

Marginalia

The Journal of the Medieval Reading Group



Apocalypse

Thematic Issue, October 2010

<http://www.marginalia.co.uk/>

Marginalia

Apocalypse Thematic Issue, October 2010

Editors' foreword iii

Articles

The Apocalypse and Religious Propaganda: Illustrations by Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder – *Denise Alexandra Hartmann* 1

Imperfect Apocalypse: Thomas of Erceldoune's reply to the Countess of Dunbar in Harley MS 2253 – *Victoria Flood* 11

Holy Shit: Bosch's Bluebird and the junction of the scatological and the Eschatological in Late Medieval Art – *Marisa Mandabach* 28

Notes

The Cup of Dom – the Identity of a Small Figure on the Franks Casket – *Dustin McKinley Frazier* 50

The Apocalyptic vision on the Cross of Sts Patrick and Columba – *Nienke Van Etten* 57

Reviews 64

Cover Image: An image from St John's College, Cambridge, MS B.9, f.169v, by permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge.

Acknowledgements:

For this issue, the editors would particularly like to thank the copyright holders of all the images: the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge; Prestel; the Albertina Museum, Vienna; Erich Lessing/ Art Resource; the British Library Board; the Bodleian Library; Images for Academic Publishing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; V&A Images, Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Jörg P. Anders; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; the Trustees of the British Museum; and Nienke van Etten.

Editorial Board

Issue Editor: Joanna Bellis (*Pembroke College, Cambridge, Literature*)

General Editor: Aisling Byrne (*St John's College, Cambridge, Literature*)

Design Editor: Danica Summerlin (*Queens' College, Cambridge, History*)

Advisory Board

Dr. Ruth Ahnert (*Queen Mary, University of London, Literature*); **Dr. Laura Ashe** (*Worcester College, Oxford, Literature*); **Dr. Elizabeth Boyle** (*St Edmund's College, Cambridge, Anglo Saxon, Norse and Celtic*); **Prof. Helen Cooper** (*Magdalene College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Dr. Richard Dance** (*St Catharine's College, Cambridge, Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic*); **Dr. Catherine Eagleton** (*Curator in the Department of Coins & Medals, British Museum, History of Science*); **Dr. Mary Flannery** (*Queen Mary, University of London, Literature*); **Dr. Berthold Kress** (*Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Art History*); **Dr. Kathryn A. Lowe** (*University of Glasgow, Literature*); **Dr. John Marenbon** (*Trinity College, Cambridge, Philosophy*); **Dr. Robert Mills** (*King's College London, Literature, Visual Culture & Theory*); **Dr. Sophie Page** (*University College London, History*); **Dr. Catherine Rider** (*University of Exeter, History*); **Dr. Anke Timmermann** (*University of Glasgow, History and Philosophy of Science*); **Dr. Katie Walter** (*Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, Literature*); **Dr. James Wade** (*Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Literature*).

Reviews Committee

Venetia Bridges (*Clare College, Cambridge, Medieval Latin*); **Megan Leitch** (*St John's College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Miriam Muth** (*Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Literature*)

Journal Committee

Linda Bates (*Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Literature*); **Joanna Bellis** (*Pembroke, Cambridge, Literature*); **Alastair Bennet** (*Girton College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Venetia Bridges** (*Clare College, Cambridge, Medieval Latin*); **Helen Brookman** (*Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Aisling Byrne** (*St John's College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Elizabeth Dearnley** (*Pembroke College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Emily Guerry** (*Pembroke College, Cambridge, History of Art*); **Joni Henry** (*St John's College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Megan Leitch** (*St. John's College, Cambridge, Literature*); **Miriam Muth** (*Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Literature*); **Danica Summerlin** (*Queens' College, Cambridge, History*); **Ben Vertannes** (*Downing College, Cambridge, History*); **Alexander Whiscombe** (*Pembroke College, Cambridge, Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic*)

Editors' Foreword

Joanna Bellis, *Pembroke College, Cambridge*
Aisling Byrne, *St. John's College, Cambridge*
Megan Leitch, *St John's College, Cambridge*

Anxiety about the imminent obliteration of the human race, or 'end times', is a staple of human experience. The central importance of the apocalypse in the cultural imagination of the middle ages is testified by the sheer number of vivid (sometimes lurid) depictions of it in the texts and images that have come down to us. Moreover, the apocalyptic preoccupations of the medieval Christian world find a modern mirror in a succession of uniquely 20th- and 21st-century concerns: nuclear oblivion, overpopulation, the greenhouse effect and, most recently, climate change. The interest of this topic to students of the medieval period is reflected in the unprecedented number of submissions we received in response to this year's call for papers. This tenth issue of *Marginalia* brings together articles on the theme of 'Apocalypse' by graduate students working in a number of disciplines and from academic institutions across the world.

Albrecht Dürer is responsible for some of the most iconic of all images of Apocalypse. Denise Alexandra Hartmann's contribution examines Dürer's work on this theme alongside that of Lucas Cranach the Elder. Her paper situates both artists within their contemporary cultural contexts and explores the extent to which Cranach reimagined Dürer's imagery for a post-Reformation world.

Victoria Flood offers a thoughtful reinterpretation of an understudied text – Thomas of Erceldoune's reply to the Countess of Dunbar – along with a theorization of the operative significance of the often undervalued medieval genre of prophecy. Her paper argues that the Erceldoune prophecy is more interesting than it has been considered to be by placing the text in relation to contemporary sociopolitical and economic conditions and concerns on the one hand, and Biblical precedent on the other. Flood employs a sophisticated view of historical relevance in order to argue that this prophecy is less tied to a certain event or propagandist agenda than it is connected to a contemporary cultural attitude towards history, and therefore 'universally applicable, rooted in the use of quasi-apocalyptic imagery and sense of universal decline'.

Marisa Mandabach's article is a comparative analysis of an intriguing figure in Hieronymus Bosch's 'Hell' panel in the *Garden of Earthly Delights*: the bluebird that sits atop a cistern-throne, eating and excreting the souls of the damned into a translucent blue bubble. Drawing on a wide range of images that depict diabolic defecation as an infernal punishment, Mandabach's interpretation of this tantalising late-medieval image and its analogues offers a wider

comment about creation and recreation, its parodies and travesties, and the artist's place as imitator. This article makes a fascinating introduction for non-specialists, especially those interested in the emerging field of 'fecopoetics', which was discussed in Virginia Langum's review in the last issue of *Marginalia*.

Dustin MacKinley Frazier offers an identification of a previously unknown figure on the Franks Casket, a magnificent Anglo-Saxon object that he calls a 'byword for scholarly puzzles'. His comparison of the conquest of Jerusalem (AD 70) as depicted on the casket's rear panel, with its description in Josephus's account, offers new insight into the identity of the small boy who appears carrying a cup beneath Titus's throne, which has important implications for our understanding of thematic narrative of the casket as a whole.

Nienke Van Etten's paper addresses the influences and uses of apocalyptic imagery in medieval Ireland with particular reference to The Cross of St. Patrick and St. Columba at Kells. Her paper pays particular attention to the complex web of historical and theological circumstances that may have informed the making of this cross.

As always, the articles are accompanied by a range of reviews of recent publications in the field.

We would like to thank all those who have helped bring this issue of *Marginalia* to publication. This issue is the first to be launched in a new format and we are particularly grateful to Danica Summerlin for lending her formatting and layout skills to this end. Thanks are also due to the speakers and attendees at the various meetings of the medieval reading group throughout the last year for their friendship and scholarly input. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the help of the various graduate students and the academic members of our advisory board who participated in the process of peer review for this issue and who gave so generously of their time and talents.

The Apocalypse and Religious Propaganda: Illustrations by Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach The Elder

Denise Alexandra Hartmann
University of Toronto

Apocalypse imagery was highly sought after in Germany during the 14th and 15th centuries, attributable to the millennialist belief that the world was coming to an end in the year 1500. This Christian conviction was supported by the reality that Germany experienced social unrest, such as peasant revolts, famine and church criticism towards the end of the 15th century. These events were interpreted as signs that the Apocalypse was imminent. Consequently, apocalyptic imagery prepared its viewers for the end of the world.¹

With the rise of book printing and distribution, Albrecht Dürer had become one of the most celebrated artists in Europe by the end of the 15th century. The printing process enabled the rapid dissemination of his work throughout Europe. Dürer's art thus became more accessible to those willing and able to pay a fair amount of money for his woodcuts.² In 1498, he published a large woodcut series of the *Apocalypse*. Fifteen illustrations inspired by the *Revelation of St. John* accompanied the text in both the German and Latin edition. In this endeavor Dürer was a pioneer; he acted as both printer and publisher while exercising full control over the form and content of this work.³ Dürer's *Apocalypse* was an enormous success and it influenced many future artists.

During the early 1520s when the Reformation became widespread, the *Apocalypse* as imagined by Dürer was reworked by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Cranach was responsible for illustrating the newly translated Luther bible.⁴ Martin Luther rejected the authority of the clergy as being the sole conduit to the word of God and criticised the practices of the Roman Catholic Church such as the selling of indulgences. More specifically, his teachings emphasised that only Faith, rather than good deeds, could lead to Salvation.⁵ Luther's seminal translation of the Bible into the German allowed a wider audience of all classes

¹ Albrecht Dürer, ed. Ludwig Grote, *Albrecht Dürer: Die Apokalypse, Faksimile der Deutschen Urausgabe von 1498. Die Heimlich Offenbarung Johannis=Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse, Facsimile of the German First Edition from 1498. The Revelation of St. John*. (New York: Prestel, 1999), pp. 24, 27. Edition consulted at the Special Collections Library, University of South Florida.

² Joseph Koerner, 'Albrecht Dürer: A Sixteenth-Century Influenza', *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 18-19.

³ Grote, pp. 12, 19.

⁴ Christopher De Hamel, *The Book: A History of the Bible* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2001), p. 216.

⁵ De Hamel, p. 216.

to engage directly with the religious text. At the same time, the use of the printing press to distribute Luther's Bible made it more affordable. These two developments facilitated the spread of literacy and Lutheran ideas.⁶

The Reformation and the words of Martin Luther influenced the production of Cranach's *Apocalypse*. Indeed, the artist maintained a close relationship to the reformer.⁷ While some scholars such as Max Dvorak believe Dürer's earlier *Apocalypse* embodies some of the religious and political inclinations of the artist, others, for instance Wilhelm Waetzoldt, reject such interpretations.⁸ In support of more apolitical interpretations, one needs to both consider the cultural context of its production and analyze images found both in Dürer and Cranach. Instead of acting as a source for early, pre-Reformation ideas, as some have argued,⁹ Dürer's *Apocalypse* acted as an artistic model for Cranach's later version. Consequently, Cranach used Dürer's imagery as a prototype but he modified the apocalyptic iconography according to its Lutheran context.

A closer investigation of Dürer's *Apocalypse* reveals that his illustrations are not layered with direct criticism of the Catholic Church. First, this paper will address the images within the work itself. The cultural context and the artist's professional agenda will be addressed. Because of a myriad of theologians within his circle of friends, Dürer was aware that an illustrated *Apocalypse* accompanied by a German text would provide a service to those that were not members of the clergy.¹⁰ The artist's piety might explain why he would want to use his art to deliver the divine word of God to a broader audience. However one can not underestimate Dürer's strong business sense and desire for prestige; it is likely, that he recognised the creation of a more accessible *Apocalypse* as a financial opportunity to satisfy a social demand. Dürer was the first artist to act as printer and publisher and handled the sales of his own prints by hiring traveling salesmen.¹¹ Hence, Dürer controlled the form and content of his monumental and instantly popular woodcut series.

Dvorak argues that Dürer elected to portray particular narrative scenes from the *Apocalypse* to best exhibit his artistic skill.¹² This *Apocalypse* was inno-

⁶ De Hamel, p. 216.

⁷ Jane Campbell Hutchison, *Albrecht Dürer, a Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁸ Jan Bialostocki, *Dürer and His Critics 1500-1971. Chapters in the History of Ideas, Inclusive a Collection of Texts* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1986), pp. 277-278.

⁹ Max Dvorak, *The History of Art as the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 59.

¹⁰ Hutchison, p. 61.

¹¹ Grote, pp. 12, 19-21, 28.

¹² Dvorak, pp. 55-56.

vative in a number of ways; the most immediately striking of which is the large format. His work consisted of full page illustrations on the recto and biblical text on the verso of each folio. His woodcuts demonstrated a new sense of vivacity which complemented the mystical text of the Revelation of St. John.¹³ The large format of the book coupled with the full page images increased the work's visual desirability as well as its market value.

Dürer's *Apocalypse* does contain elements of church criticism. Scholars have already called attention to the historical context of the book's creation amidst the contemporary persecution of the Jews in Bavaria.¹⁴ He created his *Apocalypse* against a backdrop of imminent political change. Peasants were revolting over higher taxes and the crime rate rose considerably.¹⁵ Widespread frustration with church practices was also present, though not to the extent found shortly before the Reformation.¹⁶ Considering these developments, it would be false to instantly conclude that Dürer inserted his personal opinion on contemporary issues in his work. Nevertheless, the cultural milieu of Nuremberg in 1498 was wrought with social and religious turmoil. As Dvorak has argued, Dürer's *Apocalypse* does not purely represent the artist's interest in artistic innovation but also his criticism towards the Roman Catholic Church. Since Germany was in its beginning stages of promoting the accessibility of church doctrine, Dvorak believes Dürer was interested in capturing the religious concerns of the German people. The emphasis on his innovation of artistic techniques is considered second to this aforementioned social concern. He describes the *Apocalypse* as a work representing Dürer's inner struggle with religious practices of the time.¹⁷

In contrast to Dvorak's theory, Wilhelm Waetzoldt believed that no anti-papal features can be found in Dürer's *Apocalypse* of 1498.¹⁸ He references the commonplace and pejorative depiction of bishops, cardinals and other members of the clergy on commonly found images in contemporary prints satirizing these figures.

Such figures are entirely neutral in Dürer's *Apocalypse*. During the late 15th century it was typical to find scrutiny of the Catholic Church in works of art; however, these images did not exhibit the extreme criticism later found during the Reformation. At the time it was believed that everyone including the

¹³ Hutchison, p. 62.

¹⁴ Dvorak, p. 55.

¹⁵ Grote, p. 27.

¹⁶ Thomas Döring, *Dürer's Apokalypse Und Ihre Wirkung: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig Kupferstichkabinett 22.9.-11. 1994* (Braunschweig: Das Museum, 1994), p. 1.

¹⁷ Dvorak, pp. 59-60.

¹⁸ Bialostocki, pp. 277-278.

clergy was considered a sinner should the end of the world occur;¹⁹ hence Dürer's depiction of beasts devouring cardinals should not be seen as radical church criticism, designed to excite the masses. Instead, such images represent the contemporary notion that everyone, from peasant to clergyman, will eventually suffer for their sins. Consequently, Waetzoldt's argument that Dürer's apocalyptic images during this time do not represent pre-Reformation ideas but capitalise on new artistic inventions, is valid in light of contemporary artistic conventions.²⁰

Using *The Whore of Babylon* (Figure 1) and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Figure 3) as examples, this essay will address how the apocalyptic imagery represents Dürer's intentions. Dvorak states that *The Whore of Babylon* (Figure 1) possesses anti-papal sentiments because of the appearance of the harlot's dress.²¹ The young, luxuriously dressed woman seen wearing a crown and holding a goblet, is seated on a seven-headed beast. She is saluting the crowd in front of her as she raises the goblet towards them. While the seven heads of the beast signify the seven deadly sins, the significance of the harlot's iconographic attributes is a cause for debate. Some scholars have interpreted the woman as representing the Roman Catholic Church due to her luxurious dress and tiara: her headdress is perceived as a symbol for the papal tiara and her decadent clothing thereby implies the lavish spending of the Pope.²² Thus, the Catholic Church is portrayed as the antichrist in the form of the harlot who leads people into sinful behavior.²³

Dvorak's interpretation becomes problematic in light of the fact that the figure of the harlot was most likely inspired by a Venetian woman encountered during Dürer's trip to Italy.²⁴ Dürer made many sketches of Venetian costumes (Figure 2), including those of wealthy women, on his trip from 1494 and 1495.²⁵ It seems likely that Dürer used his Venetian sketches to depict *The Whore of Babylon* (Figure 1); in so doing, he called attention to his Italian influence and newfound skill. Because Dürer had visited Venice and likely used his on site sketches to influence his figural representation in his *Apocalypse*, it becomes problematic to interpret the harlot's role as a politically charged embodiment of

¹⁹ Bialostocki, pp. 277-278.

²⁰ Bialostocki, pp. 277-278.

²¹ Bialostocki, p. 273.

²² Grote, pp. 74-76.

²³ Grote, pp. 74-77.

²⁴ Grote, pp. 74-77.

²⁵ Giulia Bartrum, British Museum, Gunter Grass, Joseph Leo Koerner and Ute Kuhlemann, *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy: The Graphic Work of a Renaissance Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 105.



Figure 1: Albrecht Dürer, *The Whore of Babylon*, 1498. Woodcut in Albrecht Dürer, ed. Ludwig Grote, *Albrecht Dürer: Die Apokalypse, Faksimile der Deutschen Urausgabe von 1498. Die Heimlich Offenbarung Johannis=Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse, Facsimile of the German First Edition from 1498. The Revelation of St. John.* (New York: Prestel, 1999), © Prestel.

church criticism. Rather, Dürer's illustration of the harlot represents his artistic ability to render a foreign and complex female figure.

Similarly, the image of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Figure 3) has attracted opposing interpretations regarding Dürer's inclusion of anti-papal sentiments. In representing this scene, Dürer did not strictly follow the Biblical text. In *Revelation*, John described how the riders appear one after the other, bringing the plagues to humanity. Dürer depicts the horsemen as riding in together simultaneously as a group of four.



Figure 2: Albrecht Dürer, *Sketch of a Venetian Woman*, 1495. Inv. 3064r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Albertina Museum, Vienna, © Albertina, Wien, <http://www.albertina.at> .

The first rider mentioned in the text is the figure depicted as the farthest away.²⁶ Dürer incorporates the new Renaissance idea of depicting the mobility of figures and animals.²⁷ Confined by the thin frame of the rectangular page, Dürer condenses the narrative into a singular composition. It seems like each horseman is riding at a different speed; people seen are fleeing from their horses' angry hooves.²⁸ Hell opens up beneath the fourth rider, who represents

²⁶ Grote, p. 46.

²⁷ Erwin Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*. [2. rev.] ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 57

²⁸ Panofsky, p. 57.



Figure 3: Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 1498. Woodcut in Albrecht Dürer, ed. by Ludwig Grote, *Albrecht Dürer: Die Apokalypse, Faksimile der Deutschen Urausgabe von 1498. Die Heimlich Offenbarung Johannis=Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse, Facsimile of the German First Edition from 1498. The Revelation of St. John.* (New York: Prestel, 1999), © Prestel.

death, while the figure of the emperor is about to be swallowed by the monster from hell.²⁹ This depiction of the emperor as one of the first victims to be swallowed up by hell may give the impression that Dürer was criticizing the Roman Catholic Church, perhaps prophesying the demise of the Holy Roman Emperor at the end of day. However, the problem with this interpretation lies in the narrowness of its interpretation; Dürer depicted other victims, not just clergymen.

²⁹ Grote, p. 48.

Moreover, by placing an emperor in the mouth of hell, he has followed the tradition of late medieval iconographic arrangement of the *Apocalypse*.³⁰ Dürer thus maintained an earlier pictorial tradition but deviated from the text in order to give his images a unique style.³¹

Dürer's 1498 *Apocalypse* does not contain an explicit counter-papal agenda. Therefore, it is necessary to use a different approach in explaining Cranach's use of Dürer's imagery in his illustration of *Apocalypse* in 1541, created after the Reformation. Cranach lived in Wittenberg, which had become the political center of the Reformation in the late 1530s. He was a wealthy citizen even enjoying the position of city councilor from 1519 to 1545;³² his high standing in society was partly the result of successful real estate and business ventures. Cranach also benefitted from the constant patronage of German princes. Eventually, he became a close friend of Luther and agreed to devise the illustrations for the great reformer's newly translated German Bible.³³ Luther believed religious images were required to follow the biblical text without changing the meaning of God's word. His viewpoint on the use of images in a religious context became increasingly moderate during the course of the Reformation; he eventually deemed them appropriate when used accordingly.³⁴ Therefore, biblical images always had to be secondary to the word. Art, for Luther, should clarify meaning to benefit the illiterate.³⁵

Although Cranach and Luther had a strong friendship, Cranach continued to accept commissions from Catholic patrons such as Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg.³⁶ Cranach, like Dürer, was a businessman. His workshop in Wittenberg was of tremendous economic importance to the region due to its thriving production. Cranach was able to choose his patrons freely thanks to his prominent position. Thus, supporting the Lutheran cause did not establish an absolute

³⁰ David Price, 'Albrecht Dürer's Representations of Faith: The Church, Lay Devotion and Veneration in the *Apocalypse* (1498).' *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 57, no. 4 (1994) 691.

³¹ Panofsky, p. 53.

³² Peter Moser, *Lucas Cranach: Sein Leben, Seine Welt und Seine Bilder* (Bamberg: Babenberg, 2004), p. 98-99.

³³ Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 76-77.

³⁴ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 72.

³⁵ Frances Carey, Frances, *The Apocalypse: And the Shape of Things to Come* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 102.

³⁶ Dagmar Eichberger, Dagmar, Charles Zika, Larry Silver, Wim Husken, Bob Scribner et al., *Dürer and His Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. xviii, 2.

business relationship between the artist and the reformer, but it explains the Reformation ideas found in his illustration of the *Apocalypse*.³⁷

Nevertheless, Cranach's apocalyptic imagery functioned, in part, as a tool for spreading Lutheran thought.³⁸ Because of its creation on the printing press, this richly illustrated Bible was quickly and widely distributed throughout Germany. In the eyes of the reformer, the *Apocalypse* was the ideal framework for representing the harmful effects of Catholic Church practices.³⁹

Lucas Cranach's workshop illustrated the *Apocalypse* with either 21 or 26 woodcuts, most of which demonstrate Dürer's influence. While the earlier editions contained full-page images, those after 1534 often had additional scenes in a smaller, landscape format allowing them to be incorporated into the text.⁴⁰ By including eleven additional woodcuts, Cranach avoided condensing and fragmenting Biblical narrative. In so doing, he upheld Lutheran ideas. He separated scenes that Dürer had grouped together into one image. Cranach also added some Dürer had decided to omit. By increasing the number of images, Cranach's changes made the *Apocalypse* more comprehensible and textually explicative.⁴¹

In Cranach's *Apocalypse*, an anti-papal sentiment is expressed in visual content. In *The Whore of Babylon*, Cranach's harlot is similar to Dürer's in that she is luxuriously dressed and riding a beast with multiple heads.⁴² She holds the goblet which signifies that she is the mother of all shame on earth. However, Cranach's figure is wearing a papal tiara. Whereas in Dürer's portrayal the woman was wearing a small crown, Cranach made a conscious choice to depict her as wearing this explicit symbol of papal authority. Consequently, the harlot becomes an embodiment of sinful church practices. Moreover, unlike Dürer's image, those who have been seduced by her are kneeling, not standing, in front of the woman, symbolizing their submission.⁴³ This crowd includes noble figures, which suggests that even the nobility is guilty of falling victim to the Catholic Church's seductive power.

When analyzing *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* within the same edition of the *Zerbster Prunkbibel*, similar pro-Lutheran ideas become apparent. Due

³⁷ Eberhard Ruhmer, *Cranach* (London: Phaidon, 1963), p. 25.

³⁸ De Hamel, p. 237.

³⁹ Bodo Brinkmann, Royal Academy of Arts, and Stadtische Galerie im Stadelchen Kunstinstitut Frankfurt am Main, *Cranach* (New York: Royal Academy of Arts, 2007), p. 200.

⁴⁰ Johannes Jahn and Hans Lufft, *Zerbster Prunkbibel "Cranachbibel", Die Apokalypse* (Witten Berlin: Von Cansteinsche Bibelanstalt, 1973), I, II, IV.

⁴¹ Carey, pp. 102, 105, 106

⁴² Jahn, XVI.

⁴³ Jahn, XVI.

to Cranach's horizontal format, the four riders could not be depicted as riding side by side in a vertical composition. The image lacks the energy and swift movement of Dürer's illustration and there are slight differences in the representation of the riders. The rider formerly representing a king is now a Turk wearing a turban. The Turk of Cranach maintains the same gesture of Dürer's king: he is preparing to shoot an arrow. However, Cranach's transformation of the figure might function as a symbol for Islam and its opposition to Christianity. Similarly, the third rider has become a Jew wearing a fur hat, a trope that represents Luther's idea that Jews were responsible for price increases.⁴⁴ Finally, in Cranach's portrayal of the hell mouth, a Roman Catholic priest is devoured. Whereas in Dürer's depiction, a generic clergyman is depicted, Cranach's redaction of this figure's significations is emblematic of the place of his book in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church.

This essay has evaluated both Dürer and Cranach's portrayals of the *Whore of Babylon* and *Four Riders* images in their respective *Apocalypses* (1498 and 1541) in terms of their cultural contexts. While Dürer did not use his work as a means to criticise the church, Cranach embraced Dürer's apocalyptic images and moulded them to support the Lutheran cause. It is important to recognise that Dürer's *Apocalypse* did not fuel reformation ideas. When he first published his work in 1498, it was not a time of open, harsh criticism towards the church with the goal of exciting the masses. By selling his woodcuts throughout Europe with the help of tradesmen, Dürer's prints became widely accredited. Dürer's images were so well received that they became the model for Apocalypse illustrations. When Cranach was assigned the task of illustrating the *Apocalypse* in the newly translated Luther Bible, he used Dürer's *Apocalypse* as a model. However, he modified the type of imagery employed by Dürer to support Reformist ideas brought forth by Martin Luther. The combination of familiar images with the vernacular text enabled Lutheran reformers and their supporters to spread their ideas.

Cranach changed the relationship between text and image in his *Apocalypse* just as he reformed Dürer's apocalyptic iconography. His transformations with regard to the visual vocabulary reveal the artist's awareness of the cultural changes; by the mid-sixteenth century Germany's stability suffered from the religious turmoil. Cranach's moulding of religious imagery is a sign of the social changes taking place due to the Reformation. His *Apocalypse* represents the new ideas of the end of time and acts as a mirror of contemporary German culture.

⁴⁴ Jahn, VIII.

Imperfect Apocalypse: Thomas of Erceldoune's Reply to the Countess of Dunbar in MS Harley 2253

Victoria Flood
University of Swansea

La countesse de Donbar demanda a Thomas de Essedoune quant la guere descoce prendreit fyn e yl la respoundy e dyt:

When man as mad a kyng of a capped man;
 When mon is levere othermones thyng then is owen;
 When Londyon ys forest, ant forest ys felde:
 When hares kendles o the herston;
 When wyt and wille werres togedere
 When mon makes stables of kyrkes, and steles castles wyth styes;
 When Rokesbourh nys no burgh ant market is at Forweleye;
 When the alde is gan ant the newe is come that don notht;
 When Bambourne is donged wyth dede men;
 When men ledes men in ropes to buyen and to sellen;
 When a quarter of whaty whete is chaunged for a colt of ten markes;
 When prude pikes and pees is leyd in prisoun;
 When a Scot ne may hym hude ase hare in forme that the Englysshe
 ne shal hym fynde;
 When rytht ant wrong ascenteth to-gedere;
 When laddes weddeth lovedis;
 When Scottes flen so faste that for faute of ship hy drouneth hem-
 selve: -
 Whenne shal this be? Nouthur in thine tyme ne in myne.
 Ah comen and gon with-inne twenty wynter ant on.¹

The reply of 'Thomas de Essedoune' to the Countess of Dunbar in Harley 2253 is the earliest recorded prophecy ascribed to the Scottish prophet Thomas of Erceldoune, known elsewhere as Thomas the Rhymer.² Although, as far as I am aware, the total series of formulations found here do not recur in any later

¹The text of the prophecy is taken from the transcription in *Medieval Political Writings* ed. by James M. Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), p. 11.

²See *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. by James A. H. Murray, EETS OS 61 (London: N. Trübner & Co, 1875); Harry Leigh Douglas Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London: British Museum, 1883-1910), I (1883), 328-9; Helen Cooper, 'Thomas of Erceldoune: Romance as Prophecy', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 171-187.

prophecies attributed to Thomas, the political pessimism and apocalyptic leanings of the Harley prophecy are echoed in later texts bearing his name.³

Studies of medieval prophecy frequently gloss over this crucial early phase of material attributed to Thomas; the Harley reply is often felt to be too obscure to sustain any sizeable attempt at interpretation.⁴ This assumed obscurity largely stems from the absence of a positive political centre to the prophecy, yet once we accept the historical context of such pessimism it becomes more intelligible. Contrary to the arguments of earlier scholars it is unlikely that the prophecy functioned as overtly anti-Scottish propaganda, for it is decidedly lacking in the characteristic jingoism of factional political prophecy.⁵ Rather it has elements which we can conceive as being universally applicable, rooted in the use of quasi-apocalyptic imagery and sense of universal decline.⁶ In this article I argue that as an English product looking back on (rather than forward to) a protracted period of Anglo-Scottish conflict, the prophecy alludes to an apocalyptic pattern of events in order to give definition to an otherwise uncertain period in Anglo-Scottish relations.

I

Thomas of Erceldoune's Reply to the Countess of Dunbar begins on the lower half of fol. 127r in Harley 2253, a West Midlands manuscript with a period of compilation now estimated between c.1326 and c.1340. The original provenance of the manuscript has been associated with great names of the age, linked by scholars alternatively to Adam Orleton, the Bishop of Hereford, and the Mortimer family or those within their purview.⁷ Often regarded as a space-filler, the

³ As Alois Brandl noted, some of the Harley prophecy's figures are echoed in the prophecy attributed to Thomas in MS Arundel 57: see Alois Brandl, ed., *Thomas of Erceldoune* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880), pp. 16, 38-9. For identification of the 'tokens' of the Harley prophecy in later prophecies of battle and disaster see: E.B. Lyle, 'Thomas of Erceldoune: the Prophet and the Prophesied', *Folklore*, 79 (Summer 1968), 111-21, (pp. 111-13).

⁴ This earliest example of Thomas's prophecies is briefly and inconclusively discussed in the two most comprehensive studies of English medieval prophecy, Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 65; and Lesley A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 92-3, 99-100. Sharon L. Jansen's detailed work on the transmission of Thomas's prophecies focuses on a later period, see *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991).

⁵ For the nineteenth-century case for anti-Scottish propaganda see Murray, pp. xix.

⁶ It is possible that in these universal elements we might find some trace of a borrowed Scottish Thomas tradition with which the Harley prophecy is working. Only a closer study of later extant Scottish materials would allow us to posit the nature of any such missing Scottish original.

⁷ *Facsimile of BM MS Harley 2253*, ed. by N. R. Ker, EETS 225 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. ix-xxiii; *Historical Poems of the 14th and 15th Centuries*, ed. by R. H. Robbins (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. xxxiii-xxxiv; C. Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: the scribes, contents, and social contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 21-110; Coote, p. 93.

prophecy is commonly attributed a lesser status than other political materials in the manuscript.⁸ However, the motivation behind the prophecy's inclusion would appear to be more than idle curiosity and the need to fill space. On the basis of vestigial northern language-forms, Frances McSparran regards the prophecy as a 'partial translation' from a northern exemplum into a south Midlands dialect, whilst retaining some original northern linguistic features.⁹ This act of dialectical translation indicates a certain level of engagement, and indeed the concerns it treats – the alleged misrule of Edward II, and the wars in Scotland during the reign of Edward III – were by no means limited to the northern border counties. Noble households across England, including the earls of Herefordshire, had landed interests in Scotland, and the impact of the Scottish wars was felt across the English counties through the requisition of men and resources.¹⁰ John Scattergood places the prophecy (in terms of both composition and compilation) in a period of weary disillusionment with the wars, holding it roughly contemporary with the other political verses in the manuscript, in the mid-1330s.¹¹ Whilst the prophecy is undoubtedly a product of these times, it is not simply a complaint poem depicting the evils of the age; it is a prophecy and this form has an undeniable impact on the presentation and shaping of its subject. Prophecy itself entails a certain view of history, a certain re-focusing.

On the basis of internal evidence, its inclusion in the manuscript, and composition in the form we find it here, appears to have taken place in the period following the English victory at the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333. Halidon Hill by no means provided a definitive resolution to the Anglo-Scottish conflict and the hostilities dragged on.¹² Thomas's Reply is above all a retrospective prophecy, composed in the immediate wake of the events it purports to foretell, in a period of future uncertainty. The series of conditions it gives for the cessation of the Scottish war are really a disconnected, de-centred account of certain key events of, and associations with, the war, from the misrule of Edward II, to English defeat at Bannockburn, to eventual victory at Halidon Hill. Such a prophecy is a way of giving shape to recent history – it is a partial re-fashioning of the past through the guise of the future. It marks an attempt to integrate re-

⁸ For a very short overview of the prophecy see John Scattergood, 'Authority and Resistance', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript* ed. by Fein, pp. 163-202 (pp. 177-8); Revard does not mention it in his overview of the political contents: Revard, pp. 74-5.

⁹ Frances McSparran, 'The Language of the English Poems' in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript* ed. by Fein, pp. 391-426 (p. 398).

¹⁰ Bruce Webster, 'Scotland without a King, 1329-1341' in *Crown, Lordship & Community*, ed. by Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 234; Ranald Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 150.

¹¹ Scattergood, p. 178.

¹² Nicholson, p. 236.

cent events into what the philosopher Slavoj Žižek terms the 'texture of the historical memory', the grounds for the (re)writing of a definitive version of the past. In *The Sublime Ideology* Žižek writes:

The past exists as it is included, as it enters [into] the synchronous net of the signifier - that is, as it is symbolized in the texture of the historical memory - and that is why we are all the time 'rewriting history', retroactively giving the elements their symbolic weight by including them in new textures - it is this elaboration which decides retroactively what they 'will have been'.¹³

An attempt to remember the events of the past in line with a particular signifying framework is in some sense an act of reconstruction. It can never give us history as directly experienced, only as understood retrospectively. Žižek writes that 'only through [...] intervention does the scene from the past become what it always was'.¹⁴ The composition (or copying) of a historical narrative is an intervention - a re-writing necessary for comprehending the past. Through such a process history becomes at once something fixed and yet also malleable: a product of re-writing and revision, of renegotiations not only of terms and meanings but of content itself. Thomas's Reply is a prime example of this process at work: history, as it is comprehended from the vantage point of such a prophecy, assumes an inevitable and predetermined form, it is 'as it always will have been'. Yet such writings are also an interpretation of their social and historical matrix; a type of gloss on the times, they must leave out more than they incorporate and give primacy to details which are schematically appropriate to the new and definitive 'texture'. The essential symbolic concordance cannot be arbitrary; it needs to possess some pre-existing thematic or associative bond with the events themselves, some level of appropriateness. In terms of the Harley prophecy the selected 'texture' is provided by a series of apocalyptic allusions, the apocalypse being the natural nodal point for a work of prophetic pessimism. The incorporation into the 'new texture' of the situations to which the prophecy appears to refer, however, can never be regarded as absolute, for the attempt itself is a response to an essential gap in understanding, and the act of recollection which the prophecy embodies remains haunted by the traumatic incomprehensibility of actual experience. For this reason, as we shall see, the apocalyptic resonances of Thomas's Reply evade perfect realisation.

¹³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989; 2nd edn. 2008), p. 59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

II

Pessimistic prophets and prophecies are undoubtedly products of crisis years and periods of discontent. Lesley A. Coote locates the late medieval appearance of prophecies attributed to Thomas, and thematically related prophetic strands such as 'Cock in the North', in two key periods: during the Anglo-Scottish wars and from Jack Cade's rebellion through the 1450s.¹⁵ These were years of sustained internecine conflict; and in the case of the Anglo-Scottish wars, immense environmental and human devastation across Scotland and northern England. The Erceldoune prophecies appear to have emerged in relation to historical trauma, and events in need of suitably pessimistic symbolic re-ordering.

In his account of the events of the year 1335, the Scottish chronicler Andrew of Wyntoun (c.1350-1423) refers to the Battle of Culblean in light of an undisclosed prophecy ascribed to 'Thomas off Ersyldowne':

Off this fycht qwhilum spak Thomas
Of Ersyldowne, that sayd in derne,
Thare suld mete stalwartly stark and sterne¹⁶

Although Wyntoun does not repeat a particular prophecy the implication appears to be a reputed accurate pessimism - for although the battle was commonly regarded as a turn in Scottish fortunes for the better, the prophet's words are 'derne' [dark], and the battle 'stark and sterne' [fierce]. On both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border Thomas was a prophet of Anglo-Scottish conflict, associated with individual battles of the fourteenth century, such as Culblean, and the conflicts of later centuries. We know, for example, that prophecies of Thomas were applied to the 1547 Battle of Pinkie Cleugh.¹⁷ The attributed prophecies are not in each case entirely novel, but for the most part build on familiar material and a recognisable tradition of prophetic pessimism.¹⁸ The universalising effect of Thomas's pessimism, which defies clear national-political orientation, gave him a recognisable prophetic status and utility on both sides of the border. Pessimistically obscure - in Wyntoun's terms 'derne' - the Ercledoune tradition was open to cross- or transnational interpretations. Thomas's are not predictions of a coming golden age of Scottish independence, but visions of chaos across national boundaries.

¹⁵ Coote, p. 100.

¹⁶ Wyntoun, II, pp. 423-7.

¹⁷ Ward, I, p. 336 [MS Sloane 1802, ff. 22v-28].

¹⁸ See Murray, 'Introduction'.

In the entry for 1286 in the *Scottichronicon* (compiled during the 1440s) Thomas's prophetic ability is traced back to the very beginning of the crisis of Scottish kingship. On the eve of the death of Alexander III, Thomas expounds to the earl of Dunbar a prophecy of great disorder in Scotland: 'a strong wind' will be heard 'which has not been known since times long ago', a blast which will 'dumbfound the nations'.¹⁹ The incipit to the Harley prophecy, relating not to the earl but his wife, the countess of Dunbar, is potentially an allusion to an earlier version of this tradition. Although in Anglo-Norman rather than the English of the prophecy itself the shift in language could betray the incipit as a gloss, it does not appear to be a late addition to the item. Here then we potentially have a reference to the legendary 1286 prophecy at least as early as c.1335-40. In a similar historical vein to the *Scottichronicon*, the Harley prophecy is conceivably referring back to a point of origin for the tokens of calamity it discloses: the death of Alexander III.

The framing of the prophecy as a reply to the countess potentially marks a nod to, or at least a potential confusion with, another countess of Dunbar: Black Agnes, who stalwartly defended Dunbar Castle during the siege of 1338. During this period Dunbar became an infamous Bruce-faction centre of resistance.²⁰ By the incipit, Thomas is potentially constructed not only as a voice from the more distant past but at the heart of more recent events. The incipit could potentially be a new addition to the hypothesised northern exemplum modified (it is uncertain to what extent) in Harley 2253. Potentially inclusion of the prophecy in the manuscript dates to post-1338, so the possibility of this historical allusion can by no means be readily excluded, particularly given the specificity of naming not the Earl of Dunbar but the Countess. In the Harley prophecy we see the adoption of a Scottish prophet across the border – and potentially the movement of a northern exemplum further south. We also perhaps see a temporal translation at work in the prophecy. At whatever stage the Dunbar connection arose, the locating of Thomas at Dunbar in a prophecy of this period potentially collapses the original 1286 connection and locates his voice on the fringes of the contentious Anglo-Scottish border of 1338.

We can conclude that Thomas of Erceldoune is a pessimistic authority on Scottish affairs. Yet this secular pessimism is not without religious analogues. Even within the brief prophecy given in the *Scottichronicon* Thomas's reputed

¹⁹ Walter Bower, *Scottichronicon* in *A History Book for Scots: Selections from the Scottichronicon* ed. by D. E. R. Watt (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1998), pp. 171-2; see also Wyntoun, II, 266, for death of Alexander III in conjunction with ill omens.

²⁰ For Dunbar as the key problematic on the map, threatening English power in southern Scotland during the campaigns in 1335 see Nicholson, p. 225.

words carry such a resonance. We might remember the stars which fall from heaven in Revelation 6.13, like figs shaken from the trees by a great wind; or the breath of God in Isaiah, 'His breath as a torrent... to destroy the nations unto nothing' (Isaiah 30.28); or indeed the 'violent wind' from the desert which destroyed the house and the children of Job (Job 1.19). Thomas's short prophecy here potentially carries with it Biblical precedence for the destruction of nation and family, and earthly existence itself. A strong current of apocalypticism is of course something we find in Old Testament prophecy concerned with the decadence and decline of the Israelites. The application of such Biblical material to the decline of various peoples in the British Isles was a long-established practice prior to this period, found in both sermons and prophecies from at least the sixth century such as Gildas's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, and early Welsh political prophecies.²¹ We might wonder if the prophesied strong wind of the *Scottichronicon*, last heard in 'times long ago', is a reference to such antique sources. However commonplace, the apocalyptic or quasi-apocalyptic divine curse is a framework which maps well onto memories of the Anglo-Scottish wars, an age defined by the English chronicles in terms of war, pestilence, and the deaths of many men.²²

III

I will now undertake a dissection of the information in the prophecy and its ordering, through each figure's relationship to contemporary events and its apocalyptic and cataclysmic connotations.

Following the incipit is the condition: 'When man as mad a kyng of a capped man'. This first figure is of course open to competing interpretations. I think that we must, however, privilege the interpretation compatible with the most likely date of the prophecy's inclusion in the manuscript - which, with Scattergood, I posit as post-dating the Battle of Halidon Hill in 1333.²³ Based on the assumption that the prophecy takes the Battle of Bannockburn as its central and only significantly datable allusion, Alois Brandl argues that it is a product of the reign of Edward II, spanning the period from the king's coronation to the Battle of Bannockburn (with the exception of the incipit which, he holds, we must date back twenty-one years from the battle), and so he takes the 'capped

²¹ See *The Works of Gildas*, in *Six Old English Chronicles* ed. by J. A. Giles (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901); *Armes Prydein*, ed. by Ifor Williams, trans. Rachel Bromwich (Dublin: DIAS, 1972; 2nd edn. 1982).

²² Cf. *The Brut or Chronicles of England edited from MS. Rawl. B.172, Bodleian Library*, EETS OS 131, 136 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1906, 1908), 2 vols, I, 72-3.

²³ See p. 4.

man' as a reference to the youth and early years of the reign of Edward II.²⁴ However, the prophecy's interests seem to lie more closely in the reign of Edward III and retrospective attributions of blame to Edward II. In this case, the 'capped man' is not a child, but a king wearing a fool's cap. This first token of calamity is more consistent with the tone of the prophecy if it is taken as a reference to the alleged misrule of Edward II. Direct attributing of blame to Edward II for subsequent national calamities became a familiar trope in English histories. In the English *Brut* he is identified as the third king of the six prophesied by Merlin: 'the gote out of a car', from whose nostrils drop 'miche harme, hungre, and dep of the peple, and gret losse of his lande'.²⁵ The rule of the 'gote' brings famine and defeat – these are the concerns of the Harley prophecy.

Paradoxically, if we accept the first line as an allusion to Edward II's infamous misrule, this suggests the prophecy was written at some remove from the reign of Edward II, for in his own time he was by no means necessarily such a locus of prophetic disdain.²⁶ It is only with hindsight, and arguably some level of retrospective distortion, that the long-view of history forms. The prophetic demonisation of Edward II is not commonly found until the end of his son's minority, and the subsequent fostering of new prophetic expectations in Edward III.²⁷ It is arguably this prophetic re-focusing, and the optimism which attended expectations of Edward III, which births the pessimism of Thomas's Reply, rooted in an imagined extension of the reign of Edward II, casting the Anglo-Scottish wars in a quasi-apocalyptic scope extended to the battle of Halidon Hill.

Therefore, although it appears to progress to events from the reign of Edward III, the prophecy firmly grounds its cataclysmic momentum in the reign of Edward II.²⁸ It stands in sharp contrast to prophecies found in the same scribal hand in Royal MS 12.C.XII, 'Lilium Regnans' and 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas'. Both of the Royal prophecies affix positive expectations to the monarch and prophesy a coming golden age.²⁹ They are affirmative products of the crisis affirmative years 1320-40, a period which also birthed its flipside in the pessimism

²⁴ Brandl, pp. 16-17.

²⁵ *Brut*, I, 243.

²⁶ For Edward II as the intended recipient of 'Adam Davy's Dream', a prophecy anticipating an English Holy Roman Emperor, see Taylor, pp. 92-96.

²⁷ See Coote, p. 107.

²⁸ It is interesting to note that the households with which the MS was originally most strongly associated were themselves instrumental in the downfall of Edward II: the Mortimers and Orleton, see Revard, pp. 26-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

of Thomas. Although it lacks the optimism of the Royal prophecies, the Harley prophecy is equally very much a product of the majority of Edward III.

If the prophecy spans the years from the Battle of Bannockburn to the Battle of Halidon Hill we have some sense of the long-view of an historical era. In *post facto* accounts of the Anglo-Scottish war it appears to have become common practice to inscribe Bannockburn in Halidon and vice versa: English loss at Bannockburn is tempered by English victory at Halidon Hill.³⁰ Yet the prophecy does not entertain this sense of setting to right, rather it incorporates the events of Halidon Hill into the same pessimistic landscape as Bannockburn and the reign of Edward II, as cast in its retrospective colours. Thomas of Erceldoune, after all, is not a prophet of the glory years of the British monarchy, but one pertinent to recollections of unrest.

IV

After the figure of the 'capped man' the prophecy continues with a series figuring physical and human disorder:

When mon is levere othermones thyng then is owen;
 When Londyon ys forest, ant forest ys felde:
 When hares kendles o the herston;
 When wyt and wille werres togedere;
 When mon makes stables of kyrkes, and steles castles wyth styes;
 When Rokesbourh nys no burgh ant market is at Forweleye;
 When the alde is gan ant the newe is come that don notht
 (2-8)

Scattergood identifies such conditionals as 'cultural and moral *impossibilia*'.³¹ Although the prophecy's succession of marvellous transformations echoes the type of physical impossibilities found in the *mirabilia* of the British histories, the cultural pertinence of the prophecy does not lie in the impossibility of such disarray but in a sense of perceived historical reality.³² The *impossibilia* are not shadowy obscurities but recognisable references to contemporary events and places. Disruption of the natural world and the social order are the inevita-

³⁰ Cf. Wyntoun, *De Orygynale Chronykle of Scotland*, ed. by David Macpherson (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1872, 1879, 1891), 3 vols., II, 403; Minot, *The Poems of Laurence Minot*, ed. by Joseph Hall, (London: Clarendon Press, 1914, 3rd edn; 1st edn, 1866), pp. 1-6.

³¹ Scattergood, pp. 177-8.

³² Cf. *Nennius's History of the Britons*, in Giles, p. 403; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 170-85, 200, 237. Although extraordinary, such marvels are generally intended as metaphorical or metonymic, such being for the most part intelligible.

ble by-products of war - the physical devastation of this period was not limited to Scotland but was also severe in the northern counties of England, and again we must bear in mind the likely northern provenance of the Harley scribe's exemplum.³³ The status of border territories as English or Scottish was repeatedly subject to redefinition during the protracted course of the conflict. The seventh line of the prophecy refers to the tactical border territory Roxburgh, ceded to the English alongside Berwick and Edinburgh by Edward Balliol in the Roxburgh Convention of 1332. A focal point of disruption in a disrupted landscape, its castle was burnt to the ground by Scottish forces on at least two occasions, and its fortifications re-built by the English upon annexation.³⁴ Its place in the prophecy potentially carries a number of multi-layered temporal resonances: the occasions of its razing, and its later English occupation, when it ceased to be a Scottish 'burgh' and became an English outpost. 'When the alde is gan ant the newe is come that don noht' seems to recall the movement of places, the desolation of old ground, and the failure to adequately rebuild what was lost.³⁵

I think we can view this marvellous desolation of the landscape, however, as something other than strict historical representation. The effects of the war in Scotland were not limited to the border territories alone; they were much larger in their scope - a scope which the prophecy extends to the point of hyperbole through the fostering of apocalyptic correspondences. In her discussion of the 'formula of tokens' found in the Harley prophecy, E.B. Lyle suggests a comparison with the 'tokens of cataclysm' found in medieval Welsh prophecies treating the fifteen signs preceding the Day of Judgement, extant also in English.³⁶ There is certainly a correspondence of form between the Harley prophecy and the signs: both are formulaic progressions of calamities. However, the features of Thomas's Reply cannot be exactly matched with any ver-

³³ See *The Chronicles of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, trans. Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1913), p. 211. The entry for 1311 describes a Scottish raid on Northumberland: 'trampling down crops by themselves and their beasts as much as they could; and so, passing by the priory of Lanercost, they entered Scotland, having many men prisoners from whom they might extort ransom money at will.' The passage goes on to detail the burning of the settlements at Brough, Appleby and Kirkoswald. Such appears to have been a continuous feature on both sides of the border during the first half of the fourteenth century. For an overview of the effect on the north and an increase in border raids following English defeat at Bannockburn see May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (London: Clarendon, 1959; 2nd edn. 1963), pp. 40-41.

³⁴ *Lanercost* refers to two instances, in 1297 and 1311, in which a Scots force burnt the town and its castle, in the first instance using the means of the sixth line of the prophecy, by placing ladders against the walls by night: 'steles castles with styes [ladders]'. See pp. 165, 204, 286, 288. On the English policy of devastation to the ceded territories in 1334, see Barrow, pp. 122, 125.

³⁵ The governments of Edward II, and later Isabella and Mortimer, both largely did 'noht' in defence of the north of England. See McKisack, pp. 32-3.

³⁶ Lyle, p. 111; see also M. E. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1937), pp. 44-47.

sions of the fifteen signs. The changing nature and desolation of the land is more directly an apocalyptic pre-condition found in sibylline and Biblical material. The series of natural upheavals prophesied in the eighth book of the *Oracula Sibyllina*, quoted by Augustine and attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl in *De Civitate Dei* 18.23, is a useful point of comparison.³⁷ Here, the coming of the Messiah is preceded by total reversals in the landscape: 'uplifted shall the valleys be, the hills shall be laid low'.³⁸ This appears to be an echo of Isaiah 40.4, where this change is similarly a sign of the coming Messianic age.³⁹ We find similar in the changing landscape of Revelation 6.14, 'And the heaven departed as a book folded up: and every mountain, and the islands were moved out of their places'. The latter appears to have been a point of illustrative exemplification in apocalypses such as the Trinity Apocalypse (Trinity College MS R.16.2), an illumination which also portrays a castle sinking into the ground.⁴⁰ Whether or not the 'Londyon' turned to forest in the prophecy is the border area Lothian, or is intended to refer to London (which I think is not so far-fetched, given the proximity of this figure to the English king, the 'capped man'), these disruptions to the physical landscape could well be included with a mind to such familiar apocalyptic reversals of place and the changing nature of land.⁴¹ In keeping with apocalyptic currents, the environmental chaos of the Harley prophecy is coupled with evidence of human disorder, covetousness: 'When mon is levere othermones thyng then is owen'. This is interesting in light of the prophecy's concern with dishonest commerce; indeed the reference to the changing status of Roxburgh accompanies the re-location of a market.⁴² This, as we shall presently see, also carries apocalyptic pertinence.

³⁷ Ward, I, 190.

³⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, ed. by G. R. Evans, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 789-90.

³⁹ I am indebted to Aisling Byrne for pointing out this correspondence.

⁴⁰ Second illumination on fol. 19v of *The Trinity College Apocalypse: A Reproduction in Facsimile of the Manuscript R.16.2 in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, with a preface and introduction by M. R. James (London: The Roxburghe Club, 1909).

⁴¹ See Dean, p. 20. 'Londyon' as either Lothian or London could well be an intended ambiguity, a figure which decentres even while it seems to give a geographical location. Disruptions in London, as well as Lothian, are intelligible – not least in the widespread effects of the famine of 1315, see below p. 16. The restructuring of the landscape could also possibly be a reference to the re-location of royal administration from London to York in 1327 and 1333, see Nicholson, pp. 42, 109.

⁴² I am unable to locate 'Forweleye'. The implication, however, is perhaps the movement of the market away from Roxburgh, which was adversely affected by the repeated interruptions to Anglo-Scottish trade. See G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Aftermath of War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series 28 (1978), 103-125, (p. 108).

V

One of the chief features of the next section of the prophecy is the subversion and abuse of commerce: from the relocation of markets, to the sale of men, and the rising price of wheat. It reads:

When Bambourne is donged wyth dede men;
 When men ledes men in ropes to buyen and to sellen;
 When a quarter of whaty whete is chaunged for a colt of ten markes;
 When prude pikes and pees is leyd in prisoun

(9-12)

English defeat at the Battle of Bannockburn ('Bambourne') appears to have been regarded as part of a complex of English misfortune. Following heavy rains across Europe in 1315 was a famine so severe that the English peasantry are said to have eaten their own children, and the cost of wheat increased to six or even eight times its normal price.⁴³ The rising price of wheat in the tenth line, following the Battle of Bannockburn and, it seems, the ransoming of hostages, appears to be reminiscent of a particularly desperate chapter in recent English history. It is plausible that within allusions to events in Scotland, affairs in England are also referenced. For the most part the prophecy contains Scottish locales but the temporal-frame it evokes is by no means necessarily limited to Scotland; the prophecy is an Anglo-centric production. The references appear de-centred precisely *because* they are recognisable, understandable as pessimistic and traumatic associations stemming from the first figure of the prophecy, the 'capped man' crowned as king. The view that the reign of Edward II was the prophetically-ratified cause and circumstance of subsequent national hardships, the sentiment we find echoed in the *Brut* above, is a long-view of history crucial to any understanding of the prophecy.

Tracing a complex of disasters back to misgovernment is of course a familiar feature of prophetic condemnation of Old Testament Israel, a people are punished for their sins, a consequence of misguidance from spiritual and earthly leaders, which desolates the landscape. Lamenting the declining British nation, Gildas draws on Jeremiah 5.30-31: 'Astonishment and wonders have

⁴³ See McKisack, pp. 49-50. The *Brut* describes the English loss of Berwick, famine, resort to cannibalism, plague, and intermittent Scottish raids upon Northumberland as a total complex of misfortune during this period - *Brut*, I, 209-10.

been wrought in this land. Prophets did preach lying, and priests did applaud with their hands, and my people have loved such matters'.⁴⁴ We can see this at work in the Harley Erceldoune prophecy: through the realisation of *impossibilia* the land is marvellously, desolately, changed. Famine is of course one such instrument of divine scourging, and here we also find an Old Testament analogue associated by Gildas with the decline of the Britons. Along the same theme entertained in his glosses on Jeremiah, Gildas paraphrases Ezekiel 5.16: 'I will stretch forth my hand upon her, and break in pieces her foundation of bread, and send upon her famine'.⁴⁵ The passage in Ezekiel itself prophesies the sending of the 'arrows of famine' (5.16) as 'a reproach among the nations' (5.14). In the Harley prophecy famine will be (has been) sent upon the English nation, a divine retribution resulting from monarchic misrule.

Ezekiel 5.16 employs a common reference to famine which we find later in the high price of wheat in the third seal of Revelation 6. We can potentially read the progress of the first four seals at work in the lines of the prophecy quoted above. In Revelation 6: the opening of the first seal which unleashes 'a conqueror' wearing a crown (6.2);⁴⁶ the second a rider with the power to 'take peace from the earth, and that they [men] should kill one another' (6.4); the third a rider bearing a pair of scales, while four voices demand 'two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny' (6.6); and the fourth Death, who kills 'with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth' (6.8).⁴⁷ The Harley prophecy gives us not only the high price of wheat (the third seal, in which the famine of the fourth is implicit), but the imprisoning of 'pees' (the second seal), and allusions to what appear to be two major battles (the second and fourth seals). The prophecy takes us to the brink of the fifth seal, but it cannot progress to the apocalyptically definitive conditions of the final three: the resurrection of the martyrs, earthquakes, the blackening of the sun, the moon as 'blood', the appearance of the Lamb (Revelation 6.9-17), and the trumpets of the seven angels heralding even greater destruction (Revelation 8.1-13). Even within the heightened realm of apocalyptic refashion-

⁴⁴ Gildas, p. 357. We might wonder how available a copy of *De Excidio* was to the original redactors of the prophecy, and might further conjecture that the hypothesised northern MS originated in a religious house – the apocalypticism of the prophecy could well have appealed to ecclesiastical minds. For the possible religious provenance of the scribe see Revard, pp. 68-9; and David L. Jeffrey, 'Authors, Anthologists, and Franciscan Spirituality', in Fein, pp. 261-70.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 340.

⁴⁶ Whilst the implications of the first seal, the conqueror given a crown are potentially interesting in relation to the Edwardian period, this is too lengthy and inconclusive a grounds for speculation for my current purpose.

⁴⁷ On animal imagery in the prophecy see below, pp. 19-21.

ing, such phenomena still lay well outside the scope of the Anglo-Scottish wars.⁴⁸

VI

The final events detailed by the prophecy are:

When a Scot ne may hym hude ase hare in forme that the Englysshe
 ne shal hym fynde;
 When ryttht ant wrong ascenteth to-gedere;
 When laddes weddeth lovedis;
 When Scottes flen so faste that for faute of ship hy drouneth hem-
 selve

(13-16)

The Scottish retreat at Halidon Hill is a matter which poetry and chronicle accounts of the Anglo-Scottish wars hold as an inevitable check to Scottish pride. Pride is of course the condition which line twelve of the prophecy presents as antithetical to peace. In both retrospective English and Scottish accounts it is a failing associated with the Bruce faction following victory at Bannockburn, of which the Battle of Halidon Hill is taken to be the divinely ratified check.⁴⁹ In the *Brut* the Halidon chastisement is formulated in anthropomorphic terms: 'And þus hit bifelle, as God wolde, þat þe Scottis hade þat day no more foisun ne myght aþeynes þe Englysshe-men, þan xx shepe shulde haue aþeyns v wolves'.⁵⁰ This simile is a commonplace of histories and prophecies of decline, for example Gildas's description of the Saxons on British soil 'like wolves into the sheep-fold'.⁵¹ Such figures appear to be intentionally reminiscent of the animal references and transformations of Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Revelation - the foundation of one of the most distinctive features of Galfridian prophecy.⁵² Yet whilst the Harley prophecy does include animal imagery, it does not give us wolves, but hares.

Given the date of Harley 2253, the relentless persecution of the Scots, hiding like hares, is an obvious allusion to the Battle of Halidon Hill. It fits not only in terms of the date of the manuscript but in the details of the battle, where the Scots were chased into the sea.⁵³ The reference to the Scots as

⁴⁸ On 'business as usual' during the 'vicissitudes of war and its aftermath' see Barrow, pp. 111-12.

⁴⁹ Wyntoun, II, 420; Minot, p. 5; Lanercost, pp. 279-81.

⁵⁰ *Brut*, I, 285.

⁵¹ Gildas, p. 310.

⁵² Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 170-85; *Brut*, I, 72-76.

⁵³ *The Romance of the Battle of Halidon Hill* reads: 'þe Englysshe men pursuyed hem so,/ Pille þe ffloode was alle a-Goo', *Brut*, I, 287 (Appendix A). See also Nicholson, p. 136.

hares is one which we find also in the English *Brut*, and appears to have been commonplace.⁵⁴ However, in apocalyptic, and indeed, we might expect, valedictory terms, this construction is unusual not only in its absence of the wolverine, but of any visible agency other than the Scots themselves. Rather than the English army, the agency of persecution is the historical momentum of the prophecy itself, to which the Scots can only react with a fearful self-destruction: for lack of a ship they 'drouneth hem-selve'. There seems to be the ghost of an apocalyptic structure here: the unfolding of historical events in correspondence with a divinely predetermined framework. The drowning of the Scots perhaps recalls the fate of the estates of men in Revelation, who throw themselves on the bitter mercy of the rocks:

And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of mountains: And they say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

(Revelation 6.15-16)

Yet there is no overt trace of a divine order in the prophecy, and the assumption of the hare form, which appears to have been an object of medieval superstition, retains the quality of a ghoulish marvel.⁵⁵ No messianic figure enters the frame to establish order, and all remains decidedly disordered.

The final formulation of the prophecy presents an image of further disarray: moral, in the ascendance of right alongside wrong; hierarchical, in the wedding of 'laddes' to 'lovedis'; and human, in the drowned Scots, a presentation seemingly devoid of English jubilation - this is after all a work of pessimism.⁵⁶ In the inter-related matrix of the material effects of war, the apocalyptic seals - conquest, battle, extortionate commerce, famine, and the 'wild beasts of the earth' - cannot be separated into a neat progression of mutually exclusive and temporally antecedent effects. Rather they form an overwhelming totality evading such clear delineations. The prophecy entertains a symbolic order which cannot be closed off. Whilst the continuation of corrupt, profiteering, and ulti-

⁵⁴ We find hares used metaphorically for the Scots in the prophecy of the last six kings in the *Brut*, see I, 72-3, and its direct application in I, pp. 204-5, although the hares are here substituted with a greyhound for John Balliol and a fox for Robert Bruce.

⁵⁵ Cf. Gerald of Wales, *Topography of Ireland*, 2.19; 'Names of a Hare' in MS Digby 86, a curse in a late thirteenth-century hand.

⁵⁶ Compare, for example, to the jingoism of Minot, pp. 1-4. Minot's verses are roughly contemporary with the prophecy.

mately chaotic humanity finds potential correspondence in the over-living of the unrepentant sinners of Revelation 9.20 who 'did not penance from the work of their hands', no sanctified utopia follows the devastation; there is no definitive casting of the sinful into Hell, and no establishment of the New Jerusalem. The pessimistic form of the prophecy fundamentally negates such an outcome. By 1340 Anglo-Scottish relations could by no stretch of the imagination be configured as possessing so absolute a conclusion.

VII

The prophecy concludes, in answer to the countess's question:

Whenne shal this be? Nouthur in thine tyme ne in myne.
Ah comen and gon with-inne twenty wynter ant on.

(17-18)

The twenty-one year period given here is a source of much speculation. The prophecy can potentially be taken as that retrospectively associated with the death of Alexander III in 1286, the tradition found in the *Scottichronicon*. This takes us roughly to the period of the Battle of Bannockburn (i.e. within half a decade). This is a key argument of nineteenth-century scholarship which regards the prophecy as propaganda intended to inspire the English and dispirit the Scots on the eve of the Battle of Bannockburn.⁵⁷ This is founded upon the misdating of the entire contents of the manuscript to c.1320, which originally refuted line sixteen of the prophecy ('When Scottes flen') as a reference to Halidon Hill.⁵⁸ However, in light of more recent scholarship, the figure of the drowning Scots can be more accurately regarded as a reference to the actual outcome at Halidon Hill, rather than wishful-thinking on the eve of Bannockburn.

Given the loose chronology common to political prophecies, more concerned with certain key events and the possibility of pattern-forming than strict historical record, the most plausible conclusion is that the prophecy's resolution is formulaic. The twenty-one years are feasibly intended to be read as *over a generation*: the scope of the conflict is such that it endures long after the 'capped man' of line one. The conclusion is perhaps an echo of Matthew 24.34, asserting the validity and immediate historical pertinence of the prophecy, 'Amen I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done'. The generational limit in Matthew appears to refer to the first stages of apocalyptic

⁵⁷ Murray, p. xix; Brandl, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Ker, pp. xxi-xiii; Robbins, p. xxxii.

desolation rather than to conclusive eschatological fulfilment, and if we view the Harley prophecy in terms of apocalyptic progression, the Scottish wars can be regarded as a symptom of this preliminary decline, although by no means its culmination. It is itself perhaps testament to the protracted nature of the apocalyptic worldview, as we find it in the Little Apocalypse of Matthew:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places:

Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.

(Matthew 24.6-8)

Within the quasi-apocalyptic terms of Thomas's Reply the Scottish wars are only the 'beginnings of sorrows', a series of apocalyptic symptoms rather than a definitive conclusion.

Whilst the events of this period deny full apocalyptic realization, the Harley prophecy still invokes a distinct sense of cataclysm. Coote has argued that the prophecy 'tells us what the people who read and wrote it feared the most'.⁵⁹ Yet its vision of a disordered universe is not a disturbing future possibility as much as a hyperbolic version of a reconstructed past. It does not necessarily give us history as it was, but history as it was written from the vantage point of the end of the crisis period. The prophecy is not an expression of fear, rather it is an attempt to come to terms with a disordered past through integration into an intelligible structure, the Žižekian 'new texture' of the apocalyptic order. Although perfect integration is inevitably denied, a certain new and subsidiary level of understanding is achieved through such an engagement. Apocalyptic echoes cast a heightened level of meaning across the details of the prophecy: the sufferings of the period are significant and historically ratified, for the resonance, if not the realisation, is ultimate.

⁵⁹ Coote, p. 99.

Holy Shit: Bosch's Bluebird and the Junction of the Scatological and the Eschatological in Late Medieval Art

Marisa Mandabach
Harvard University*

In the 'Hell' panel of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca. 1500), a devil with the head of a bird and a humanoid body with glowing blue skin devours one naked soul and drops two more, in a transparent blue bubble, into a cesspool (Figure 1). Its black eye conveys no hint of consciousness; glinting with two white highlights, it is all surface and all abyss. Although the orifice that expels the bubble is hidden by the seat of a throne-like privy chair, in its hue the bubble is a material extension of the devil's body, a body shown to be doubly po-

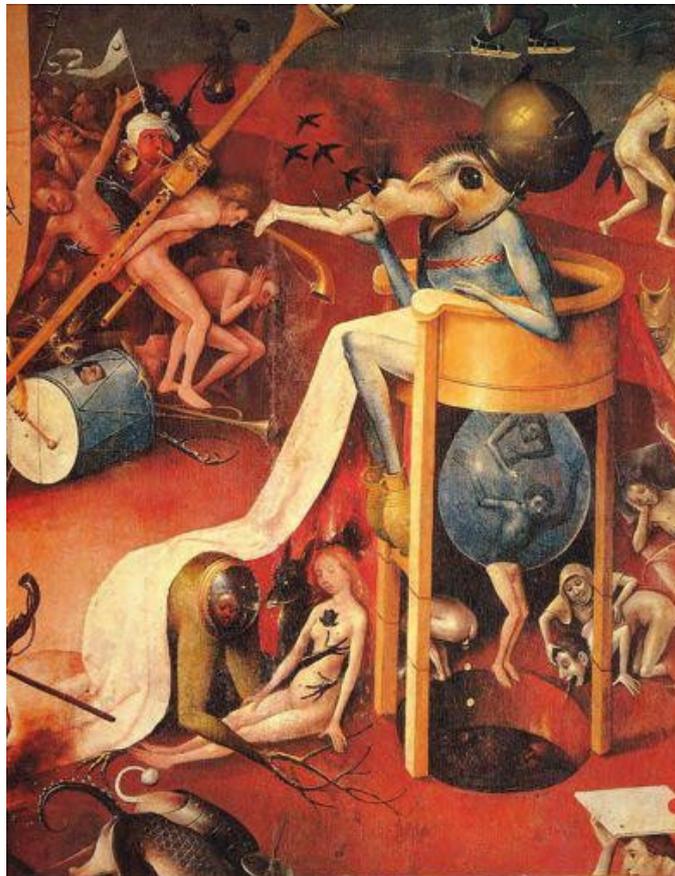


Figure 1: Hieronymus Bosh (Netherlandish, ca. 1450-1516) **Garden of Earthly Delights**, ca. 1500
Detail from interior right panel: "Bird-headed devil" Museo del Prado, Madrid.
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

*I would like to express my thanks to Jeffrey F. Hamburger who helped inspire this paper.

rous: half-ruptured from the bubble, a naked male falls from one abjection towards another, his arms still flailing inside the blue membrane, his legs dangling over the cesspool he will join. Another victim follows him headfirst. Their tormentor is an eating and defecating machine. Moreover, the half-eaten victim in its raised claw has been infected with the latter of these modes, releasing (no doubt in terror, as in a literal 'fight or flight' response) a smoky cloud of black-birds from his or her anus.

The scene continues below, around a circular cesspool to which two pale bystanders add their helpings. One hides his face and defecates golden coins, while another, eyes bulging, vomits as a nun positions his head over the pool. To their left, a woman and a donkey-devil with its arms wrapped around her naked torso are shown their visages in a convex mirror, fused onto the backside of another devil whose face is hidden by a white cloth trailing down from the bird's lap. The mirror gleams blue along its edges, perhaps also reflecting the bird and its bubble. But the woman's eyes are closed: she does not see what we see, namely, that her reflection emerges from the backside of a devil, likening her to its excrement.

The *Garden of Earthly Delights* has been a favourite terrain of iconographers attempting to uncover the original meaning of its bizarre imagery.¹ Yet as Keith Moxey has argued, one of the most meaningful aspects of the work has nothing to do with hidden symbolism: rather, it is the fact that Bosch has taken the sacred format of a triptych, formerly reserved for altarpieces, and filled it with the kinds of fantastical and licentious imagery seen in the margins of medieval manuscripts.² The breach in genre enables him to invoke a Last Judgment altarpiece only to replace it with an idiosyncratic essay on the fate of God's

¹ A list of explanations for the triptych 'in terms of astrology, alchemy, rare forms of heresy, illustrated puns, and so forth' up to 1994 is given in Keith Moxey, 'Hieronymus Bosch and the "World Upside Down": The Case of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*,' in *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretation*, ed. by Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), pp. 104-140 (p. 135, note 2); quote from p. 105. More recent iconographic studies include Ulrich Fritsche, *Jheronimus Bosch: das ausgewogene Welt-Bild; der "Garten der Lüste" offenbart sein Geheimnis* (Schallenberg: Hazeka, 1996); Eric de Bruyn, 'The Cat and the Mouse (or Rat) on the Left Panel of Bosch's "Garden of Delights" Triptych: An Iconological Approach,' *Jaarboek / Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* (2001), 6-55; and Peter Glum, *The Key to Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights" Found in Allegorical Bible Interpretation* (Tokyo: Chuo-Koron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2007).

² Moxey, p. 140.



Figure 2: Hieronymus Bosch
Garden of Earthly Delights, ca. 1500:
 Exterior closed state ("Third Day of
 Creation")
 Image courtesy of Erich Lessing /
 Art Resource, NY

Creation,³ depicted on the closed state as a watery grisaille globe (Figure 2).⁴ On the left interior wing, Christ leads Eve to Adam in a garden recognizable as Eden, though already rife with portents of natural, spiritual, and bodily corruption.⁵ Meanwhile, the central panel teems with allusions to terrestrial, literally 'seedier' forms of creation: human sexual intercourse (or simply delectation), natural generation, and possibly alchemy.⁶ A multiplicative energy and freedom is conveyed throughout by the relentless variety, not just of bizarre creatures and contortionist poses, but also of colours, shapes, and textures. In the 'Hell' panel, this formal variety is still present – but the freedom is now in the hands of bestial devils, who march, cajole, impale, ride, or hang their human victims around a decrepit and burning landscape.

A subterranean 'world upside down', Hell had in fact long been an artistic subject-realm in which nudity and fantastical hybrids could take centre stage. Keeping this in mind, and focusing on the bird-headed monster, the following essay will examine a metaphorical strain in late medieval art – of special interest

³ My understanding of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and of Bosch's art in general, has been deeply informed by lectures given by Joseph Leo Koerner, as well as by his article 'Self-Portraiture Direct and Oblique,' in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, ed. by Joanna Woodall and Anthony Bond (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006), pp. 67-80.

⁴ This is the most broadly-accepted interpretation of the globe. Another is that it represents the Earth after the flood; see Ernst Gombrich, 'Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights: A Progress Report,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 32 (1969), 162-70.

⁵ Bosch's Eden is filled with creatures that were associated with putrefaction, melancholy, and evil; see Laurinda S. Dixon, *Alchemical Imagery in Bosch's Garden of Delights* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), esp. pp. 41-45.

⁶ On alchemical symbolism in the painting see Dixon, as above.

will be paintings, including altarpieces, manuscript illuminations, and frescos – in which ideas about creation and judgment came to be linked with ones about the scatological body of the devil. What light can this medieval tradition shed on Bosch's bluebird and its role within the eschatological framework of the *Garden*? Although this study is retrospective in focus, its purpose is not to deny Bosch's novelty or void his agency – as if artworks simply appear, one after another, in some blind mechanical procession. His bluebird is a highly, even ostentatiously, original creation. However, only by seeing how it is typical can we see how it is also idiomatic, how Bosch transforms inherited metaphors into new terms.

Hellmouths and Frames

Devouring beasts appear as agents of the underworld or of the passage thereof in medieval art of many regions and periods. A canonical example from Romanesque sculpture is the large trumeau at Souillac (ca. 1135), featuring an interlace of gnawing beasts topped by a human whose head is clenched in the jaws of a griffin (image available online at http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/zgothic/1romanes/po-12c11/11f_1100.html).⁷ As Carol Knicely notes in her article on the trumeau, animal symbolism played an important part in monastic liturgies for the dead and dying: dramatizing the pleas of those facing death, the monks of Souillac would chant, 'Deliver me from the mouth of the lion [...] / Deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess you.'⁸ Such symbolism had a typological formulation in the story of Jonah, whose swallowing and regurgitation by the whale was construed as a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Christ.⁹

The metaphor of death as devouring was also expressed in the convention of showing the entrance to Hell as a giant maw or rictus – a 'hellmouth'. This mask of the underworld was envisioned in highly imaginative ways. Sometimes it appears as a giant mouth abstracted from any geological setting, acting as a synecdoche of Hell itself.¹⁰ Exemplary of this mode is a miniature from the Winchester Psalter (ca. 1150) in which the hellmouth, crammed with souls, functions

⁷ Carol Knicely, 'Food for Thought in the Souillac Pillar: Devouring Beasts, Pain and the Subversion of Heroic Codes of Violence,' *Racar* 24.1997 (2000), 14-37 (p. 30).

⁸ Knicely, p. 30.

⁹ Isabel Grübel, 'Lucifer als Seelenfresser. Überlegungen zu einer zentralen Gestalt des mittelalterlichen Jenseitsglaubens,' in *Frömmigkeitsstile im Mittelalter*, ed. by Wolfgang Haubrichs (Göttingen, 1991), pp. 49-60 (p. 51).

¹⁰ Grübel (p. 51) likewise notes that the Hellmouth 'became a required element of representations of the afterlife, either as an entrance to the underworld or as a symbol of hell itself' (translation from the German mine).

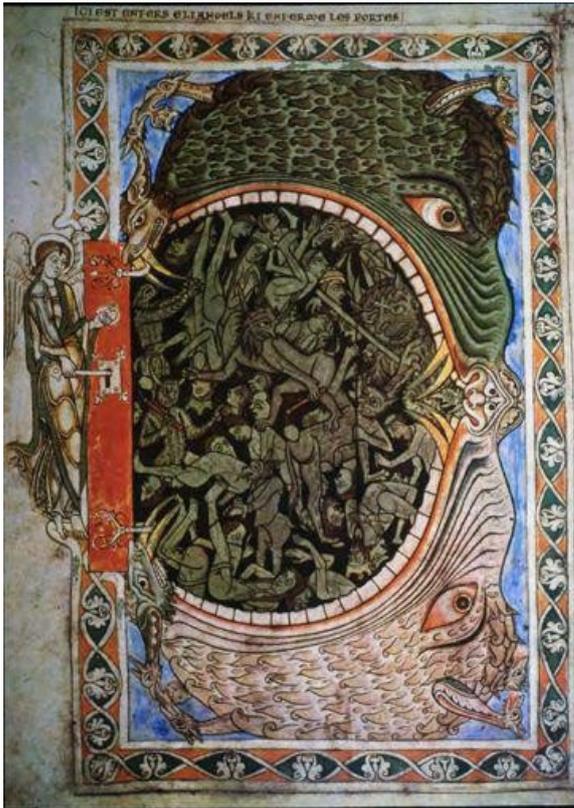


Figure 3: Angel Locking the Damned in Hell

Illumination from the Winchester Psalter (Psalter of Henry of Blois), ca. 1150
 © The British Library Board, Ms Cotton Nero C. IV, fol. 39

both as a prison and as a kind of enlivened frame-within-the-frame (Figure 3). The link between hellmouths and frames is also seen in miniatures where the hellmouth interacts with the marginalia. For example, in a Last Judgment miniature attributed to the Boucicaut Master (active ca. 1390-1430), a hellmouth appears to vomit out all of the marginal decorations while two demons attend it, one fanning the flames it belches, the other prodding the damned with a pitchfork to keep them inside (Figures 4, 4a, and 4b). In the lower right, the 'netherface' of another demon sprouts a thorny flower of the same kind seen running through the margins. In such images, the hellmouth is simply the largest member of Satan's protean army, a demon blown up into a symbolic container or mask for everything demonic or grotesque. Indeed, as Mikhail Bakhtin has explained, 'The most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss.'¹¹

In a fourteenth-century Apocalypse in the Cloisters collection, a hellmouth with two faces not only contains the hydra-headed Beast of Revelation

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 317.

Figure 4: Last Judgment
 Attributed to the Boucicaut Master
 (act. ca. 1390-1430)
 Illumination from a Book of Hours,
 use of Paris
 Image courtesy of the Bodleian
 Library, University of Oxford
 Ms Douce 80, fol. 192r



Figure 4a: Detail of Figure 4;
 "Hellmouth attended by demons"



Figure 4b: Detail of Figure 4; "Demon with
 flower-sprouting netherface"



Figure 5: Dragon and the Beasts Cast into Hell

Illumination from an Apocalypse (the Cloisters Apocalypse), Normandy, ca. 1330
The Cloisters Collection, Ms 68.174, fol. 34v-35
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

but is also a breeding ground for other monstrous masks, which pile up in front of one another (Figure 5). Likewise, the hellmouth from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves (image available online at <http://www.themorgan.org/collections/works/cleves/manuscriptEnlarge.asp?page=75>) is an nightmarish *mise-en-abyme*. A tiny replica even appears in the lower margin, a green monster spewing inscribed banderols that initiate the formal rhythm of the vine-scroll borders – suggesting not just the margins but the *entire image* as a site of scatological excess. Whereas the Winchester Psalter showed the jaws of Hell being locked, later miniatures like these emphasise the hellmouth more as an appropriate container for what Paul Binski has called the ‘promiscuity of forms’ that characterises hellish imagery in general:

Where Heaven represents order and harmony, Hell represents disorder; again, it is an anti-representation [...] and in some ways it is a representational sphere that offered to medieval writers and artists vastly greater scope than the calm aesthetic numbness of Heaven. Hell as the sphere of ego was the ideal sphere of artistic egotism [and] thus inevitably the realm of variety and fantasy [...].¹²

¹² Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 172-73.

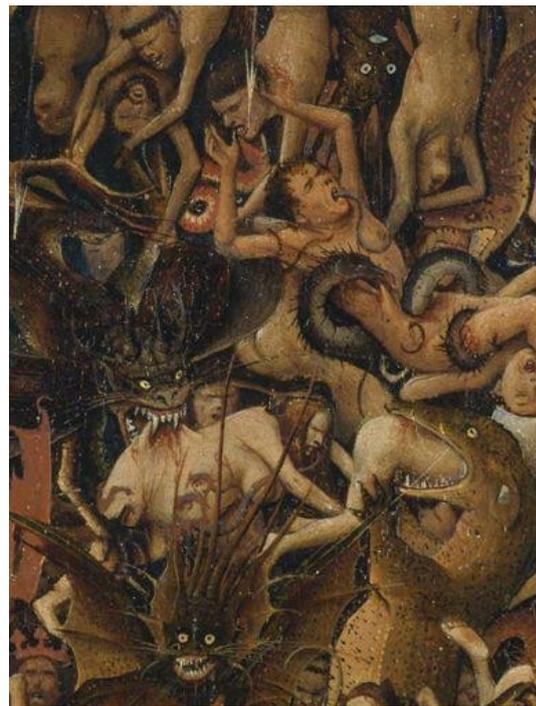
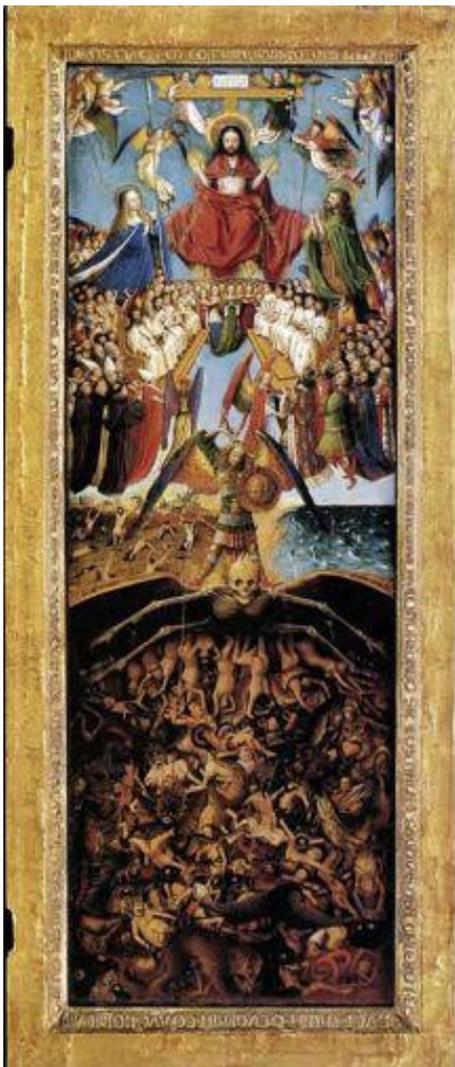


Figure 6: Jan van Eyck (Netherlandish, ca. 1390-1441)

Last Judgment (right wing from a diptych altarpiece), ca. 1430

Image courtesy of Images for Academic Publishing, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 6a: Detail, "Devouring Beasts"

The expressiveness of a mouth, its relation to speech, makes the hell-mouth the perfect symbolic frame for such a realm.¹³ Binski is one of many scholars who have stressed the space for invention offered to medieval artists by monstrous, grotesque, carnivalesque imagery, as well as by the margins of manuscripts, in which such imagery flourished.¹⁴ This is relevant to Bosch, who most likely trained as a manuscript illuminator specializing in the creation of fantastical marginal imagery before transitioning to panel painting.¹⁵ In fact,

¹³ See Michael Camille, 'Mouths and Meaning: Towards an Anti-Iconography of Medieval Art,' in *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. by Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 43-57.

¹⁴ See especially Meyer Schapiro, 'On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art,' in his *Romanesque Art* (New York, NY: Braziller, 1977), pp. 1-27; and Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion, 1992).

¹⁵ See Suzanne Sulzberger, 'Jérôme Bosch et les maîtres de l'enluminure,' *Scriptorium* 16 (1962), 46-49.

Moxey argues that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* was conceived by Bosch, and understood by his patrons, as an allegory of artistic freedom – a claim that shall be addressed at the conclusion of this paper. For the time being, however, let us continue to trace the prehistory of Bosch's bluebird.

Devouring Beasts and the Rapacious Earth

Being ingested by animals represented a means not only of passage to the other world but also of punishment at the hands of Satan and his bestial army. From a medieval Christian perspective, the bodies of animals inhabit a liminal ontological territory: capable of independent movement and appetite, they appear animated, yet are soulless. Conversely, a human being, once he or she passes on, is *only* a soul (even if this soul remains attached to a single bodily identity).¹⁶ Being repeatedly devoured by beasts thus forces the soul to submit to – or pass through, as is the case with Bosch's bluebird and other creatures we shall examine – a body that represents a hideous inversion of its own, *inanimate* but alive.

It was in Northern European paintings of the fifteenth century that depictions of souls being masticated by zoomorphic devils reached a height of cruelty, inventiveness, and verisimilitude. In Jan van Eyck's Last Judgment panel in the Metropolitan Museum (ca. 1430) (Figures 6 and 6a), Hell is shown as the crammed underbelly of the earth's surface, presided over by a skeleton doing the splits. Its prisoners are gnawed upon by beasts running the gamut of animal genera – mammals, reptiles, and birds.

In Dieric Bouts the Elder's *Fall of the Damned* (ca. 1470) (Figure 7), a motley crew of reptilian devils attack naked souls in a landscape so rocky it practically has teeth. Indeed, many of the damned are shown partially submerged into the earth; this is the endgame of their fall, which began when they were dropped here by flying devils (and were thus forced to repeat the devils' own prior fall from Heaven). The grammar of fallenness is also one of inversion, as many of the devils hold their victims upside down. In the lower right, a lizard inserts its open jaw into the picture to bite off a soul's head. In the upper left, an entrance to Hell appears as a flame-spewing cave, inside of which the tiny heads of about a dozen captive souls are visible, becoming less and less distinct the further inside they appear.

¹⁶ As Carolyn Walker Bynum has argued, the enduring integrity of body and soul was considered essential for human salvation, and was a topic of concern for many theologians; see *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), esp. Ch. 3, pp. 117-55: 'Reassemblage and Regurgitation: Ideas of Bodily Resurrection in Early Scholasticism.'

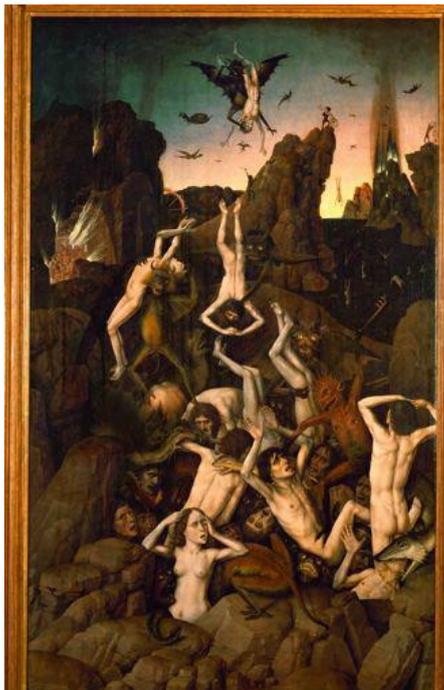


Figure 7: Dieric Bouts (Netherlandish, ca. 1415-1475)

Fall of the Damned, ca. 1470

Musée des Beaux Arts, Lille

Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

Here, then, the body of Hell has been replaced by the body of the earth, sucking the damned downwards as if by some infernal gravity and incinerating them within its cavities. Indeed, as Peter Dinzelbacher has argued, in medieval thought the place of Hell was not simply allegorical: Hell was also understood to be ‘a real cavelike prison’ in central earth, divided into a number of chambers and with Satan’s seat at its core.¹⁷ This led to speculation about the coordinates of its point or points of entry. For example, Emperor Frederic II of Hohenstaufen ‘asked his court philosopher Michael Scot where on or under or above this our earth Hell and purgatory might be found, how many abysses existed, and, in connection with this, what one ought to think about volcanoes.’¹⁸ The main hellmouth was believed to be located somewhere on Golgotha, the hill on which Christ was crucified over the bones of Adam.¹⁹

The idea of the earth as a consuming body with creatural appetites is made even more explicit in a miniature of ca. 1480, attributed to Simon Mar-
mion, in which Paradise and Hell appear as opposite ends of an eschatological

¹⁷ The terrestrial existence of Hell was asserted by Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 97, 7 (196). See Peter Dinzelbacher, ‘The Way to the Other World in Medieval Literature and Art,’ *Folklore* 97, No. 1 (1986), 70-87 (p. 70).

¹⁸ Dinzelbacher, p. 70.

¹⁹ Robert Lima, ‘The Mouth of Hell: The Iconography of Damnation on the Stage of the Middle Ages,’ in *European Iconography East and West: Selected Papers of the Szeged International Conference, June 9-12*, ed. by György E. Szőnyi (Leiden and NY: Brill, 1996), pp. 35-48 (p. 36).

Figure 8: "Hellmouth with bridge to Paradise"
 Attributed to Simon Marmion (French, ca. 1425-1489)

Illumination from a Book of Hours

Image courtesy of V&A Images / Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Ms Salting 1221, fol. 153



panorama (Figure 8).²⁰ In the foreground, the visage of Hell is fused onto a fiery lake over which souls must traverse across a very narrow bridge. Determined not to let them pass, it is the landscape itself that sucks up the souls and spits them out through its mouth and nostrils.

If Hell could be conceived of as a geological container, its body was thus also characterised by a grotesque *lack* of boundaries. Another passage from Bakhtin is worth citing here at length:

The grotesque body [...] is never finished, never completed; rather, it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world [...]. This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body [...]. Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up. And next is the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. This is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination [...] as well as copula-

²⁰ See *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer: Das Jenseits im Mittelalter*, ed. by Peter Jenzler (Zürich: Schweizerisches Landmuseum, 1994), cat. no. 130, 338-9.

tion, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body [...].²¹

An excellent example of such a body is seen in this miniature from the Bodleian Library's *Livre de la Vigne nostre Seigneur* (c. 1450-70) (Figure 9). Satan places a foot in each lower corner, straddling the border and staring out at the viewer. Faces with gaping mouths cover his shoulders, elbows, and knees, suggesting that his limbs have been spat out (or are about to be swallowed up) by these orifices. In place of his navel is an eye; beneath it, a giant grinning face sticks out a phallic tongue. The implication is not just that his body is limitless – ingesting and expelling with equally disgusting ease – but that it is able to mul-



Figure 9: "Lucifer with many faces, judged by Christ in majesty"

Illumination from the *Livre de la Vigne nostre Seigneur*, ca. 1450-70

Image courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS. Douce 134, fol. 67v

Figure 10: Martin Schongauer (ca. 1430-1491) or his school
The Harrowing of Hell
Inner right wing of altarpiece ("The Dominican Altarpiece"), ca. 1480.
Musée d'Unterdenlinden, Colmar
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



²¹ Bakhtin, p. 317.

tively, to spawn other bodies, and perhaps even to leap off the page. It is thus the body of Satan, rather than that of Christ, that conveys the liveliness and communicative power of the image.

What goes into the devil must come out

The openness of Hell could have positive soteriological implications, confirming the potential for souls to be released upwards on the Day of Judgment and reconstituted in Heaven; frequently described as vomiting forth flames, the hellmouth could not only swallow the souls of the damned but could also expurgate those of the redeemed. Carolyn Walker Bynum has noted that one of the many metaphors used for resurrection was 'the vomiting up of bits of shipwrecked bodies by fishes that have consumed them.'²² Such a reverse trajectory is seen in the Harrowing of Hell, in which the entrance to Hell becomes an exit.²³ In a late fifteenth-century altarpiece attributed to Martin Schongauer or his school in Colmar, the gates of Hell have fallen open to form a bridge across which Christ leads the saved (Fig. 10). But Hell's army still has plenty of ammunition: a green devil twists backwards, its brown netherface extending a tail-like nose towards Christ whilst gazing at the viewer as if to share the joke that 'what comes in can also go out'.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, though, some artists began to take this metaphor to its most literal depths, showing the openness of the hellish body not as a path to resurrection but as one of the most gruesome means of eternal punishment – in fact, as the mechanism that made eternal punishment possible. As Isabel Grübel has argued in her article on 'Lucifer as a devourer of souls',

The difficulty with this kind of hellish punishment lies in the fact that, once eaten, the souls of the damned would no longer exist, thereby depopulating Hell. But because the punishments of Hell were by definition eternal, artists looked for ways to lead the devoured souls to further rounds of punishment. The most plausible solution seemed to be to allow the souls to emerge 'naturally', so to speak, from the other side of the monster.²⁴

The progenitor of such representations, which flourished in Italian painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was Giotto, who depicted an eating

²² Bynum, p. 6.

²³ For an interesting discussion of the 'dramatic implications of Hades' gastric troubles' in early Christian art and literature see Margaret English Frazer, 'Hades Stabbed by the Cross of Christ,' *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 9 (1974), 153-161.

²⁴ Grübel, p. 53 (translation from the German mine).

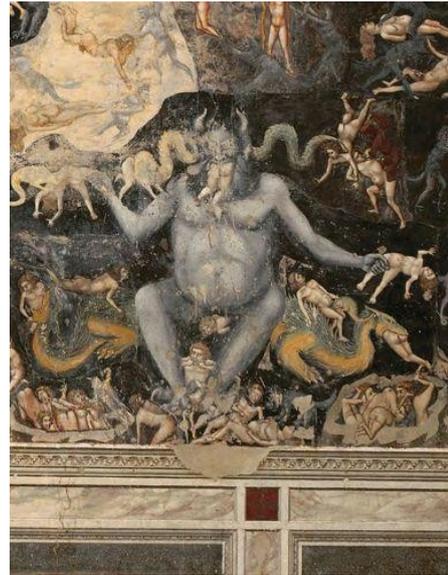
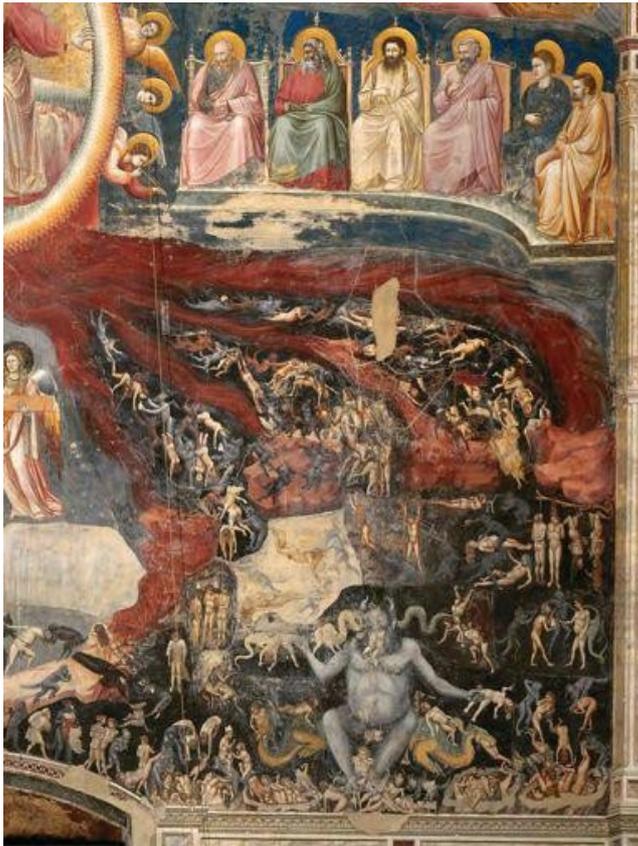
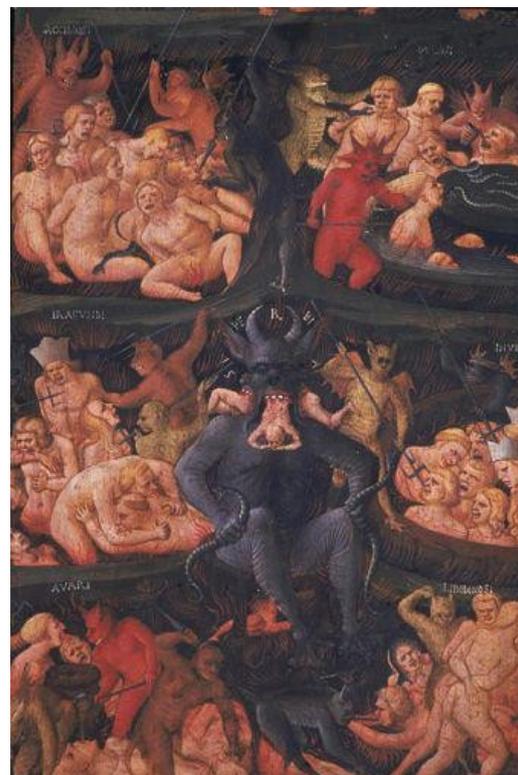


Figure 11: Giotto (Italian, 1266/67-1337)
Last Judgment Fresco
Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, ca. 1305
Detail: Hell
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY
Figure 11b (above): Detail of Figure 11

Figure 12: Fra Angelico (ca. 1400-55)
Last Judgment triptych, ca. 1450
Detail from right wing: "Satan in Hell"
Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Photo: Jörg P. Anders



and defecating Satan in his Last Judgment fresco at the Scrovegni chapel in Padua (ca. 1305) (Figures 11a and b). From the lower corner of Christ's rainbow aureole, rivers of fire stream down to Hell like blazing arteries or intestines. At the bottommost core, Satan—whose blue colour makes him an especially close forerunner of Bosch's bluebird²⁵—is shown gorging on souls and excreting them into a pile on the cornice. Two snakes extend from his ears to bite further victims; flanking his hips are two dragons that act as auxiliary devourers, feeding souls directly into his stomach. Likewise, in Fra Angelico's Last Judgment triptych of ca. 1450, Satan is shown with three mouths (Figure 12), a fleshy soul crammed into each one; another soul is excreted headfirst into the flames, where further tortures are carried out by devils with zoomorphic faces and humanoid bodies.

In these images, a direct link is made between the soul's eschatological progress and Satan's bodily processes. We will now examine a text and an illuminated manuscript in which this conjunction found equally vivid expression north of the Alps.

Demonic Digestion in the Visions of Tundal

Scholars have long viewed the *Visio Tnugdali* as a potential source for Bosch's demonology.²⁶ Written in ca. 1149 by an Irish monk living in the South German city of Regensburg, the text offered the most comprehensive descriptions of Hell before Dante, and by the fifteenth century had been translated into at least thirteen languages;²⁷ a Dutch version appeared in Bosch's hometown of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1484.²⁸ However, only one artist is known to have illuminated the text from start to finish: Simon Marmion (ca. 1425-1489), who in 1475 recreated it in twenty miniatures for Margaret of York, the Duchess of Burgundy.²⁹

In the opening scene, Tundal, a pleasure-seeking Irish knight, has a seizure at a dinner party. His soul leaves his body, whereupon it is led by an angel on a three-day tour of the afterlife that includes some truly horrific visionary

²⁵ Grüberl, p. 52.

²⁶ See the bibliography given in *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and The Visions of Tundal*, ed. by Thomas Kren (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1992), p. 26, note 58.

²⁷ Eileen Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante* (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca Press, 1989), p. 253 and xiv.

²⁸ See *Tondalus Visioen en S. Patricius Vagevuur*, 2 vols., ed. by René Verdeyen and Joseph Endepols, (Ghent, 1914-17). For other translations see Nigel F. Palmer, "*Visio Tnugdali*": *The German and Dutch Translations and their Circulations in the Later Middle Ages* (Munich: Artemis, 1982); and *Visio Tnugdali: Lateinisch und Altdeutsch*, ed. by Albrecht Wager (Hildesheim and Zurich: Georg Olms, 1989).

²⁹ On this manuscript (Ms. 30) see Thomas Kren and Roger S. Wieck, *The Visions of Tondal from the Library of Margaret of York* (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1990).

experiences of Hell. The *mise-en-scène* of the departure is telling: as Tundal reaches for a plate of food, he cannot complete the gesture of raising hand to mouth. That death is preceded and signified by a sudden paralysis of the consuming body is appropriate, for the regions Tundal and the angel will visit are repeatedly constructed in spectacles of eating, digestion, and defecation. Consider this description of the valley where murderers are punished:

This valley was very deep, full of burning coals. Over the valley was a round iron lid, burning and massive. On top of this lid was falling a great multitude of damned souls who were burned and roasted there and were then liquefied and strained through the burning lid like a sauce strained through a canvas sieve. From there they would fall onto the fire, from whence their torments were continuously renewed.³⁰

Marmion interprets the valley as a giant bowl into which souls – who look distinctly like pieces of excrement – are falling and mixing in with a hellish soup (Figure 13). Likewise, the Punishments of the Greedy entail being devoured by the beast Acheron, whose enormous mouth continually belches flames and is propped open by two columnar devils (Figure 14). Once Tundal is forced to enter, he is attacked by various beasts (lions, dogs, serpents) and is also

Figure 13: Simon Marmion (French, ca. 1425-1489), attributed “The Torment of Murderers” Illumination from *Les Visions du Chevalier Tondal* (The Visions of Tundal), Ghent, 1475
Tempera colors, gold leaf, gold paint, and ink on parchment 36.3 x 26.2 cm
Detail courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms 30, fol. 13v (Detail)



³⁰ Translation from Kren and Wieck, p. 41.



Figure 14: Simon Mar-
mion (French, ca. 1425-
1489), attributed
“The Beast Acheron”
Illumination from **Les
Visions du Chevalier
Tondal** (The Visions of
Tondal), Ghent, 1475
Tempera colors, gold
leaf, gold paint, and ink
on parchment
36.3 x 26.2 cm
Detail courtesy of the J.
Paul Getty Museum, Los
Angeles, MS. 30, fol. 17.

Figure 15: Simon Mar-
mion (French, ca. 1425-
1489), attributed
“The House of Phris-
tinus”
Illumination from **Les
Visions du Chevalier
Tondal** (The Visions of
Tondal), Ghent, 1475
Tempera colors, gold
leaf, gold paint, and ink
on parchment
36.3 x 26.2 cm
Detail courtesy of the J.
Paul Getty Museum, Los
Angeles, MS. 30, fol. 21v
(Detail)



Figure 16: Simon Mar-
mion (French, ca. 1425-
1489), attributed
“The Forge of Vulcan”
Illumination from **Les
Visions du Chevalier
Tondal** (The Visions of
Tondal), Ghent, 1475
Tempera colors, gold
leaf, gold paint, and ink
on parchment
36.3 x 26.2 cm
Detail courtesy of the J.
Paul Getty Museum, Los
Angeles, MS. 30, fol. 27



'suffocated' by the smell of sulphur. The Latin text goes further, describing the entire mouth of Acheron as emitting an 'incomparable stink' (*fetor incomparabilis*).³¹ The multitude inside the mouth of Acheron is thus not only subjected to the killing equation of rotting and digestion, but is also made to smell its product.

The House of Phristinus, where gluttons and fornicators are punished, is compared to an oven. Its proprietor is insatiably gluttonous, a baker-demon whose victims are attacked by executioners wielding knives, pitchforks, and other implements. The narrator reports that Tundal also saw these victims being tortured in their genitals – 'yet in response, their genitals, putrid and corrupt, seemed to gush with worms' (*doloribus quoque verendorum locorum cruciabantur quam maximis, set contra verenda ipsa putredine corrupta scaturire videbantur vermibus*).³² By a hideous reversal, the organs of fecundity are baked into cornucopias of corruption that will attack the very body that generated them. Self-multiplying and self-deleting, the damned are forced to take part in their own punishment, involving a breakdown of their selves that is nonetheless infinitely re-enactable. Tundal is forced to experience this firsthand when Phristinus's henchmen surround him, chop him into pieces and throw his disconnected parts (*dissipatam*) into the flames.³³ The blazing red oven of Marmion's miniature reveals only a few abstract shadows (Figure 15), confirming that the end-game of this 'bakery' is total formal and ontological dissolution – becoming re-packaged by Satan and unrecognizable to God. The same threat is delivered in the Valley of Fires, in which

souls were cooked and recooked to the point where they were reduced to nothing. Then the devils would take them with their iron forks and place them on burning anvils, where they would forge them together with big hammers, so that twenty, thirty, or fifty, or a hundred of them would become one mass. Tormenting them, the devils would say, one to the other, 'Are they forged enough?'³⁴

Marmion depicts a recessed pit, surrounded by pure blackness, in which the only identifiable beings are the devils themselves: their victims have decomposed into red or blue blotches or streaks (Figure 16).

Yet it is the punishment of fornicators that occasions Marmion's most literal depiction of 'holy shit' (Figure 17). The chief torturer of this section is a bird

³¹ Latin text from Wagner, p. 16.

³² Translation from Gardiner, p. 166; Latin text from Wagner, p. 24.

³³ Translation from Gardiner, p. 166; Latin text from Wagner, p. 24.

³⁴ Translation from Kren and Wieck, p. 50.

-monster that repeatedly devours the fornicators and drops them into a frozen pond. Not surprisingly, both this section and the corresponding miniature have been seen as possible sources of inspiration for Bosch's bluebird.³⁵ We are told that while still inside the House of Phristinus,

The angel and the soul soon came upon a beast unlike all those they had already seen. This beast had two feet and two wings, a very long neck, and an iron beak and iron claws. From its jaws it breathed fire and flame and stood upon a large pond, all frozen. There it would devour all the souls it could reach. When it had eaten the souls, and they had been reduced to nothing in its belly, the beast would defecate, dropping them onto the ice where their torments were renewed.³⁶

The souls are 'reduced to nothing' in the bird's belly, but when the bird drops them onto the pond, they magically re-exist. Again, if the souls were to be truly digested, they would cease to exist – fundamentally altering the Christian narrative, in which souls are not only immortal but are also attached to one particular bodily identity.³⁷ The fornicating priests and nuns are threatened with total ontological breakdown, only, in the cruellest of jokes, to be 'reborn' intact to spin through the cycle of punishment *ad infinitum*. Demonic defecation is thereby construed as a parody of rebirth or resurrection. Indeed, the original Latin states that the bird-demon 'was giving birth to' the souls (*pariebat*); it was Margaret of York's French translator who changed the verb to 'defecated' (*reiettoit par derriere*, literally, 're-existed through the derriere').³⁸

It is thus important to note that many images in the Italian tradition previously examined actually show Satan extruding souls from the *lower* front of his torso.³⁹ For instance, in a fresco by Giovanni da Modena in the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna (ca. 1410-15), a black, furry Satan squats in the pose of a

³⁵ See for example Robert L. McGrath, 'Satan and Bosch: The "Visio Tundali" and the Monastic Vices,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6/71 (1968), 45-50. As Kren points out, Bosch's bird-devil departs significantly from the one described in the text; for this and a bibliography on the subject see Thomas Kren, ed., *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and The Visions of Tondal* (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1992), p. 26 and note 58.

³⁶ Translation from Kren and Wieck, p. 49.

³⁷ See Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, esp. pp. 117-55.

³⁸ Roger S. Wieck, 'Margaret of York's *Visions of Tondal*: Relationship of the Miniatures to a Text Transformed by Translator and Illuminator,' in *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, pp. 119-128 (p. 120, note 12). Wieck argues that this was a mistake caused by the French translator's 'imperfect' knowledge of Latin; however, it seems just as likely that the change was intentional.

³⁹ See James J. Paxson, 'The Nether-faced Devil and the Allegory of Parturition,' *Studies in Iconography* 19 (1998), 139-176.



Figure 17: Simon Marmion (French, ca. 1425-1489), attributed; "The Torment of Unchaste Priests and Nuns" Illumination from **Les Visions du Chevalier Tondal** (The Visions of Tondal), Ghent, 1475
Tempera colors, gold leaf, gold paint, and ink on parchment
36.3 x 26.2 cm
Detail courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, MS. 30, fol. 24v

Figure 18: Giovanni da Modena (Italian, active ca. 1409-55)
Last Judgment, ca. 1410-15
Fresco
Detail: "Devouring and Excreting Satan"
Basilica di San Petronio, Bologna
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



Figure 19: Hieronymus Bosch (Netherlandish, ca. 1450-1516)
Garden of Earthly Delights
Detail from left and central wing: "Two couples"
Image courtesy of Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

woman giving birth while a grimacing face on his lower stomach pushes out a human body (Figure 18).⁴⁰ As James J. Paxson has argued, such images demonise the female body via its most defining process; they also echo Dante's *Inferno*, in which 'the earth's core, at Hell's centre [...] happens to be the crux or crotch of Satan's actual body.'⁴¹ Their horror is enhanced by the fact that Satan is shown simultaneously 'giving birth' and devouring, clearly implying an elision of birthing and shitting (of course, such an elision does not require much, given the proximity of the organs involved).

Conclusion: Satan as Anti-Creator

The same elision, I would argue, is performed as Bosch's bluebird consumes and releases souls in a bubble whose shape and context clearly invoke an egg. The bubble's glossy, transparent membrane is also reminiscent of other bubble-like objects depicted in the *Garden*, particularly a large one shown budding from a plant-stalk in the lower left corner of the central panel to encase a naked couple (Figure 19). The male places a hand on his partner's lower belly, a gesture that would seem to imply her pregnancy, or at least the desire to cause it. However, as Keith Moxey argues, these paramours are a postlapsarian inversion of the pair shown directly to their right – Adam and Eve, whose 'marriage' in Eden is mediated by Christ and 'enacted for the sole purpose of human procreation.'⁴² By contrast, the second couple unites within a garden in which seeds are spilled, as it were, everywhere, but in which there is not a child in sight. The man's belly-rubbing gesture is thus an ironic one; his exposed genitalia indeed show his true motivations.⁴³ Significantly, their bubble occupies the same horizontal axis as the one excreted by the bluebird. In Hell, the cycle of inversion is made complete: the fornicators who inverted (or rather perverted) the sanctioned union to their right are punished, 'hatched' within an egg-shaped bubble mocking the one that enveloped their purely sensual bliss.

The bluebird's bubble also resembles the translucent Creation globe on the exterior state (see Figure 2) – although the shape of Creation, a perfect sphere, is now distorted into an oval. Scholars have argued that the globe specifically

⁴⁰ Cited in connection to Bosch by Grübel, p. 53.

⁴¹ *Quando noi fummo là dove la coscia / si volge, a punto in sul grosso de l'anche / lo duca, con fatica e con angoscia, / volse la testia ov'elli avea le zanche, / e aggrapossi al pel [...]* ('When we had reached the point at which the thigh / revolves, just at the swelling of the hip, / my guide, with heavy strain and rugged work, / reversed his head to where his legs had been / and grappled on the hair [...]'). Cited Paxson, p. 148.

⁴² Moxey, pp. 126-7.

⁴³ Moxey, pp. 126-7.

represents the third day of Creation, 'when no plant of the field was yet in the earth' (Gen 2:5).⁴⁴ In the upper left spandrel, a tiny figure of God the Father is shown gesturing towards an inscription that runs across the top: *Ipse dixit et facta su[n]t. Ipse ma[n]davit et creata su[n]t* ('For he spoke and they were made / for he commanded and they were created').⁴⁵ As the triptych is opened, the viewer is thus prompted to compare God's creative act with the various procreative or pseudo-procreative spectacles that ensue in the interior.

Moxey's claim that the triptych is also an allegory of *artistic* creation therefore seems reasonable. His argument can be summarised as follows: starting with Cennino Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte* (1400), Italian art theorists had used the related notions of *fantasia* and *licenza* – denoting the ability and the right of painters to create unnatural, fantastical forms at will by recombining those of nature – to align painting with poetry, thereby elevating its status. The hybrid monster, an artistic 'fantasy' that also displayed the imaginative faculty of the artist, and whose *locus classicus* was the mermaid described by Horace in the opening lines of the *Ars poetica*, became emblematic of a less mimetic and more poetical art, whose hero was Michelangelo.⁴⁶ Interest in such an art had been stimulated by the discovery, in the late fifteenth century, of the ruined *Domus Aurea* or 'Golden House' of Nero in Rome, whose walls were covered with interlacing hybrids of human, animal, and vegetal forms – a style of ornament named *grottesche* or 'grottoesque' in reference to the ruins' subterranean locale.⁴⁷ Bosch's chief patrons were the humanistically-educated Counts of Nassau-Breda, who possessed a vast library and in whose Brussels palace the *Garden of Earthly Delights* hung next to a portrait by the Dutch classicist painter Jan Gossaert.⁴⁸ In this milieu, Bosch must have become aware of the 'value attached to fantasy' in Italian art theory, and of its potential for elevating a kind of imagery in which he was already proficient.⁴⁹ Moxey thus interprets the *Garden* as 'a manifestation of the rising aspirations of the Renaissance artist,' which co-opts 'the satirical and entertainment value of the notion of the world upside down,

⁴⁴ Dixon, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Dixon, p. 65.

⁴⁶ See David Summers' chapter on *Fantasia* in his *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 103-143.

⁴⁷ On this topic see Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. by Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1963), esp. pp. 20-30; and Dorothea Scholl, *Von den 'Grottesken' zum Grottesken: die Konstituierung einer Poetik des Grottesken in der italienischen Renaissance* (Münster: Lit, 2004)

⁴⁸ See Paul Vandebroek, *Jheronimus Bosch. Tussen Volksleven en Stadscultuur* (Berchem: EPO, 1987); cited Moxey, p. 136 (note 4).

⁴⁹ Moxey, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Moxey, pp. 122 and 124.

as well as of fabricated monsters, in order to demonstrate the humanist artist's new claim to artistic freedom.⁵⁰

Yet the identification of this freedom with an art of the grotesque was never a purely positive one, and had to be defended in the face of anxieties about transgression and meaninglessness; even Horace had warned that an imagery too detached from the laws of nature risked unravelling into sheer nonsense and vanity.⁵¹ How is such an art defended in the Hell panel of the *Garden*, in which the laws of nature no longer apply and are replaced with an order of the monstrous?

Bosch's bluebird offers an alternative figure of an artist, one who does not make anything new but simply recycles the world's formal detritus – and whose subject matter, moreover, is human beings, literally rendered as matter that is 'thrown under'. That the bird's victims are posited as subjects of a kind of demonic representation is further suggested by two nearby allusions to mirrors: most obviously, the convex one on the backside of the green devil, but also the cesspool, in which the faces of two souls already submerged appear to stare back up towards the souls vomiting or defecating into the pool, thus resembling their reflections.⁵² In both of these cases, the mirrors are black and the reflections are murky, darkened versions of subjects to which they are juxtaposed. Nonetheless, the truth of their identification – that human beings are vanities, as meaningless as shit – is confirmed by the bluebird and its falling egg. In a twist, Bosch's hybrid monster hatches its images in the same forms in which they are received; devoid of fantasy, it reproduces them mimetically and in tact.

⁵¹ As Summers points out, anxiousness about an art of the fantastical, underwritten by accusations of artistic 'vanity' leveled by Horace and Vitruvius, were always present and grew especially urgent later in the sixteenth century with the counter-reformation emphasis on decorum: 'Back once again were the comparisons of painting and sophistry, and the denunciations of the children of imagination as nothing; nothing, however, fraught with danger for the immortal soul, like devils and evil itself' (Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, p. 140). That the Renaissance discourse on the grotesque comprised both praise and criticism is not properly acknowledged by Moxey, who focuses on famous defenders such as Francisco de Holanda.

⁵² The figure shown vomiting, and staring, into the cesspool distinctly resembles later images of Narcissus at the fountain, particularly the painting of the subject by Caravaggio.

The Cup of Dom – the Identity of a Small Figure on the Franks Casket

Dustin McKinley Frazier
University of Saint Andrews



Figure 1: The rear panel of the Franks Casket, ©The Trustees of the British Museum

Since its discovery in 1857, the Franks Casket has become a byword for scholarly puzzles amongst Anglo-Saxonists. The casket's complex interweaving of images from pagan and Christian sources alongside inscriptions in runic and Roman letters poses countless questions to modern viewers. Academic debate over the presence of a programme uniting the casket's various elements continues, largely as a result of the apparent incongruity of those elements' diverse cultural influences. Hundreds of studies have revealed an intricate web of symbols linking panels and the narratives from which they derive.¹ However, one important figure on the casket's rear panel remains unidentified by scholars: a small human figure whose presence underscores one of the panel's primary themes.

¹ For recent studies of the Franks Casket, and examples of various programmes for reading the casket's many narratives, see: Leslie Webster, 'Stylistic Aspects of the Franks Casket' in *The Vikings* ed. by R. T. Farrell (London: Phillimore Press, 1982); Jennifer Lang, 'The Imagery of the Franks Casket: Another Approach' and Leslie Webster, 'The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket' in *Northumbria's Golden Age* ed. by Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), pp. 227-46; Alfred Becker, 'Franks Casket Revisited' *Asterisk*, 12 (2003) 83-128.



Figure 2: The unidentified figure ©The Trustees of the British Museum

The rear panel depicts the conquest of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD as recorded by Flavius Josephus in *De bello Iudaico* 6:4-6.² Josephus emphasises the Jews' responsibility for their own downfall and begins his account of the conquest by attributing the downfall of Jerusalem to the willingness of many Jews to follow false prophets and the leaders of three different seditious factions.³ On the casket, the Roman conquest appears as a series of four scenes with corresponding textual captions, arranged in upper and lower registers around a stylised Temple.⁴

² *De bello Iudaico* was known in Anglo-Saxon England primarily or perhaps exclusively in a fourth-century abbreviated Latin translation by Hegesippus, which is used here. For manuscripts extant in England and on the Continent, see: Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001) pp. 50, 83, 86, 127; Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006) pp. 218, 317; Rosalind Love, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede' in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, forthcoming 2011).

³ Carolus Fridericus Weber, ed. *Hegesippus qui dicitur sive Egesippus De Bello Iudaico ope codicis cassellani recognitus* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1864) pp. 276-371. For the translations used herein, see: Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume II* trans. Henry St John Thackeray (London: Heinemann, 1926). It is interesting to note that Hegesippus follows Josephus's Greek text quite closely in his description of the young boy and priests. Subsequent references to this passage contain a reference both the Hegesippus's Latin and to Thackeray's facing translation of the original Greek text, as *Hegesippus* and *Josephus*, respectively.

⁴ Why the carver chooses to use the Roman alphabet for three words and an Anglicized version of the Latin *habitatores* for the caption of the upper right-hand scene is uncertain, the subject of debate and conjecture. In Webster's opinion, 'The casket's unique use of Latin and the roman alphabet at this point in the text emphasises the pictorial message of a new world order' [Leslie Webster, 'Stylistic Aspects of the Franks Casket' in *The Vikings* (London: Phillimore, 1982)]. Neuman de Vegvar suggests that 'the use of Latin here may...be [an] example of the Anglo-Saxon use of euphemism and other methods for avoiding the transference of disaster by sympathetic magic from written word to reality' [Carol Neuman de Vegvar, *Northumbrian Renaissance* (Susquehanna: Susquehanna University, 1987) p. 266]. In support of his theory of visual cues, Laing says that 'the change in both script and language...reinforces the impression that this caption refers only to the upper right panel' and goes on to suggest that the upper and lower registers of the panel contain references to separate story lines. [Jennifer Laing, *Early English Art and Architecture* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 1996) p. 249].



Figure 3: Detail of lower left scene of the rear panel ©The Trustees of the British Museum

The upper register depicts Titus at the head of the advancing Roman army and the flight of the Jewish populace. The lower register deals with Titus' actions as *imperator*, a title granted him by his soldiers after taking the city. Given this shift and Josephus' view that the Romans delivered a 'just vengeance', the two scenes of the lower register unsurprisingly deal with the concepts of judgment and justice. On the lower left, Titus appears enthroned with a cup in his hand as deliverer of judgment; on the right, a group of Jews depart for Rome 'as hostages for their country's fidelity to Rome'.⁵

The unidentified figure appears in the panel's lower left scene, in which Titus faces a hooded figure and a soldier. Behind him, another figure holds a captive by the hood or hair. The unidentified figure sits beneath Titus' throne, a cup held in his outstretched hand. A single runic Old English word appears in the border at the scene's lower left corner: *dom*.

Logically, because the scenes depicted on the panel derive from just three chapters of *De bello Iudaico*, and Titus exercises *imperium* in only one of those, the label *dom* - and the unidentified figure - must correlate with an instance within that chapter. In the text, Titus judges three groups of Jews: the priests who desecrated their own temple during the fighting, the leaders of the sedition that

⁵ *Hegesippus*, p. 371. As *imperator*, Titus displays precisely those qualities which according to Bede define good kingship: *prudentia*, *fortitudo*, *iustitia* and *temperantia*. Of these, all but *fortitudo* seem implicit in the narrative moment depicted in the lower left-hand scene. Though no clear connection between the casket and Bede can be made, it is perhaps not inappropriate to assume that the personal and administrative characteristics exhibited by Titus would have resonated positively with Anglo-Saxon royal, noble and ecclesiastical viewers of the casket. For a more complete discussion, see: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).



Figure 4: Detail of boy seated below the throne (rear panel) ©The Trustees of the British Museum

destroyed the city, and a group of nobles who beg for peace. Only the first instance corresponds visually to the panel scene: ‘...the priests...were brought to Titus by the guards, they begged for their lives; but he replied, that the time of pardon was over as to them...and that it was agreeable to their office that priests should perish with the house itself to which they belonged. So he ordered them to be put to death.’⁶ On the panel, a soldier stands behind a cloaked man who faces Titus. Behind Titus’s throne another cloaked figure is dragged away by his hood and arm.⁷ Such striking similarity between text and image seems to me to indicate that this particular *dom* represents that of the dishonourable temple priests.

Having identified the priests visually and textually, it makes sense to return to the text for clues as to the identity of the unidentified figure below the throne. Immediately preceding the passage in which the priests receive their death sentence, Josephus recounts the following story of a boy who had been hiding with the temple priests following the temple’s destruction:

There was a boy that...desired some of the Roman guards to give him their right hands as a security for his life, and confessed he was very thirsty. These guards commiserated his age, and the distress

⁶ ‘...nec multo post Sacerdotes confecti fame & siti vitam rogarunt, quos Titus iussit occidi degeneris animi esse respondens, ut templo et muneri cuperent superuiuere’. *Hegesippus*, p. 367; *Josephus*, p. 471.

⁷ The use of sub-scenes also occurs on the front and right side panels. Though in those cases plant ornaments separate sub-scenes, the scrolls of Titus’ throne and the general arrangement of figures creates a clear visual parallel. Additionally, the use of three visual units (priest and guard on right, Titus in centre, and priest and guard on left) mirrors the arrangement of the Weland scene and reinforces the visual link between the two scenes.

he was in, and gave him their right hands accordingly. So he came down himself, and drank some water, and filled the vessel he had with him...and then went off, and fled away to his own friends; nor could any of the guards overtake him; but still they reproached him for his perfidiousness. To which he made this answer: "I have not broken the agreement; for the security I had given me was not in order to my staying with you, but only in order to my coming down safely, and taking up some water; both which things I have performed, and thereupon think myself to have been faithful to my engagement". Hereupon those whom the child had imposed upon admired at his cunning, and that on account of his age.⁸

In contrast to the priests, who betray their duty and receive death sentences, the boy keeps his word and wins the admiration of the Roman guards. The boy lives, while the priests die.

I suggest that the small figure seated below Titus represents this boy. The cup he holds represents the vessel he fills with water and mirrors the one held by Titus, and links the two figures visually and perhaps symbolically.⁹ The centrality of the temple and the overtly Judaeo-Christian context of the scene brings to mind Old Testament references to cups as symbols of both wrath and salvation. If the cup in Titus's hand suggests that of Isaiah 51:17 and the priests the representatives of the people of Jerusalem, 'who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering', the boy's cup more seems more closely related to a sort of 'cup of salvation', as in Psalms 116:13.¹⁰ The contrasting judgment passed on the boy and priests also

⁸ 'Interea puer quidam eo loci, ubi etiam Sacerdotes erant, quos et inopia aquae, et aestus finitimi incendii commacerabat siti, rogavit unum de custodibus Romanis dexteram sibi dare, potum offerre. Porrexit ilico, aetatem pariter miseratus ac necessitatem, bibit puerulus et quia sedulo innoxiae creditum fuerat aetati, rapuit aquae vas, et cursu sese proripuit, ut etiam Sacerdotibus bibendi copiam ministraret. Voluit sequi miles sed non potuit comprehendere. Ille periculo suo Sacerdotum sitim levavit. Bona fraus, quae neminem laederet, subueniret necessitati. Denique miles ipse miratus est magis affectum pueri, quam dolum detestatus, quod in illa aetate atque excidio totius urbis, et communi periculo, quid deberetur reverentiae sacerdotibus, quod potuit ministerium, non inexpressum reliquit'. *Hegesippus*, pp. 366-7; *Josephus*, pp. 468-71.

⁹ It seems likely that the cups held by Titus and the boy are part of one programmatic approach to casket in which objects link panels visually, symbolically and metaphorically. Cups appear in the *dom* scene, the left and right scenes of the front panel, and on the right-hand end panel.

¹⁰ Isaiah 51:17. 'Elevare elevare consurge Hierusalem quae bibisti de manu Domini calicem irae eius usque ad fundum calicis soporis bibisti et epotasti usque ad feces' (Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.). Psalms 115: 13 'Calicem salutis accipiam et nomen Domini invocabo' (I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord). Other examples of the dual nature of cups as symbols of wrath and/or salvation include Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, 1 Corinthians 10:16. It is also possible that the cups that appear on the casket would have carried symbolic weight in a more culturally specific sense, as they could also have suggested to an Anglo-Saxon viewer a shared cup such as the one from which Beowulf drinks before pledging his service to Hrothgar. For a recent discussion of the use of cups as im-



Figure 5: Detail of Welund offering the cup to Beaduhild (front panel) ©The Trustees of the British Museum

appears in their arrangement within the scene. The boy's confinement below the throne suggests his relevance to the priests' condemnation while maintaining his independence from it. As in the narrative, he appears visually in contrast to the priests who surround him. In a scene emphasising the just consequences of dishonourable behaviour, the boy appears as a reminder of the rewards of oath keeping and quick thinking.

The appearance of Josephus's thirsty, cunning boy also establishes a symbolic connection beyond the scene in which he appears. The cup in the boy's hand links the casket's front and rear panels visually and thematically. The traits that characterise the boy also characterise Welund, who appears on the casket's front panel and who also holds a cup in his outstretched hand. Like the boy, Welund secures his freedom through cunning, and appears in the act of offering a cup of drugged beer to Beaduhild, daughter of the unjust Niðhad.¹¹ Like the priests, Niðhad pays for his dishonourable behaviour in a space outside the confines of the scene.

ages of both wrath and death, and salvation, in Biblical and medieval literature, especially *Beowulf*, see: Joanna Bellis 'The Dregs of the Cup of Trembling: The Ambivalent Symbolism of the Cup in Medieval Literature' *Journal of Medieval Studies*, 2011 (forthcoming).

¹¹ For a recent edition of the *Völundarkviða*, including a discussion of the Weland panel of the Franks Casket, see: Ursula Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda Volume II: The Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) pp. 239-329. Weland also appears in the Old English poem 'Deor' and is mentioned in 'Waldere II'. For an analysis of his role in an Old English elegaic context, see: Anne Klinck, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition & Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) pp. 43-6, 90-91 and 158-68.

Identifying the small figure of the back panel's lower left-hand scene with the cunning boy of Josephus' narrative thus reinforces the scene's key themes of justice and honour. It also establishes a clear symbolic connection between the casket's front and rear panels. The cups of Titus and the boy, symbolic of vengeance and life respectively, mirror the cup of Welund, which symbolises both salvation (his own) and vengeance (delivered upon Niðhad via the rape of Beaduhild). Though at first glance unrelated, the boy and smith are in fact linked by the narrative moments in which they are depicted and in the cups they hold, and by the suggestion they represent, that the nature of *dom* includes of both life and death, freedom and damnation. For the smith as for the boy, it is the moment of justice - and the cup of *dom* - that matters most.

The Apocalyptic Vision on the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba

Nienke Van Etten
University College, Dublin.

The greater part of the Irish scripture crosses¹ has been dated to the 9th and 10th centuries. This date has often led scholars to believe that the Irish high crosses were erected in response to the Viking raids on many of the monasteries in the country. Scholars have argued that due to the nature of the material of the stone crosses, these monuments would have been nearly impossible to move or destroy. While the portable treasures of many monasteries were carried away by the raiders and other valuables were destroyed, the free-standing stone crosses could not be so treated by the Scandinavians.² This argument, however, is not substantiated by the archaeological and historical record. Free-standing crosses are mentioned in seventh-century sources, and thus clearly predate the Viking Age, which is further supported by the fact that the stone crosses appear to have been based on wooden predecessors.³ The Ahenny Crosses, erected entirely of stone, are stylistically dated to the eighth century.⁴ Thus, it seems that the tradition of erecting stone crosses was already in place prior to the arrival of the Vikings in Ireland. One cannot deny, however, that the Viking raids had an impact on the worldview of the medieval person. Many medieval sources describe these Viking raids as the 'end of civilization', and clearly see these events as a foretoken for the emerging and inescapable Apocalypse. The community of Columba at Iona was certainly not spared, and was subjected to two recorded attacks at the start of the ninth century.⁵

During the attack of 806 sixty-eight members of the Columban community were killed. The Annals of Ulster record the start of the construction of a new monastery at Kells, Co. Meath under the supervision of Cellach, abbot of Iona, a

¹NB The following abbreviations have been used: AU: *The Annals of Ulster to 1131AD*, ed. by Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin: 1983); Rv: 'The Revelation of St John the Apostle' in *Douay Rheims Bible* translated from the Latin Vulgate.

²High crosses portraying biblical scenes are so named.

Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin, Volume I* (Dublin/New Jersey: Templekieran/Humanities Press, 1979) 290; Roger Stalley, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin: Townhouse, 1996) p. 38.

³ Dorothy Kelly, 'The Heart of the Matter: Models for Irish High Crosses' in *Journal for the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 121 (1991), 105-145, (p. 105-7).

⁴ Françoise Henry, *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin: Three Candles Ltd. For the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland, 1964) p. 59.

⁵ AU 802.9; AU 806.8.

year later.⁶ The new monastery was completed in 814 and Cellach retired as superior of the Columban monastery, only to die a year later.⁷

The inscription on the Tower Cross at Kells, *S. Patricii et Columbe Cr(ux)*, in conjunction with the iconography of the cross, which is remarkably similar to that of the Book of Kells, has allowed scholars to suggest an early ninth century date for the cross.⁸

The cross has been regarded as apocalyptic.⁹ The *Majestas Domini* scene depicted on this cross presents Christ in Glory surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists. The winged symbols of Mark and Luke, holding their Gospels, are carved on either side of Christ, while above Christ the symbol of Matthew, raising the Lamb, is depicted. John, the eagle, is located below the figure of Christ.¹⁰

And in the sight of the throne was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal,

And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third living creature, having the face, as it were, of a man, and the fourth living creature was like an eagle flying.¹¹

As can be deduced from the quote above, the four symbols of the evangelists¹² are present in the Apocalyptic prophesy of St. John the Divine. And they

⁶ AU 807.4.

⁷ AU 814.9; AU 815.6.

⁸ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 28; Hilary Richardson, 'Visual Arts and Society' in *A New History of Ireland, Volume I: Prehistoric and early medieval Ireland*, ed. by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 680-713 (p. 710).

⁹ Charles Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland: A Review' in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. by H.B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998) pp. 288-330, (p. 311).

¹⁰ Arthur Kingsley Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* (New York: Arno Press, 1979) p. 74; Hilary Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery and the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh and the Book of Kells' in *Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages: Texts and transmission*, ed. by Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) pp. 205-14, (p. 206-7); Kees Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha: Eschatological Theophanies and Irish High Crosses* (Amsterdam: Stichting Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, 1997) pp. 64-66, 118: Though he argues that the eagle below the *Majestas Domini* scene is a symbol of the resurrection; Kees Veelenturf, 'Irish High Crosses and Continental Art' in *From Ireland Coming*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) pp. 83-102, (p. 86). He argues that the eagle is located between the *Majestas Domini* panel and the crucifixion panel below it. Thus, he argues, it is possible that the eagle, which is also a symbol of the resurrection, belongs to the crucifixion scene below. This difficulty in the analysis of the iconography is, he argues, indicative of the ambiguous nature of the Irish biblical scenes found on the crosses.

¹¹ Rv 4:6 - Rv 4:7.

¹² Mark the Lion, Luke the Ox, Matthew the Man, and John the Eagle.



Figure 1: *Majestas Domini* scene, Cross of St. Patrick and St. Columba, picture: Nienke Van Etten.

are portrayed here exactly like they are described in the Revelation, surrounding the throne of Christ.

The Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba is also unusual in the organization of the panels. While the Last Judgment is often represented on the Irish high crosses, the scene is normally found on the east side of the cross-head, while the crucifixion is located on the west side. In this way, the paradoxical nature of Christ, as sacrificial Lamb and powerful Judge, was emphasised.¹³ Thus, the presentation of the Last Judgment in conjunction with the crucifixion represented the dual nature of the merciful, and at the same time, unforgiving God. In the case of the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, the respective scenes of the crucifixion and the Last Judgment are not situated at opposing cross heads; in-

¹³ Hilary Richardson, 'The Cross Triumphant' in *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin*, ed. by Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002) pp. 112-7 (p. 116); Richardson, 'Visual Arts', p. 709; Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha*, p. 122-5; Veelenturf, 'Irish High Crosses', p. 84.



Figure 2: *Majestas Domini* scene tops the scene of crucifixion.

Picture: Nienke Van Etten

stead the Last Judgment is situated on the cross head on the west side of the cross, while the crucifixion is depicted on a panel below it.¹⁴

On the opposing (east) cross head the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes is represented, flanked by the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac (l) and St Paul and St Anthony breaking bread in the desert (r).¹⁵ Thus, it is not only the unusual depiction of the *Majestas Domini*, but also the organization of the panels that makes the cross unique. The way in which these Biblical scenes are ordered is just as important as the images themselves. The scenes can be arranged differently, and thus take on another meaning. The way the panels are arranged on the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, with its dramatic conclusion in the *Majestas Domini*, would emphasise the impending Day of Judgment.¹⁶ The capstone of the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba is missing, but this was likely in the shape of shrine, similar to capstones that have survived. Hilary Richard-

¹⁴ Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha*, pp. 124-5: Veelenturf argues that despite the unusual placement of the panels here -the Last Judgment topping the Crucifixion, rather than their respective placement at opposing crossheads- the paradoxical nature is still emphasised.

¹⁵ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 35.

son has suggested that in this instance, and perhaps in others too, the capstone, in the shape of a church-building, represented the Heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁷

Why was the Apocalyptic Vision displayed here? What was the intention of the Columban community of Kells? The symbolism of the cross has often seemed to indicate that the cross was erected in response to the brutality of the Viking raids. The pagan Vikings, who attacked the innocent monastic communities of Europe were surely a foretoken of imminent Doom. It is not hard to understand how the brutality of the Viking raids and their apparent disregard for the sanctity of Christian churches were understood by the ecclesiastical communities to point to imminent Apocalypse. While one could imagine the horrors of the Apocalypse, the Last Days 'would also herald the building of a New Jerusalem'.¹⁸ Was Kells indeed to represent, at least symbolically, the 'New Jerusalem' as envisioned by St. John the Divine? It is interesting to note here, that according to Hilary Richardson 'the four symbols of the Evangelists are part of the Apocalyptic Vision and they are a constant feature of both the Book of Armagh and the Book of Kells.'¹⁹ The ninth-century manuscript of Armagh has an extensive drawing of the heavenly Jerusalem concluding the text of the Apocalypse.²⁰ The evident stylistic similarities between the Books of Kells and Armagh seem to highlight the likely extensive communication between the two communities. Cellach, the abbot of Iona, is commemorated next to Book 13 of the Gospel of Mark on folio 65v of the Book of Armagh.²¹ This would further support the extensive links that may have existed between the Patrician and Columban monasteries. It is a possibility that the Book of Kells was at least begun in the eighth century.²² The similarity in the 'Apocalyptic Vision' of the Patrician and Columban communities might have found its culmination in the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba, its inscription commemorating both saints.

While one can easily assume that the 'Apocalyptic Vision' is a result of the Viking attacks, it is also in line with the eschatological writing of the late eighth century, which became increasingly concerned with the impending Doomsday.²³ The early Irish Church seems to have had a great interest in collective es-

¹⁷ Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 207.

¹⁸ Francis John Byrne, 'Church and Politics, c.750-1100' in *A New History of Ireland, Volume I: Prehistoric and early medieval Ireland*, ed. by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 656-79, (p. 662); Rv 3:12; Rv 21:2 - Rv 21:4.

¹⁹ Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 206.

²⁰ Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland', pp. 310-1.

²¹ Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland', p. 311; Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', pp. 205-6.

²² Richardson, 'Biblical Imagery', p. 205.

²³ St. John Seymour, 'The Eschatology of the Early Irish Church' in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 14 (1923), 179-211, (p. 198).

chatology, and its literature seems particularly apocalyptic. In contrast, the European ecclesiastical culture of the sixth and seventh centuries was 'overwhelmingly directed to moral issues' and was primarily concerned with individual eschatology.²⁴ St. Patrick, popularly accredited with the conversion of Ireland, writing after the collapse of Roman administration in Britain, believed that the world was about to end.²⁵ The Irish saint Columbanus repeated this sentiment in his writings in the sixth century. In the eighth and ninth centuries the inevitable Doomsday became increasingly popular. By the second half of the tenth century this eschatological theme had gained such popularity that a plethora of texts were devoted to the Day of the Last Judgment.²⁶ The rise of the Céli Dé movement in the second half of the eighth century had a large influence on all aspects of Irish religious literature and art. The movement, which sought to live a more severe ascetic life than the monastic brethren in other houses, managed to gain influence in the monastic powerhouses such as Armagh and Clonmacnoise by the eleventh century.²⁷ Biblical images became increasingly popular and the texts of the eighth and ninth centuries became increasingly pre-occupied with the fate of the soul of the common Christian.²⁸ While one can surely find many Irish causes for this increasing concern, possible Continental influences need to be considered too. After the seventh century the previous discussions surrounding the patristic literature culminated in a greater emphasis on 'issues of merit, sin and identity' on the European Continent 'and so (the Church) found itself in need of a different imaginative world'.²⁹ The close cooperation of religious scholars in the Carolingian Empire in the late eighth century would surely have heightened Irish interest in the matter of eschatology. In fact, Françoise Henry has suggested that the inspiration for the scenes on the cross was perhaps taken from Carolingian carved ivories already in possession of the Columban monks.³⁰ These would certainly have predated the Viking attacks. It

²⁴ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* 2nd Edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) pp. 236-7.

²⁵ Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Patrick on the Margins of Space and Time' in *Eklogai: Studies in Honour of Thomas Finan and Gerard Watson*, ed. by Kieran McGroarty (Maynooth: NUI Maynooth, 2001) pp. 44-59, (p. 54).

²⁶ Benjamin Hudson, 'Time is Short: The Eschatology of the Early Gaelic Church' in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) pp. 101-23, (pp. 103-5, 109-10, 121).

²⁷ Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006) pp. 3, 212.

²⁸ Richardson, 'Visual Arts', p. 708; Seymour, 'The Eschatology', pp. 198-9.

²⁹ Peter Brown, 'The Decline of the Empire of God: Amnesty, Penance and Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages' in *Last things*, ed. by Bynum and Freedman (Philadelphia: 2000) pp. 41-59, (p. 59).

³⁰ Henry, *Irish High Crosses*, p. 29.

thus seems plausible that the iconography of the cross is not a product of the Viking raids, but that it was rather the culmination of earlier eschatological writings. While it has long been considered that the cross and its iconography were a response to the brutal attacks of the early Viking Age, it remains certainly a possibility that the inspiration for the scenes was to be found in the literature of earlier centuries.

Marginalia Reviews

*The Familiar Enemy:
Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War*
Ardis Butterfield
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
ISBN: 978-0-19-957486-5 (Hardcover); 444 pages.
£60.00 (\$99.00).

The phrase *familiar enemy* is Chaucer's: 'what pestilence is more myghty for to anoye a wyght than a famylier enemy?' asks Philosophy in *Boece* (book 3, pr.5, 68-70). This idea provides the philosophical matrix that shapes Butterfield's book. It considers encounters between English and French throughout the Middle Ages, encounters that were characterised and shaped both by affinity and alterity. The cover image, which comes from a late fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Chroniques de France*, encapsulates this strange antipathy that is dependent on sympathy: it shows 'a deeply ambiguous fraternal embrace. Edward III and Philippe VI, at the very moment where Edward swears fealty, are shown locked close and cheek to cheek. This gesture, visually so full of affection, proclaims the start of war' (p. xix).

As the preface states, 'the relationship between England and France, *soeurs ennemies*, has been praised, mocked, fought for, resisted, ceaselessly discussed, and self-consciously lived, for longer than any other Western axis.' (p. xix). The two coasts, so close and yet so far, have found in their friction and their friendship much that has been used to define their national identity. The complexity of their relationship is Butterfield's theme, and one which she treats with refreshing subtlety. Butterfield owes much to Derrida, whose philosophies of language and translation permeate her argument, and are perceptible although unseen in the book's alertness and willingness to see shades of grey where previous scholars of Anglo-French relations have been content with black and white national and linguistic boundaries. Derrida's famously contradictory propositions form the paradox that is the kernel of the book's argument: 'On ne parle jamais qu'une seule langue. On ne parle jamais une seule langue.' ['We only ever speak one language. We never speak only one language', (p. 98)].

I would suggest that this characteristic perceptiveness will be one of the book's lasting achievements – and perhaps one of its most controversial contributions. It collapses one of the binaries that has characterised so much of the criticism that has attempted to define the relationship between English and French in the Middle Ages. Much of this debate hitherto has been devoted to drawing battle lines between the languages – to establishing the extent of French influence at any given point, to defending its status as a living vernacular, or concomitantly to asserting, often in triumphalist tones, the resurgence and dominance of English. Butterfield's position is much more subtle, and more daring. She suggests that "'English" could be defined precisely as a form of French... "English" is not therefore a single concept that works merely in polarity with French; it contains and is contained by French in a subtle, constantly

changing, and occasionally antagonistic process of accommodation' (p. 99). This statement challenges old orthodoxies so foundationally that it is likely to meet with some controversy. Yet, regardless of how far the reader agrees with Butterfield's position, her argument changes the nature of the debate. Instead of seeing English and French as discrete entities in sometimes abrasive coexistence, she reminds us of the very lack of fixed boundaries in their mutual encounter. English and French bleed into one another (not an inappropriate metaphor, perhaps, for the fourteenth century) on many fronts: the site of their encounter is not a rigid dividing line, but a blurred, confusing, linguistically double and ideologically complex blend. Butterfield repeatedly draws attention to the multiplicity of language – the fact that a binary conception of 'English' and 'French' anachronistically fails to account for the polyphonic linguistic reality, comprising not only English (and its many dialects), and Anglo-Norman, but also Parisian French, Flemish, Picard, Francien, Walloon, Breton, Champenois, Bourguignon, Lorraine, Gascon, Catalan, all of which were in differing political and cultural relations... talking of languages as *either* holistically discrete *or* internally unified does not recognise the realities of an era before standardisation. It is this acknowledgement that makes Butterfield's claim original. It reminds us that we need to consider bold statements of English identity conjured in opposition to French as springing out of a culture that was far from *living* such a binary; that we need to be alive to the possibilities of such articulations springing from a reaction to the familiar, as well as from a fear of the 'other'. As Butterfield concludes, 'languages give the lie to attempts to create national beginnings. Their entanglements are a counter-plot to national histories: they show how national histories are strange, wilful distortions made to create very specific narratives' (p. 391).

The book's first part, 'Nation and Language', aims 'to set the two histories of English and Englishness, French and Frenchness within the same overarching narrative'. It traces some of the pre-history of the Hundred Years War, beginning with Wace (and a comparison with Victor Hugo, another Jersey poet looking in both directions across the channel – an example of the some of the incidental yet illuminating cross-period resonances that Butterfield enjoys). It goes on to discuss several texts, from The Strasbourg Oaths to the fabliaux, in a discussion of 'the linguistic intricacies' of post-Conquest cross-channel relations, 'in the belief that war is not merely the cause of Anglo-French separation but the symptom of its fundamental likeness' (p. 1). The second section, entitled 'Exchanging Terms: War and Peace' deals with the fourteenth century. It discusses the poetic rivalries of Jehan de la Mote and Philippe de Vitry, and of Chaucer and Deschamps, as a paradigm for thinking about linguistic sparring that depends both on cultural friction and cultural debt. It offers a provocative reading of *The Knight's Tale*, that sees in Palamon and Arcite resonances of Jean II, royal prisoner of Edward III; and it discusses the idea of envoys in *Troilus and Criseyde*. The third part, 'Vernacular Subjects', moves into the fifteenth century. It begins with a discussion of *The Book of the Duchess*, pondering significant questions such as monolingualism and its ideology, of translation, of the plural and non-discrete nature of both English and French, the idea of the 'mother tongue', and Chaucer as the 'father' of English. It includes a section on Charles d'Orléans, the aristocratic prisoner-come-diplomat bilingual poet. It then goes on to think about the lasting imaginative impact of Agincourt and of Jeanne la

Pucelle, as opposing symbols of nation. Finally it moves into the sixteenth century to finish with Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The book is expertly put together, with a comprehensive index and bibliography, ten plates and three maps. It is a survey of attitudes to language and war with a deeply thoughtful and thought-provoking premise. The old and, dare I say, entrenched field of study on the fraught question of relationships between English and French, is much the richer for it. As *The Familiar Enemy's* own closing words suggest, 'the locus for imagining difference is to be found somewhere on the voyage rather than at the journey's end' (p. 394).

Joanna Bellis,
Pembroke College, Cambridge

*Chaucer from Prentice to Poet:
The Metaphor of Love in Dream Visions and Troilus and Criseyde*
Edward I. Condren
(Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008)
ISBN-978-0813032412; 240 pages.
£53.50 (\$59.95).

As the title *Chaucer from Prentice to Poet* appropriately suggests, Condren's book attempts to chart Chaucer's progress as a poet while simultaneously considering the various 'matters that challenge him as a practicing poet' (1). As expected, his analysis, strengthened by scattered diagrams and an appendix, involves 'the subjects and forms of literature, the relation between literature and life, literary construction, self-representation, and the important matter of royal favor' (62). Condren's critical approach is Janus-faced: ambitious in scope, yet does not sacrifice meticulous attention to detail. His chapters, divided by work, consider numerical design, metaliterary aspects of self-dialogue, before-and-after comparisons of a poet's maturing process, the Boethian formula of unity, and finally, overarching themes centered around 'macrocosmic love and the creation of poetry' (2). Condren's approach dares to challenge a range of critical assumptions propagated *ad arbitrium* by modern critics, which altogether contributes to a highly thought-provoking and persuasively argued chronological survey of Chaucer's career as a poet.

In his chapter on the *Book of the Duchess*, Condren attempts to derail the assumption held by modern critics that the man in black represents John of Gaunt. Rather, the man in black, he argues, represents a persona of Chaucer as a young poet. The dialogue between the dreamer and the man in black 'reconstructs the maturing of a poet' (37) and reflects a long tradition of self-dialogue, which includes the writings of Guillaume Machaut. To advance his case, he relies on historical circumstance, scribal inconsistencies, editorial opinion, and strong internal evidence. He doesn't hesitate to admit his claims are 'bold' and run 'counter to the dominant critical belief' (22). He further speculates that the poem was originally written for Queen Philippa, who died when Chaucer was on her staff at 'the age of foure and twenty yer' (line 455). The poet then later revised it to sound like the culmination of an eight-year en-

deavor to finish a poem for Gaunt's wife Blanche. This would of course explain some of the poem's inconsistencies, such as the word *fers*, a word meaning a chessboard queen.

Condren's numerical analysis, prompted by the poem's mention of Pythagoras, is equally intriguing. Using the same magnitudes employed by Virgil, the structural composition of the *Book of the Duchess* perhaps reflects the commonly known magnitudes of the divine proportion. He speculates how 'this proportion's power to expand indefinitely, associated with infinite divine power, suits perfectly an elegy for a woman whose death, to all who knew her, would bring the lady herself to the expansion of heavenly bliss' (59). In Chapter 3, Condren similarly examines plausible mathematical strategies involved in the *Parliament of Fowls*. Some modern critics are likely to regard the application of numbers as mere coincidence and as a strategy not demonstrable *ad oculos*, but at the very least these chapters will influence our understanding of Chaucer's interest in mathematics.

It is not surprising that the book on Chaucer's progress as a poet would include two chapters (4 and 5) on the poet's dream vision most infused with 'metaliterary meaning,' the *House of Fame*. Condren's purpose is to find a fabric of unity in this enigmatic piece, where the apparent lack of a main subject is a bit problematic. In short, he imagines the *House of Fame* as a complete and finished prologue to *Troilus and Criseyde*, that is to say, the missing 'love-tydynges.' Furthermore, he argues, 'it seems more than coincidence that *Troilus and Criseyde* is Chaucer's only major poem lacking its own prologue, and the *House of Fame* his only major poem lacking an obvious leave-taking' (130). Starting from his analysis of the parallel structure and compositional strategy in the dream visions, Condren arrives at interesting conclusions. First, he takes the 'English Gaufride' to be Chaucer himself, whereas the majority of critics assume the reference to be Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Welshman. Following the autobiographical thread, the narrator's wanderings in the House of Fame may very well represent Chaucer's store of literary precedents gained as a young author buried deep in his books, whereas the House of Rumor may reflect a maturing poet's observations of daily life as a more direct source of poetic inspiration (123). The man of 'gret auctorite,' he claims, is in fact the author himself standing before his audience in 'mock anonymity' and 'transparent inflation' (136). He adds, 'The *House of Fame* may be an *ex post facto* explanation of the circumstances that led to some heinous offense' (136). If the reader is not convinced by this theory, the analysis nonetheless sheds new light on shared thematic material between *The House of Fame*, *The Legend of Good Women*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In particular, Condren suggests that some elements in *Fame*, such as the Dido-Aeneas episode on love and betrayal, can serve as obvious counterpoints to *Troilus and Criseyde*.

In Chapter 6, Condren examines *Troilus and Criseyde* as it relates to the poet's interests in artistic creation and cosmic unity, particularly as characters are pitted against the temporal and the eternal. The shape of the poem's action, it seems, is once again grounded in mathematics. For instance, he draws attention to the thematic implications of the word *dulcarnoun*, a reference to the two-horned shape of the geometric proof of the Pythagorean theorem. In the dialogue between Pandarus and Criseyde, Chaucer's comparison of both rational and irrational right triangles reveals 'a complex metaphor for Criseyde's

dilemma in wanting Troilus and yet wishing not to disclose that she wants him [...] a perfect symbol of the incompatible choices she faces near the end of the poem where ideals compete with practicality' (143). In addition, Condren's coherent reading of the consummation scene at the heart of Book III is as refreshing as it is matter-of-fact, offering an alternative interpretation on Troilus's faint. Insights on Criseyde's subtle marks of character are equally persuasive, particularly in relation to his closing comments on the philosophical paradox in the *Consolatio*.

On the whole, Condren's investigations offer an impressive number of provocative interpretations (*sensu lato* and *sensu stricto*) that will prove a valuable resource for future students and scholars of medieval literature.

Alexander Gabrovsky
Trinity College, Cambridge.

*Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory,
AD 300-1475*
Ed. by Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
ISBN-978-0-19-818341-9 (Hardcover); 972 pages.
£95.00 (\$175.00).

Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric presents an historical survey of the teaching of grammar and rhetoric from antiquity through the Middle Ages; of the theories of literary language, form and structure that constituted the basis of any student's education in this period. The editors describe this weighty volume as a contribution to two closely related fields of study: the history of the language arts and the history of literary theory, but this description does not do complete justice to the wealth of information provided by the primary works translated and collected in this book and by the editors' elegant chapter introductions, pithy headnotes and textual notes. As the editors note, the arts of grammar and rhetoric formed the 'abiding toolbox for anyone engaged in a life of letters'. Those now engaged in studying the writers of this period, in whatever field, will be grateful for this challenging introduction to the tools in that box.

For the most part, this book is organised diachronically. Part 1 outlines the key grammatical and rhetorical works of late antiquity and the early medieval period. Part 3 traces the rise in the popularity of the learned commentary on these traditional works in the twelfth century and the consequent growing sophistication of the vocabulary of grammar and rhetoric and the widening gulf between the logical and literary domains of grammar that culminated in the thirteenth century. Part 4 surveys the development of new theories to meet new pedagogical needs in the late twelfth and throughout the thirteenth century, such as the new *ars poetriae* developed for compositional training in the medieval grammar schools and the arts of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and of preaching (*ars praecandi*). Part 5 outlines the professional, civic and scholastic approaches to the language arts in the thirteenth century: the subordination of grammar and rhetoric within more specialised areas of university study, the en-

try of Ciceronian rhetoric into the vernacular civic sphere and the impact of the appearance of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in the second half of the thirteenth century. Finally, Part 6 traces the reception of the traditions of grammar and rhetoric in the later middle ages. This section, the shortest, is the least satisfying in its argument and scope, particularly in its discussion of the deployment of rhetorical theory in the English literary works, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. It is perhaps unfair to expect a more detailed analysis of the relationship of literary works to rhetorical theory in a volume intended as a general survey of grammar and rhetoric. Even in the short discussions of these works, the editors prove that a greater knowledge of the traditions of rhetoric and grammar can provide a rich resource for provocative new readings of these works (if further proof were required, see Rita Copeland's early work *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1993)).

The two exceptions to the general organizing principle both address themes spanning the entire period. The 'General Introduction' presents six essays on larger thematic issues identified in the works presented: the classification of knowledge; grammar: the logic of language and the 'reading road'; figurative language in grammar and rhetoric; rhetoric, poetics, and the forms of fiction; hermeneutics and rhetoric: reading as invention; and the ethics of grammar and rhetoric. These essays, which provide an historical overview as well as a challenging theoretical analysis of each theme, epitomise the sophisticated and often challenging argument of the editors' introductory sections. The other exception is Part 2, which provides a diachronic overview of two important themes in the theory and teaching of grammar over the entire period: the struggles to theorise and translate the Latin ablative absolute construction and the use of etymology.

The above summary has not described the 57 translated excerpts from primary works around which the editors have constructed their survey. One of the delights of the book is finding within these selections far more than dry theoretical treatises expounding the Latin cases or the rhetorical tropes. For example, anyone who has struggled with the ablative absolute will recognise the rueful translation-anxiety of the writer of the General Prologue to the *Wycliffite Bible* who expounds the difficulties of translation and advocates a non-literal approach since often 'to Englysshe it after the word, wolde be derk and douteful.' More fun to read are the lively translations of the allegories of Grammar and Rhetoric from Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*; on finishing her speech Rhetoric confidently places a noisy kiss on Philology's forehead 'for she did nothing quietly, even if she wanted to.' The majority of the excerpts are, however, less obviously delightful and often difficult to tackle. The editors' headnotes are helpful guides through this material, being, in essence, modern models of the *arcessus ad auctores* tradition. They combine short descriptions of each work, its place within the tradition, its influence on later writers and notes for further reading.

The one disappointment with this book is that only English translations of the primary works are provided. The editors sometimes add a Latin term in brackets in the translation, offering a tantalising insight into the potential difficulties and controversies in rendering these technical treatises into precise and coherent English. At 972 pages in length, it is understandable that the publishers did not want to add to this already weighty volume, but was there not some

other feasible way to provide these excerpts in their original language, such as via a web-site or a DVD pocketed in the back, rather than force readers to search through the *Patrologia Latina* or find the modern edition? Despite this lack, *Medieval Grammar & Rhetoric* will be a very useful introduction and reference work for many years.

Joni Henry,
St. John's College, Cambridge.

Printing the Middle Ages
Siân Echard
(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)
ISBN-978-0-8122-4091-7 (Hardcover); 314 pages.
£42.50 (\$65.00).

Anyone who has made use of Siân Echard's eclectic webpages will have noted her interest in the visual form of medieval texts: in manuscripts, early printed books, and later editions and translations. Intended for undergraduate readers, they provide an enjoyable diversion for the procrastinating medievalist, containing images such as the fabulously multi-coloured and somewhat trippy illustrations in the Cockerel Press *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, published in 1954. In *Printing the Middle Ages*, Echard explores and theorises this theme, as she 'seeks to understand the lasting impact, on both the scholarly and popular imagination, of the physical objects which transmitted the Middle Ages to the English-speaking world.' [p. xi]

Echard approaches the topic her publishers describe as 'the post-medieval, postmanuscript lives of medieval texts' with much experience of those texts in their medieval, manuscript forms. Her eye for palaeographical and codicological detail provides a fascinating guide to printed texts; like manuscripts these too have a great deal to say about the text encoded in their material form, as she convincingly shows. Yet while Echard's field is medieval studies, her book demonstrates serious and profitable engagement with the work of book and print historians from a variety of periods, including Roger Chartier, David McKitterick, and Leah Price. This broad, cross-period critical engagement, combined with the evidence of her sustained and imaginative archival research, situates each text Echard considers fully within the intellectual life of its period, from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

As can be seen from her lengthy chronological sweep, Echard's topic is huge and can only be approached, as she has done, through assiduously-researched snapshots into particular textual traditions in certain centuries. Echard charts through all her chapters what she calls 'the mark of the medieval', which authors, illustrators, and publishers seek to use to identify the origins and authenticity of their work. She begins in her introduction by examining the print history of images found in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts; she writes that 'the plowman image', which she describes as having a mobile and symbolic role in printed versions of texts of the *Piers* tradition, 'can be seen as a crystallization of the process by which medieval texts have made their way into our hands.' [p. 17] In her first chapter, 'Form and Rude Letters', Echard's focus is on the most

fundamental way a printed edition can suggest the authenticity of its text. Exploring sixteenth and seventeenth century editions of Old English texts, the chapter examines the use of 'Gothish' letters; as she reveals in a later chapter, the use of 'Saxon' fonts to evoke the rudeness of the Anglo-Saxon past was so attractive to scholars that antiquaries were known as 'Blackletter men' into the nineteenth century. [p. 143] Chapter Two, 'The True History of Sir Guy (And What Happened to Sir Bevis?)' reveals how the visual images that accompanied seventeenth and eighteenth century editions and retellings of medieval romance tell quite a different story from the purely textual transmission. In her third chapter 'Aristocratic Antiquities' Echard demonstrates most explicitly that the interpretative past of medieval literature is deeply implicated in our current readings, as Macaulay's late-nineteenth-century edition of Gower, not yet supplanted, is compared with the eighteenth-century efforts of the Gower family to laud the poet they claimed as their ancestor. Here, as throughout, Echard's own images really prove their value, as we contrast the same text in manuscript, a hand-written transcript, and a printed edition, with both the latter seeking to replicate the former in different ways. In chapter four Echard's subject is 'Bedtime Chaucer'; the 'infantalizing', in David Matthews' term, of the father of English literature, particularly to make him suitable for women and children. It is a topic covered by several previous scholars, but Echard breaks new ground with her close attention to text and image in each production. In her final chapter, 'Froissart's Not French (Or Flemish)' she tackles a theme that runs through the history of medieval English scholarship, namely scholarly attempts to bolster the national and native roots of the literature. In her coda, Echard arrives suddenly in the present day, with a consideration of the latest – seemingly irreversible – change that the codex has seen; the birth of what she describes as the 'digital avatar'.

Printing the Middle Ages makes an important contribution to a growing debate. If we agree that there is much interest to be had in the transition from medieval to modern, this work suggests not only that constructions of the two are deeply affected by everything in between, but also that the journey itself is a highly enjoyable one. Rich and detailed, with a refreshing sense of humour, Echard's book is itself highly-illustrated, although some colour images – such as one can enjoy on her website – would have gone a long way, particularly for the manuscript and nineteenth-century images. Another minor quibble might be that while her subject conceives of textual transmission as the material form of printed books, the work's strengths are the biographical and historical detail it brings to each example, and particularly its analysis of visual images; perhaps textual – such as issues of editing and translation – and material aspects of the book could have been more fully addressed. One would not expect Echard to delve into the history of publishing or to conduct statistical research into readerships, but her survey, focussed strongly around the author or scholar, could have stretched back to the book's production or forward to its consumption on more occasions than it does. It would be unfair to ask Echard to cover in the same space the material that her primarily-synchronic approach necessarily leaves out, especially as her chapters range back and forth chronologically more than one would expect from her periodised themes. Nonetheless it would be fascinating to read in as much detail about the later representation of Old English, or earlier versions of Chaucer. Perhaps it is fairer to hope that Echard will

continue to collect interesting imprints for a second volume, which, if anything like its predecessor, would be eagerly anticipated and warmly received.

Helen Brookman,
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

*Paradoxes of Conscience in the High Middle Ages:
Abelard, Heloise, and the Archpoet*
Peter Godman, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 75
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
ISBN 978-0-521-51911-3 (Hardcover); 242 Pages.
£50.00 (\$95.00).

How far is it possible to perceive ironic identities within the seeming monolith of penitential writing in the High Middle Ages? This question of sincerity and its alter ego, which Godman describes as *fictio* or the falsification of moral identity, is rarely asked: the sincerity of writers and their penitents on the subject is generally assumed, an understandable reaction when faced with the serious tone of many of the medieval tomes that deal with the topic. Yet it is a question that needs to be asked more often, as it has serious implications for our understanding of the High Middle Ages in general and the twelfth century in particular. It is possible to be too quick in assuming that a straightforwardly ethical reading of a text that engages with the spiritual life is *the* historically accurate one, without considering that a minority (but a key minority) of readers and listeners might have found in that very moral focus a source of ironic self-identification. This awareness in turn helps us to better understand the full spectrum of twelfth century writing: a period that encompassed both the serious intensity of a Bernard of Clairvaux and the clever irreverence of an Archpoet is of necessity multifaceted and various, rather than being a simple 'Renaissance'. The teasing apart of this kind of polarization is the driving force behind Godman's work, and in characteristic fashion he chooses as his major case study for its illustration those high-profile exemplars of tragic romance so beloved of later poets, Abelard and Heloise, along with the Archpoet, a figure who has been subjected to over-simplified readings that reduce his colourful writing to the monochrome of the 'penitential'.

The first two chapters, 'Moral moments' and 'The neurotic and the penitent', trace *fictio* and its subtleties through the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, 'master-dialectician of the conscience', Augustine's struggles in the *Confessions*, Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*, and that 'dull if diligent compiler, Isidore of Seville'. The third chapter, 'True, false and feigned penance', focuses mainly on the last of these categories, discussing the problem of 'feigned' sincerity in confession and concluding that it was a vital concern more broadly because it subverted the 'sincerity and authenticity' that were 'central to the twelfth century's understanding of itself.'

The remaining chapters, dealing with the letters of Abelard and Heloise and the Archpoet's 'Confession' poem, are the ones most likely to be of interest to literary scholars. Here Godman seeks to escape the literalism of pre-

vious interpretations; he shows that Abelard's letters are an attempt to 'refashion moral identity' that expose his past spiritual sophistry, a 'drama of interiority' that has been previously accepted at face value. Heloise receives the same treatment; insisting on the difference between appearances and reality, she becomes 'lost in the labyrinth of her interiority' and the problems of her own sincerity. This subtle and sophisticated analysis of medieval literature's most famous couple moves away from the tired, biographically focused debates over authenticity, and places them in a new context that enables them to be seen as participants in the development of ideas. This liberation is also sought for the Archpoet; again seeking to distance his work from futile biographical musings, Godman interprets his famous 'Confession' as a deliberate inversion of the form of sincere penance, addressed to his complicit patron, Rainald of Dassel, a man who likewise inverted the sacred and the profane with his support for the Holy Roman Emperor against the Church during the papal schism of 1159-77. This chapter, in its close reading of a poetic text combined with pertinent and intriguing historical connections to Rainald of Dassel and intellectual debates of the time, should be a model for literary scholars who wish to historicise texts with subtlety. It also sets a new standard for literary analyses of so-called 'Goliardic' poetry, demonstrating that the Archpoet's 'Confession' has little in common with the drinking songs so often cited as examples of this type of composition, and thereby providing a welcome fresh critique of an outdated generic characterization. The book concludes with a brief discussion of *fictio* as it developed after the twelfth century, not confined to the later Middle Ages but relating it also to the problem of Albert Speer's conscience and the Nuremberg trials in the twentieth century. This is an ambitious and timely book, or rather, two books: it seeks to encompass both a history of *fictio* and lengthy twelfth-century case studies, and, whilst they are skilfully intertwined, the reader may well be left somewhat frustrated, wanting more of both than can be fitted into a monograph-length publication. Godman's 2000 book *The Silent Masters: Latin Literature and its Censors in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press), contains 348 pages of text, with a similar balance between intellectual history and literary analysis, and this format suits his detailed approach better. Despite this, the book is an important and valuable contribution to the history of penitential writing and to the understanding of the three main authors with which it engages.

Venetia Bridges,
Clare College, Cambridge.

Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance
Corinne Saunders, *Studies in Medieval Romance 13*
(Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010)
ISBN-13: 978-1-84384-2217 ISBN-10: 1843842211; 312 pages.
£50.00 (\$95.00).

Rightly or wrongly, no mode of medieval writing is as closely associated with magic and the supernatural as romance. As such, it is perhaps surprising that Corinne Saunders' most recent book is the first full-length exploration of the role of magic and the supernatural in English romance. Academic study of medieval ideas of the supernatural has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years. The last decade has seen the publication of a cluster of important works on the topic, including Robert Bartlett's *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (2008) and C. S. Watkins' *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (2008). Romance also is very much 'of the moment', with a striking number of articles and books on the subject making it into print. It would seem then that the publication of *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* could not be timelier.

Like much recent work on romance and the supernatural, this book benefits from its readiness to take both seriously. As Saunders states at the outset, 'there is . . . a strong case for a more realist approach to magic and the supernatural' and she insists that romance 'participates in the dialogue and debate, both popular and learned' concerning these topics (p. 4). The remainder of the book makes the case for this more 'realist approach' convincingly. Saunders' style of argument honours the 'mixed mode' (p. 3) with which she is dealing: her close readings are sensitive to nuance and stress the originality of individual authors. Although, as the title suggests, the book's primary focus is romance, Saunders' range of literary and cultural allusion is very wide. In an academic environment that tends to favour the particular over the general, it is refreshing to encounter a book as broad in scope as this one. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* is also accessible and well-written, facts that should extend its readership beyond academics and postgraduates to advanced undergraduate students.

The book falls into two sections. The first paints a careful picture of the sophisticated network of ideas relating to the supernatural within which literary treatments of the topic should be read. The second part is concerned with a more focussed probing of specific romance texts and the uses to which their authors put these ideas. Saunders' opening chapters establish the roots of medieval ideas of magic and the supernatural in Classical and Biblical writing and trace the various strands of magical practice and belief – licit and illicit, learned and folk – that characterise medieval attitudes. The detailed treatment of Biblical and Apocryphal attitudes in Chapter 1 is particularly useful, as is the concise account of Augustine's thought in the following chapter. The third and fourth chapters give clear-sighted accounts of white and black magic respectively. A fifth chapter treats notions of the otherworld and a sixth analyses the boundaries between Christian marvels and diabolical agency. The chapter on 'Otherworld Enchantments and Faery Realms' is particularly engrossing and provides one of the best general analyses I have seen of the roles these regions

play in romance. After a final chapter on Malory there is a tantalisingly brief coda devoted to the continuities and dissonances between Medieval and Renaissance notions of the magical.

For the most part, Saunders orders her chapters and sections thematically rather than by individual texts or authors. This thematic ordering throws up some intriguing points of congruence between texts that are all too rarely considered side-by-side. Themes treated by Saunders include the use of magic in healing and love, shape-shifting, the virtues of precious stones, the figure of the witch, and revenants. On rare occasions Saunders devotes an entire chapter or a section of a chapter to an individual text or author. The discussion of Chaucer that concludes Chapter 3 takes issue with critical assumptions that the poet was 'uninterested in, or distrustful of magic' (p. 145) and goes on to demonstrate how his works, principally the *Franklin's Tale* and the *Squire's Tale*, 'engage in a conspicuously learned, realist manner with the concept of natural magic' (p. 146). The singling out of Malory for special treatment in the final chapter is judicious and produces a sensitive reading of the *Morte*.

A mode of writing as deeply concerned with the possibility of transformation as romance found a natural bedfellow in the world-altering power of magic and the supernatural. *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* is a generous and stimulating book that serves up much food for thought and will be of lasting value to scholars of medieval literature and the history of ideas.

Aisling Byrne,
St. John's College, Cambridge.