

Leeds Studies in English

Article:

E. A. Jones, 'The Heresiarch, The Virgin, The Recluse, The Vowess, The Priest: Some Medieval Audiences for Pelagius's Epistle to Demetrias', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 31 (2000), 205-27

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123777&silo_library=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

The Heresiarch, The Virgin, The Recluse, The Vowess, The Priest: Some Medieval Audiences for Pelagius's *Epistle to Demetrias*

E. A. Jones

For one of the four great doctors of the church, St Jerome was not well served by Middle English translators. Renditions of only two works of any substance ascribed to him survive. One of these is the 'Prologue' to the earlier version of the Wycliffite Bible – a project which he would no doubt have turned in his grave to be associated with.¹ He could scarcely have been happier with the attribution to him of the other, the 'Epistle to Demetrias', written in fact (with fine irony) by his arch-opponent, the man he described, casting aspersions on his British origins as well as his often remarked corpulence, as a 'huge, bloated, Alpine dog, weighed down with Scottish oats', the heretic Pelagius.²

I

Pelagius wrote his *Epistula ad sacram Christi virginem Demetriadem* in 413, three years before he was condemned and excommunicated by Innocent I, having been pursued by both Jerome and Augustine, for his belief in the primacy of the human will (rather than grace) in securing salvation.³ Demetrias, daughter of the widow Juliana, a member of the powerful Roman family of the Anicii now in exile in North Africa following the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth, was fourteen years old when she announced her vocation to the life of virginity. Her mother and Proba (either her grandmother or her great-aunt), the head of the family, had been among the spiritually best-connected women in Rome, and Juliana was able to secure for her daughter letters of congratulation, encouragement and counsel not only from Pelagius, but also from the three men who would soon accomplish his downfall, Augustine, Jerome and Innocent.⁴

Only the first eight of Pelagius's letter's thirty chapters are what would be

called 'Pelagian' in content, attacking the 'ignorant majority' (*imperitum vulgus*) for their denial of man's innate propensity to choose good over evil.⁵ As Pelagius notes, without a hint of irony, as he climbs onto his hobby-horse:

Quoties mihi de institutione morum, et sanctae vitae conversatione dicendum est, soleo prius humanae naturae vim qualitatemque monstrare, et quid efficere possit, ostendere.

[Whenever I have to speak on the subject of moral instruction and the conduct of a holy life, it is my practice first to demonstrate the power and quality of human nature and to show what it is capable of achieving (2, 1).]

With the opening of his ninth chapter, however, he drops the strident tone of the controversialist, to turn (with a disingenuous note of compromise) to the proper business of the present epistle:

Et quoniam sufficienter de his, ut puto, diximus: nunc instituiamus perfectam virginem, quae es utroque semper accensa, et naturae simul et gratiae bonum morum sanctitate testetur.

[Since we have said enough on these matters in my opinion, let us now begin our instruction of a perfect virgin who by the purity of her moral life bears witness at one and the same time to the good of nature and the good of grace, since she has always drawn her inspiration from both of these sources (9, 1).]

He first exhorts Demetrias, who has elected to take upon her the life of perfection not commanded but only counselled by God, that she should not neglect to observe his commandments, to strive to eschew vices, and to practise a moderate degree of asceticism. By following this form of living, Demetrias will replace her earthly nobility with nobility of soul (22, 2). Pelagius then describes the temptations with which the envious devil will attempt to divert her from her course of perfection, and offers remedies against them, before concluding with an injunction to focus not on the trials and hardships of her ascetic way of life, but on the reward which is held out to her, for

nullus labor durus: nullum tempus longum videri debet, quo gloria aeternitatis acquiritur.

[No labour ought to seem difficult, no time too long to wait, when the prize at stake is nothing less than everlasting glory (30, 3).]

The literary excellence of the 'Epistle' has been remarked from the earliest times.⁶ In the present century, Georges de Plinval has contrasted the work's eloquence with the utilitarianism which more often characterizes its author's prose:

Le style est devenu plus noble et plus varié: des images délicates et heureuses lui confèrent un agrément nouveau; on dirait qu'un souffle de poésie, venu peut-être de l'hellénisme, a assoupli la prose austère de Pélage.⁷

It is, though, the letter's good sense and sound advice unselfconsciously offered which most impress its recent translator, Bryn Rees:

What is most striking perhaps is Pelagius's sympathy, indeed empathy, with his young pupil, the delicacy and restraint with which he moderates his 'terrifying message'. . . . Nor is there any sign of condescension or self-regard here, none of the slick showmanship of a Jerome or of the world-weary detachment of an Augustine. The impression which we get, and which Demetrias must have got, is that of an older, wiser friend, writing with deep feeling and sincerity from his own lifetime of experience and commending the values and obligations which he himself prizes above all else.⁸

II

It was an estimation which the Middle Ages shared. Bede offers a brief but appreciative analysis of the work, commending the teaching its author provides,

by which he excellently instructs the virgin dedicated to God,

and indeed would have brought to completion a work most useful and wholesome, if he had taught her in all her prayers to call on divine grace, and not to trust in the freedom of her own will, and in her own strength.⁹

Bede suspected that the work was not by Jerome (mortifyingly for Jerome, one of his reasons was that the 'charm of its honeyed eloquence' ('suavitas eloquentiae demulcentis') disqualified him as a candidate for its authorship), although he did not know that Pelagius was its true author.¹⁰ The attribution of the 'Epistle' to Jerome was, however, usual throughout the Middle Ages, and the unchallenged orthodoxy of the doctor of the church must have served as a powerful guarantor of the text's acceptability. The 'Epistle to Demetrias' is thus a nice example of a text which appears to have acquired authority only by dint of concealing its authorship. Indeed, it is interesting to speculate whether it survived because of a chance association with the name of Jerome, or whether the ascription was a fiction concocted to prevent the loss of a text whose many excellent qualities, as Bede acknowledged, made it too good to be allowed to go to waste.

Concrete testimony to the regard in which the 'Epistle' was held throughout the Middle Ages is afforded by the ninety-six extant medieval manuscripts of the work, the earliest dating from the eighth and the latest from the end of the fifteenth century.¹¹ There are twenty-seven manuscripts surviving in British libraries, ranging in date from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Six twelfth- and one thirteenth-century manuscript may be identified as having belonged to English religious houses; another twelfth-century copy belonged to Merton College, Oxford.¹² The 'Epistle' also provides quotations, cited with the ascription to Jerome, in a number of English works.¹³

The Middle English translation of the 'Epistle', dating probably from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, is extant in six fifteenth-century manuscripts:¹⁴

A: London: British Library, MS Add. 10053, fols 40v-68v.¹⁵

Ro¹: British Library, MS Royal 17.C.xviii, fols 110v-8v.

Ro²: British Library, MS Royal 18.A.x, fols 67r-82v.

N: Norwich: Castle Museum, MS 158.926.4g.5, fols 1r-30r.

Ra: Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C 894, fols 91v-7v.

Jo: Oxford: St John's College, MS 94, fols 127r-140av.

It differs from the Latin text chiefly in the careful removal of any material tainted

with the author's heresy. Thus the first eight chapters of the 'Epistle', in which Pelagius offers his preliminary exposition of the doctrine of the dignity of the human will, are excised from the Middle English text, which thus begins with chapter nine.¹⁶ As already observed, this is the point where Pelagius himself is conscious of getting down to the proper business of his treatise – the instruction of Demetrias. Thereafter, Pelagius's text is generally free of suspect material. An important exception is the opening of chapter eleven, which attracted the particular attention of Augustine and Alypius, who wrote to Demetrias's mother Juliana in 417, advising her that they had seen a copy of Pelagius's letter to her daughter and warning her of the dangers of its sentiments, quoting the offending passage:¹⁷

Habes ergo et hic per quae merito praeponaris aliis, immo hic magis. Nam corporalis nobilitas atque opulentia, tuorum intelliguntur esse, non tua. Spirituales vero divitias nullus tibi, praeter te, conferre poterit. In his ergo jure laudanda es: in his merito caeteris praeferenda es: quae nisi ex te, et in te esse non possunt.

[In this respect too, then, you have possessions which rightly entitle you to be set above others, indeed even more so; for everyone realizes that your nobility in the physical sense and your wealth belong to your family, not to you, but no one except you yourself will be able to endow you with spiritual riches, and it is for these that you are rightly to be praised, for these that you are deservedly set above others, and they are things which cannot be within you unless they come from you (11, 1).]

To be fair, Pelagius seems here to be opposing Demetrias's own individual efforts to the patronage of her family, rather than to the operation of God's prevenient grace. Nevertheless, in the charged atmosphere of theological controversy, it is not difficult to see how the argument that spiritual riches can come only and exclusively from oneself, and can only be possessed if they come from oneself, could be seen to offend against the Augustinian doctrine of grace. Augustine and Alypius exclaim proleptically, 'Of course you realize what great danger there is to be feared in these words'.¹⁸ Whether or not alerted by their comments, the Middle English translator replaces these remarks with a judiciously worded paraphrase:

But certes, vertues & good maneres – þat arn gostly riches & fairhed of þe soule – þei arn in þi power for to haue, for þei arn gendred in þin herte.¹⁹

The passive construction neatly leaves the agent of the engendering of virtue in the heart unexpressed, thereby sidestepping in one clause the entire Pelagian controversy.

Other alterations to Pelagius's text in the English translation reflect the fact that it is designed for an audience less specific than that of the original 'Epistle'. Thus the translator omits the opening paragraphs of the fourteenth chapter, with their lengthy comparisons of the worldly honour associated with the consulships of Demetrias's kin with her own even more exalted vocation (14, 1-2), and where Pelagius exhorts Demetrias

Omnis ista praeclari generis dignitas, et illustre Anicii sanguinis decus, ad animam transferantur

[Let all that dignity which you derive from your famous family and the illustrious honour of the Anician blood be transferred to your soul (22, 2)]

the Middle English text has, more generally, 'I pray þe þat þu turne alle þin high²⁰ kynrede & al þi gentil blood to gentrye of soule' (fol. 19v). Again, Pelagius excuses his young reader from performing the works of mercy, asking her pious mother and Proba to fulfil them in her place (22, 1); the English translator, in an interesting modification, has instead:

þis maner of bysynes of actif dedis I counseyle to opere moore þan to þe, as to ryche men & wommen. For to hem it befalleþ to fede þe hungry, to cloþe þe naked, to visyte þe seke, & to resseyue pylgrymes & herberweles, and [for]²¹ hope in heuenly mede gladly for to zeue to Crist in pore men (fol. 19v).

This echo of the familiar societal rationale for the contemplative life suggests a possible audience for the Middle English version of the 'Epistle'.²² One copy known to have been in the possession of a practising contemplative is **Jo**, written for his own use and completed in 1434 by John Lacy, a Dominican friar living as an anchorite, attached apparently to the priory of his order at Newcastle.²³ Found alongside prayers,

liturgical texts, guides to confession, commentaries on the commandments and deadly sins, and four of the more basic of Walter Hilton's *Eight Chapters on Perfection*, the 'Epistle' seems to have served as an informal 'form of living' for a vocation which had no canonically sanctioned rule.²⁴

Three other manuscripts similarly accompany their text of the 'Epistle' predominantly with works of elementary religious instruction. Of these, **N** is probably the earliest, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century.²⁵ Its copy of the 'Epistle' is followed by the *Lityl Tretys* on the seven deadly sins by the Carmelite Richard of Lavynham, a commentary on the Pater Noster, and a short verse on the abuses of the age.²⁶ Its language suggests a Norfolk origin, and it is tempting to associate it with the flourishing of the solitary life in Norwich and its environs which appears to begin with Julian of Norwich at the turn of the century.²⁷ The mid-century text in **A** represents the accommodation of the 'Epistle' to a new audience. A note on fol. 83r records that it was made for John Pery, canon of the Augustinian priory of Holy Trinity, Aldgate.²⁸ It is accompanied by material of a slightly more advanced nature than that in **Jo** and **N**, including the *Mirror of St Edmund* and Hilton's *Eight Chapters* complete, as well as more rudimentary catechetical material on the seven deadly sins, five senses, seven works of mercy, and so on, concluding with the short treatise setting out the minimum requirements for a priest's knowledge, *Sacerdos Parochialis*.²⁹ **Ro**², meanwhile, is the only surviving manuscript of the 'Epistle' which can be shown to have been intended, as of course Pelagius's original letter was, for a female recipient. The principal work in the manuscript is a lengthy treatment of the vices and virtues translated from the French *Somme le roi*; as well as the 'Epistle', it features also brief commentaries on the commandments and vices, a treatise offering remedies against temptations, and a form of confession.³⁰ The latter is intended for the use of a woman, and the treatise on temptations is addressed to a 'dere sister'.³¹

The remaining two copies occur in the very closely related pair of manuscripts, **Ra** and **Ro**¹. Both are almost certainly London manuscripts of the late fifteenth century.³² They are virtually identical in their contents, which are generally of a more advanced nature than those of the other four manuscripts of the 'Epistle'.³³ They include texts of the *Craft of Dying* and the *Treatise of Ghostly Battle*; Hilton's *Eight Chapters*, *Mixed Life* and a compilation based on chapters from the first book of the *Scale of Perfection*; short treatises on tribulations and on prayer, and a translation of the Ps.-Bernard *Meditationes Piissime*. They differ only in the final leaves of **Ro**¹, where it alone has a prayer in time of tribulation, and three prayers taught by the Virgin to St Bridget. Both manuscripts preserve only the later part of the 'Epistle', omitting all the opening discussion of the obligation to observe the commandments

and the discerning of vice from virtue, beginning instead with material found in the twenty-first chapter of the Latin text, advising against excess in fasting and other ascetic practices. In keeping with the emphases of their other contents, therefore, these manuscripts give a text which is concerned not with the necessary preparations for the life of perfection, but with the spiritual temptations and tribulations which attend its attainment.

It is not immediately clear for what kind of readership the manuscripts were intended. Most of the texts already mentioned are of a type often found in the ownership of pious laypeople attempting to follow a quasi-religious way of life. Hilton's *Mixed Life*, of course, is explicitly designed for, and indeed defines the nature of, such a life. At the same time, they include 'a good contemplacion for a prest or he go to masse', which appears incompatible with such an audience.³⁴ The 'lytil tretise azenes fleischly affeccyoneȝ & alle vnþrifti lustis' which immediately follows the 'Epistle' in both manuscripts is, on the other hand, written for a woman, although its author is happy to countenance its wider circulation:

And thofe this tretis and writyng after þe maner of spech be made to women allonly and that for certeyne causis, yitt euery man havyng discrecion that redis therein may also well take his lernynge and spirituall availe þereby as itt had beene wretyn to hem also specially as itt is wretyn to women.³⁵

Perhaps the most plausible conjecture is that the manuscripts were conceived as aids to the pastoral direction of laymen and -women attempting to follow the Hiltonian mixed life, such as might be of use to their confessors or other spiritual directors.³⁶ With the increasing appeal and the 'self-help' nature of such a life, which texts such as Hilton's helped to foster, however, it is easy enough to hypothesize a ready lay audience for these manuscript compilations.³⁷ Certainly by the mid-sixteenth century both manuscripts were in the possession of just the kind of London gentry family which might have provided an audience for them a century earlier.³⁸

III

The 'Epistle' turns up next as part of the lengthy Middle English guide to the contemplative life, *Disce Mori*.³⁹ Surviving in two manuscripts, this mid-fifteenth-century compilation offers an exhaustive course in the way of perfection, beginning

with the recognition and extirpation of vice, moving through penance and ascesis to the acquisition of virtues and contemplative experience itself. It is perhaps best known for its many borrowings from the English mystics Rolle and Hilton, and its allusions to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, together with the quotation of a stanza from that poem.⁴⁰

Lee Patterson has called it 'a handbook for nuns', declaring that its intended audience 'is pretty clearly indicated by its address to Sister Alice'.⁴¹ He also argues that the nuns for whom it was intended were the Bridgettines of Syon Abbey, from the fact that the earlier and better of the extant manuscripts (Oxford: Jesus College, MS 39) was owned by Dorothe Slyght, nun of Syon at the dissolution, and that 'although the sources . . . are known only in small part, those that are . . . are from books that were available in the Syon Abbey library'.⁴² While further research into the sources of *Disce Mori* has tended to reinforce the work's Syon associations, Patterson's identification of the work as designed for the nuns there cannot be supported.⁴³ The work is never addressed to a 'Sister Alice': the name appears only in a verse prologue which dedicates the text

To you my best-beloued sustre, Dame Alice,
Whiche þat for Cristes loue haue hoole forsake
Pe worlde, þe flesh and þe feendes malice.⁴⁴

Addresses in Middle English religious treatises to 'ghostly sisters' and the like are of course both commonplace and (often, no doubt) conventional; there is no evidence that they need imply an audience of nuns. Indeed, examination of *Disce Mori*'s version of the 'Epistle' conclusively demonstrates that Dame Alice's forsaking of world, flesh and devil is of a fundamentally different kind.

Patterson states that the compilation's concluding 'Exhortacion' 'is specifically addressed to Sister Alice'.⁴⁵ It does not in fact refer to its recipient by name, but it is true to say that, as its opening makes clear, it is more concerned than has been the rest of the work with her specific personal circumstances:

Suster, now ye haue herde þe comendacion of þis vertu chastite,
þe whiche ye haue chosen to clope you yn, and avowed it to
youre spouse Ihesu Crist, I wil write you in þende of þis booke,
whiche treteth of vices and vertues, as ye haue red afore, a litel
fourme hou ye shal lyue to þe plesance of youre seid spouse and,
with his grace and helpe, so ende your lyf in his seruice þat ye

may come to his blisse þat he bought you to (p. 538).

This 'form of living' is in fact a reworking of the English translation of the 'Epistle to Demetrias'. Like the translation, it begins in the ninth chapter of Pelagius's treatise and, in spite of some freedom in its treatment of its source, it follows the English translation closely thereafter, save that, in place of Pelagius's warnings against excess in fasting and abstinence, the compiler of *Disce Mori* substitutes the second of his two versions of the same series of extracts from Rolle's *Form of Living* which he took from one of his other sources, *Speculum Spiritualium*.⁴⁶ A few pages, including material apparently based on Rolle's *Commandment*, conclude the chapter.

His dependence on the English rather than the Latin text is readily apparent from the very first lines which he adopts. Where Pelagius has

Scito itaque in Scripturis divinis, per quas solas potes plenam
Dei intelligere voluntatem, prohiberi quaedam, concedi aliqua,
nonnulla suaderi. Prohibentur mala, praecipiuntur bona;
conceduntur media, perfecta suadentur (9, 2)

Disce Mori's

If þou wolt rede it [sc. scripture] or here it, þere shalt þou knowe
what is þe wille of oure Lorde, whiche stont in iv: in forbedyng
of some þinges, and biddyng of some þinges; in suffryng of some
þinges, and in consaillyng of some þinges. Alle synne, vice &
wickednesse be forbeden; alle vertues, rightwisnesse and
goodnesse be comanded; oper dedes whiche be meen, as wedlok
and suche oper, be suffred; but þe best dedes, þat be þo of
perfeccion, as virginite or chastitee & suche oper, be consailed
(p. 538)

is clearly derived not from the spare Latin, but from the more expansive English translation:

In holy writte, if þou wilt loke it or here it, þow schalt mow
knownen what is Goddes wille. For Goddes will þorwout holie
writte standeþ in foure thynges: in forbedyng of sum þinges, [in
bidding of sum thynges,] in grauntynge and sufferynge, or in

counseilynge of som pinges. Alle synnes and wickednesses aren forboden; alle vertues and goodneses arne commaunded and boden; oper dedes þat arne in þe mene þat arne neþer good ne euele arne suffred; but þe beste dedes arne counseiled (fols 1r-v).⁴⁷

Thus the qualification in the reference to the scriptures, the characteristically medieval *divisio* of the 'wille of oure Lorde', and the greater specificity as to what kinds of deeds constitute *mala*, *bona*, *media* and *perfecta* are all features of the *Disce Mori* passage clearly derived from the English text. Further details, however, such as the concrete examples of 'dedes whiche be meen' and 'þo of perfeccion', are an indication of the readiness of the compiler of the later work to supplement and alter his source.

A significant instance of such alteration occurs where the author of the English 'Epistle' (harsher in this than Pelagius had been) is offering advice as to suitable times for prayer:

And þou3 it be soo þat þou haue offryd al þe tyme of þi lif in Goddis seruyse, so þat þou schuldest neuere latyn houre voyd fro gostly profityng – as Dauid seiþ, 'Blyssed is he þat haþ meende of Godis lawe nyght & day' – neuerþeles, 3et schal þou sette a certeyn tyme of certeyn howrys in which þou schal fully, with dwellyng of prayeris, tent to God & in maner of lawe fully 3eue þin herte þat tyme to þe souerein intencion of preyere. Pe most couenable tyme, it is at mydny3t, or at morwin & forþ tyl it be vnderne (fols 20r-v).⁴⁸

The compiler of *Disce Mori*, however, for his hours of prayer, suggests only

þe morowe til it be vnderne – for it were to laborieus to þee to rise, as did þe prophet Dauid, at midnyght to pray (p. 550).

This, of course, is hardly consistent with the monastic routine, for which the Psalmist's 'Media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi' (Ps. 118.62) is a founding text.⁴⁹ Other advice elsewhere in this chapter 'as to þi demenyng in þi litel house with þi seruantes or oper folke seculer' (p. 550), taken over from the 'Epistle', or the suggestion, 'If þe lust to be muche comunycatif with men or women, forbere it as muche as þou may' (p. 557), made in the chapter's independent conclusion, offer

further evidence that *Disce Mori* could not have been intended for nuns, at least of so strictly enclosed an order as the Bridgettine.

Nevertheless it is clear that Dame Alice has made a vow of chastity, and aspires to some form of religious life. Three possibilities suggest themselves: that she was a novice of the Bridgettine order, an anchoress, or a vowess. The Bridgettines were unique in requiring postulants to spend their year-long novitiate outside the monastery. Typically they would reside in its outer precincts, accustoming themselves to 'some maner observaunces of the . . . holy rewle' and perhaps receiving some formal instruction.⁵⁰ *Disce Mori* could have provided in one volume both instruction and a 'form of living', and in the sixteenth century the Jesus College manuscript may have served just such a purpose for Dorothe Slyght. The sheer scale of the compilation, however – in terms both of its length (just short of 650 quarto pages in the Jesus copy), and the implied cost of its production – argues against a conception of merely temporary usefulness. It seems more plausible to suggest that the work was originally commissioned from a brother of Syon, who kept a copy for his own and/or the monastery's subsequent use.⁵¹

Such a patron could have been an anchoress. Support for this hypothesis might be drawn from the fact that, in his preamble to the extracts from Rolle's *Form of Living* already mentioned, the compiler describes that work as having been sent 'to suche a woman as yee be' (p. 548); in his earlier version of the same extracts, he describes the recipient of the original as 'a deuoute woman recluse' (p. 350). The two comments are, however, widely separated in the compilation, and there is no reason to suppose 'suche a woman as yee be' to have the same degree of specificity as 'a deuoute woman recluse'.⁵² There is a broad similarity between the demonstrable status of Dame Alice and that of a recluse – both of whom have renounced world, flesh and devil – such as might be taken to justify the phrase 'suche a woman as yee be', without making the conclusion that she was an anchoress inevitable. Although an argument *e silencio* can never be entirely conclusive, given the level of circumstantial detail found in *Disce Mori*'s version of the 'Epistle', it would be most surprising, if the text were indeed destined for an anchoress, not to find included in it any reference to her distinctive way of life. In addition (and again *e silencio*), there are no records of an anchoress attached to or connected with Syon.⁵³

By contrast, Syon did maintain well-documented links with vowesses: women, in almost all cases widows, who had taken solemn (and episcopally authorized) vows of perpetual chastity, and bore some of the accoutrements – the veil and ring – of regular religion, without being subject to any formal rule or superior.⁵⁴ At the dissolution, Susan Kyngestone, vowess, widow of the steward of one of Syon's

manors in Gloucestershire, 'occupied a chamber in the precincts'.⁵⁵ Two of her sisters (one a widow) were nuns there. Their mother, Elizabeth Fettiplace, became a vowess circa 1522, following the death of her second husband, and her mother, Alice Beselles, another vowess, was charged board at the monastery during the 1520s, until her death in 1526.⁵⁶ Joan Marler, widow of a mayor of Coventry, lived as a vowess there until 1531.⁵⁷ A century earlier, Margaret, widow of the Duke of Clarence, had declared

that she desires henceforth to lead a celibate life and, putting aside worldly pomps, has elected to dwell near the Augustinian monastery of St. Saviour and SS. Mary the Virgin and Bridget, Syon.

In 1428 she gained papal permission for any of the brothers, 'as often as she wishes', to leave the monastery 'up to a distance of two miles of those parts', in order to hear her confession, minister the sacraments to her, and assist her in the drawing up of her will, and in 1436 she was given leave to enter the precinct of the monastery itself.⁵⁸ The ministrations she received from the brethren were also literary: a life of St Jerome together with catechetical material was 'drawen yn-to englysh . . . vnto þe hygh pryncesse Margarete duchesse of Clarence' by Simon Wynter, brother of Syon until circa 1429.⁵⁹ Syon's literary links with vowesses are further evidenced by a 'Boke of the lyf of wedows', translated into English some time after 1491, and copied soon after by Robert Tailour, a scribe associated with the abbey.⁶⁰

Another modification in *Disce Mori's* use of the 'Epistle' adds weight to the hypothesis that this was Dame Alice's vocation. Where Pelagius congratulates his disciple that she has given up the chance of an advantageous marriage, and the English text compares the wedded life which its reader has rejected with the course of perfection s/he has undertaken, *Disce Mori* has:

And þou had lyked to be wedded *ayene* in worldly estate, *as þou were gretly desired of men*, þou wolde þan haue do al þi busynesse þat no womman in riches nor array shulde haue passed þee; and þefore now be as besy þat noon oþre womman passe þee in array of goode vertues (p. 540. *Disce Mori's* additions to the Middle English text in italics).⁶¹

While both Bridgettine postulants and anchoresses could be, and sometimes were,

widows, the vocation of vowess was so intimately associated with the state of widowhood that it is often described simply as the order of widows.⁶² It seems most probable that it was this vocation which Dame Alice had elected to follow.⁶³

IV

The final incarnation of the 'Epistle to Demetrias' is also perhaps the most surprising. Soon after its completion, *Disce Mori* was used – possibly by the same author, very probably in any case by a brother of Syon – as the base text for a further compilation, prefaced by Archbishop Pecham's famous call for improved clerical education, *Ignorancia Sacerdotum*, from which it takes its name, and whose target audience and purpose is indicated clearly in its prologue:

For as moche as after þat I, nameles, had red þe golden and famous glose which þe excellent doctour of bothe the lawes, Lyndewode, Bisshop of Seynt Daud, made vpon this precedent constitucion, and thought it diffuse, intricat with lawe, and hard of intellecte to suche symple lettred men, nameli in lawe, as I am, though þat I therin be aggraduat, I presumed vnder supportacion and correccion of the reders herof, as God knoweth, oonli of charite and in eschewyng of ydelnesse, to drawe out of the seid glose and other werkes of hooli doctours, this ensuyng rude werk made in oure modre tunge, for diuerse causes that moued me, bi whiche I entende, after suche auctours as I haue seen, to distribute forth to symple curates [r]urales or vpplandisshe, hou thei shal declare vnto theirre parisshe the matieres conteyned in the seid constitucioun in fulfillyng of þe charge leide vpon hem bi the same.⁶⁴

Most of the rest of this prologue is taken from *Disce Mori*'s version of the 'Epistle', with a number of alterations to accommodate it to its new audience.⁶⁵ Thus the compiler omits references to Christ as 'þi spouse', changes its address from the second person to 'vs preestes' (fol. 6r and *passim*), and adds references to 'oure ordre' (fol. 6r). Typical of his technique is his treatment of *Disce Mori*'s advice concerning the temptations sent by the devil:

Lete vs not, perfore, helpe him in wille ayenst oureself, ne assent to hym, and as a flee he wol flee vs. As to hem þat haue forsake þe worlde, as ye haue, he is busy to turment hem with wicked þoughtes, to make hem wery of himself, and to repent hem, and so kest hem in oueremochel heuynesse, and ween þat þe foule þoughtes come of himself, and so holde himself werse þan þei were afore, er þan þei toke hem to perfeccion, and more greue God. And þus, but þei beware, þenemy wol, with multitude of fantasies, so derke her wittes þat þei shal falle nerhande into dispaire; and al is fals, and wol vanyssh as dewe, and þei kepe hem in mekenesse, whiche allone, as was seide to Seint Antonye, escapeth al þe laces of þe deuel (pp. 553-54)

which becomes

Late vs not perfore helpe hym in wille ayenst ouresilf ne assente to hym, and as a flye he wol flee fro vs men of þe chirche, whiche haue bounde vs to þe special seruice of God. He is ful besi to turmente wijp wicked þoughtes, to make vs wery of oure ordre and to repente vs, and so cast vs into som inconuenience, and greue oure Lord. Ayenst which is necessarie vnto vs to kepe vs euer in mekenesse, which allone, as was seide vnto Seynt Antony, escapeþ alle þe laces of þe deuel (fol. 11r).

V

This is a far cry from the fourteen-year-old virgin Demetrias, and an unlikely apotheosis for the reviled Pelagius. Other readers of the 'Epistle' encountered have included an anchorite, a vowess, male and female religious, and the laity. The repeated reappropriations of Pelagius's text by new writers for new readers says much about medieval ideas of intellectual property, and the voracious appetite for works of spiritual guidance during the later Middle Ages among both the religious and the cultivators of the various kinds of 'Mixed Life'. Ultimately, of course, they offer testimony to the enduring qualities of a text which conveys an infectious enthusiasm for the life of perfection with moderation and generosity, and combines it with detailed and practical advice. Even the most ignominious of origins could not deny a

work so evidently 'useful and wholesome' an audience. As Lawrence wrote, 'Never trust the artist. Trust the tale'. It was the function of the medieval reception of the 'Epistle to Demetrias' to save the tale from the artist who created it.⁶⁶

NOTES

¹ Ed. C. Lindberg, *The Earlier Version of the Wycliffite Bible*, Stockholm Studies in English (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1959-), I, 26-36. Also incorporated in the later version: see J. Forshall and F. Madden, eds, *The Holy Bible . . . made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, 4 vols (Oxford: at the University Press, 1850), I, 61-78.

² Quotation from Jerome's preface to his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, 3 (*Patrologia Latina* 24, col. 758), cited by B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1988), p. 7. The 'Epistle to Demetrias' is item H.5 (and O.11) in P. S. Jolliffe, *A Check-List of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974). Jolliffe lists also the 'lityl instruction' derived from Jerome's epistle to Eustochium (H.18 and O.32) made by the Bridgettine Thomas Betson and printed in his *A Ryght Profytable Treatyse* (London, 1500), and subsequently copied by John Colman of St Mark's Hospital, Bristol (A. I. Doyle, 'Thomas Betson of Syon Abbey', *The Library*, 5th ser. 11 (1956), 115-18 at pp. 117-18; Jolliffe records only the manuscript copy).

³ For the Latin text of the Epistle, see *Patrologia Latina* 30, cols 15-45 and 33, cols 1099-120. There is an English translation, with an introduction to which much of the following paragraph is indebted, by B. R. Rees in his *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 29-70. See also *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, ed. by J. de Guibert et al., 17 vols (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937-95), s. v. *Demétride*. For Pelagius, see Rees, *Reluctant Heretic*; G. de Plinval, *Pélage, ses écrits, sa vie et son réforme* (Lausanne: Payot, 1943).

⁴ Rees, *Letters*, p. 30. The letter of Innocent is not extant.

⁵ *Epistula* 3, 1; trans. Rees, p. 38; *Patrologia Latina* 30, col. 17. Subsequent references, which will be given in the text, will be by chapter and paragraph numbers, allowing reference equally to Rees's translation (which I have adopted) and the texts in the *Patrologia*.

⁶ See references in Rees, *Letters*, p. 33.

⁷ *Pélage*, p. 245, quoted in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, loc. cit.

⁸ *Letters*, p. 35.

⁹ *Quibus optime virginem Deo dicatam instituit, et revera multum utile ac salubre opus perficeret, si eam divinae gratiae in omnia suffragia flagitare, et non animi sui libertate, viribusque fidere doceret* (*Patrologia Latina* 91, col. 1074), referred to by Rees, *Letters*, p. 33.

¹⁰ Rees, *Letters*, p. 33. For Bede's comment, see *Patrologia Latina* 91, col. 1073.

¹¹ Listed in B. Lambert, *Bibliotheca Hieronymiana Manuscripta*, *Instrumenta Patristica* IV, 4 vols (Steenbrugge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969-72), III, 1-7.

¹² To the identifications made by Lambert, add London: British Library, MS Royal 6.C.xi (Bath), Lambeth Palace, MS 356 (Llanthony prima) and Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS Bodley

365 (Merton). See N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), pp. 7, 120, 147.

¹³ Thus, for example, a marginal reference identifying a quotation from 'Seint Jerom' in the fourteenth-century *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God* (ed. by M. Connolly, EETS, os 303 (1993)), K.18-21, as taken from the *Letter to Demetrias* is not, as Connolly supposes, erroneous (pp. 16, 110); the passage is translated from Pelagius's 'Epistle', cap. 20.1 (apparently independently of the Middle English translation of the text described below). I have not found any support for the assertion of Conrad Pepler that the 'Epistle' 'in England became associated with Walter Hilton' ('John Lacy: A Dominican Contemplative', *Life of the Spirit*, 5 (1951), 397-406 at p. 400), although, as I describe below, the Middle English translation is sometimes found alongside works by him.

¹⁴ Listed by Jolliffe, *Check-List*, item H.5.

¹⁵ The manuscript has been misbound. To follow the text of the 'Epistle', read fols 40v-47v; 49r-v; 48r-v; 51r-v; 50r-v; 52r-68v.

¹⁶ Three of the extant Latin manuscripts do the same: two of the twelfth century, from the Benedictine monastery of Maria Laach in the Rhineland and the Cistercians of Ter Doest near Bruges, and one of the fourteenth, from the charterhouse of Basle (Lambert, *Bibliotheca*, p. 2). There seems, however, no reason why the Middle English translator could not have reached the decision to omit chapters 1 to 8 independently.

¹⁷ *Patrologia Latina* 33, cols 848-54, with the quotation at col. 850. Augustine and Alypius's letter is noted by Rees, *Letters*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸ 'Cernis nempe quanta in his verbis sit cavenda perniciēs' (*Patrologia Latina* 33, col. 850).

¹⁹ N, fol. 5r. All quotations will be from this manuscript, which is one of the earlier and better of the extant copies. Folio references hereafter will be given in the text. Punctuation, word-division and capitalization are editorial; abbreviations are expanded silently. I follow this procedure with quotation from manuscript texts throughout.

²⁰ MS 'hight'.

²¹ So the other manuscripts which have this passage (A and Jo). N has 'to'.

²² For a representative statement, making use of the figures of Martha and Mary, see Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, c. 28 (ed. by C. H. Talbot in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio mediaevalis, 1 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971), pp. 635-82, at pp. 660-62). For the symbiotic relationship of society and the recluse more generally, see A. K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

²³ For Lacy, see Pepler, 'John Lacy'; R. M. Clay, 'Further Studies on Medieval Recluses', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser., 16 (1953), 74-86 at pp. 75-78. The

language of the manuscript is northern, 'with a component firmly localised along the Salop-Herefords border, suggesting that John Lacy was perhaps connected with Lacy of Weobley' (*Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. by A. McIntosh et al., 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), I, 153).

²⁴ Jo is described in H. O. Coxe, *Catalogus Codicum MSS. Qui in Collegiis Aulisque Oxoniensibus Hodie Adservantur*, 2 vols (Oxford: e typographeo academico, 1852), II(6), 26-27; S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, *Oxford College Libraries*, Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist VIII (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 87-89. The treatise on the commandments has been edited by J. F. Royster, *A Middle English Treatise on the Ten Commandments*, *Studies in Philology*, 6, 8 (1910-11).

²⁵ For a description, see N. R. Ker (completed by A. J. Piper), *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-92), III, 523-24.

²⁶ Lavynham's *A Lityl Tretyis* is edited by J. P. van Zutphen (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1957); for this manuscript, see p. xlvi. The Pater Noster treatise is Jolliffe, *Check-List*, item M.9, and the verse is no. 906 in the *Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by C. Brown and R. H. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press for the Index Society, 1943).

²⁷ N. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), especially pp. 57-58.

²⁸ 'Orate pro anima domini Johannis Pery canonici ecclesie sancte Trinitatis London infra algate qui hunc librum fieri fecit cuius anime propicietur deus Amen.' Noted Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, pp. 123, 278. The text to which this note is appended is in the same hand as the 'Epistle'.

²⁹ A is described in the *List of Additions to the MSS in the British Museum in the years MDCCCXXXVI-MDCCCXL* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1843), p. 7; *A Handlist of Manuscripts containing Middle English Prose in the Additional Collection (10001-12000)*, *British Library, London* (ed. by P. Brown) and in the *Additional Collection (12001-14000)*, *British Library, London* (ed. by E. D. Higgs), Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist V (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988), pp. 6-10.

³⁰ For a description of the manuscript, see G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (London: The Trustees, 1921), II, 265-67. On its text of the *Somme*, see W. N. Francis, *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, EETS, os 217 (1942), pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

³¹ A. I. Doyle, 'A Prayer Attributed to St Thomas Aquinas', *Dominican Studies*, 1 (1948), 229-238 at p. 230. The texts are Jolliffe, *Check-List*, items C.43 and K.3, respectively. See also C. Horstman, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, EETS, os 85 (1886), p. vi.

³² These manuscripts have often been noted, although there remains considerable scope for further investigation of their relationship, provenance and intended audience. The most

complete discussions remain unpublished: G. R. Morgan, 'A Critical Edition of Caxton's *The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die* and *Ars Moriendi* together with the antecedent manuscript material', D. Phil. thesis, 2 vols (Oxford, 1972); V. Murray, 'An Edition of *A Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* and *Milicia Christi*', D. Phil. thesis, 2 vols (Oxford, 1972). Most writers consider **Ro**¹ the superior of the two; that **Ra** derives directly from it is sometimes argued, but has not been conclusively proved.

³³ For a description of **Ra**, see W. D. Macray et al, *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae*, 14 vols (Oxford: e typographeo academico, 1845-1918), VII(2), 465-67; for **Ro**¹, see Warner and Gilson, *Royal and King's*, II, 245-46.

³⁴ Jolliffe, *Check-List*, N.17.

³⁵ Jolliffe, *Check-List*, K.1. Quotation from **Ro**¹, fol. 122r.

³⁶ For relationships of this kind between clergy and laity, see A. I. Doyle, 'The Vere Family and Books Relating to Barking Abbey', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 25 (1958), 222-43, at p. 236.

³⁷ See H. M. Carey, 'Devout Literate Lay-People and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Later Medieval England', *Journal of Religious History*, 14 (1987), 361-81, although she confines her discussion (unnecessarily I think) to the nobility.

³⁸ Morgan convincingly identifies the William Harlowys whose name appears in both manuscripts with the William Harlow, gentleman, who was buried in 1562, and whose daughter Elizabeth married Sir Martin Bowes (*Art and Craft*, i, 33).

³⁹ Jolliffe, *Check-List*, A.6. R. R. Raymo, 'Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction' in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, gen. ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 7 (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences, 1986), item 11. I have an edition of the concluding 'Exhortacion' in preparation for Middle English Texts (Heidelberg).

⁴⁰ For the Rolle borrowings, see my 'A Chapter from Richard Rolle in Two Fifteenth-Century Compilations', *Leeds Studies in English*, n. s. 27 (1996), 139-62. For *Troilus* see L. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), pp. 115-53.

⁴¹ *Negotiating the Past*, p. 142. For some of these objections to Patterson's assumptions regarding the audience of *Disce Mori*, see also A. M. Hutchison, 'What the Nuns Read: Literary Evidence from the English Bridgettine House, Syon Abbey', *Mediaeval Studies*, 57 (1995), 205-22 at p. 219 n. 65.

⁴² *Negotiating the Past*, p. 118. For further details of Dorothe Slyght, see A. I. Doyle, "'Lectulus noster floridus": An Allegory of the Penitent Soul' in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. by R. G. Newhauser and J. A. Alford (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), pp. 179-90 at p. 184 and n. 27. Although, as Doyle suggests (*inter alia*), it is possible that *Disce Mori* was composed for a St Albans woman and the Jesus manuscript came to Syon only when a

subsequent owner – Dorothe Slyght – became a nun there, the evidence of the work's sources, and much circumstantial evidence advanced below, convince me of a Syon origin.

⁴³ See my 'Jesus College, Oxford, MS 39: Signs of a Medieval Compiler at Work', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 7 (1997), 236-48 at pp. 247-48 n. 31.

⁴⁴ Oxford: Jesus College, MS 39, p. 5. All subsequent references will be to this manuscript (which is paginated) and will be given in the text.

⁴⁵ *Negotiating the Past*, p. 119.

⁴⁶ Jones, 'A Chapter', *passim*.

⁴⁷ 'In bidding of sum thynges', missing from N, has been supplied from A.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Epistula* 23, 1, which omits the suggestion to pray at midnight.

⁴⁹ *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, 16, 4-5 (ed. by A. de Vogüé and J. Neufville, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 7 vols (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1972-77), (II, 524). It is also quoted in the commentary on the divine office written for the nuns of Syon, *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* (ed. by J. H. Blunt, EETS, es 19 (1873), p. 12).

⁵⁰ J. Hogg, *The Rewyll of Seynt Sauuioure*, *Salzburger Studien zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik* Bd. 6 vol. 4: *The Syon Additions for the Sisters from The British Library Manuscript Arundel 146* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1980), p. 81. The Additions make provision, by way of an exception, for those novices 'that dwelle fer from the monastery, and kepe not the seyd zere in the courte withoute' (ibid., p. 83). In his will proved 1524, Sir Richard Sutton, formerly steward of the abbey, specified that the proceeds from the sale of certain of his properties should go towards 'the finding of an honest preest [*inter alia*] to . . . teche all those women that intend to be professed and admytted unto the house of Syon' (G. J. Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1840), p. 532). Perhaps he was hoping to prevent a repeat of the intimacy which evidently grew up between James Grenehalgh and Joanna Sewell (below n. 53), almost certainly during the latter's novitiate.

⁵¹ In this regard it may be significant that the better of the extant manuscripts (the Jesus College manuscript), which must be closely contemporary with the composition of *Disce Mori*, is not the archetype, but does appear to have been corrected against it in a hand which is also responsible for the production of the derivative compilation *Ignorancia Sacerdotum* (discussed below), and which I suspect may be the hand of the two texts' common author. Presumably the archetype went to its patron. These questions will be addressed fully in my forthcoming edition of the 'Exhortacion'.

⁵² I have also raised tentatively the possibility that the 'Exhortacion', including the version of the 'Epistle', may be in some aspects of its composition separate from the rest of *Disce Mori*. See 'A Chapter', pp. 150-51.

⁵³ Anchorites recorded in Middlesex and London are listed by R. M. Clay, *The Hermits*

and *Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914), pp. 228-31. There are no relevant additions among Clay's notes for a revised edition (which I am currently preparing for publication). Joanna Sewell is once described as *Syonita Reclusa* but this, if it is any more than a reference to the strictness of the Bridgettine order, is more likely to refer to her incarceration as discipline for her over-attachment to the Carthusian of Sheen, James Grenehalgh, rather than any change of vocation to the anchoritic life. Certainly she died, in 1532, a nun of Syon. (See M. G. Sargent, *James Grenehalgh as Textual Critic*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 85, 2 vols (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1984), I, 105-06 and n. 76.)

⁵⁴ On this subject, which has suffered prolonged scholarly neglect, there is now a series of articles by M. C. Erler, most importantly 'English Vowed Women at the end of the Middle Ages', *Mediaeval Studies*, 57 (1995), 155-203. For vowesses connected with Syon, see her 'Syon's "Special Benefactors and Friends": Some Wowed (*sic*) Women', *Birgittiana*, 2 (1996), 209-22. (I am grateful to Virginia Bainbridge for bringing this article to my attention.) Dame Alice Hampton, vowess and benefactor of Syon, is too late for identification with the dedicatee of *Disce Mori* and, unlike her, never married. *Ibid.* pp. 211-17 and 221-22. My thanks to Professor Erler for her advice on these matters.

⁵⁵ F. R. Johnston, 'Syon Abbey', in *A History of the County of Middlesex*, Victoria County History 1 (London: Oxford University Press for The Institute of Historical Research, 1969), pp. 182-91 at p. 188.

⁵⁶ For these vowesses, see Erler, 'English Vowed Women', p. 175; 'The Family of Fettiplace', *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, 5th ser., 2 (1916-17), 183-92 at p. 186; M. C. Erler, 'The Books and Lives of Three Tudor Women' in *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. by J. R. Brink, *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies*, 23 (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993), pp. 5-17. Alice Beselles's will was proved 19 June 1526 (Erler, 'English Vowed Women', p. 202).

⁵⁷ Erler, 'Syon's "Special Benefactors and Friends"', p. 218.

⁵⁸ *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters Vol. VIII. A. D. 1427-1447*, ed. by J. A. Twemlow (London: Mackie and Co. Ltd. for His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), pp. 63-64 and 149; 64; 70. Noted by G. R. Keiser, 'Patronage and Piety in Fifteenth Century England', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 60 (1985), 32-46 at p. 37.

⁵⁹ Yale: University Library, MS 317, fol. 5r, quoted by Keiser, 'Piety and Patronage', p. 32. In 1429 Wynter was given papal permission, at the petition of the duchess, to remove to a less strict monastery (possibly St Albans). See Keiser, 'Piety and Patronage', p. 38.

⁶⁰ Erler, 'English Vowed Women', pp. 178-79.

⁶¹ At p. 539 he congratulates her similarly that she has 'forsaken þe second weddyng'.

⁶² Erler, 'English Vowed Women', p. 156.

⁶³ Vowesses' professions are generally recorded in episcopal registers, although practice seems to have varied considerably. The memoranda volume of Thomas Kempe, Bishop of London 1450-89, is unfortunately not extant. See D. M. Smith, *Guide to Bishops' Registers of England and Wales* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), p. 141. The register of his predecessor, Robert Gilbert (1436-48), includes a memoranda section, but this is briefer than is often the case elsewhere, and contains no vowesses' professions. See London: Guildhall Library, MS 9531/6, fols 190r-230v. It should be added that the absence of evidence from these sources also hampers (although, since the vocation tends to be more amply recorded, not as seriously) the search for an anchoress Alice.

⁶⁴ Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS Eng. th. c. 57, fol. 3r; 'rurales' is an emendation for MS 'curales'. *Ignorancia Sacerdotum* is item A.2 in Jolliffe, *Check-List*. See further Jones, 'Jesus College, Oxford, MS 39', *passim*.

⁶⁵ This fact is overlooked in the account of the correspondence between the two compilations given by J. Bazire and E. Colledge, *The Chastising of God's Children* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), pp. 25-29. See further Jones, 'Jesus College, Oxford, MS 39', p. 246 n. 11.

⁶⁶ Cf. D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 8.