct reading 'þeowes' from British Library, Cotton MSS, Otho B X, fol. 26, while the erroneous Cotton Julius reading 'swingle' (p. 84, line 414) is not replaced by the evidently original reading 'spinle' from the Cotton Otho manuscript (fol. 17). One cannot complain that these variant readings go unremarked in this edition's introduction or commentary (or indeed in the collation of the three manuscripts), but it seems strange to substitute correct readings at some points and not at others. A text more consistently improved or preserved would seem a more obvious editorial position, and would be more useful for students and scholars alike.

These are, nevertheless, very minor complaints; Magennis's edition does

not pretend to be the definitive critical edition of the Old English *Life* of Saint Mary of Egypt, but it does provide a very useful tool for teaching a neglected text, and a useful starting point for further work on this and other similar texts. It is to be hoped that this edition will stimulate further research on this text, as well as a greater use of the text in teaching in the area of Anglo-Saxon studies.

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NOTE

[1] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, Early English Text Society, o.s. 76, 82, 94, 114 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881-1900; repr. as two volumes 1966), II, 2-53.

The Transmission of Old English Poetry. By Peter Orton. Westfield Publications in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 12. Turnhout: Brepols. 2000. xvii + 223 pp. ISBN 2 5035 1072 8.

This book deals with the fundamental question of the role played by scribes in the transmission of Old English poetry. Using evidence from almost all of the twenty Old English poems which survive wholly or in part in more than one manuscript version, Orton sets out to discover 'whether scribes ever did "depart" deliberately from their exemplars' (p. 2). His analysis takes the form of detailed case-studies which he characterises, in the terms of his chapter headings, as demonstrating different types of scribal activity, from 'confused' to 'ambitious' to 'meticulous'.

Orton's comment that '[e]ditors of single-witness OE poems do not want to find corruptions in their texts because we have not developed any general procedure for dealing with them' (p. 3) rather exaggerates editorial reluctance to postulate 'corruption', but does pinpoint the striking lack of properly critical, and widely accepted, work on how to edit an Old English text with an awareness of possible alterations for the worse as well as for the better.

The detail of Orton's analysis is compelling, but his assertions on broader topics tend at times to push his argument further than his material justifies. He

repeatedly attempts to keep separate the roles of 'poet' and of 'scribe', but never offers any evidence for distinguishing poetic texts written down in manuscript by their composer from precise copies of texts made by scribes. His comments also imply that each Old English poem is the work of an original poet, even if this work is overlaid in all surviving copies by scribal alterations, but this raises problematic – and unaddressed – questions about the validity for early medieval textual culture of modern concepts of an original author, and Orton could usefully have complicated his presentation of the question of authorship, and of the identity of poet and scribe, with more reference to recent work on Anglo-Saxon notions of authority and textuality. His response to – and rebuttal of – Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's notion of 'formulaic reading' is vigorous, but lacks detailed engagement with the cultural concepts mentioned above, and cannot be fully played out in a work of this size and scope. His conclusion that '[t]he oral poet – and I think this must also have been true of his literate successor – was trained by ear and worked with the voice; the copyist trained and worked with eye and hand' (p. 207), is sure to provoke more work by scholars who would beg to differ.

The subject-matter of this study, and its wealth of detail, could make for a dry and over-technical read, but in fact it is an engaging working-through of the stages of a complex reasoning, written lucidly and straightforwardly. Only a few errors of format and detail (the lack of some sigla and abbreviations from the opening lists, and missing possessive apostrophes on p. 21), and the consistent and unjustified references to unnamed scribes and modern editors as 'he', work against the flow and accuracy of the analysis.

Many of Orton's most interesting points about poetic texts could be underpinned or nuanced with comparative reference to recent work on the corpus of Old English prose. For example, his claim that '[c]opyists working late in the OE period, or after the Norman Conquest, probably had very little idea of the meaning of the poetic texts they reproduced' (p. 23), is certainly not true of most copyists of Old English prose in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and might therefore indicate significant differences in the cultural contexts of, and attitudes towards, late prose and poetic copying. Similarly, Orton's analysis could move on from statements such as 'we should remain open to conviction on the possibility of a constructive competence in OE scribes which would enable them to remodel, improve or modernize texts at will, in a spirit of active stewardship rather than passive subservience to the text' (p. 77) by reference to prose copying, where there is plenty of evidence of precisely this kind of 'active stewardship' by scribes who recopy earlier OE texts in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. His conclusion

that 'intelligent' modifications by scribes copying poetic texts tend 'away from the poetic towards the prosaic rather than vice-versa' (p. 197) would be another interesting starting-point for a comparison between modified copies of poetry and of prose. His hypothesis on the decline of vernacular poetic composition towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, and his passing comment about it 'resurfacing before long as ME alliterative poetry' (p. 208) will be particularly interesting to Anglo-Saxonists working on the continuity of vernacular composition and copying in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and to Middle English scholars contemplating the roots of vernacular traditions.

Orton's discussion in chapter 8, 'The Meticulous Copyist', on letter forms, accent marks, abbreviations and format is an excellent example of the value of paying proper attention to the evidence for the variety of palaeographical and codicological practices in Old English manuscripts, and will be a source of reference for future work. His suggestion that the *Dream of the Rood* 'has undergone extension by an inferior poet whose work we see in the second half of the poem' (pp. 159-60), similarly opens the way for new scholarship by inviting a thorough re-evaluation of that text, and his comments on p. 200 about distinctive features shared by it and *Soul and Body I* ought to encourage further work on the Vercelli Book as a whole. The mine of detailed information and analysis which this study provides will, in fact, no doubt change the direction of future critical work on much of the Old English poetic corpus.

MARY SWAN UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England. By Ethan Knapp. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press. 2001. x + 210 pp. ISBN 0-271-02135-7 . Price: $40.

This welcome study of Hoccleve's art offers an elegantly structured account of a poet whose literary work, Ethan Knapp maintains, is intelligible primarily in the context of his career as a bureaucrat in the office of the Privy Seal. Knapp persuasively argues for the importance of bureaucratic practice to the literary culture of the early fifteenth century, and, with reference to the *Formulary*, the

large volume of official documents Hoccleve copied for reference by future generations of Privy Seal clerks, he neatly sets up the terms on which we are to understand the construction of a 'bureaucratic identity'. Knapp rereads 'La Male Regle' in the light of this identity, stressing the interrelation of the petitionary and (a revised notion of) the autobiographical in Hoccleve's work.

Alongside the emphasis on bureaucratic culture, an interest in how Hoccleve relates to Chaucer underpins the argument of the book in general. Knapp, revising some long-held critical assumptions about this relation, is at pains to point out ways in which Hoccleve differs from Chaucer, and how the two poets are engaged in different literary projects (p. 12). Knapp suggests that Hoccleve's use of Chaucerian material is more 'antagonistic' (p. 12) than imitative, but there are times when one would welcome further development of some of his insightful formulations and contextualisations of the younger poet's position. For example, Knapp strikingly characterises Hoccleve's identity as 'liminal', one that accords with neither a 'chivalric' nor a 'clerkly masculinity', and that is 'marginal [. . .] to the authority of ecclesiastical latinity' (p. 13). While situating the poet in this way elegantly lays the ground for the fascinating discussion of Hoccleve's 'ventriloquizing' of gendered perspectives and values in his early poem, the *Letter of Cupid*, his translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, it begs further comparison with the positioning of Chaucer's own poetic persona, and with the treatment of gender in a text such as the *Legend of Good Women*. And while there is brief mention of how Hoccleve's 'Complaint' rewrites the opening of the *Canterbury Tales* (pp. 164-65), there is much else to investigate with regard to (potential) verbal echo and its inference; for example, might Hoccleve be calling to mind, or impersonating, Chaucer the pilgrim (and to what ends?) when he has the Old Man, in the *Regiment*, demand of him, in the context of his ability to write, 'What man art thow?'[1]

Knapp has a happy talent, however, for selecting, with economy, some of the more important themes in Hoccleve, and for producing literary analyses that do full justice to the ambiguities of the poet's verse. As well as discussion of the *Letter of Cupid*, there are bold and imaginative readings of the critical implications of fifteenth-century technologies of writing, and of paternal literary anxiety, in the *Regiment of Princes*, a subtle evaluation of issues of heresy and orthodoxy in the 'Address to Oldcastle', and a thoughtful treatment of mediation in Hoccleve's Marian poetry. One might quibble with aspects of the pages on the 'Address' – is there, for example, too easy a conflation of the figural representation of saints and 'the iconic methods of Lancastrian propaganda' in the

discussion of Oldcastle as 'anti-saint' (p. 146)? – but this original and adroit approach nonetheless intelligently accounts for the sense of deep ambivalence this supposedly orthodox poem conveys. And the writing on Mary as 'vanishing mediator' (p. 146) poignantly evokes a world of uncertain patronage and belief.

Finally, Knapp considers the influence of a bureaucratic milieu on the production of the sequence of texts we call the *Series*. This chapter is perhaps the least fully achieved of the study; its analysis of the sequence of poems as the 'product of dialogue and negotiation' (p. 181) is stylish, but Knapp here also bypasses an opportunity to return to his earlier formulation of the relationship between death and the technology of writing and so does not address (for example) the issues of death and patronage that are surely of pressing importance to the *Series* as a whole, with its inscribed competing patrons and its translation from Henry Suso of 'How to Learn to Die.'

In *The Bureaucratic Muse*, Knapp brings a lively critical perspicacity to bear on Hoccleve's writings, and offers a set of literary and cultural co-ordinates and contexts for thinking about the literature that would themselves reward further investigation and research. All those involved in Hoccleve – and fifteenth-century – studies will benefit from, and want to engage fully with, this thoughtful and intellectually stimulating work.

CATHERINE BATT UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

NOTE

[1] Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. by Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1999), l. 144.

Helen Barr, *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. viii + 229 pp. ISBN 0-19-8112424. Price: £35.00.

Helen Barr examines a variety of texts produced in late medieval England as examples of socioliterary practice. She writes from the position that language is a material form of social practice, that language creates social reality, and that

literary texts are forms of social language practice. Her choice of texts is deliberately eclectic, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and encompassing prose and verse, Latin and English, the canonical and non-canonical. She examines texts not usually considered to engage with contemporary issues as well as those more obviously enmeshed in issues of the time. In her close reading of texts and in her attention to linguistic detail, Barr finds common ground between philology, formalism and historicism.

In chapter 1, Barr examines three texts which explicitly concern themselves with social issues but which do different ideological work. She shows how Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale* directly addresses the subversive question of the ideology of language. *To Sir John Oldcastle* is demonstrated to be Lancastrian propaganda and supportive of a normative social hierarchy, despite Hoccleve's awareness that truth in narrative is constructed and that reading does not have a fixed meaning. More surprising is Barr's suggestion that *Wynnere and Wastour* can be seen alongside Chaucer's *General Prologue* as redefining late fourteenth-century social relationships 'with great subtlety'; she regards the poem's inconsistencies not as flaws but as integral to its design, and indicative of a hierarchical society 'under strain' (p. 26). *Pearl* is not explicitly about social issues, and has usually been judged on aesthetic grounds, but in a lively chapter 2 Barr finds it full of social references. She sees its figurative language as having social valency, and considers the dreamer-jeweller as a mercantile figure, fascinated by wealth and troubled by social inferiority, his uncertainty showing in the mobility of his social register.

In other chapters, Barr prefaces her close readings of texts with information on Richard II's image-making, the 1381 revolt, and different strands of traditional peasant discourse: the ameliorative, which in Wycliffite texts is associated with the peasant labourer, and the pejorative, which in Wycliffite texts is transferred from peasant to friar. The political context is by now well known, but Barr's identification of the distinctive characteristics of Wycliffite writing is informative, and all the background material is lucid, accessible, and leads easily into the readings of the texts under discussion, which she examines for political or religious references. In the political arena, two pro-Lancastrian texts, the anonymous *Richard the Redeless* and Gower's *Cronica Tripertita*, are found to challenge the codes by which Richard sought to represent his kingship. Barr has covered similar ground on *Richard the Redeless* elsewhere, but her consideration of the vernacular poem alongside the Latin is intriguing, as is her argument that Gower, in a text full of codifications, deliberately refuses textual space to

Richard's key icon, the hart. There is also an interesting juxtaposition of texts in which Barr claims to find religious resonances. *Mum and the Sothsegger*, composed after curbs on heresy were enforced, and the courtly love poem *The Boke of Cupide*, written before such censorship was imposed, are both examined for Wycliffite expression. Barr has previously written about the antifraternalism of *Mum*; she now also gives the hive of bees exemplum a Wycliffite interpretation, and equates the drones with friars. This chapter is the least sure-footed part of her book, and her claims about *Cupide*'s coded, playful references to emergent Lollardy are not entirely convincing.

At the physical and perhaps symbolic heart of Barr's study are two absorbing chapters on Chaucer, chapters 4 and 5, where she considers the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* respectively, and finds both to engage with ideological issues. In the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* she finds resonances with Richard's attempts at image-making. Cupid is the king heading the royal progress, the representative of the dominant culture intolerant of heresy, who tells the narrator what to write. The narrator abases himself and outwardly shows allegiance, but he also 'scripts himself into the position of a dissident subject' (p. 105) who writes what he chooses. Barr therefore sees Chaucer as aware of the politics of representation, and claims the poem to be about ownership of discourse. In considering the way the *Nun's Priest's Tale* addresses the events of 1381, Barr looks at how other contemporary accounts, in Latin and French, adopt an authoritative, distanced perspective, and depict the rebels as animals or devils. In contrast, Chaucer's tale is in the English vernacular, confounds generic expectations, resists a final interpretation, has many and unidentifiable voices, and erodes distinctions between peasant and courtly registers. Barr sees these literary strategies as having social resonance, and thinks the tale is 'an example of the social struggle for empowerment' (p. 127).

Barr's afterword, in which she examines Lydgate's *The Churl and the Bird*, acts as a recapitulation of her argument that literature is 'socially positioned discourse' (p. 198). Her study, particularly the chapters on *Pearl* and Chaucer, will be valued by those interested in the literature and history of the period. Her readings of individual texts are perceptive and only rarely tenuous, her linking of texts is intriguing, and her consideration of the deep and complex ways in which literature can relate to wider social issues is particularly thought-provoking.

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