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COVER IMAGE: The Passion Scenes in the St Augustine Gospel,
Corpus Christi College MS 286, Folio 125r

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Augustine_Gospels#/media/File:AugustineGospelsFolio125rPassionScenes.jpg)

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Acknowledgements 4

Editorial 6

Papers

KATE EDWARDS, 'Bede and Merlion and Arsaladone':
The persistence of short verse prophecies in late-medieval England 7

BERNARDO S. HINOJOSA, 'Christic Love and Motherly Sorrow':
The Mariology of Julian of Norwich 17

Reviews

ALICIA C. SMITH, Annie Sutherland, *English Psalms in the
Middle Ages 1300-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 26

BERNARDO S. HINOJOSA, Robin Lane Fox, *English Psalms
in the Middle Ages 1300-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 29

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The 2016 *Marginalia* Yearbook issue presents the best MPhil essays of the academic year of 2014-2015. Kate Edwards contributes a thought-provoking essay on the transmission and transformation of prophetic discourses in late-medieval England. Her “‘Bede and Merlion and Arsaladone’: The persistence of short verse prophecies in late-medieval England’ discusses the adaptation of such prophecies in some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts and printed books. Edwards argues that unstable authorship figures such as Merlin, Thomas of Erceldoune and Saint Bede are invoked to enhance the authority of prophecies whose deliberate non-specificity lets interpretation remain conveniently open to those who interpolated them into heterogeneous texts. She then examines the dissemination of these verses in local historical contexts and demonstrates their powerful influence as tools of popular political commentary that could be called upon to challenge governing authorities.

The second essay by Bernardo S. Hinojosa, ‘Christic Love and Motherly Sorrow: The Mariology of Julian of Norwich’, provides new insights into the representation of the Virgin Mary in the work of Julian of Norwich. Situating Julian’s understanding of the Virgin Mary in the context of late-medieval English Mariology, he contends that Julian departs from the traditional understanding of Mary’s role in the Christian faith by opening up the possibility of a Virgin figure beyond simple humanity and motherliness. Based on a close comparative reading of the Short Text and the Long Text, Hinojosa explores how Julian develops a Mariology through the exegesis of her own visions. Building on the intercessory role of the Virgin in her first vision, Julian elevates Mary’s compassion for Jesus’ death to a love with heavenly dimensions in her second, and finishes with a vision of the Virgin in heaven which illuminates Mary’s symbolic role in God’s work of Christ’s redemption. Hinojosa concludes that Julian’s interpretation of her visions in the Long Text transforms the motherly love of the Virgin into a gateway for understanding humankind’s filial bond with God through the motherly love of Jesus Christ.

This issue also contains reviews of two recent and stimulating contributions to medieval studies. Hinojosa explores a new biography of St. Augustine by Robin Lane Fox and Alicia Smith takes us through a study of the Middle English translation of the Psalms by Annie Sutherland.

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*‘Bede and Merlion and Arsaladone’:
The persistence of short verse prophecies
in late-medieval England*

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But derke it is and wonder thyng
That Marlyn made in his shewyng
But fewe men without wene
Coude vnderstonde what it myght bene

Here, the sixteenth-century *Lytel treatyse of þe Byrth & Prophecye of Marlyn*¹ describes a discourse which would have been familiar to many of its early readers: prophecy. Scraps of verse which claim to speak with the authority of Merlin, as well as Bede, Thomas of Erceldoune and even Chaucer, survive in large quantities from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. They are often uncatalogued and preserved by happy accident on flyleaves, at the ends of longer texts, or later printed as filler. Like the *factotum* woodcuts on the title page of the *Lytel treatyse*, they were consistently adapted and re-used, to the point that there is not, in most cases, an ‘original’ version or known author.² Critical focus has so far centred upon the longer ‘major monuments’ of prophecy set out by Rupert Taylor in 1911.³ In this study of some shorter works of prophecy, I will examine a broad range of short verse prophecies, in order to understand their relationship with changing political contexts, and with their often unstable authorship figures. Short verse prophecies survive from as early as the thirteenth century into the sixteenth century and beyond, despite acts of 1402 and 1406 which linked them with the Welsh rebellions

¹ STC (2nd ed.) 17841 (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1510; repr. 1529), image 33, in *Early English Books Online*

<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgthumbs.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=99836586&FILE=../session/1470320288_3518&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spel1.cfg&DISPLAY=AUTHOR> [accessed 3rd March 2015].

² Lesley Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 15; Sharon Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), 10.

³ These ‘monuments’ are: *The Six Kings to follow King John*, *The Prophecy of John of Bridlington*, the English Becket, the Erceldoune cycle, and *The Whole Prophetie of Scotland*. *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press), synopsis.

and with Wycliffitism,⁴ and a further act of 1542 which made prophecy a felony.⁵ Their open-ended language stretches to accommodate multiple contexts, and was used to comment upon contemporary social and political issues throughout the late medieval period. I will explore the dissemination and re-use of these prophecies in their changing contexts, and their attribution to marginal figures such as Merlin. Prophecies' circulation in both oral and textual forms is recorded in a range of chronicles, letters and state papers, and by studying these I hope to gain insight into their popularity and continued survival. Prophetic discourse was, in the late medieval period, dangerous: too easily adaptable and too widely disseminated to ignore.

I

A major feature of short verse prophecies is their non-specificity, evident in the textually related Trinity College, Dublin 516 and Magdalene College, Cambridge 1236 (IMEV 3943). Their predictions are apocalyptic, 'Then schal the lond of Albion torne into confusioun!'⁶ and rooted in stock complaints of the world turned upside down, evident in this first stanza from Magdalene 1236:

When feythe fayleth in prestys sawys,
And lordys wyll be londys lawys,
And lechery is prevy solas,
And robbery ys goode purchas.⁷

Priests and lords are shown failing to fulfil their allotted roles in society, while the blunt, urgent juxtapositions of 'lechery [...] solas' and 'robbery [...] goode purchas' build the verse's central image of a world in chaos. This image could be applied to virtually any period of tumult in English history, and this tendency towards generalisation has resulted in several damning assessments of these verses as barely prophetic⁸ and 'rather trite'.⁹ Such criticisms miss the point: the conditions described in Magdalene 1236 appear to be *deliberately* unspecific. Anyone might hear their own complaints echoed in the verse, and yet no specific critique is levelled at the priests and lords of a specific time period or location. The very structure of the 'when – then' formula looks towards the future, without the need for a specific - and potentially dangerous - historical context.

⁴ Helen Barr, *Signs and Sothe: Language in the Piers Plowman Tradition* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), 25.

⁵ Janette Dillon, *Language and Stage in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198.

⁶ The Prophecy of Merlin (Trinity College Dublin MS 516 fol. 115r) in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. by James M. Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 9 (line 1).

⁷ The Prophecy of Merlin (Magdalene Coll. Cambridge MS 1236 fol. 91) in *ME Political Writings*, 10 (lines 1-4).

⁸ Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1986) views them as essentially 'complaint' lyrics, 201.

⁹ V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (London: Blandford Press, 1971), 301.

The verses' movement is made both insistent and easily memorable by the use of rhyming couplets, which work with the familiar complaint features to suggest that they could have been transmitted orally as well as textually. This orality is evident in early, related carols such as 'Vycyce be wyld and vertues lame,/ And now be vicyce turned to game'.¹⁰ Stock features of the complaint do not invalidate these verses as prophecy; they make them powerfully versatile. Indeed, their very familiarity and apparent vagueness may have allowed them to more effectively disseminate critiques of specific establishments or events.

Evidence that these verses *were* re-applied to specific contexts over time is written into the extant prophecies themselves. Lesley Coote highlights the important role of 'the copyist, or the audience, many of whom themselves copied prophecies',¹¹ such as vicar John Benet. He compiled Trinity College, Dublin 516, which contains several prophecies, including a version of IMEV 3943 on fol. 115r that ends 'A M CCCC lx and on, few lordes or ellys noone' (vs. 6) before shifting into another well-known piece, 'Longe berde herteles' (IMEV 1820). The date, 1461, is integrated with the rest of the stanza, 'noone' forming the second half of a couplet with the prophesied 'confusioun'; here, context is vital to the verse's structural completeness. What it refers to is unclear, given the turmoil of the period; one possibility, however, is the 'lamentable battell of Tolton, called Palmson feld',¹² which took place on Palm Sunday, 1461. Its tragic combination of civil war and religious celebration seems particularly suited to 'world upside-down' verses such as this. Whether it refers to a full year or a particular event, this verse demonstrates the ease with which prophetic discourse could be adapted to comment on particular contexts.

The inclusion of 'Longe berde herteles' after 'A M CCCC lx' is one example of the way in which scraps of verse were combined and re-combined, drawn from what Paul Strohm calls 'a pre-existing repository or, actually, junkyard of utterances'.¹³ The verse is shorter and more compact than 'When feith fayleth':

Longe berde herteles,
Peyntede hoode wytles,
Gay cote graceles,
Maketh Engeland thrifles.¹⁴

The metonymic 'Peyntede hoode [...] Gay cote', particularly in relation to 'When feith fayleth', seems to refer to the priesthood; other extant versions, for example the

¹⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. e1 (SC 29734), ff.60v-61 in *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*, DIMEV 6141 <<http://www.dimev.net/record.php?recID=6141>> [accessed 9th March 2015].

¹¹ *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, 1.

¹² Appendix: John Haryngton, LLB., in *Extracts from the Municipal Records of the City of York, during the Reigns of Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III*, ed. by Robert Davies (London: Nichols and Son, 1843), 291.

¹³ Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 9.

¹⁴ 'Dublin 516', lines 7-10.

fourteenth-century Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 6860, refer specifically to 'bisschop slaw/prist Wylde'.¹⁵ One of the earliest examples of this verse, a thirteenth-century pencil note in Cambridge, Trinity College B.3.29, reads:

Ald man witles }
 yung man recheles } Aluredus kyng
 Wyman ffameles }
 betere ham were lifles }¹⁶

Here, the final line does not spell out dire consequences for England, but asserts that the offending men and women would be better off dead. This is closer to advice than to prophecy, a discourse alluded to by attribution to King Alfred, whose *Proverbs* circulated during the early Middle Ages. The fluidity of such terms is exposed by the movement of IMEV 1820 between advice and prophecy, further demonstrating the adaptability of these short verses. This, in turn, ensured their proliferation, as a kind of 'medieval mass media'.¹⁷

The second verse of Magdalene 1236 is very different, opening with the stock figures 'Gone-away' and 'Courtesy', and continuing:

Then Wallys shall rayke and hastely ryse;
 Then Albeon Skottlonde shall to hem fall;
 [...]
 The rede Irtonde fox shall ryse with all
 With glayvys grownde, and gare men to agryse ¹⁸

As Karen Moranski notes, 'even when a poet identified his animal symbols, those figures could still be taken out of context and used in others',¹⁹ and this certainly appears to be the case with the 'rede Irtonde fox', no longer positively identifiable. James Dean suggests Robert the Bruce and Red John Comyn, both Scots, as candidates,²⁰ which seems unlikely given the fox's Irishness. Though this prophecy *may* refer to the Bruce Campaign of 1315-18, it could also reference any number of clashes over Scotland. The image of an English Scotland falling to the Welsh, followed by the rising of a warlike Irish fox, 'With glayvys grownde', articulates the general instability of these borderlands' relationship with England, and the threat of

¹⁵ King counsel-less/Bishop loreless' oin *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*, DIMEV 2994 <<http://www.dimev.net/record.php?recID=2994>> [accessed 9th March 2015].

¹⁶ Based on M. R. James' transcription, 'B.3.29 ISAIAS GLOSATUS', in *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts* <<http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=383>> [accessed 16th March 2015].

¹⁷ Helen Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', *Arthurian Literature* XXII (2005), 64-83 (65).

¹⁸ 'Magdalene 1236', lines 8-12.

¹⁹ Karen Moranski, 'The "Prophetie Merlini", Animal Symbolism, and the Development of Political Prophecy in Late Medieval England and Scotland', *Arthuriana* 8 (1998), 58-68 (65).

²⁰ 'Notes', in *ME Political Writings*, 16-29 (19).

rebellion which they posed. The final line, 'Sevyn shall sytt in youre asyse',²¹ narrows the vision of national apocalypse into direct address; the prophecy remains open to interpretation, while the use of place names and, unusually, personal address, gives it the *appearance* of specificity.

The popularity of prophetic discourse is evident from its persistent re-use into the sixteenth century. These verses are, as I have demonstrated, extremely adaptable; they invite the 'powerful human impulse to particularise the universal'.²² In a letter of 1586, complaining to Lord Burghley of English behaviour at St. Malo, 'A. B.' writes 'Surely Chawcer's provyse never toke so deepe effect yn yngland & specyally in the west parts as now, for theaft ys made good purchase'.²³ 'Theaft' replaces Magdalene 1236's 'robbery', but the basis for this reference otherwise appears to be a very similar, stock phrase, here applied to a specific instance of 'theaft'. Whether A. B. truly believes in its divine inspiration is largely irrelevant; prophecy is, here, a way of claiming authority,²⁴ and in this case attribution to Chaucer suggests literary, rather than truly vaticinal authority. Prophecies are, as Paul Strohm asserts, 'manipulated in such a way as to offer maximum scope' to their readers,²⁵ and the 'scope' of prophecy is such that, as in this case, it can be applied directly to any number of events. Prophetic language bolsters A. B.'s complaint, giving it an authority beyond his own; it is, as this letter shows, a useful discourse.

In 1538, the examination of the vicar Hugh Holland in association with Sir Geoffrey Pole records another phrase much like 'When feith fayleth' to describe Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries: 'commend me to my brother [...] show him the world in England waxeth all crooked, God's law is turned upso-down, abbeyes and churches overthrowen'.²⁶ The openness of the prophetic discourse is such that these stock lines can remain true for a Catholic writing in the late 1530s. It is impossible to know whether to add prophecy to the list of Pole's treasons, though as a supporter of the Pilgrimage of Grace he would certainly have had access to them. This phrase may refer specifically to rebel-associated verses, or it may simply be an unconscious echo. Prophecies are, as I have demonstrated, designed to be remembered and reused. Their partial re-emergence in these letters provides documentary evidence of their success in doing so.

II

²¹ 'Magdalene 1236', line 14.

²² Moranski, 'The "Prophetie Merlini"', 61.

²³ 'A. B. to Lord Burghley, July 7th 1586', in Gertrude H. Campbell, 'Chaucer's Prophecy in 1586', *Modern Language Notes* 29 (1914), 195-6 (196).

²⁴ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 43.

²⁵ Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 22.

²⁶ Henry VIII: November 1538 11-15', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* vol. 13.2, ed. by James Gairdner (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), 308-353 (309), in British History Online <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol13/no2/pp308-353>> [accessed 10th March 2015].

These short verse prophecies proliferated as a result of their adaptable, memorable form and contents, an open-ended tool for social and political comment. Notably, they have no traceable 'authors'. Indeed, their patchworked forms suggest that the concept of 'authorship' is not truly applicable here; instead, their compilers and copyists - such as Humphrey Newton, a gentleman, or the professional scribe John Shirley - attributed them to figures often either mythical or long dead. In this section, I will discuss the impact of these attributions upon prophecies' survival, and upon the ways in which they were perceived and read.

Helen Cooper writes, 'ascribe your prophecies to someone safely in the past [...] Merlin or Thomas of Erceldoune, or, on occasion, both together - and it was easy to disclaim responsibility',²⁷ and this was evidently the case; however, many attributions also function beyond this. The commonplace book of Humphrey Newton, s.xv²-s.xvi¹, contains one such attribution: a prophecy beginning 'When feith faileth in prestes sawe3', fol. 104r, is headed 'Seynt bede'. This provides a different kind of context; rather than anchoring the prophecy in contemporary issues, it roots its utterance in the past. Authority is conferred by appropriating 'some recognized source of insight',²⁸ in this case the church historian Saint Bede. Although recognised as a scholarly and religious authority, by the late-medieval period the reception of Bede's writings had shifted: his *Ecclesiastical History* was not translated into Middle English until 1565, and was first printed in exile, in Strasbourg (1475-82).²⁹ He appears in John Purvey's *Prologue* to the Wycliffite Bible as an example of a translator: 'if worldli clerkis loken wel here croniclis and bokis, thei shulden fynde that Bede translatide the Bible and expounide myche in Saxon that was English either comoun langage of this lond in his tyme',³⁰ a dangerous position to occupy. The attribution of this prophecy to Bede does, certainly, draw upon his authority as a scholar; however, this authority was not necessarily 'safe'.

The names attached to late-medieval prophecies, including Merlin, Bede, and Thomas of Erceldoune, often existed on the margins of political or religious orthodoxy. King Alfred, to whom the Trinity Cambridge B.3.29 verse is attributed, joins Bede in the *Prologue* to the Wycliffite Bible, 'not oneli Bede but also King Alvred [...] translatide in hise laste daies the bigynning of the Sauter into Saxon',³¹ while an interpretation of Merlin's prophecy of the *Six Kings* occasioned a deposition against John Hale, vicar of Istylworth: 'Hale called the King the "Molywarppe" that Merlin

²⁷ *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 191.

²⁸ R. E. Lerner, 'Medieval Prophecy and Religious Dissent', *Past and Present* 72 (1976), 3-24 (8).

²⁹ Allen J. Frantzen, 'The Englishness of Bede, from then to now', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. by Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 229-42 (236).

³⁰ The Wycliffite Bible: From the Prologue', in *ME Political Writings*, 60-74 (73, lines 357-60.)

³¹ Wycliffite Bible: Prologue', 73, lines 360-62.

prophesied of.’³² These attributions lend an already-politicised edge to these prophecies, and evidently reading or owning these verses was only slightly less dangerous than writing them.

In his letter, A. B. attributes a prophecy to Chaucer, a writer who, in the century after his death, was presented as a part of the court in images such as the *Troilus* frontispiece of Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 61.³³ John Shirley, who was heavily involved in establishing Chaucer as this ‘Laureall Poete of Albion’,³⁴ included an IMEV 3943 prophecy on fol. 78r of Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 59 alongside texts by Chaucer and Lydgate. He does not attribute the prophecy to Chaucer, but to Merlin,³⁵ however, Chaucerian attributions which appear in later, sixteenth-century verses such as BL Additional 24663: ‘wrytten by Iefferae Chauser’³⁶ perhaps stem from the Chaucerian associations of manuscripts like Ashmole 59 and Cambridge, Trinity College R.3.15. Caxton printed a prophecy from R.3.15 at the end of his edition of *Anelida and Arcite*, and another appears as part of the apocryphal canon in William Thynne’s 1532 printed Chaucer;³⁷ beyond these, almost no printed prophecies survive. Explicit or implied attribution to Chaucer the ‘court poet’, rather than to Bede or Merlin, may have aided the survival of these verses into print.

Longer works such as the *Prophecies of Rhymer, Bede, and Merlin*, as the title indicates, often cite multiple prophetic authorities: ‘Bridlynton to this prophecye grantes/And so did Bede’.³⁸ The accumulation of names, ‘This Merlyn said in prophesye’ (375); ‘This Arsalladoue dyd saye’ (341), might, out of context, seem absurd; however, by creating this network of attributions, the poem internally legitimises its dangerous prediction and the *terminus ad quem* of 1531. The shorter prophecies’ attributions are thus developed into a dangerously powerful consensus, something explicitly stated in another work, *The Marvels of Merlin*:

Then Bede and Merlion and Arsaladone
And Seint Thomas off Canterburye and Bridlynton
All these shall fall to on conclusyon.³⁹

³² Henry VIII: April 1535 11-20’, in *Letters and Papers* vol. 8, ed. by Gairdner (London: HMSO, 1885), 202-18 (214), in *BHO* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol8/pp202-218>> [accessed 12th March 2015].

³³ Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993), 22-3.

³⁴ Headnote to *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, quoted by Lerer, 46.

³⁵ The Prophecy of Merlin (Oxford University, Bodleian Library MS 6943 fol. 78r)’, in *ME Political Writings*, 9.

³⁶ When faith fails in priests saws’, in *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*, DIMEV 6299 <<http://www.dimev.net/record.php?recID=6299>> [accessed 5th March 2015].

³⁷ Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 40.

³⁸ ‘Prophecies of Rhymer, Bede, and Merlin’, ed. by Jansen, *Political Protest*, 63-90 (lines 286-7).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 91-7 (lines 46-8).

Men such as Bede, Merlin, and the thirteenth-century Scottish prophet Thomas of Erceldoune were already emblematic of dangerous modes of discourse, and this text does not unite them in order to hide a real 'author' or assert its conservatism, but to prophecy the overthrow of the king. Attributions make prophecies *more* of a threat; they allow one to disclaim responsibility, certainly, but they also add their own marginal, dangerous authority to this 'open' discourse.

III

Tim Thornton records that when King James I returned to Scotland in 1617, he was celebrated as the fruition of just such a prophetic consensus: 'the end of al your prophesies'.⁴⁰ This is a politically potent act of re-reading: the transformation of prophecies which had undermined James' predecessors into a confirmation of his rightful kingship. The transmission of prophecy is, as a result of its often anti-establishment uses, well-documented in chronicles and records of the period, and this re-use of prophecy to authorise kingship was not new. Writing in 1401-2 for a French audience, the chronicler Jean Creton discusses a powerfully legitimising belief held by a knight in Henry's retinue, that Merlin and Bede had prophesied the downfall of the king (Richard II):

Ainsi tenoit le dit chevalier ceste prophecie vraie, et y adioustoit graunt foy et creance; car il font de telle nature en leur pays, que en prophecies en fanthones & sorceries croient tous parfaitement; et en usent tous volentiers.⁴¹

[Thus, the said knight held this prophecy to be true and attached great faith and belief to it; for he does what is natural in their country, believing completely and willingly using prophecies, spirits, and sorceries]

Creton believed that Richard II was still alive; evidently, he does not credit the prophecy he discusses with great verity.⁴² By presenting the knight's belief as symptomatic of '*leur pays*', *their* country, he carefully places himself and his audience as superior to the naturally credulous English; the possibility that this prophecy was a shrewd piece of propagandistic re-reading cannot have escaped him, however it did not suit his presentation of the English. Edward Hall, in his *Chronicle* (first printed 1548), similarly belittles the Welsh for their belief in prophecies used by Owain Glyndŵr against Henry, the 'moldewarp' king, in 1405: 'call you these prophecies? nay call them vnprofitable practises. Name you them

⁴⁰ *Prophecy, Politics and the People*, 59.

⁴¹ *French Metrical History of the Deposition of Richard II*, ed. and trans. by John Webb in *Archaeologica; Or, Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity* 20 (1824), 1-423 (374). I have expanded the abbreviations preserved by Webb's diplomatic transcription, and provide my own translation.

⁴² Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400: The Reign of Richard II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 52.

diuinacions? nay name them diabolicall deuises'.⁴³ Hall explicitly criticises the truth-claims made by these 'deuises', while simultaneously acknowledging their king-making, rabble-rousing political power when contextualised. Like Creton's English, Hall's Welsh are a credulous people; Given-Wilson notes the belittling aspect of such a presentation when he asserts that 'political prophecy would come to be seen as both quirky and plebeian'.⁴⁴ This is as much a means of undermining political prophecy and the people who credit it, as it is an acknowledgement of its immense power during the late medieval period.

State records contain further evidence of the circulation and impact of these prophecies, as Jansen has shown in her study of a vicar, John Dobson, who was eventually executed for circulating prophecies. Records of Dobson's deposition reveal the varied, erratic transmission of prophecy in and around the Scarborough area. Dobson had the prophecy from John Borobie, prior of the White Friars in Scarborough, who had borrowed it, extracting two or three 'clausis', presumably those relevant to his interests, and copying them onto the same 'ij shetes of paper afore rehersed'.⁴⁵ Another fragment from a different source, a 'little tale of a cromme and the Cristis crosse rowe', also appeared on these sheets.⁴⁶ The juxtaposition of two prophecies, one partially copied, and a 'little tale' on these sheets echoes the structure of manuscript witnesses like Trinity Dublin 516, compiled by John Benet, vicar of Harlington, in the mid- to late-fifteenth century. As well as evidence that prophecy was considered a real threat, these records provide a significant insight into the transmission of these popular texts. In 1534, a monk, John Broughton, confessed that 'he had shown his master certain prophecies [...] he had a bill of William Dieson of Wynndyndirmire, and another of William Rawlinson of Colton, containing prophecies [...] has conversed with his master, the abbot, of the said prophecies';⁴⁷ another example of 'scribal copying which clearly went hand-in-hand with [...] oral circulation'.⁴⁸ These strands of dissemination: showing, lending,

⁴³ STC (2nd ed.) 12721, (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), image 25, in *EEBO*

<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=99856251&FILE=../session/1470320060_3046&SEARCHSCREEN=CITATIONS&VID=21780&PAGENO=25&ZOOM=&VIEWPORT=&SEARCHCONFIG=var_spell.cfg&DISPLAY=AUTHOR&HIGHLIGHT_KEYWORD=> [accessed 8th March 2015].

⁴⁴ Given-Wilson, *Writing of History*, 40.

⁴⁵ Jansen, 2.

⁴⁶ 'Christ's Cross Row' was another prophecy associated with the Pilgrimage of Grace. See Michael Bush, *The Pilgrims' Complaint: A Study of Popular Thought in the Early Tudor North* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 14.

⁴⁷ Henry VIII: Appendix, 1533-1534', in *Letters and Papers* vol. 7 (London: HMSO, 1883), 628-42 (642), in *BHO* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol7/pp628-642>> [accessed 10th March 2015].

⁴⁸ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 364.

discussing, copying, provide a model for imagining the circulation of prophecies such as those I have discussed, extant on manuscript flyleaves and in margins.

These prophecies' popularity is attributable to their short, memorable structures and stock imagery; they are applicable to as many contexts as possible with minimal editing. This openness makes them a dangerous tool, sharpened further by attribution to marginal figures such as Merlin, both a prophetic authority and, by the late medieval period, associated with rebellion. Extant manuscript witnesses of the *IMEV* 3943 prophecy demonstrate multiple different uses of prophetic discourse as a mode of social and political comment, and thus provide a unique insight into 'popular' engagement with politics and local and national identities in late-medieval England. The circulation of these short verse prophecies was a prosecutable offence, while their authority was appropriated by kings from Henry IV to James I; evidently, either way they were too powerful to ignore.

Christic Love and Motherly Sorrow: The Mariology of Julian of Norwich

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In her Short Text and Long Text, Julian of Norwich presents three lengthy visions of the Virgin Mary. Despite this, Julian seems conspicuously absent or at least perfunctorily treated in modern scholarship about English Mariology. Such scholarship, however, has emphasised the particular Marian devotion of late medieval East Anglia as in keeping with a similar trend across Western Europe.⁴⁹ For instance, Gail McMurray Gibson notes that '[i]n late medieval England, images of the Virgin Mary were rarely out of sight or mind; this was especially true in East Anglia, where to the very eve of the English Reformation, the roads and streets and bridges of Suffolk and Norfolk thronged with men and women who were not only Mary's worshippers, but her pilgrims'.⁵⁰ Indeed, a few miles from Norwich lay Walsingham: the most important pilgrimage site in medieval England, in part due to its supposed possession of a vial of the Virgin's breast milk.⁵¹ In terms of East Anglian literature, scholars locate the manuscript of the N-Town Plays in this region of England.⁵² Remarkably, this Mystery cycle includes a sequence of plays about Mary's life. Likewise, even a cursory reading of the *Book of Margery Kempe* reveals Kempe's identification with and powerful devotion to the Virgin. Although it is harder to locate these texts specifically in East Anglia, Karen Saupe's *Middle English Marian Lyrics* notes the rising popularity of the Virgin from the twelfth century onwards and collects the rich tradition that translates this heightened devotion into lyrical form.⁵³

Almost universally, scholars associate medieval Marian worship with compassion and affectivity. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt views the Virgin as 'the paradigm for this vicarious sharing in Jesus's suffering'.⁵⁴ By emphasising

⁴⁹ On Medieval Europe's Marian devotion, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400- c.1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 256.

⁵⁰ Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 139.

⁵¹ Carole Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 1-2.

⁵² Douglas Sugano (ed.), *The N-Town Plays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 2-3.

⁵³ Karen Saupe (ed.), *Middle English Marian Lyrics* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997).

⁵⁴ Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 38.

Mary's suffering at the Crucifixion, people can meditate on the Passion and the humanity of Christ. Saupe, moreover, locates a similar affective tradition in the emergence of the *planctus Mariae* during the fourteenth century.⁵⁵ These are complaint lyrics that find a poetic plangency in the Virgin's maternal sorrow during the Crucifixion. Scholars have read these poems both as 'hysterical' cries that misunderstand 'Christ's work in the redemption'⁵⁶ and as lyrics that 'had the potential to effect ethical thinking and behaviour'.⁵⁷ Despite the seeming irreconcilability of these interpretations of the *planctus Mariae*, either as a distraction from Christic Redemption or as a constructive theological tool, both readings denote a similar conception of fourteenth-century Marian devotion. The *planctus* urges the believer to engage with Mary's intense maternal sorrow and connect with the humanity of Christ. The influence of this mode of Marian affectivity is evident, for instance, in Chapter Eighty-one of Margery Kempe's *Book*. In this chapter, Kempe witnesses a distraught Mary after the Crucifixion, whom she comforts.⁵⁸

Conversely, Julian of Norwich's Mary remains serene even at the Crucifixion itself, an absence of expressivity characteristic of Julian's overall distance from outward displays of grief. Unlike Kempe's constant accounts of crying and weeping, Julian mentions tears only once in her texts. She notes that 'we may never stinte of morning ne of weping. This weping meneth not all in poring out of teeres by oure bodely eye, but also to more gostely understanding' (347-49).⁵⁹ For Julian, perennial but inward weeping is a form of contrition from the weight of mortal flesh and the darkness of sin. She shies away from the outpouring of emotion found in Kempe and the *planctus Mariae*, in favour of an inner or *gostely* lamentation. Indeed, the limited critical interest in Julian's portrayal of the Virgin Mary may be a consequence of her detachment from the "affective" maternal sorrow associated with Marian devotion. As I will show, Julian rewrites this affective tradition, a transformation particularly evident in differences between her Short Text and Long Text. The Short Text shows an interest in Mary's maternal sorrow, which mostly dissipates in the Long Text. In order to analyse the differences between the two texts, I rely on the framework Barry Windeatt presents in his essay 'Julian's Second Thoughts'. For Windeatt, the Short Text is the 'narrative self-account of an experience', whereas the Long Text is an 'exploratory continuum of meditative commentary'.⁶⁰ In other words, the Short Text recounts Julian's deathbed vision, which she then contemplates and explains in the

⁵⁵ Saupe, *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, 23-25.

⁵⁶ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 259.

⁵⁷ Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 150.

⁵⁸ Barry Windeatt (ed.), *The Book of Margery Kempe: Annotated Edition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer), 351-57.

⁵⁹ All citations from Julian of Norwich's works are from Jacqueline Jenkins and Nicholas Watson (eds.), *The Writings of Julian of Norwich* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), cited parenthetically according to page number.

⁶⁰ Barry Windeatt, 'Julian's Second Thoughts: The Long Text Tradition', in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *A Companion to Julian of Norwich* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 102.

Long Text. Applying this framework to the Marian visions, I contend that while the Short Text aligns itself with a traditional affective Mariology – that is, the Mariology Julian experienced in East Anglia – the Long Text presents a different understanding of the role of the Virgin in the Christian faith. It orthodoxly posits Mary as an intercessor between humanity and divinity, but also de-emphasises Mary’s simple humanity and motherliness.

Throughout her two texts, Julian presents three distinct visions of the Virgin Mary. The first vision (Section Four in the Short Text and Chapter Four in the Long Text) introduces a young Mary at the Annunciation. The second vision (Section Ten in the Short Text and Chapter Eighteen in the Long Text) depicts Mary standing at the foot of the cross during the Passion. In the third and final vision (Section Thirteen in the Short Text and Chapter Twenty-five in the Long Text), Christ shows Julian a high and noble Mary who exists above all other creatures in Heaven. Each of Julian’s three visions respectively align with what Saupe calls the three dominant ‘devotional and artistic depictions of Mary...Maiden, Mother, and Queen’.⁶¹

Besides a few minor variations in diction, the first vision is almost identical in the Short Text and the Long Text. A slight dissimilarity between the two, however, begins to show how the purpose of each text differs. The Short Text reads: ‘In this sight I *sawe* sothefastlye that she is mare than alle that God made benethe hir in worthiness and fulhede’ [emphasis added] (70). In contrast, the Long Text exchanges the verb *sawe* for *understand* (137). This change is compatible with the way Windeatt views the relationship between both versions. In the Short Text, Julian narrates what she saw in her visions, whereas in the Long Text she explains and thus understands said visions. The fact that, other than the verbs, the passage remains the same seems to imply that Julian saw and understood the same thing. The broader context of the Long Text, however, indicates how Julian’s thoughts develop between the writing of each text.

At the beginning of the first Marian vision in both texts, Julian describes the childlike Mary as ‘a simple maiden and a meeke, yong of age, a little waxen above a child, in the stature as she was when she was conceivede’ (137). While both texts are nearly identical, the adjective *simple* recalls an earlier passage found solely in the Long Text: ‘This revelation was shewed to a simple creature unlettered, living in deadly flesh’ (125). Scholars have interpreted this controversial line, among other readings, as a defence against claims of Lollardy, a “modesty topos” or a truthful account of Julian’s illiteracy.⁶² All of these readings require *simple* to mean lowly or ignorant, which the *Middle English Dictionary* accepts as definitions. The MED,

⁶¹ Saupe, *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, 6.

⁶² See, for instance, Georgia Ronan Crampton (ed.), *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994) 3-4, Lynn Staley, ‘Julian of Norwich and the Late Fourteenth-Century Crisis of Authority’, in David Aers and Lynn Staley (eds.), *The Powers of the Holy* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 109-112, and Nicholas Watson, ‘The Composition of Julian of Norwich’s *Revelation of Love*’, *Speculum*, 68.3 (1993), 637-83 (pp. 673-74).

however, also lists humble and meek as likely definitions. Both Mary and Julian's simplicity can thus signify the exalted quality of humility, rather than the belittling required by a "modesty topos". After all, humility, as I will explain, is also a characteristic of God Himself.

Julian does emphasise her humbleness in the Short Text, most markedly when she comments that she cannot be a teacher as she is 'a woman, lewed, febille, and freylle' (75). However, she does not use the "Marian" adjective *simple* which appears only three times in the text.⁶³ In contrast, the Long Text includes fifteen instances of *simple/symple*. More than half of these refer to either Julian (three) or Mary (five).⁶⁴ Indeed, Julian renders Mary *simple* in all of her visions, imbuing this adjective with Marian significance. By repeatedly applying the same adjective to both Mary and herself, Julian begins to identify with Mary and, in turn, exalts the Virgin's humility as an imitable trait. This process of *imitatio* continues throughout the text and is particularly evident in a passage found only in the Long Text: 'This gretnesse and this nobilnesse of [Mary's] beholding of God fulfilled her of reverent drede. And with this she sawe herselfe so litille and so lowe, so simple and so poor in regard of her God, that this reverent drede fulfilled her of meknes' (145). Julian keeps emphasising Mary's simplicity, but unlike the passage shared by both texts, here she explains, rather than just describes, the vision of young, little Mary. Her visual littleness is representative of her humility and is therefore a littleness that allows her to behold or contemplate the greatness of God; only through an awareness of our smallness can we access His greatness. Some level of *identificatio* is also present in the overall context of the vision, as Mary's receiving of the Word during the Annunciation was often heralded as a model for contemplation. Gibson, for instance, notes that texts such as Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes vitae Christi* offer up Mary at the Annunciation as an imitable devotional model.⁶⁵ Julian begins her own theological exercise by thinking about the Annunciation, perhaps placing herself within a Marian contemplative framework.

After this explanation of Mary's simplicity, Julian describes a vision of Christ's bleeding head and remarks: 'Lo, what might this noble lorde do more wurshippe and joy to me than to shew to me, that am so litille, this marvelous homelyhede?'⁶⁶ (147). Following her vision of Christ, Julian sees herself as *litille*, particularly in contrast to a *marvelous homelyhede* [familiarity] with Christ. She describes herself with diction associated with the Virgin and, in so doing, embodies Mary's humility and is able to see and understand Christ. Julian's accessing of Christ via Marian humility becomes even more marked a few lines later, when she

⁶³ The adjective *simpille* appears twice in Section 4 (69; 71) and once in Section 13 (89). All these describe Mary.

⁶⁴ Due to the availability of a digital edition, this search was conducted in Crampton, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*.

⁶⁵ Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 49.

⁶⁶ London, British Library, MS Sloane 2499 (Crampton, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, 47) actually uses the word *simple* instead of *litille*.

meditates on God's nature: 'he that is highest and mightiest, nobliest and wurthiest, is lowest and meekest, hamliest and curtyest. And truly and sothly this marvelous joy shalle he shew us all, when we shall see him' (147-49). Thus far Julian had distinguished between Mary's and her littleness and the greatness of God. Now, however, she uses paradoxical language to describe Him who is simultaneously high and mighty and low and meek. Only after understanding Mary's meekness is Julian able to understand Christ's humility.

This paradox views the Incarnation as an act of humbleness: an interpretation traceable at least to Late Antiquity. In this view, God's willingness to take on lowly human form and suffer for the salvation of humankind was deemed the ultimate act of *humilitas*.⁶⁷ For instance, in his treatise on the Gospel of John, Augustine writes: 'Quid superbis, homo? Deus propter te humilis factus est. Puderet te fortasse imitari humilem hominem, saltem imitare humilem Deum'.⁶⁸ [Why are you prideful, man? God for you became humble. Perhaps it would shame you to imitate a humble man, but at least imitate the humble God].⁶⁹ Augustine exalts the *humilem Deum* and, in a mode of *imitatio Christi*, posits Him as an example against *superbia*. Unlike Augustine, however, Julian brings Mary into the centre of this theology of Incarnational humility. Indeed, Mary's meekness during the Annunciation helps Julian access and understand the intrinsic humbleness of the Incarnation. In the Long Text, Julian renders her Short Text vision of a physically small Mary into a lesson, first, about Mary's humility and, second, about the act of love that exists at the core of Christian theology: God's humble embodiment.

Julian's understanding of Christ through Mary is in keeping with Mary's role as intercessor in the Middle Ages. Rachel Fulton notes that, during the High Middle Ages, 'the supplicant prays to Mary to come to his or her aid, begging for assistance despite his or her sins, so that he or she might gain entrance, through Mary's intercession, to the heavenly kingdom'.⁷⁰ The Virgin's role as a mediator between human and divine continues and even flourishes in later centuries.⁷¹ Intercessory function reflects Mary's role in the greater Christological narrative. She now links humanity with the divine, just as her womb housed the coming together of humanity and divinity. The Short Text's visual description of the Virgin thus gives way to a complex understanding of Mary's role in the Incarnation and as intercessor. Summarizing the late medieval appraisal of the young Mary, Saupe writes: 'To focus on Mary as *Maiden* is to celebrate her purity, her beauty (internal and external), her

⁶⁷ See Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The Interpretation of Mary and Martha, the Ideal Imitation of Christ, the Orders of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 146-47.

⁶⁸ *Patrologia Latina* 35, col. 1604.

⁶⁹ Translation is my own.

⁷⁰ Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 218.

⁷¹ See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 263 and Saupe, *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, 9.

pristine worthiness to participate in God's redemptive plan'.⁷² While the Short Text dwells on a similar external rendering of childlike or virginal purity, the Long Text transcends this vision and instead focuses on how Mary's positive internal traits mirror the humility that shapes the basis for Christianity.

In the second vision, Julian presents Mary at the Crucifixion, the traditional setting for the *planctus Mariae* and the Virgin's motherly grief. Julian's rendering of the Passion thus reflects how she transforms the fourteenth-century figure of the grieving Mary. In both texts, Julian first emphasises the Virgin's compassion: 'Herein I sawe in partye the compassion for oure ladye, Saint Marye. For Criste and sho ware so anede in love that the gretnesse of hir love was the cause of the mekillehede of hir paine. For so mekille as sho loved him mare than alle othere, her paine passed alle othere' (85). This introduction seems to place Mary in her traditional affective role. She is compassionate and, crucially, suffers enormous pain from the crucifixion of her son. The Short Text dwells on this image of grief.

The Long Text, however, immediately adds: 'For in this I saw a substance of kinde love, continued by grace, that his creatures have to him, which kinde love was most fulsomely shewde in his swete mother, and overpassing [...] For ever so higher, the mightier, the swetter that the love is, the more sorow it is to the lover to se that body in paine that he loved' (185). *Kinde* is of course a polysemous term. It can mean kind and affectionate, as well as natural and human. For instance, writing about *Piers Plowman*, Madeleine Kasten suggests that *kynde knowynge* is natural or intuitive knowledge, 'knowledge as being of an affective rather than an abstract nature'.⁷³ In turn, Julian's reference to *kinde love* evokes both God's gracious love for his creation, but also a love that is germane to and present in his creatures' affections. For Julian, this *kinde love* eventually gives rise to a love with heavenly dimensions. Julian describes Mary's love with the adjectives *higher* and *mightier*, with which, in the previous vision of Mary, she had described God. This exalted, divine Mary prefigures the Assumption and Julian's vision of Mary as Queen of Heaven. Julian thus urges the reader to think beyond the immediate sorrow of the Passion and into the greater redemptive project. This higher and mightier love, moreover, suggests that Mary's love during the Passion transcends earthly motherly affection and is imbued with divinity. While the idea of Mary as a transcendental and divine mother may seem obvious to us, medieval culture seemed to focus on and even celebrate Mary's simple humanity. For instance, in Epistle 174, the influential Bernard of Clairvaux rejects Immaculate Conception and argues that Mary's primary merit is the purity of her simple humanity.⁷⁴ In turn, McNamer sees a very human 'maternal nurturance' at the centre of Mary's compassion in late medieval devotion.⁷⁵

⁷² Saupe, *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, 6.

⁷³ Madeleine Kasten, *In Search of Kynde Knowynge: Piers Plowman and the Origin of Allegory* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 67.

⁷⁴ *Patrologia Latina* 182, cols. 0332D-0336C.

⁷⁵ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 162.

Contrary to these views, Julian associates Mary with a higher and mightier love and exalts her divinity rather than her humanity.

Mary's divine love becomes even more marked in a further passage, unique to the Long Text, which explains her *sorow*. From the outset, Mary's sorrow contrasts with the images of the wailing mother that Saupe, McNamer and Woolf locate at the core of fourteenth-century Mariology. Julian writes:

And every mannes sorow, desolation, and anguish he sawe and sorowd for kindnes and love. For in as mekille as our lady sorowde for his paines, as mekille sufferde he sorow for her sorowse, and more over, in as mekille as the swete manhed of him was wurthier in kinde. For as long as he was passible, he sufferde for us and sorowde for us. And now he is uppe resin and no more passibile, yet he suffereth with us, as I shalle sey after (191).

Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary clearly suffers for her son's pain; indeed, she suffers with her son. However, given Julian's extraordinary visual imagination – her vivid descriptions of desiccated bodies and flowing rivers of blood – the understatedness of Mary's pain is striking. Although Mary suffers and sorrows, there are no descriptions of tears or indeed of the pronounced affectivity shown in the Marian lyrics, Margery Kempe's *Book*, or indeed in Julian's own Short Text. Rather, Julian interprets Mary's sorrow as reflecting God's sorrow for His fallen creation, along with the immeasurable compassion of the Redemption: how Christ *suffereth with us* and consequently redeemed us. While in the Short Text she witnesses a sorrowing mother, by means of her Long Text meditations, she realises that that vision is representative of something greater, of the love and compassion God shows for his creation, particularly in his willingness to take on human form and undergo crucifixion. As in the first vision, Julian uses Mary as an intercessor who allows for a greater understanding of God and of his compassionate relationship to his creation.

The final change between the Short Text and the Long Text's second vision of Mary is a deletion. Only the former references Julian's own mother before the vision of the Virgin. Julian writes: 'My modere, that stode emanges othere and behelde me, lifted uppe hir hande before me face to lokke min eye' (83). Much has been written on how the Long Text does away with most of the biographical details of the Short Text. Lynn Staley Johnson contends that '[d]espite the subtlety of the long text, it appears at once less individualistic and more authoritative than the short [...] she trims some things that make the short text a more personal work'.⁷⁶ Besides this, in the context of the Long Text's dissolution of Marian affectivity, the disappearance of Julian's own mother points towards a dismissal not only of Marian grief, but also of human motherly grief more generally. In the Short Text, Julian draws a parallel between her own grieving mother at her deathbed and the grieving Mary. By the time she writes the Long Text, however, she realises that her vision of Mary

⁷⁶ Lynn Staley Johnson, 'The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe', *Speculum*, 66.4 (1991), 820-838 (p. 832).

transcends motherly sorrow in the earthly sense. It is reflective of the greater divine sorrow that exists at the heart of the Redemption.

Both in the Short Text and the Long Text, Jesus asks Julian whether she would like to see Mary, generating the third and final vision of the Virgin: ‘And with the same chere and mirthe he loked downe on the right side, and brought to my minde whare oure ladye stode in the time of his passion and saide: “Wille thoue see hir?”’ (89). In the Short Text, Julian immediately assents. In the Long Text, before assenting, Julian interprets the question in three different ways, each of them highlighting the immense love between Mary and Jesus. In the first interpretation, Christ wishes that Julian see Mary since she is the most blessed of creatures. In the second, through this ghostly sight, Julian can participate in the love between Christ and Mary. In the third interpretation, Christ asks: ‘Wilt thou se in her how thou art loved? For thy love I have made her so high, so noble, so worthy’ (205). As was implied in the previous Marian vision, here Julian understands that the Virgin Mary is symbolic of the greater system of Christic love at work in the Redemption. In Mary, she can see God’s love for her. Julian’s triple hermeneutic act also sheds light on the Long Text’s exegetical purpose: its aim is to transform a perceived vision, or question, into a greater understanding of Christology. Indeed, Julian concludes her exegesis as follows: ‘But hereof am I not lerned to long to see her bodely presens while I am here, but the vertuse of her blissed soule—her truth, her wisdom, her cherite—wherby I may leern to know myself, and reverently drede my God’ (205). Julian consolidates what she suggested in the Passion vision. She has learned that the little *bodely presens* that she saw is not the end of the vision, but rather a starting point to understand Mary’s virtues, God, and even her own self.

This contemplation leads to Julian’s final mention of Mary two chapters later in a passage present only in the Long Text. Julian revisits the idea of motherhood that she had thus far seemed to eschew. Writing herself, whether knowingly or unknowingly, into a mystical tradition that includes Hildegard and Gertrude the Great, Julian thinks of God as a mother.⁷⁷ She writes:

For in that same time that God knit him to oure body in the maidens wombe, he toke oure sensual soule. In which taking—he us all having beclosed in him—he oned it to oure substance, in which oning he was perfit man. For Crist, having knit in him all man that shall be saved, is perfete man. Thus oure lady is oure moder, in whome we be all beclosed and of her borne in Crist. For she that is moder of oure savioure is mother of all that ben saved in our saviour. And oure savioure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne and never shall come out of him (305).

Julian describes the Incarnation using quotidian imagery: a knitting of human and divine within the *maidens wombe*. This knitting, however, also comes to represent the

⁷⁷ On the medieval trope of Christ-as-mother, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

hypostatic union within the Second Person. That is, the conjoining of human and divine that permits the redemption of humankind. All humans are *beclosed in him*, like He is *beclosed* in the *maidens wombe*. From this multiple enclosing, Julian concludes that just as Mary is the mother of Christ, so is she our own mother. In turn, our own enclosure within Him renders Christ our mother. This image of Christ as mother consolidates the nature of Julian's Mariology in the Long Text. Julian is able to understand the tenets of Christology by means of Mary the intercessor. The Virgin's enclosing womb and motherhood allows Julian to understand the divine motherly love of Christ. Julian therefore forgoes maternal grief, or even human motherhood, in favour of a more spiritual notion of maternity, representative of humankind's endless and inescapable bond of love with God, which takes the form of a perennial pregnancy.

The disappearance of Julian's biological mother and the emergence of Christ as our mother in the Long Text seem to indicate Julian's desire, between the writing of the two texts, of transcending the limitations of human emotion and entering the realm of endless divine love. She transforms the Virgin Mary from a figure of motherly grief and love into a figure of Christic love and sorrow. She transforms her individual experience of motherly love into a universal and endless one. The Long Text's deletion of motherly affectivity, whether in the form of the Virgin or of Julian's own mother, appears to indicate a detachment from the theme of motherhood. Julian, however, seems to be engaging in an even greater project, one of exalted motherly love. Precisely by eschewing dramatic outpourings of maternal grief, she is able to transform motherly love from something earthly into something more transcendental. Motherly love becomes the gateway to God's love.

Annie Sutherland, *English Psalms in the Middle Ages 1300-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) ISBN: 9780198726364 (Hardcover); 320 pages; £60.

Annie Sutherland's book takes on the relatively rarely explored territory of Middle English translation of the Psalms, perhaps the best known and most quoted book of the Bible in that period. A fairly compact volume, *English Psalms in the Middle Ages* delineates the various examples of translation, abbreviation, and paraphrase of the Psalter with rigour and clarity, framing these texts with discussions of medieval translation theory, literary and devotional contexts, and the material culture in which the psalms circulated. Sutherland's interpretative survey provides a wealth of information for anyone interested in the medieval usage of this central biblical text, and highlights areas in which there is still significant historical and literary investigation to be done.

As anyone with even a passing familiarity with medieval Christianity knows, the Psalter formed the backbone of the Western liturgy and as such was foundational to the devotional and mental landscape of medieval English people. The antiphonal structure of the Divine Office, which pulsed through the daily life of the devout and the interlocking cycles of the ecclesiastical year, rested largely on this particular book. This centrality in public worship contributed to the place of the psalms in the educational sphere: they were often placed alongside such doctrinal staples as the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria as the site of basic religious and linguistic instruction (for eminently practical reasons, the main recipients of such education being those who would take on the responsibility of liturgical enactment). It was widely assumed that most, if not all, of the psalms were authored by King David, the 'man after God's own heart', and that they were conventionally interpreted in a highly Christocentric fashion, effecting a thoroughgoing assimilation of ancient poetry to the typological and devotional concerns of the medieval Church.

The introduction to this volume elaborates on some of these aspects of the Psalter, and elucidates the central theme of the investigation: the complex relationship between the Vulgate text and the various forms of vernacular translation. The late medieval interaction of Middle English with Latin is a field which has been approached from numerous vantage points in literary-historical criticism, and Sutherland takes care throughout the book to avoid reductive concepts of the place of either language in this textual culture. In the case of the Psalter and its translations, she argues, it is better overall to see the relationship of Latin and vernacular not as competitive, but as responsive and creative, enabling 'the liberation of a new voice... at once devotional and literary' (p. 6).

Chapter 1, 'Psalm Dissemination', lays the foundations of the investigation, tabulating and contextualising the kinds of psalm 'translation' to be found in English devotional literature. Wholesale renderings of the entire Psalter into the vernacular, including Richard Rolle's popular version and the relevant section of the Wycliffite Bible, form only one category in this survey. Other forms include English-language primers, which, as educational texts built around liturgical patterns, necessarily included piecemeal psalmic translation; abbreviated and paraphrased versions of individual psalms or groups (the latter represented chiefly by the Seven Penitential

Psalms, which in their particular devotional aptness take on a quasi-independent identity); and bilingual, interpretative commentaries which freely traverse the territory of both academic and devotional engagement with the biblical text. The chapter highlights in particular the difficulty of distinguishing the orthodox and the heterodox in this area, given the intermingling of activities and networks often labelled as heterodox with patently mainstream texts and contexts. The Wycliffite psalms, for example, are characterised as ‘volumes which could well have been used to complement entirely orthodox devotional activity’ (p. 64).

Chapter 2, ‘Theorizing Translation’, completes the preliminary material by discussing the theoretical underpinnings of the activity of translation from Latin in the medieval period. Building on the work of Rita Copeland, the chapter examines the paradoxical relationship between, firstly, the classical model of translation as an activity of ‘differentiation from the source text’, which sometimes even took the form of ‘contestation and displacement’ (p. 66), derived from Cicero’s definition of *non verbum pro verbo*; and, secondly, the ‘sacramental, incarnational view of words themselves’ (p. 69) which led Jerome to advise the closest literalism in the translation of the scriptural text. This groundwork established, Chapters 3 and 4 on ‘The Practice of Translation’ – the former dealing with complete psalters, the latter with abbreviated and paraphrased versions – analyse how these ideological and methodological influences manifested in the various textual traditions of vernacular psalms.

These two chapters form the core of the book’s thesis, reconfiguring a simplistic, ancestral view of the different kinds of psalm translation which would see them as a ‘chain’ of developing versions where each one builds on the previous one. Instead, Sutherland proposes the concept of a ‘vibrant late-medieval psalmic nexus’ (p. 113) in which translators worked along a spectrum of literal closeness to the Vulgate text and incorporated glossing and interpretation with varying degrees of separation from the original. The links between texts, therefore, are not always those we would expect, an assertion amply demonstrated by the analysis of the direct relation of the psalmic text of Middle English primers to the Early and Later Versions of the Wycliffite Psalter (pp. 141-9) – the most conventional of genres incorporating a foundational text of heterodoxy.

A number of useful new perspectives arise from this discussion, particularly in the care Sutherland takes to distinguish between modern (often negative) judgements of the literary value of some of these texts, and the aims and values which gave rise to these qualities. Conventional assumptions about the processes of vernacularization make it difficult to fully appreciate the existence of a ‘quasi-sacramental tradition’ (p. 98) surrounding the very words of the biblical text, as well as the ways of reading both English and Latin, in some cases in tandem, which contributed to the various catechetical and devotional functions of the translated (or adapted, or paraphrased) Psalter. The practice of supplementing imitative translation with commentary or interpretation is analysed in detail, reaching an apex in the psalm commentary of Eleanor Hull which is ‘quite content to allow vernacularization and commentary to intermingle’ (p. 182). Thus, it produces a

reflective, expansive journey through the biblical texts in which attention to the 'lettre' liberates rather than limits' (p. 184). Throughout, we are never allowed to settle into a reflexive definition of the role of 'translator', but are pushed to consider and re-consider the intentions and priorities of those who produced English psalms.

Chapter 5, 'Reading the English Psalms', turns to the reading experience of those who engaged with these translations, in terms both of repeated scribal copying and of the reading of completed texts, and considers how the Psalter 'seek[s] a reading which is also a doing' (p. 208). The particular efficacy of psalm-reading as a form of prayer is a widespread motif in medieval devotional discourse, and this chapter demonstrates how the Psalter collapses Old and New Testament holiness, requiring its readers to live 'lives of New Testament obedience of these Old Testament precepts' (p. 211); its existence in English becomes a crucial part of this mediating moral power.

The book concludes in Chapter 6, 'The English Psalms?', by examining the material context of the translated psalms, specifically the ways in which Latin and English interact on the page. Texts presenting solely the English version of the psalm(s) are in the minority; instead, the vast majority have some kind of Latin incipit or parallel text, allowing for linguistic engagement (indeed, Rolle in particular identifies his text as an aid to language learning) and for the reader to key him- or herself into the appropriate liturgical setting with the cue of the Vulgate text. This perspective further problematizes simplistic conceptions of the relationship of Latin to English, with assumptions of hierarchy and/or competition only functioning to a certain extent. While a 'hierarchy of descent' (p. 231) seems an appropriate way to describe some manuscripts, in others there is the sense that Latin is simply useful, 'a means of facilitating cross-referencing' (p. 233) and sometimes little more. Overall, the impression given is of a climate of 'experimenting with the vernacular as a language of devotion' (p. 255), rather than of aggressive ideological vernacularization.

The volume concludes with an acknowledgement of the work still to be done on many areas of its investigation, from the generic identity and use of the English primers to the exact relation of heterodox and orthodox usage of Latin and English; it is clear, however, that this book presents a significant amount of important new work in the fields of medieval translation, devotion, and heterodoxy. Further research into these areas and into that of the medieval psalms in particular will be facilitated by the clearly arranged and technically fluent argument, a number of full-page images from under-researched manuscripts, and four appendices which list the extant manuscripts of each different type of psalm translation and adaptation discussed. One of the clearest themes of the book is the unique versatility and fertility of the Psalter, expressed by several different writers in terms of garden metaphors. Indeed, 'the psalms 'flourished' or produced meaning as they were read by the devout' (p. 275) in the Middle Ages, and are given the same opportunity to act as a touchstone of meaning in this accomplished volume.

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Robin Lane Fox, *Augustine: Conversions to Confessions* (Basic Books, 2015) ISBN 978-0-465-02227-4 (Hardcover); 657 pages; \$35

Almost fifty years after its original publication, Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* continues to be required reading for any serious – and not so serious – student of Late Antique and medieval history. By providing a biographical account of Saint Augustine, Robin Lane Fox's magisterial new book appears to follow in Brown's footsteps. Lane Fox's own take on the saint's life, however, is profoundly different from earlier biographies. He does not piece together Augustine's life from birth to death. Rather, he focusses solely on the first half of the bishop's life: from his birth until his writing of the *Confessions*. In doing so, Lane Fox does not use Augustine's autobiography as a source for reconstructing the saint's life. Rather, he places Augustine's autobiographical project at the core of his argument.

Conversions to Confessions is not a traditional biography of Augustine, but an extensive yet lucid commentary on Augustine's own autobiographical project and its place in a broader historical, theological, and cultural context. Indeed, the book has the potential of reaching a broader audience than most books on Augustine. It offers some unique insights into the saint's life, which will please scholars of Late Antique history. However, the book's interest in providing a broader context for Augustine's life – coupled with its engrossing prose – may extend its reach into a more general audience, always a commendable aim for academic titles.

The book begins by introducing the two key terms from its title. Lane Fox suggests that Augustine's life can be understood as a series of intertwining confessions and conversions, processes which produced Augustine's unique outlook on his own life. The plural conversions is highly significant. Lane Fox reads Augustine's life as one of continual transformation, rather than as a straightforward journey towards Christianity. Indeed, for Lane Fox, Augustine's explorations of Manicheism and Neo-Platonism are as transformative as is his eventual Christian baptism. This idea is certainly generative, although the rest of the lengthy book sometimes seems to forget about these two terms and how the various events in Augustine's life inform and are informed by such processes. In this first section, Lane Fox also explains that, throughout his book, he will compare Augustine's life to the lives of Synesius and Libanius, two lesser-known Greek thinkers roughly contemporaneous with Augustine.

Following this brief theoretical framework, Lane Fox divides his book into six parts. The first four faithfully follow the structure laid out by Augustine's *Confessions*. In these sections, Lane Fox contextualises the first nine books of Augustine's autobiography; he provides his reader with a meticulous portrayal of the Late Antique world Augustine inhabited. Two lengthy excursus are particularly noteworthy. Part II (and in particular chapters 8 and 9) provides a robust exploration of Manicheism, its history and core beliefs. Given our limited knowledge of this religion, Lane Fox's discussions are as comprehensive as one could hope for. Unlike most scholarship on Augustine, Lane Fox views Augustine's Manicheism as a crucial conversion, rather than as a stepping stone towards Christianity. His account of this

religion's tenets will aid students of Augustine and Late Antique history.

Like his Manicheism, Augustine's Neo-Platonism is often glossed over, despite the influence of Neo-Platonist philosophy in most of the bishop's corpus. Remedying this, in Part III (and specifically Chapters 17 and 18), Lane Fox lucidly explains how Plotinus received and in certain cases transformed some of Plato's key arguments. In turn, he explains how 'this Platonist philosophy was to change the way in which Augustine regarded God, the world, evil and truth' (p. 241). Scholars of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages often use terms like 'Platonist' and 'Neo-Platonist' without sufficient discussion of what they actually mean. Lane Fox's careful account of the transmission of Plato's thought into Late Antiquity is most welcome.

Most of Lane Fox's meticulous historical discussions prove fruitful. However, this historical accuracy contrasts with some of his discussions of Augustine's psyche, which appear rather conjectural. Discussing Augustine's turmoil during his Neo-Platonist years, Lane Fox writes: 'If a psychologist could persuade him nowadays that what he sensed was due to his mental stress, Augustine would readily accommodate this suggestion to his existing view of God' (p. 243). Likewise, after describing a Greek hymn, Lane Fox writes: 'If Augustine, a decade earlier, could have read and sung this hymn, he would have been entranced by its call' (p. 260). Similar speculative statements – many ifs, coulds, and woulds – crop up throughout the book and distract from Lane Fox's otherwise meticulous historical accounts.

The contextualised retelling of the *Confessions* concludes in part four. In parts five and six, Lane Fox recounts Augustine's life from his mother's death (Book IX of the *Confessions*) until he began writing his autobiography. Throughout these sections, Lane Fox describes some of Augustine's overlooked works such as *On Two Souls* and *On the Usefulness of Being*, two important critiques of Manicheism. Lane Fox reminds the reader that the Augustinian corpus is extensive and multifaceted; it extends beyond the *Confessions* and *City of God*. Although Lane Fox no longer follows the structure of the *Confessions*, he continues to hold Augustine's autobiographical project at the core of his book. He carefully explains that Augustine's life and texts following his conversion eventually informed his autobiography. For instance, Lane Fox explains that '[s]elf-praise and its remedy, humility before God' – key themes in the earlier *On True Religion* – would eventually find resonance in the future bishop's greater confessional project (p. 485). These intertextual discussions are among the book's greatest triumphs. They raise exciting questions regarding Augustine's oeuvre; their conclusions rely on concrete textual evidence, rather than conjecture.

The book's final three chapters are even more argumentative and indeed polemical than is the rest of the book. Lane Fox argues against 'the prevailing scholarly view' that Augustine composed the *Confessions* 'over four to six years' (p. 522). He relies on the structure of the work, evidence from the *Retractions*, and a comparison to Libanius' own autobiographical writings to argue that the *Confessions* 'were composed...in a single continuous burst' (p. 524). Lane Fox's argument is convincing, especially given the *Confessions*' style, which resembles continuous prayer. The impact and accuracy of Lane Fox's concluding hypothesis, however,

remain to be seen and will certainly receive much critical and scholarly attention, whether positive or negative, over the next few years. Even if the single burst hypothesis is disproven, it is sure to catalyse new and exciting work on Augustine, work which ceases to view Augustinian chronology as fixed.

While the professional Augustinian scholar may find Lane Fox's sparse endnotes unappealing or even concerning, the bibliographical apparatus appears sufficient: it shows the author's careful use of primary and secondary material, without alienating a more general reader. The book's judiciously curated bibliography, moreover, will be of great assistance to undergraduate and graduate students alike. Finally, it includes thirty-three gorgeously printed full-colour plates, a surprising and very welcome perk given its affordability.

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