Leeds Studies in English

New Series XLVIII

2017

Architectural Representation in Medieval England

Edited by

Hannah Bailey, Karl Kinsella, and Daniel Thomas

Editorial assistant
Alaric Hall

Leeds Studies in English

<www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>
School of English
University of Leeds
2017

‘Synne to shewe, vs to frame’: Representing the Church in Robert Mannyng’s *Handlyng Synne*

Laura Varnam

In his influential treatise on poetics, the *Poetria Nova* (c. 1200), Geoffrey of Vinsauf famously used the metaphor of the architect as a didactic exemplum for the poet:

> Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actum
> Impetuosa manus: intrinseca linea cordis
> Praemetitur opus, seriemque sub ordine certo
> Interior praescribit homo, totamque figurat
> Ante manus cordis quam corporis; et status ejus
> Est prius archetypus quam sensilis. Ipsa poesis
> Spectet in hoc speculo quae lex sit danda poetis.
> Non manus ad calamum praeceps, non lingua sit ardens
> Ad verbum: neutram minibus committe regendam
> Fortunae; sed mens discrete praeambula facti,
> Ut melius fortunet opus, suspendat earum
> Officium, tractetque diu de themate secum.
> Circinus interior mentis praecircinet omne
> Materiae spatium.[1]
>
> If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in a definite order. The mind’s hand shapes the entire house before the body’s hand builds it. Its mode of being is archetypal before it is actual. Poetic art may see in this analogy the law to be given to poets: let the poet’s hand not be swift to take up the pen, nor his tongue be impatient to speak; trust neither hand nor tongue to the guidance of fortune. To ensure greater success for the work, let the discriminating mind, as a prelude to action, defer the operation of hand and tongue, and ponder long on the subject matter. Let the mind’s interior compass first circle the whole extent of the material.[2]

Like the master builder, the poet is advised to plan the structure of his work and ‘circle’ the material thoroughly in his mind before he handles it poetically. The construction of the text, like the construction of a building, is ‘archetypal before it is actual’. The *Poetria Nova* was

[1] *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine*, ed. and trans. by Ernest Gallo (The Hague: Mouton Press, 1971), p. 16 (ll. 43–56).

[2] *Poetria Nova*, trans. by Margaret F. Nims, rev. ed. with introduction by Martin Camargo (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2010), p. 20.

the most popular treatise on rhetoric in the late Middle Ages, as Martin Camargo explains: 'as a standard curricular text and the supreme authority on the art of poetry, the *Poetria Nova* exerted an influence on writing practices and literary aesthetics that extended far beyond the immediate pedagogical contexts of its use. For the better part of three centuries, every poet, whether writing in Latin or one of the vernacular languages, would have experienced that influence'.[3] Geoffrey's use of the metaphor of the master builder is a cornerstone of late medieval architectural representation and the connection that he sets up between material and poetic composition forms part of the intellectual background to the early fourteenth-century penitential handbook *Handlyng Synne* by Robert Mannyng (c. 1283–c. 1338) that will be the subject of this article. Geoffrey of Vinsauf begins his teaching on the art of poetry by correlating architectural and textual composition. In this article, I will show how Robert Mannyng also exploits the didactic potential of architectural construction in his attempt to teach the reader how to 'handle sin'; rather than constructing a house, Mannyng builds an archetypal parish church and churchyard to frame and locate his pastoral guidance.

The church was the building at the heart of medieval religious life and Mannyng draws on both the symbolism and the material reality of church architecture to support his didactic purpose in the text. He reminds us that we 'handyl synne euery day | yn wrde & dede al þat we may' and, paradoxically, that deliberately cultivating such 'handling' is a productive part of the penitential process.[4] 'Handyl so to ryse from all', Mannyng urges, 'þat none make þe eft to falle' (ll. 109–10). In Mannyng's formulation, sin is tangible; it is something to be touched and handled. But the Middle English *hondlen* also means to 'manipulate', to 'deal with' and 'act upon'.[5] As Mark Miller summarises, 'the insistent materiality of sin, the way it attaches to us in all of our dealings with the world, means that it is at the same time manipulable if we gain the proper training' and it is this training that Mannyng's penitential handbook aims to provide.[6] The text frames and materialises sin through architectural representation in order to teach the reader how to recognise and deal with it.

In the first part of this article I will contextualise *Handlyng Synne* as part of the literature of pastoral care that flourished in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), focusing in particular on the ways in which the text's representation of the church might resonate with the architectural allegories of Robert Grosseteste and William of Durandus, both of whom use the church as a didactic model. In the second part, I will show how Mannyng establishes the church as a frame, both metaphorical and material, for the public exposure of sin, a fundamental step in the process of learning to recognise and then handle it. In Mannyng's examination of sacrilege, the damage done to material fabric of the church, from churchyard walls to tombs, plays a crucial role in demonstrating the effect of misbehaviour on the sanctity of the church. The final section will demonstrate how these themes are explored in Mannyng's most famous exemplum, 'The Dancers of Colbek'. Architectural representation emerges as a rich symbolic resource for Mannyng, both for the construction of his text and the edification of his readers as he teaches them how to successfully handle sin.

[3] Camargo, 'Introduction', p. 15.

[4] Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. by Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), ll. 89–90. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition by line number.

[5] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Sherman M. Kuhn, Hans Kurath and Robert E. Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001), http://quod.lib.umich [accessed February 2017], s.v. 'hondlen', senses 2 and 3c. Hereafter the *Middle English Dictionary* is cited as *MED*.

[6] Mark Miller, 'Displaced Souls, Idle Talk, Spectacular Scenes: *Handlyng Synne* and the Perspective of Agency', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 606–32 (p. 613).

Robert Mannyng and the Context for *Handlyng Synne*

Robert Mannyng tells us in the prologue to *Handlyng Synne* that he addresses 'alle crystyn men vndyr sunne' (l. 57), the 'gode men of brunne [Bourne]' (l. 58), and most especially the Gilbertine community at Sempringham in Lincolnshire (l. 60). Mannyng was a Gilbertine canon at Sempringham and it has been suggested that he was either master of novices or, as has been proposed more recently by Joyce Coleman, the *hospitarius* or guest-master responsible for the pilgrims who came to visit the priory.[7] Coleman argues that *Handlyng Synne* was written 'both to edify the pilgrims and to induce them to contribute to the rebuilding of the priory church', an ambitious project which began in 1301.[8] Mannyng started work on *Handlyng Synne* in 1303 (as he tells us in line 76) and the text's promotion of the importance of caring for the church building to prevent sacrilege could have encouraged visiting pilgrims to donate to the building work that was visible around them.

None of the surviving manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne* date from Mannyng's lifetime, however. As Sullens records, 'nine manuscripts contain all or parts of *Handlyng Synne*' and the three most complete manuscripts date to c. 1400: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 415 and its two copies, Folger Library, MS V.b.236 and London, British Library, MS Harley 1701.[9] The surviving manuscripts demonstrate that *Handlyng Synne* remained popular and relevant long after Mannyng's initial composition; indeed, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Osborn MS a2 may be as late as the mid-fifteenth century, a century and a half after Mannyng initially produced the text for the Sempringham community.[10] The sustained usefulness of the text also attests to the enduring need for material in the vernacular that encouraged good behaviour among priests and laity, particularly in relation to their spiritual and material home on earth, the church.

As a penitential handbook, *Handlyng Synne* came out of the flourishing tradition of pastoral care literature that was generated by the injunctions of the Fourth Lateran Council on yearly confession and the education of the laity. Texts such as Mannyng's provided priests with entertaining exempla in the vernacular to teach the laity the key components of moral behaviour and such material was frequently recycled and borrowed from other sources, with expansions and additions as necessary. *Handlyng Synne* is itself a 'translation, adaptation, and expansion' of the Anglo-Norman *Manuel des Pechiez*, a text often attributed to William of Wadington.[11] Following the *Manuel*, *Handlyng Synne* is 'highly schematic in layout', as Mark Miller has recognised: after a short prologue, the text proceeds with clearly organised sections on the Ten Commandments (ll. 147–2990), Seven Deadly Sins (ll. 2991–8586), Sacrilege (ll. 8587–9500), Seven Sacraments (ll. 9501–11310), and Confession (ll. 11311–

[7] Raymond G. Biggar, 'Mannyng, Robert (d. in or after 1338)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17986 [accessed 17 September 2015]. Joyce Coleman, 'Handling Pilgrims: Robert Mannyng and the Gilbertine Cult', *Philological Quarterly*, 81 (2002), 311–26 (p. 312).

[8] Coleman, 'Handling Pilgrims', pp. 312 and 318.

[9] Sullens, *Handlyng Synne*, pp. xviii–xix.

[10] Sullens, *Handlyng Synne*, pp. xxiii and xxviii–xxxi.

[11] Biggar, 'Manyng, Robert'. Sullens argues in her 1983 edition of *Handlyng Synne* that the attribution to Wadington is generally discredited (p. xxxviii) but Matthew Thomas Sullivan reassesses the case for Wadington in his 1990 D. Phil. thesis and concludes that Wadington is indeed the author, identifying him as a 'secular canon and prominent figure in legal hierarchy of the Diocese of York' ('The Original and Subsequent Audiences of the *Manuel des Péchés* and its Middle English Descendants' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1990), abstract).

12638).[12] Each section and subdivision is signposted: for example, 'the first comaundement: þou shalt haue no god but one', 'here begynne þe seuene dedly synnys. The first dedly synne ys Pryde', 'þe first poynt of shryfte'.[13] The text then alternates between 'exemplary narratives and a combination of commentary, ethical and religious instruction, and general descriptions of the topic or topics at hand'.[14] The exempla are often identified with the phrase 'a tale', as Sullens replicates in her edition, and this combined with the section headings makes the text easy to navigate and its overarching framework clear to the reader. I want to suggest that the clearly demarcated structure of the text is in part supported by the architectural language and role of the church within the text. The use of architecture as a structuring device for thought is well attested by the work of Mary Carruthers on medieval memory and Christiania Whitehead on architectural allegory.[15] The church was one of the primary architectural models used for such purposes, alongside the temple, the ark, and the cloister. Texts such as the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* by William of Durandus (c. 1280s), for example, read church architecture allegorically in order to construct an ideal community, with each architectural feature assigned to an appropriate member of the congregation.[16] The pavement represented the poor in spirit and the common people, for example, and the pillars signified the bishops and teachers who uphold the temple of God.[17] Operating on a strictly hierarchical schema, the *Rationale* put each member of the community in their place and constructed an ideal social order, an order that was reinforced by the practicalities of accessing church space.[18] The laity were traditionally housed in the nave whereas priests had control of the chancel, the most sacred space of the church.

Church architecture was also used to organise and catalogue pastoral material in the Middle Ages. In the 1220s Robert Grosseteste used St Paul's assertion that Christians are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3.16) to structure his teaching on confession and penance in his short treatise the *Templum Dei*.[19] Aimed at educating priests and supporting their pastoral work, the text constructs a twofold temple of God. The corporeal temple represents the human body and the spiritual temple — built on the foundations of faith, with walls of hope and a roof of love — represents the soul. The enumeration of the features of each temple enabled Grosseteste to systematize his teaching on the *cura animarum*, and the *Templum*

[12] Miller, 'Displaced Souls', p. 608. Cynthia Ho also describes the text as having a 'carefully numbered and subdivided organizational scheme': 'Dichotomize and Conquer: "Womman Handlyng" in *Handlyng Synne'*, *Philological Quarterly*, 72 (1993), 383–401 (p. 383).

[13] Sullens, *Handlyng Synne*, pp. 7, 77, and 282 respectively. Sullens does not include this rubrication in the line numbering.

[14] Miller, 'Displaced Souls', p. 609.

[15] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Christiania Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

[16] *The Rationale divinorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. by T. M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). I discuss the Middle English translation of the *Rationale* known as *What the Church Betokeneth* in Laura Varnam, 'Church', in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. by Marion Turner (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 299–314 (pp. 301–04).

[17] *Rationale*, trans. by Thibodeau, pp. 19–20. On the association of pillars with religious figures, see the article by Hannah Bailey below.

[18] For more on this tradition, which goes back to the *De gemma animae* (c. 1120) of Honorius Augustodunensis, see Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, pp. 49–60.

[19] 'Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis uos', in Robert Grosseteste, *Templum Dei*, ed. by Joseph Goering and F. A. C. Mantello (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), p. 29. I am grateful to Karl Kinsella for referring me to the *Templum Dei*.

Dei remained popular into the fifteenth century, even being translated into Middle English.[20] Grosseteste's name became synonymous with penitential literature, especially after he issued his constitutions in 1238, reinforcing the importance of lay education in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council. Indeed, the Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 415 copy of *Handlyng Synne* erroneously attributes the French source text to Grosseteste: 'here begynneþ þe boke þat men clepen yn frenshe manuele pecche þe wheche boke made yn frenshe Roberd Grosteste Bysshop of Lyncolne'.[21]

There was, then, an established tradition of pastoral literature drawing on architectural representation for structure and support. Sacred buildings such as the church and temple were already imbued with symbolic and sacred power and it is against this background that we can see Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* operating. As mentioned above, Mannyng was translating and adapting the *Manuel des Pechiez* which Matthew Sullivan dates to the mid thirteenth-century, placing it after the Fourth Lateran Council and in the milieu of the *Templum Dei*.[22] *Handlyng Synne* is not allegorical in the same way as the *Templum Dei* or Durandus's *Rationale* but it does exploit the symbolic potential of church architecture as part of its teaching strategy. The church building was without doubt a crucial resource for the late medieval parish priest who could make use of its structure and decorations, such as stained glass and wall paintings, when preaching and draw on the power of its sanctity to encourage good behaviour from his parishioners. The church was where the laity came to confess their sins; indeed, they brought their sins with them to church and in many pastoral care texts the building becomes a magnet for vice and profane practice. This is especially the case, as we might expect, in material dealing with sacrilege which focused specifically on the threat that lay misbehaviour posed to the church and its furniture. In order to teach the laity to avoid this sin, pastoral care texts must first illustrate it and in *Handlyng Synne*, sacrilege is represented and materialised in the architecture itself. Churchyard walls are broken, temporary structures fall down, and the inhabitants of overly elaborate tombs are ejected from the church by devils and fiends. Architectural representation — material and metaphorical, allegorical and the subject of narrative — is a rich resource for the edification of the laity in *Handlyng Synne*. As Mannyng reminds us in the opening of his section on sacrilege, '3yt mowe we weyl nat werche | 3yf we forgete holy cherche' (ll. 8591–92).

Constructing a Framework for Handling Sin

Handlyng Synne opens with a prayer to God and a statement of purpose:

> Fadyr and sone & holygost
> Þat art o god of my3tys most.
> At þy wrshepe shul we begynne
> To shame þe fend & shewe oure synne.
> Synne to *shewe*, vs to *frame*,
> God to wrshepe, þe fende to shame. (ll. 1–6, italics mine)

[20] See Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, pp. 24–27 and for the fifteenth-century Middle English *Templum Domini*, Roberta D. Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle: A Study in the Mediaeval Allegory of the Edifice with Especial Reference to Religious Writings* (Pennsylvania: Bryn Mawr, 1930), pp. 90–112.

[21] Sullens, *Handlyng Synne*, p. 3.

[22] Sullivan, 'Original and Subsequent Audiences', p. 18. Durandus's *Rationale* (c. 1280s) postdates the *Manuel* but it represents the culmination of a long tradition of architectural allegory. See Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, pp.

The verbs *shewe* and *frame* here are crucial. To *shewe* in Middle English means 'to examine', 'to be visible', 'to exhibit in public, display', and 'to teach', all of which correspond to Mannyng's aim in the text with regard to sin.[23] 'Vs to frame' is more complex, however, especially when considered in the light of the extant manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne*. To *frame* means to 'benefit or profit, to do good, to strengthen or comfort spiritually', and the text clearly intends to benefit 'vs', the reader, by its teaching. This meaning, deriving from the Old English 'fremian', dates from 1175 until the second quarter of the fourteenth-century; indeed, the final quotation in the *Middle English Dictionary* is from Mannyng's own *Chronicle of England*, which dates from 1338.[24] The *Middle English Dictionary* also includes a second verb, *framen*, which has an architectural and a literary meaning: 'to join or frame timber, to construct a building'; and 'to fashion something, compose a story'.[25] The architectural meaning is attested from the end of Mannyng's lifetime, c. 1330, and the literary meaning from c. 1400, the date of the surviving manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne*. The verb derives from the noun 'frame' (a framework of any kind) and, by the end of the fourteenth-century, the connection between architectural framing and the creative framing at work in a text was being exploited by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*. When Pandarus has set his plot in motion to unite the lovers at his house in Book III of *Troilus*, the narrator comments: 'This tymber is al redy up to frame'.[26] Pandarus's plan is imagined architecturally; his plot is the timber frame of a house that represents the lovers' union metaphorically. Chaucer also uses architectural representation at the end of Book I when Pandarus first considers how he should approach Criseyde with the news of Troilus's love for her. Here Chaucer draws directly on Geoffrey of Vinsauf's architectural metaphor in the *Poetria Nova*, with which I began this article:

> For everi wight that hath an hous to founde
> Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
> With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
> And sende his hertes line out fro withinne
> Aldirfirst his purpose for to wynne.
> Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,
> And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte.[27]

Pandarus's architectural approach to his orchestration of the love affair mirrors Chaucer's own careful construction of his poem; he too 'caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte'. Chaucer was, of course, writing more than fifty years after Mannyng but by the time of the extant manuscripts of *Handlyng Synne*, c. 1400 and after, the architectural and literary meaning of 'frame' had gained currency. When the prologue of *Handlyng Synne* declares that the purpose of the text is 'synne to shewe, vs to frame', it means to benefit us spiritually (the first meaning of the verb 'framen') but by the end of the fourteenth-century (and perhaps before), 'to frame us' might also imply the metaphorical construction of a framework. In the poem as a whole, Mannyng has composed a clear framework within which the reader is taught to handle sin, as I suggested in my description of the poem's structure above. But this framework can also be found at the narrative level as individual instances of sin often take place in the church and churchyard in the text's narrative exempla. Within the section on sacrilege in particular, the state of the material frame of the church and churchyard is crucial in determining whether

50–51.

23 *MED*, s.v. 'sheuen' (v.(1)), 1a, 2a, 4a, and 8a.

24 *MED*, s.v. 'framen (v.(1))', 1.

25 *MED*, s.v. 'framen (v.(2))', 1a and 2.

26 *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Book III, l. 530, p. 520.

27 *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, Book I, ll. 1065–71, p. 488.

or not a sin has been committed: walls that are broken or collapse are clear signs of sin and individuals who are removed from within the protection of the church walls are marked out as sinners.

The concept of a frame that is both architectural and metaphorical is theorised by Victor Turner in his essay 'Frame, Flow, and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality'. Turner argues that framing enables a society to analyse itself and in *Handlyng Synne*, the walls of the church and churchyard operate as precisely such frame for the examination of sin and the reinforcement of sacred space. Turner states that:

> To look at itself a society must cut out a piece of itself for inspection. To do this it must set up a *frame* within which images and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be scrutinized, assessed, and, if need be, remodelled and rearranged. In ritual what is inside the frame is what is often called the "sacred," what is outside, the "profane," "secular" or "mundane." To frame is to enclose in a border. A sacralised space has borders.[28]

A frame can be permanent, such as temple walls, or 'situational', such as an improvised structure that is erected temporarily or a border traced out through ritual procession.[29] In this model, a society engages in a process of self-examination through the use of a framing device which has the additional function of establishing the demarcation between sacred and profane space. In *Handlyng Synne*, the architectural frame of the parish church enables the Christian community to examine its sins, both personal and communal, and the walls of the church and churchyard are a crucial element in maintaining the identity of the church as a sacred space. The liturgical ritual for the consecration of a church established the binary of sacred space inside and profane space outside the church and churchyard, in part through ritual aspersion of the walls and the procession of the clergy around the outside of the church, which reinforced the border performatively.[30] Once the consecration ceremony is complete, however, it is up to the congregation to maintain the church's sanctity through virtuous behaviour and care for the material fabric, and this forms the primary focus of Mannyng's pastoral advice in the section on sacrilege in *Handlyng Synne.*

Mannyng defines sacrilege as 'mysdede to holynes' and begins with stealing and church breaking:

> Al þyng þat men wyþholde,
> Stole or reft, ȝyue or solde,
> Wyþoute leue of here wytyng,
> Þat kepe holy cherches þyng,
> Al swych þyng ys sacrylage,
> Wyþoute leue ys al outrage.
> Now of þe fyrste þat we haue spoke:
> Þey þat haue cherches *broke*
> And stole þo þynges þat were þer ynne,
> Sacrylege men calle þat synne. (ll. 8603–12, italics mine)

The verb 'breken' in Middle English can be used both of material objects and bodies and has multiple meanings: 'to destroy the wholeness of an object', 'to make forced entry', 'to break

[28] Victor Turner, 'Frame, Flow, and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 6 (1979), 465–99 (p. 468).

[29] Turner, 'Frame, Flow, and Reflection', p. 468.

[30] See Brian Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), pp. 45, 48, and 58–59.

open' something sealed, 'to commit a sin, transgress' (including to fail to keep the sacraments or holy days).[31] To 'break' the church is to violate its integrity and sanctity, and this also applies to the churchyard as well as the church itself. Mannyng explains:

> Vnkynd man ys he hardyly
> Þat yn cherche ȝerd doþ vyleyny.
> Oure long hous hyt ys to come
> To rest yn tyl þe day of dome.
> Þarfore we shuld, ȝyf we were kynde,
> Kepe hyt clene wyþ gode mynde.
> And þese prestes me þynkþ do synne
> Þat late here bestes fyle þer ynne. (ll. 8655–62)

Here the churchyard is refigured as an architectural space: 'oure long hous […] to rest yn tyl day of dome'. The church was described as the house of God on earth in medieval literature, drawing on Jacob's exclamation when he observed the ladder of angels ascending and descending from heaven (Genesis 28.17), and here the churchyard becomes a house of rest in which mankind awaits judgement day. The *MED* defines 'hous' as a 'building for human residence' but figuratively as 'the grave or bier', citing the late twelfth-century poem *The Grave*.[32] In Mannyng, rather than an individual grave, the entire churchyard is transformed into a communal 'longe hous', long perhaps denoting both the shape of the grave and the length of time mankind will abide within it before judgement day.[33] It is also possible that 'longe hous' is a translation of the Latin term *domus longa*, discussed by Gwyn I. Meirion-Jones, who concludes that the Latin term refers to a rectangular dwelling in which 'man and beast are housed at opposite ends, under one roof, with entry by a common lateral door'.[34] If the long-house does usually contain cattle, the allusion in *Handlyng Synne* would be ironic because Mannyng urges the reader to keep the churchyard clean, especially from animals that 'fyle [defile] þer ynne' (l. 8662).

Refiguring the churchyard as a dwelling place for mankind leads Mannyng to invoke man's very nature as a reason to avoid desecrating their future 'longe hous': 'vnkynd man ys he hardyly | þat yn cherche ȝerd doþ vyleyny' (ll. 8655–56). 'Kynde' in line 8659 ('ȝyf we were kynde') is a polysemous word in Middle English, encompassing man's nature, reason, instinctive moral feeling, and his relationship with his fellow human beings.[35] Ellen K. Rentz comments in her analysis of this passage in *Handlyng Synne* that 'as a space shared by the living and the dead, the churchyard represents the extended generations of the parish; its users are spiritual kin and their conduct should reflect that affinity'.[36] In the Middle Ages the laity were

[31] *MED*, s.v. 'breken', 1a, 11a, 12, 15, and 23a.

[32] *MED*, s.v. 'hous', 1a and b. The *MED* refers to the poem under an alternative title, 'Body and Soul (1)'. In her article above, Helen Appleton argues that the 'perverted domestic architecture of the grave is used to induce fear' and that the grave-as-house imagery is 'an extremely effective and widely understood warning against sin'. Here, Mannyng's graveyard-as-house imagery is employed as a warning against sacrilege but this is not because the space is terrifying in itself but because it is assumed that the reader will not wish to despoil the place in which they will rest until Judgement Day.

[33] See *MED*, s.v. 'long (adj.(1))', senses 1 ('of space, distance: long, extensive, far-reaching; also fig. large, great') and 2a ('of periods of time: of great duration, long-lasting'). On the collocation 'long hom', see also the above article by Helen Appleton.

[34] Gwyn I. Meirion-Jones, 'The Long-House: A Definition', *Medieval Archaeology*, 17 (1973), 135–37 (p. 137). I am grateful to Elizabeth Solopova for this reference.

[35] *MED*, s.v. 'kinde', 1a, 5b, 9–11.

[36] Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015),

responsible for the upkeep of the churchyard, just as they were responsible for the nave of the church, but as *Handlyng Synne* makes clear, the churchyard was not always the sacred space it was supposed to be. Indeed, in David Dymond's words, the churchyard was 'God's disputed acre', a place of 'action and noise, of ambiguity and conflict'.[37] Part of this conflict was due to secular activities in the churchyard, as we shall see in the 'Dancers of Colbek' exemplum, but in lines 8661–62 Mannyng singles out priests' animals in particular that 'fyle [defile] þer ynne', 'filen' here referring both to the act of defecation itself and the desecration of the churchyard that results.[38] This can, however, be prevented if man employs his natural 'kindness' and ensures that he keeps control of his animals, as the exemplum that Mannyng then tells makes clear.

This narrative is Mannyng's own addition to the *Manuel des Pechiez* and it concerns a knight, rather than a priest, whose manor 'was nat fro þe cherche ful fere':

> And was hyt þan as often falles,
> Broke were þe cherche ȝerd walles.
> Þe lordes hyrdes often lete
> Hys bestes yn to þe ȝerd & ete.
> Þe bestes dede as þey moste nede,
> Fyled oueral þere þey ȝede. (ll. 8677–82)

A bondman reproaches the knight for allowing his animals to defile the graves but the knight asks indignantly, 'what wrshepe shuld men make | aboute swyche cherles bodyes blake?' (ll. 8693–94). The bondman replies that 'þe lord þat made of erþe erles | of þat same erþe made he cherles' (ll. 8699–8700). The rhyme between earls and churls here reinforces that they are indeed of the same 'kind', if not the same social class. Duly chastened, the knight 'closed þe cherche ȝerde' (l. 8711) and his animals no longer defile its sanctity. Mannyng's social critique is evident here but what is also important is the responsibility that is placed on individuals whose lands border the churchyard for the upkeep of its boundaries. Mannyng's comment that the churchyard walls are broken 'as often falles' suggests that this narrative does not reflect an isolated incident, and indeed Katherine French notes that enquiries as to whether cattle were grazing in the churchyard feature in lists of Episcopal visitation questions, suggesting that the issue was of significant concern.[39] Similarly, in the late fourteenth-century, John Mirk directs the clergy to ask parishioners if they have left open the churchyard gate, thus allowing animals to enter, in his list of questions for confessional examination.[40] The integrity of churchyard walls and vigilance over any points of entry were essential for the prevention of sacrilege and parishioners' attitudes to the walls, and the community of the departed that they enclosed, act as a litmus test for vice and virtue.

This is also the case when Mannyng's narrative moves into the church itself in the next exemplum in the sacrilege section. This exemplum concerns a rich lawyer called Valentine. Mannyng tells us that he served the church 'more for mede þan godnes and onour' (l. 8750) but, nevertheless, he was buried within the building:

p. 28.

37 David Dymond, 'God's Disputed Acre', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), 464–97 (p. 466).

38 See *MED*, s.v. 'filen (v.(2))', 1, 2a, and 2b.

39 Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 32.

40 John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by Edward Peacock, Early English Text Society, o. s., 31 (London: Trübner, 1868), p. 46.

Þe fyrst nyght þat he was þer leyde,
Þe wardeynes of þe cherche vpbrede,
And herd one crye, ruly and shryl,
As he were put out aȝens hys wyl.
Þe wardeynes asked what þat myght be:
'Ryse vp we alle and go we se.'
Þere he was byryed þyder þey ran
And saye many fendes aboute þys man,
And of hys graue þey vp hym pulde,
Oute of þe cherche drawe hym þey wlde.
Þe deueles drowe hym by þe fete
As hyt were kareyne þat dogges ete. (ll. 8755–67)

When the churchwardens enter the church they discover that Valentine's body has been dragged out of its grave by fiends and they run back to their beds in fright. When they return to the church the following morning and inspect the grave, the body is missing:

Þer yn al aboute þey soght
But þe body fond þey noght.
Þey opunde þe dores & loked aboute
And fond þe body lyggyng þer wyþ oute (ll. 8773–76).

The binary prepositions 'in' and 'out' are crucial here as Valentine's position in relation to the church signifies his spiritual state. To be dragged 'out of þe cherche' by fiends clearly demonstrates that Valentine has no right to lie at rest in that most sacred of spaces: 'þer he lay fyrst, he was nat wrþy' (l. 8780).[41] The churchwardens' thorough search of the building, including opening the church doors, emphasises this, especially given that during the night they had already seen Valentine's body expelled from the church so they should already know that it is no longer inside. Mannyng then explains that it is Valentine's elaborate tomb that is to blame for his fate:

But hys soule had pyne þe more
For *þe pompe & pryde* þat he was leyd þore.
Lordes are bysy aboute to haue
Proud stones lyggyng an *hygh* on here graue.
Þurgh þat *pryde* þey mowe be lore
Þogh þey had do no synne byfore.
Hyt helpeþ ryght noght þe *tumbe of pryde*,
Whan þe soule fro pyne may hyt nat hyde. (ll. 8781–88, italics mine)

Here it is the architectural representation itself — the tomb which Valentine has commissioned to represent him after death — that is the cause of sacrilege. The tomb is a sinful construction and as a result even a virtuous man can be lost, 'þogh þey had do no synne byfore'. The use of the adjective 'hygh' compounds the sinful nature of the tomb because when referring to architecture, it often connotes 'pride and ostentation'.[42] In pastoral care texts it is crucial that church architecture, whether the building itself or a tomb within it, is virtuous in representation and in construction. We see concern with the latter in the fifteenth-century exempla collection

[41] For more on devils enforcing the sanctity of the church, see Laura Varnam, *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 145–60.

[42] *MED*, s.v. 'heigh', 1a.

The Alphabet of Tales, which includes a narrative concerning a usurer who built a church with the proceeds from 'his ravyn [robbery] & his vsurye [money-lending]'.[43] When the bishop and clergy arrive to consecrate this newly constructed church, they discover a devil sitting on the altar who demands, 'Why halows þou my kurk? Sese! for þe iuridiccion þeroff longis vnto me; ffor it is byggid all of ravyn & vsurie'.[44] The clergy flee and the devil sets the church on fire, destroying it entirely. A building constructed from the wages of sin belongs to the devil and cannot be consecrated as a sacred space, as the devil's use of the legal language of jurisdiction makes clear. In this narrative, church architecture cannot remain standing unless it is built on virtuous foundations. As in the case of Valentine's tomb, we find devils acting, paradoxically, to ensure that sacrilege does not take place. Fiends remove Valentine's body from the sacred space of the church in *Handlyng Synne.* In *The Alphabet*, the devil prevents the clergy from consecrating a sinful structure.

In Mannyng's most famous exemplum, 'The Dancers of Colbek', much expanded from his source, material architecture is also employed as an essential indicator of sin. In fact, the architecture itself emerges as a more proficient reader of sin than the participants in the narrative.[45] In the exemplum, the dancers who carol in the churchyard are condemned to continue dancing for a year, but when the Emperor takes pity on them and constructs a temporary shelter as protection from the weather, the structure keeps falling down. The dancers' sin of sacrilege will not be hidden away. However, the collapse of the architecture does not resolve the narrative's moral complexities, unlike the exemplum of the usurer's church above. At the end of the episode Mannyng betrays an anxiety that men might say that the events related confirm the proverb 'þe nere þe cherche, þe ferþere fro god' (l. 9247). If this is indeed the case, the sanctity of church architecture is in considerable peril.

The Dancers of Colbek: Architecture Falling Down

Mannyng introduces this exemplum with a warning against carolling, wrestling, singing, and playing games in the churchyard 'whyl þe prest standeþ at messe' (l. 8998):

> And specyaly at hygh tymes,
> Karolles to synge & rede rymes.
> Noght yn none holy stedes
> Þat myghte dysturble þe prestes bedes. (ll. 9003–06)

The 'Dancers of Colbek' are then introduced to demonstrate the effect of sacrilegious carolling and dancing. Twelve mad fools arrive in the town of Colbek to fetch the priest's daughter Ave and encourage her to join their dance. They dance and sing around the churchyard while the priest, Robert, is trying to conduct the mass inside. Hearing the noise from his position at the altar, Robert walks out into the church porch and forbids them to continue, inviting them instead to enter the church and 'comeþ yn on feyr manere | Goddes seruyse for to here' (ll. 9072–73). By disrupting Robert's liturgical performance, the dancers commit sacrilege. As Mark Miller puts it, their activity is 'a sin against the church itself by way of a perversion or

[43] *The Alphabet of Tales*, ed. by Mary Mcleod Banks, Early English Text Society, o. s., 126–7 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1879), p. 198.
[44] *The Alphabet of Tales*, ed. by Banks, p. 199.
[45] On the motif of architecture-as-reader, see also the article by Hannah Bailey below.

parody of the celebration inside the church, the mass whereby the Christian community is rightly constituted and affirmed'.[46]

The dancers refuse Robert's invitation, however, and continue with their performance. Robert is 'sore agreued' (l. 9080) and in his exasperation at their truculent behaviour, he curses them:

> He preyed god þat he on beleued,
> And for seynt magne þat he wlde so werche,
> Yn whos wrshepe sett was þe cherche,
> Þat swych a veniaunce were on hem sent
> Ar þey out of þat stede were went,
> Þat þey myghte eure ryght so wende
> Vnto þat tyme twelfmonth ende. (ll. 9081–89)

The dancers' hands immediately lock together and they are condemned to continue their performance for twelve months. Robert sends his son Aȝone to free Ave from the dance but Mannyng declares ominously that 'al to late þat wrd was seyd, | for on hem alle was þe veniaunce leyd' (ll. 9100–01), and when Aȝone seizes Ave's arm, he only succeeds in pulling it off, leaving her body to continue to dance regardless. Aȝone takes the severed arm to Robert, declaring, 'þy cursing now sene hyt ys, | wyþ veniaunce on þyn owne flesshe' (ll. 9120–21). As many critics have noted, it is here that the moral of the exemplum splits in two; on the one hand, the narrative is a warning to the laity against carolling in the churchyard, on the other, it is a warning to priests who are quick to anger.[47] Robert buries Ave's arm, we presume in the churchyard, but the following morning, 'he fond hyt lyggyng aboue þe graue' (l. 9131). Robert buries the arm on two further occasions and each time he discovers it above the grave in the morning. Expelled from consecrated ground as Valentine's body is ejected from the church, Ave's arm will not remain at rest in the earth and so Robert brings it into the church and 'ordeyned hyt for to be | þat eury man myghte wyþ ye hyt se' (ll. 9140–41). The arm remains uncorrupted but unlike the relic of a saint or a votive offering at a shrine, the arm operates as a sign of sin rather than sanctity.[48] It is essential that the congregation should be able to see the arm, the symbol of Robert's failure to save his own flesh and blood from the curse. There is a breakdown of both sacred space and social order here. The sanctity of the churchyard is disturbed and this is paralleled by the disruption in the priest's own family. Mannyng explains in the prologue that he intends to 'shewe' sin and here it is clearly made visible for our profit. Robert cannot be allowed to bury the arm in consecrated ground as this would compound the sacrilege already taking place in the churchyard, performed by the cursed dancers, of whose group his own daughter is a member. The sacrilege extends beyond threatening the sacred space of the church to destabilise the parish community as a whole, starting with the parish priest.

[46] Miller, 'Displaced Souls', p. 610.

[47] See Kate Greenspan, 'Lessons for the Priest, Lessons for the People: Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Audiences for *Handlyng Synne*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 21 (2004), 109–21 (p. 113). Miller argues that 'our sense of what the narrative is about, and so of what the sin or sins relevant to it as a piece of instruction might be, keeps getting overturned' and the multiplicity of interpretations 'complicates the moral geography of the tale' ('Displaced Souls', pp. 611–12).

[48] Pilgrims often left votive offerings at shrines in the shape of the body parts which they hoped the saint would heal. See Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 97–99.

The fate of the arm is additionally significant for the structure of the tale because it indicates the likely outcome of the next event in the narrative. After he describes how the arm is placed in the church for all to see, Mannyng returns to the dancers, informing us that they continue to dance without experiencing tiredness, hunger, or thirst, and they remain impervious to the weather:

> Ne mete ete ne drank drynke,
> Ne slepte onely a lepy wynke.
> Nyght ne day þey wyste of noun,
> Whan hyt was come, whan hyt was goun.
> Frost ne snogh, hayl ne reyne,
> Of cold ne hete felt þey no peyne.
> Her ne nayles neure grewe,
> Ne solowed cloþes ne turned hewe.
> Þundur ne lyghtnyng dede hem no dere,
> Goddes mercy dede hyt fro hem were. (ll. 9150–59)

Somewhat paradoxically, we hear that God's mercy protects the dancers from thunder and lightning, but this, I would suggest, is because it is crucial that the spectacle remains to be seen so that their sin is shown as an example. Neither fully alive nor fully dead, the dancers' bodies exist in a liminal state but the performance they stage transforms the churchyard into profane space for the duration of their punishment. The original instance of sacrilege caused by the dance is endlessly repeated and as a result, the priest has cursed his own liturgical performance to be disrupted and desecrated for a whole year. Robert is entirely complicit in the act of sacrilege and behaves 'unkindly' both to his fellow men and his sacred office.

The spectacle of the dancers draws an audience and the Emperor Henry arrives from Rome and attempts to help them. He is overcome with emotion and 'wepte sore | for þe myschef þat he sagh' (ll. 9166–67). He then employs carpenters ('wryghtes') to build a 'coueryng' over them because of the weather:

> He dede come wryghtes for to make
> Coueryng ouer hem for tempest sake,
> But þat þey wroghte, hyt was yn veyn,
> For hyt com to no certeyn,
> For þat þey sette on o day,
> On þe touþer, down hyt lay.
> Ones, twys, þrys, þus þey wroght,
> And al here makyng was for noght.
> Myght no coueryng hyle hem fro cold
> Tyl tyme of mercy þat cryst hyt wold. (ll. 9168–77)

A 'coueryng' here means a 'roof or ceiling' and to 'hyle' them from the cold means to 'protect and shelter' the dancers, but also to hide and 'conceal' them.[49] Just as Ave's arm is expelled from the earth three times, so the roof that is erected over the dancers falls down three times. The carpenters' 'makyng was for noght'. But this is not because the workmanship was poor or the building materials were ill-gotten, as we saw with the usurer's church, but because the dancers' sin must remain visible for the edification of those who observe it. For all his tears at their plight, Emperor Henry has not read the dancers' performance correctly. They cannot be affected by the weather so his desire to protect them is misplaced. He describes their predicament as 'myschef' which means 'misfortune, affliction, trouble' but also 'wickedness,

[49] *MED*, s.v. 'coveringe (ger.(1))', 3b and 'hilen', 1c and d, 1a and 2.

wrongdoing', and it is the latter meaning that the *MED* cites for the line in *Handlyng Synne*.[50] The Emperor might see the dancers as experiencing affliction but their dance is in fact a sign of wrongdoing, not a misfortune to be pitied.

Kate Greenspan argues that Mannyng's audience would have recognised a different but related aim in the Emperor's order to build the shelter: an attempt to 'entomb' the dancers and 'protect the community' from being contaminated by their sin.[51] She suggests that the dancers' 'lack of response to external stimuli, unconsciousness of their surroundings, and failure to eat, sleep or grow might well betoken death to a medieval audience' and as a result, until the dancers 'have been rendered inert by decomposition, the cursed carollers threaten the common welfare. Their continued exposure prevents worms and decay from acting upon them and bringing them to rest'.[52] The dancers' continued performance threatens the community as it perpetuates the initial act of sacrilege and disturbs the everyday running of the parish church. But rather than protecting the community by burying the dancers, the overarching purpose of *Handlyng Synne* necessitates that they are displayed for the public good. After exhorting the reader in the prologue to handle sin so that we can 'ryse from alle', Mannyng concludes:

> Þarfore may hyt & gode skyle why
> Handlyng synne be clepyd *oponly*.
> For hyt touchyþ no *pryuyte*
> But *opon* synne þat callyd may be. (ll. 137–40, italics mine)

Sin must be made visible openly and, although it was not his intention, the repeated collapse of the Emperor's shelter in fact foregrounds this imperative. Each time the structure attempts to conceal the dancers and separate their act of sacrilege from the community, it falls to the ground, revealing their sin openly once more.

For the carpenters themselves, their 'makyng was for noght', in that the structure they erect fails to perform its purpose, but Mannyng's own textual reconstruction of the event endows it with didactic meaning. Architectural vocabulary pervades this section of the 'Dancers' tale that Mannyng has deliberately expanded from his source text. We are told that the structure that the carpenters 'sette on o day, | on þe touþer, down hyt lay' (ll. 9172–73). Here the verb *setten* means 'to build and construct, to locate in a fixed position', but it is used earlier in the 'The Dancers of Colbek' to mean 'consecrated' or 'dedicated to', when Mannyng mentions St Magnus 'yn whos wrshepe sett was þe cherche' (l. 9083).[53] The carpenters 'set' the roof over the dancers but because they are desecrating the churchyard, it cannot be allowed to remain standing. Mannyng also exploits the double meaning of the verb *maken* in this section. The primary meaning is to construct or build and it is used twice in this sense in the exemplum: when the carpenters 'make' the covering for the dancers (l. 9168) and when Mannyng asserts that their 'makyng was for noght' (l. 9175).[54] Like *setten*, the verb *maken* can also be used of religious foundations but Mannyng uses it in its additional sense of 'write or compose' in the prologue to *Handlyng Synne*:

> For lewed men y vndyr toke
> On englyssh tonge to *make* þys boke,
> For many beyn of swyche manere
> Þat talys & rymys wyle bleþly here
> Yn gamys, yn festys, & at þe ale,

[50] *MED*, s.v. 'mischef', 1a and 4.
[51] Greenspan, 'Lessons for the Priest', p. 116.
[52] Greenspan, 'Lessons for the Priest', p. 116.
[53] *MED*, s.v. 'setten', 2a and 4a.
[54] *MED*, s.v. 'maken', senses 1 ('to create'), and 2 ('to construct or produce a thing').

Loue men to lestene trotouale,
Þat may falle ofte to velanye
To dedly synne or outher folye.
For swyche men haue y *made* þys ryme
Þat þey may weyl dyspende here tyme
And þer yn sumwhat for to here
To leue al swyche foul manere
And for to kun knowe þer ynne
Þat þey wene no synne be ynne. (ll. 43–56, italics mine)[55]

Mannyng has 'made' *Handlyng Synne* so that 'lewed men' who fall into sin because of their love of secular tales can be educated by his moral tales to 'knowe' and recognise sin. 'þer ynne', inside his book, are edifying tales that make sin visible for our profit and in the 'Dancers of Colbek' Mannyng ensures that his narrative 'making' reveals, rather than conceals, the sin of the dancers. The carpenters' material making is in vain but Robert Mannyng's poetic construction is profitable and edifying.

Conclusions

Once the twelve months are over, the cursed dancers fly into the church and lie in a swoon on the pavement for three days. Brought back to life, they confront Robert and accuse him of being the 'ensample and enchesun [cause] | of oure long confusyun' and the 'maker […] of oure trauayle' (ll. 9194–96), declaring that 'to þy long home sone shalt þou wende' (l. 9199). Recalling the 'longe hous' of the churchyard, the 'long home' to which Robert is destined is his grave. When the dancers rise up to leave the church, his daughter Ave remains behind, lying dead on the pavement, and Robert himself promptly dies. The dancers leave the church but although they are no longer joined together, they are still 'hoppyng aboute' (l. 9225) and aside from one who is healed at the shrine of St Edith, they remain in this state without 'amendement' (ll. 9226–37).[56] The ambiguity of this ending, which sees the majority of the dancers remain in their state of punishment, is compounded by Mannyng's conclusion, which focuses on the ambiguous potential of responses to the tale:

Þarfore men seye & weyl ys trowed,
þe nere þe cherche, þe ferþere fro god.
So fare men here by þys tale:
Some hold hyt but for a troteuale.
Yn ouþer stedes hyt ys ful dere,
And for gret merueyle þey wyl hyt here.
A tale hyt ys of feyr shewyng,
Ensample & drede aȝens cursyng.
Þys tale y told to *make ȝow aferd*
Yn cherche to karolle or yn cherche ȝerd;
Namly aȝens þe prestes wyl,
Leueþ whan he byddeþ ȝow be styl. (ll. 9246–57, italics mine)

[55] *MED*, s.v. 'maken', 5.

[56] 'Amendement' means 'correction', 'improvement in health', 'reparation or redress (of a wrong)', and most relevant here, 'salvation', 'penance, atonement'. *MED*, s.v. 'amendement', 1a, 2, and 5b and c. It is also related to the verb 'amenden' which also means to correct or emend a text, and to repair a building, which ties in with the architectural language discussed above. *MED*, s.v. 'amenden', 1b and 2a.

The tale is an 'ensample' against cursing and the word 'ensample' here recalls the dancers' designation of Robert as the 'ensample […] of oure long confusyun' (l. 9194). But it is also a warning against carolling in the church or churchyard. The tale is held by some men to be a 'troteuale', a favourite word of Mannyng's that means 'idle tale-telling, a trifle, a piece of foolishness'.[57] But elsewhere ('yn ouþer stedes') it is seen as a 'gret meruyele', that is, a wonderful event — or in narrative terms, a miracle account.[58] This ability for the narrative to signify in multiple ways and to fulfil multiple generic categories simultaneously might explain Mannyng's use of the proverb 'þe nere þe cherche, þe ferþere fro god'. Introduced with the phrase 'þarfore men seye & weyl ys trowed', the bold proverb that follows sounds definitive but as Mark Miller argues, this would be to oversimplify the tale and misread the 'cherche'. If the proverb were true, Miller writes, 'then "the church" would no longer be a *church*, a house of God'.[59] The introductory phrase should therefore be read as a deliberate exaggeration; men might well *say* that this is the case but the reader should be able to recognise from their own experience that the proverb is not entirely accurate. Miller goes further and suggests that 'this bit of common knowledge […] expresses an impulse to over-specify the tale's fearfulness, as if it could be located in a particular place and so avoided'.[60] Keeping away from the church will not protect the individual from sin; it will prevent him or her from learning how to handle it properly. Mannyng declares in the prologue that 'euery whare ys begynnyng of synne' (l. 120) but as his exempla show, in the parish church sin finds its end through careful handling and constant vigilance.

The use of the proverb does, however, provoke the reader to engage with the core issue at the heart of *Handlyng Synne*'s exploration of sacrilege: when the individual enters the church and churchyard, bringing their sins for confession or enacting new ones because of 'unkindness', do they in fact come closer to God or are they in constant danger of being expelled from the church community? This is an issue that, I have suggested, the text addresses using architectural representation as its method. The architecture of the church — the churchyard walls, elaborate tombs, and temporary shelters — act as 'a tool, a machine for thinking', to borrow a phrase from Mary Carruthers.[61] The materiality of walls, roofs, and tombs, and their responsiveness to misbehaviour facilitates Mannyng's teaching on sin and the language of construction and framing also provides a method for thinking about poetic composition and the organisation of the text. The nearer we are to the church in *Handlyng Synne*, the further we are from falling into the same sins as the 'Dancers of Colbek', proud Valentine, or the knight with the unruly animals. Robert Mannyng frames sin in the architecture of the parish church to the profit of his book and his readers.

[57] *MED*, s.v. 'trotevale'.

[58] *MED*, 'merveille' 1a ('a wonderful feat'), 1b ('a miracle'), and 2 ('a written account or spoken report of a marvellous thing or event').

[59] Miller, 'Displaced Souls', p. 626.

[60] Miller, 'Displaced Souls', p. 626. Whiting cites Mannyng as the first reference for the phrase as proverbial; see B. J. Whiting, with H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases: From English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 85.

[61] Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, p. 276.