

*Maria Mediatrix: Mediating the Divine in the Devotional
Literature of Late Medieval England*

by

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Abstract

Christianity, as a religion centered on the Incarnation of a spiritual being, is always necessarily a religion of embodiment, but its attitude toward that embodiment has always been one of distrust. The juxtaposition of seemingly opposing forces—flesh and spirit, affect and intellect—results in problematic but inevitable troubling of binary oppositions. Late medieval devotion is replete with mediators that serve to focus meditation and prayer in order to bring the individual closer to God, but they can also represent the physical presence of God and bring God closer to the individual. A study of these various modes of mediation will reveal how the connections between spiritual and physical were conceived. Mediation—whether of language, the senses and emotions, texts and objects, or saints—reveals and reestablishes our connection to the divine.

Using the depictions of the Virgin Mary, the *Mediatrix*, found in the devotional literature of medieval England as a starting point, this study explores the mechanism of mediation in medieval Christian thought. The first two chapters examine the problem of the erotic in religious discourse, focusing primarily on architectural allegory and imagery and language borrowed from the Song of Songs. Architectural allegories representing the female body of the Virgin Mary and the female religious draw on both spiritual allegories and allegories found in secular love poetry

and romance. The use of eros in devotional discourse creates a tension between the prescribed chastity and sensory restriction and the highly sensual, sexual language and heightens the emotional effect of the text. The second two chapters focus on compassion, first looking at *planctus Mariae*, or Marian laments, to examine how a meditating reader is drawn into the scene of the passion through dialogue with Mary and through Mary's control of the meditative gaze. The final chapter examines how devotional images can be used as mediators because of their ability to represent (and in some sense *be*) an invisible, divine reality.

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Abbreviations

<i>BMK</i>	<i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i>
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
EETS	Early English Text Society o.s. original series s.s. supplementary series
<i>Glossa Ordinaria</i>	<i>Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria</i>
<i>IMEV</i>	<i>Index of Middle English Verse</i>
<i>MWME</i>	<i>A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500.</i>
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 1844-1855.

Introduction

Christianity, as a religion centered on the Incarnation of a spiritual being, is always necessarily a religion of embodiment, but its attitude toward that embodiment has always been one of distrust. In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul defines two opposing forces in the human individual, the flesh and the spirit. He writes: “caro enim concupiscit adversus spiritum spiritus autem adversus carnem haec enim invicem adversantur ut non quaecumque vultis illa faciatis” [For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are adverse to one another so that you do not do those things which you want.].¹ The flesh is the source of weakness, lusts and sin; it leads the willing soul away from God. But in the Incarnation of Christ, God joined divine spirit with human flesh. The juxtaposition of seemingly opposing forces—flesh and spirit, affect and intellect—results in problematic but inevitable troubling of binary oppositions.

In medieval theology, Mary’s body, as the physical site of the Incarnation, provided an opportunity for speculation about the relationship between divinity and humanity. The paradoxical nature of Mary’s simultaneously virginal and maternal body and her unique relationship with Christ are used to create a personally meaningful image for the reader of devotional texts. An examination of how Marian imagery is used as a rhetorical and meditative device in devotional texts will shed light on the way the relationship between human body and divine spirit was experienced. From the early Christian era, through the Middle Ages, and into the present, theological speculation about the Virgin Mary typically has centered on her virginity and maternity. These aspects of Mary’s physical, human, and specifically female body raise

¹ *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994) Galatians 5:17. All subsequent biblical translations will refer to this edition.

questions about the relationship between Christ's two natures and, by extension, his relationship with all of humanity. A grounding in the history of Marian theology and devotion will set the stage for the Marian imagery in religious texts from late medieval England which will be the primary focus of this thesis.²

The condition of Mary's body and her role as human mother go hand in hand with the definition of Christ's person and, therefore, with the medieval understanding of the human condition: her virginal conception and childbirth guaranteed that her Son was special—that He was the Son of God and the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah—while her true maternity and childbirth guaranteed that Christ was fully human.³ The Gospels, apocryphal writings, and Patristic writers defended her virginity before Christ's birth against non-believers and heretics. The emphasis on Mary's perpetual virginity emerged out of polemics with critics of Christianity such as Celsus who claimed that Mary's pregnancy was not only normal but adulterous, writing that she had been turned out by her husband for adultery and had born an illegitimate child to a Roman called Pantera.⁴ Gradually, theologians began to debate the state of Mary's virginity through the rest of her life, both through her delivery of Christ (her virginity *in partu*), and for the remainder of her life after His birth. Virginity *in partu* refers specifically to the physical integrity of Mary's body—it means that her hymen remained intact even through the delivery of a child. Virginity *in partu* was largely popularized through apocryphal writings, specifically the

² This is meant as a basic introduction and summary to the major themes in the development of Marian theology and devotion. For more comprehensive studies, see: Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion, vol. 1, From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

³ "Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitis nomen eius Emmanuhel" [behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you will call His name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

⁴ Rubin, *Mother of God*, 14.

Protoevangelium Jacobi and later the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, in which Mary's intact virginity is confirmed by two midwives. The focus on Mary's life-long virginity was tied to the growth of ascetic movements, which held up Mary as a model of the life of sworn virginity. The idea of virginity *in partu* was not accepted by all theologians because it was problematic to emphasize Mary's virginity at the expense of her maternity. Tertullian and Origen, for example, felt that the virginity *in partu* threatened Mary's maternal role and, thus, Christ's true humanity. Ambrose, on the other hand, embraced her virginity *in partu*, calling her a "bona porta" [good door] who "clausa erat, et non aperiebatur" [was closed and was not opened].⁵ Through the birth of her Son, the Blessed Virgin was "servavit intactam" [preserved intact].⁶ Mary's virginity *in partu* came to be generally accepted by the end of the patristic period.⁷

The Council of Ephesus in 431 affirmed both the unity of Christ's divine and human natures and His unity in the Trinity. The same council also declared Mary to be the *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer." Prior to Ephesus, theologians debated whether Mary should be properly called *Anthropotokos*, mother of Christ's human nature, or *Christotokos*, mother of Christ. Thus, the declaration of Mary to be the *Theotokos* was not simply an act of honor toward Mary, rather it was a confirmation of the Christological declarations of the council: the unity of Christ's human and divine natures and of His unity with God the Father. Mary's status as *Theotokos* is linked to Christ's relationship with God and with all of humanity.

In England, Marian devotion was well established before the Conquest. Mary Clayton has identified two distinct periods of Marian devotion in pre-Conquest England: the first, based

⁵ Ambrose, "Liber de institutione virginis," PL 16, Col. 334C.

⁶ Ambrose, "Liber de institutione virginis," Col. 335B.

⁷ Changes in our understanding of the biology of pregnancy and childbirth have changed the discussion of Mary's virginity. It is no longer thought that the intact hymen is essential to virginity. See Graef, *Mary*, 14-16.

on Roman models, was from the late-seventh through early ninth centuries centered in Northumbria; the second was in the latter half of the tenth and in the eleventh centuries in the south at Canterbury, Abingdon and, especially, Winchester.⁸ This later period, which likely reflected the monastic reform movements, introduced additional Marian feasts (the Conception and Presentation) as well as more powerful and independent artistic images of the Virgin. Mary's role, like her feasts, became less closely tied to her role as the mother of God. Clayton concludes that the cult of the Virgin in pre-Conquest England was primarily monastic and devotional. Aelfric is perhaps the only writer to include theological discussion in his Marian writings, and his stance is largely dependent on Carolingian models.⁹ Eadmer, a Saxon student of Anselm of Canterbury in the late eleventh or early twelfth century, marked the beginning of independent speculation on Marian doctrine in England.¹⁰ The Cult of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England was notable not for its innovations, but for its eagerness in adopting devotional practices that were springing up throughout Europe.

While Mary's perpetual virginity was established early in Christian history, two other doctrines related to the status and fate of her body—the Immaculate Conception and corporeal Assumption—were debated throughout the Middle Ages and were only established as Catholic doctrine in the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Both of these doctrines developed out of a desire to ensure the purity of Christ's human flesh by preserving Mary's, both before her birth and after her death. According to the Aristotelian theories of sexual reproduction, the mother contributed the matter (the flesh) for the form of a new human being, which was

⁸ Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 267-273. Clayton traces these periods throughout her book, with individual chapters treating feasts, liturgy, private prayer, dedications, art, poetry, and prose.

⁹ Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin*, 210-266, 270-273.

¹⁰ Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin*, 274.

provided by the father.¹¹ In the case of Mary and Christ, the only human contribution to his conception was from Mary. Because Christ assumed His flesh from Mary's, their flesh was thought to be the same. Most theologians agreed that Mary was free from personal sin and was purified of original sin sometime before Christ's birth; however, her Immaculate Conception, or freedom from original sin from the moment she was conceived, was not generally accepted in the Middle Ages. Many held that she was purified of original sin either while in her mother's womb or at the Annunciation. The Latin Fathers, particularly Ambrose and Augustine, planted the seeds for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception when they linked sexuality to the transmission of original sin. This link naturally raised questions about the nature of Mary's conception by St. Anne. The first detailed exposition of the Immaculate Conception was written by Eadmer, probably in defense of the reintroduction of the feast at Bury, St. Edmund's. The debate raged throughout the Middle Ages with English theologians typically favoring the theory and theologians in France (most notably Bernard of Clairvaux) denouncing it.¹² Duns Scotus came to a solution that was doctrinally agreeable to most theologians. He argued that Mary's preservation from original sin did not exempt her from dependence on Christ for salvation, but rather it was Christ's greatest act of redemption.¹³ Nevertheless, the debate continued throughout the medieval period. The Franciscan order quickly adopted Scotus' position, but the Dominicans continued to oppose the doctrine, adhering instead to the teaching of Thomas

¹¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice," *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992) 210; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 22-25. The Aristotelian model of conception was only one model current in the Middle Ages from the twelfth century onward. The other model, based on Galen's theory, held that both a male and a female seed were needed for conception.

¹² Graef, *Mary*, 215-222; Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 189-200.

¹³ Graef, *Mary*, 300-302; Rubin, *Mother of God*, 303-305.

Aquinas. Despite gaining general approval by the mid-fifteenth century, the Immaculate Conception was not declared official church doctrine until 1854.

The Assumption was celebrated in the West as early as the seventh century, but whether Mary's body was taken into heaven along with her soul was a matter of debate, as the evidence was exclusively apocryphal. The apocryphal *Transitus Mariae*, which recounts Mary's death and assumption, originated in the East and was known in the West in Latin translation no later than the sixth century.¹⁴ The *Cogitis me*, a sermon attributed to Jerome but most likely written in the ninth century by Paschasius Radbertus, rejects the apocryphal tale and argues that Mary's soul was surely in heaven but that nothing can be said for certain about her body. The general attitude (if not the official doctrine) toward the corporeal assumption was changed by a late eleventh- or twelfth-century text attributed to Augustine, which claimed that, although Scripture did not reveal the fate of Mary's body, the corporeal assumption could be proven by reason.¹⁵ His arguments were based largely on the identity of Christ's flesh with Mary's intact, pure body and the obligation Christ would feel toward his mother. Pseudo-Augustine insists that Christ's body came from Mary, meaning that her body must also be privileged. Mary's flesh cannot be subject to the corruption of the grave if it is one with Christ's. He argues that because Christ took His flesh from Mary at the Incarnation, His flesh can only be in heaven if Mary's is as well.¹⁶ The doctrine of Mary's bodily Assumption was not declared doctrine until 1950.

¹⁴ For more details on the apocryphal *Transitus Mariae*, see chapters two and three in Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo Saxon England 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 24-100, and Rachel Fulton, "'Quae est ista quae ascendit sicut aurora consurgens?': The Song of Songs as the *Historia* for the Office of the Assumption," *Mediaeval Studies* 60 (1998) 55-122, especially 82-91.

¹⁵ Graef, *Mary*, 222-224; Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 201-213.

¹⁶ Graef, *Mary*, 186.

Medieval devotion to Mary was centered upon her status as mediator between Christians and her Son. Mary was first called *Mediatrix* in Paul the Deacon's eighth-century Latin translation of the legend of Theophilus; the title came into general use during the twelfth century.¹⁷ Mary functions as a mediator not only by bringing petitions from her devotees to her son, but also by providing the flesh which is taken up by Christ in the Incarnation and acting as a proxy for the mediator's imaginative experience of biblical events.

That the Virgin Mary is a woman is a biological necessity for her role in salvation history—she could not have given birth to Christ otherwise. But the importance of Mary's gender in medieval Christianity does not end with biology. Many scholars in the past have seen devotion to the Virgin as a way to reclaim a place for woman in an otherwise male-dominated faith, whereas others have argued that Mary represents an unrealistic standard which real women cannot hope to approach.¹⁸ More recently, scholars such as Karma Lochrie and Anne Clark Bartlett have tried to show that there was room for women to both participate in and subvert medieval misogynist discourse.¹⁹ While it is tempting to try to use depictions of Mary to reveal something about the treatment or social standing of women or about female-specific devotional

¹⁷ Graef, *Mary*, 171, 234-240, 245, 248.

¹⁸ See, for example, Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976) 134-174.

¹⁹ Karma Lochrie, "The Language of Transgression: Body, Flesh, and Word in Mystical Discourse," *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) 115-140 and Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1995). Although Thomas Bestul places himself primarily in this camp, he consistently emphasizes Mary's domination by male figures in the laments, see Thomas Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) 117.

practices, such a move would be misleading.²⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum has shown that women were not particularly drawn to Marian devotion.²¹

The relationship between Mary and “woman” is rarely straightforward and raises a number of issues with regard to Mary as a model for male as well as female readers of devotional material, women’s agency and authority within misogynistic discourse, and the way in which the relationship between body and soul are laid out in terms of gender categories. Mary can never be assumed to represent an average “woman.” Her interaction with Christ and depiction in art and literature relative to Him, in particular, are hard to describe with respect to medieval attitudes toward women in general because of her unique status as perpetual virgin and mother of God. Nevertheless, medieval scientific and theological ideas about women and gender difference did have an impact on the depiction of and devotion to Mary. Mary’s status as a woman also had an impact on how her theological and devotional role is formulated throughout the Middle Ages.

As a woman, Mary is an appropriate vehicle for the two-way interaction between divine and human because medieval theology and medical theory alike described the female body as open and penetrable. In medieval medicine, the female body was thought to differ anatomically from the male in that there are openings through which moisture could be purged.²² This bodily “openness” became a central feature in attitudes toward women and treatment of the female body

²⁰ As, for example, Penny Schine Gold attempts in her book *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

²¹ In *Jesus as Mother*, Bynum notes that male monks refer more to the Virgin Mary, whereas women tended to prefer to address the infant or adolescent Christ. See Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 172-173; Bynum, “. . . And Woman His Humanity?” Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages,” *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 152-154.

²² For more on medieval scientific theories of anatomy and gender difference see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 169-227.

both in theory and in practice. The female body was thought to be permeable, lacking solid boundaries. Women were viewed as physically vulnerable, which threatened both their individual moral safety and that of the community. Because of the perceived physical and moral vulnerability of women, they were often secluded or protected by architectural enclosures. Roberta Gilchrist has shown that aristocratic women were “spatially secluded” for some portion of their lives because of the importance of female chastity to patrimony.²³ Caroline Walker Bynum and Karma Lochrie both argue that medieval theological and medical understandings of the body, flesh and will influenced the role of affect in medieval devotion as well as the emphasis on female virginity and female religious practices in the latter half of the Middle Ages.²⁴ Religious ideals for women emphasized physical enclosure of women (as in the cloister or anchorhold) or even of the female body itself (in the form of restricting bodily fluids or the intake of food).

This vulnerability can also be seen in allegories for the female body found in both secular literature (such as love lyrics and romance) and religious literature (including sermons, prayers, and devotional writing). The chaste female body is compared to an impenetrable castle, while the unchaste body is a castle that falls to the invader. Mary’s body is an enclosure; she is linked typologically to Old Testament enclosures such as the temple, Noah’s ark, or the Ark of the Covenant. Her body is sealed by her virginity against the evils of the outside world in order to serve as a container for God within the world. Marian titles and images like the “gate of heaven”

²³ Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 1999) 144.

²⁴ See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, in particular the essays “‘. . . And Woman His Humanity,’ ” 151-179 and “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages,” 181-238; Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), especially chapter one, “The Body as Text and the Semiotics of Suffering,” pages 13-55.

or the “aqueduct of grace” between Heaven and Earth in liturgy, poetry, sermons, and devotional texts illustrate a distinctly medieval view of the female body that lends itself well to her role as mediatrix.²⁵ Mary’s body is a passage through which God enters the human world at the Incarnation and through which humans can return to God through her intercession.

Gender difference was a common mode of discourse in religious literature aside from descriptions of gender-specific practices. There is a long tradition of interpreting gender relations as allegories for the interaction of various parts of the individual person. According to St. Augustine, concupiscence is the rebellion of the flesh against the human will, especially the soul, and is a direct result of the initial “rebellion of the human will against God’s will.”²⁶ The flesh itself is not necessarily evil, but it must be controlled and mastered. Augustine uses a gendered analogy, the analogy of husband and wife, to describe how the flesh ought to be mastered by the spirit. Because women were associated with the flesh and because of their humoral and anatomical makeup, the emotions were associated with the feminine. Lochrie compares the gendered construction of the flesh (as opposed to spirit and rule of the mind) in St. Augustine and the will (as opposed to reason) in Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard “focuses on the will as woman in collusion with the flesh to eviscerate the soul” rather than making a distinction between flesh and will, as Augustine did: the corrupt will, subject to fleshly desires, struggles against the control of reason.²⁷ In each case, “woman . . . occupies the border between body and soul, the fissure through which a constant assault on the body may be conducted.”²⁸ According

²⁵ On Bernard of Clairvaux’s image of Mary as the aqueduct of grace, see chapter one below, page 52.

²⁶ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 19. For more on Augustine and the body, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 341-427.

²⁷ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 20-21.

²⁸ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 21.

to such formulations, the individual was neither just soul and nor just body, but one person made up of two parts that are necessarily, intimately, and emotionally connected. The connection between the soul and the body was essential to later medieval forms of piety that emphasize Christ's humanity and the Christian soul's intense personal connection with Him.

In the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the theological and devotional focus shifted from Christ's divinity to His humanity. The development of affective forms of devotion also resulted in a new focus on devotion to Mary—the person who had the most intimate relationship with Christ. Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Aelred of Rievaulx (among others) encouraged meditation on Christ's human existence, particularly his birth and death, to stir love and compassion which would then draw the meditator toward God. The purpose of affective devotion was to move the individual to contrition. Affective meditation involved three stages: sensible recollection, emotional reflection, and moral application.²⁹ Vivid description, in the case of devotional texts, and visual detail, in the case of devotional images, aid in the first stage, which then naturally triggers the emotions required to achieve the reflection of stage two. The moral application, which is clearly seen in the Marian lament discussed at the end of chapter three when the reader's gaze is turned upon himself, involves examining one's own soul, recognizing individual sins, and feeling the remorse necessary for contrition. This form of meditation emphasizes the experience of the individual, blending personal and sacred history to create an emotional response of love and compassion. Proper love of Christ conforms the devotee to Christ's image. Affective devotional practices of the later Middle Ages relied upon the intimate connection between body and soul. In some theological writings, the human being

²⁹ Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1989) 6; Elizabeth Salter, "Nicholas Love's 'Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,'" *Analecta Cartusiana* 10 (1974) 158.

was described as being comprised of both masculine and feminine aspects: the body, flesh, and passions were considered feminine and the soul or mind was considered masculine. The feminine aspects of the individual could be acted upon in order to influence the masculine, working together for the salvation of the entire person.

Although Anselm wrote for both male and female readers and Bernard's sermons were directed toward his fellow monks, the female reader is the type of audience most often associated with the affective piety of the later Middle Ages. Sarah McNamer carries this association further, arguing that the affective movement was not simply adopted by women, but that it was motivated by and developed for women.³⁰ Previous scholarship often categorized affective devotional writings as the lowest form of spirituality, suited to the laity, the uneducated, or women.³¹ Some scholars have come to the defense of affective piety as a serious spiritual undertaking. Denise Despres emphasizes above all the penitential goal of affective meditation. Karnes identifies another, loftier goal of affective meditation in her study of Bonaventure. Affectivity, far from being a lesser form of spiritual practice relegated to the laity, becomes the grounding for serious systematic theology. For Bonaventure, imagination "functions cognitively to assist in the translation of sensory into intellectual apprehension."³² When an individual meditates on the life of Christ, he or she creates a mental image of Christ's humanity. Because of His dual nature, Christ is able to participate in the individual's cognitive process, "act[ing] on the mind's image of himself in order to lead the cognizing meditant from his humanity to his

³⁰ Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) 59.

³¹ See Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) 9-13 and "The 'school of devotion': Imagination and cognition in medieval meditations on Christ," (Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004) 1-9. Elizabeth Salter, "Nicholas Love's 'Myrroure,'" 178.

³² Karnes, *Imagination*, 139.

divinity. This process, like that of cognition itself, depends centrally on imagination.”³³

Bonaventure thus extends the implications of his theories of imagination and cognition to incorporate affective piety.

The function of imagination, as Nicholas Watson notes, is essentially that of mediation.³⁴ The imagination occupies a “liminal position between body and spirit,” which allows it to link the experiences of the senses and the body to the mind and soul but also makes it vulnerable to “diabolic interference, deterioration as a result of disordered postlapsarian desire, and perceptual error.”³⁵ Karnes demonstrates that the affective piety of the later Middle Ages preserves a theory of cognition that makes use of imagination and affect to achieve “precisely that knowledge of and union with God that the more prestigious theology of the monasteries and universities also sought.”³⁶ Affective meditation relies on the imagination’s ability to mediate between the physical and spiritual as a means of access to God. Bonaventure’s theory of cognition and affective theology identifies Christ Incarnate as the link between the physical and spiritual and allows (or even requires) knowledge to originate in the knowledge of sensible things. Meditation and contemplation coincide in the person of Christ, as do material and spiritual perception, because Christ mediates between material and physical.³⁷ This idea of Christ’s mediation

³³ Karnes, *Imagination*, 139.

³⁴ Nicholas Watson, “The Phantasmal Past: Time, History, and the Recombinative Imagination,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 32 (2010) 9.

³⁵ Watson, “Phantasmal Past,” 12.

³⁶ Karnes, “The ‘school of devotion,’” 7. Karnes notes that it is a mistake to dismiss the intellectual value of affective devotional practices (Karnes, *Imagination*, 15).

³⁷ Karnes writes: “Christ takes on the role of the Aristotelian agent intellect and extracts intelligible data from imagination’s phantasm. That phantasm, containing both sensory and intelligible data, is proportioned to Christ with his dual humanity and divinity. He therefore has the unique ability to act on imagination’s image and generate intellectual cognition out of sensory cognition. Every act of knowing, so understood, is a mini-journey from Christ’s humanity to his divinity. Imagination becomes the crucial locus of divine presence within the mind, and the mind that then turns itself to the task of imagining Christ has, according to Bonaventure, an especially effective means of ascending to him” (*Imagination* 76).

between physical and spiritual modes of perception need not be limited to Bonaventure's theology nor indeed to meditations specifically on Christ or the Passion. Though not expressed in formal theological writings, the Bonaventuran attitude toward the physical world can be seen in a variety of affective devotional texts, objects, and practices. The role of mediation in late medieval devotional culture depends, if not specifically on Bonaventure's formulation, upon an essential link between material and spiritual.

Mary embodies liminal status: she bridges the gap between binaries of human and divine, virgin and mother, sister and spouse, life and death, flesh and spirit. Central to my thesis is the mixing of binary categories and liminality as the space in which those binaries mix. The term “liminality” originated in Arnold van Gennep’s anthropological studies of ritual in the early twentieth century and was popularized by Victor Turner.³⁸ In a rite of passage, as an individual moves from one state or set of stable cultural conditions to another, he or she passes through three stages: separation, the liminal phase, and incorporation. The liminal phase is the transitional phase between two stable states. This phase is characterized by instability, dislocation, ambiguity and contradiction. Individuals in the liminal phase are “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”³⁹

³⁸ See Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*,” *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) 93-111; Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

³⁹ Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95. As Bynum points out, there are problems applying Turner's theory of liminality and dominant symbols to the lives of medieval women. Whereas men made use of poverty, nudity, femaleness, etc. in their religious experience, women did not. Women, she argues, were liminal specifically for men. The purpose of my study, however, is not to look specifically at the actions or intentions of medieval religious women, but rather at their metaphorical use in the description of the human being as a whole; the idea of feminine liminality is directly relevant. I am not interested in whether or not these images are prescriptive, or even whether or not they are descriptive of actual women's practices. I am interested in how liminality is descriptive of the Christian life, how it is employed to express truths about the human condition, and especially how it influences the role of mediation in

Liminality is prominent within religious discourse because religious discourse explores the relationship between the binary opposition of human and divine—categories that are both clearly distinguished and consistently mingled. Binary pairs are necessary in order to define the world around us, but at the same time they necessarily define incompletely or even falsely—like allegory. It is a lie, but one through which truth can be expressed. We create categories and make sharp distinctions between them so that we can identify, classify and communicate; however, the falseness of the binaries is just as necessary as the categories themselves.

Mary's liminality allows her to function as a mediator between the human and the divine. In a similar way, literary devices (such as allegory), texts (including meditations, lyrics, prayers, etc.) and devotional objects (including books, images, relics, etc.) serve as mediators between the private lives of medieval Christians and God. These mediators focus meditation and prayer to bring the individual closer to God, but they can also represent the physical presence of God and bring God closer to the individual. A study of these modes of mediation—language, image, and flesh—within Marian devotional texts and images will reveal how the connections between spiritual and physical were conceived.

In the first chapter, I examine the architectural allegory used to represent the body of the Virgin Mary found in Robert Grosseteste's *Château d'Amour*. The allegory is an important representation of Christ's Incarnation of Mary's dual function as mediator between divine and human. After contextualizing Grosseteste's allegorical castle within the theological tradition of architectural allegory, I compare the allegorical castle of Mary's body to architectural allegories

medieval devotion. See Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality," *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 27-51.

of the female body found in secular love poetry and romance. The allegories found in Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* and the *Roman de la rose* in particular offer important insight into the connotations of the allegorical castle that influence our reading of the Marian allegory. In reading these allegories alongside Grosseteste's religious allegory, I identify the secular, erotic overtones present in Grosseteste's allegory of the body of the Virgin Mary, and consider what these connotations of the female body as allegorical edifice contribute to the explicitly religious allegory of the Virgin Mary's body.

In the next chapter, I continue my investigation of architectural allegory, looking now at the *Ancrene Wisse*. I consider the author's use of architectural allegory and erotic language and imagery from the Song of Songs to create a typological alignment of the anchoress with the Virgin Mary. Where Grosseteste's allegory provided a subject for contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation, the allusions to Marian allegories in the *Ancrene Wisse* function in a different way, creating not only a mystery on which to meditate, but a model to imitate. The anchoress aligns herself with Mary and attempts to imitate Mary's desire for and receptivity of Christ. The use of eros in devotional discourse creates tension between the prescribed sensory restriction and the highly sensual, sexual language that heightens the emotional effect of the text.

In chapter three, I shift from examining eros to compassion and from architectural allegory to Marian laments. Where the first two chapters looked at the emotions of love and desire, this chapter deals specifically with empathetic suffering and identification with Christ and Mary. I first examine one type of Marian lament, the dialogue with St. Bernard, which developed from the "Quis dabit," one of the most influential Latin meditations on the Passion. I compare the Latin meditation with its earliest Middle English version, found in the *Cursor Mundi*. I then turn to other Middle English Marian laments that involve interaction between a

meditator and the Virgin Mary. By engaging imaginatively with Mary, the reader of the poem is able to engage personally in the drama of the Passion.

Toward the end of chapter three, I begin to discuss the role of the gaze in Marian laments, considering the dynamic of the gaze shared among the reader, the Virgin Mary, the Crucified Christ, and God the Father. The gaze in these poems occurs within the meditation; it is imaginative. The jumping-off point for chapter four is a Middle English Marian lament in which the reader gazes upon a real object—a Pietà statue. This chapter investigates the function of physical, visual objects within affective devotion. I consider what material objects are capable of representing and in what way they are like human bodies in their relationship to a spiritual reality. Medieval theories of perspectivist optics provide one way of explaining how being seen can be active rather than passive, giving a type of agency to the object seen. In addition to meditations using devotional images, I consider miracle stories in which images come to life or in other ways behave like people. The ability of religious images to represent (and in some sense *be*) an invisible, divine reality influences their role in affective devotional practices, heightening the emotional impact of imaginative devotional practices.

Chapter 1

Architectural Allegory and the Marian Body

Medieval scriptural exegesis is replete with typological interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures. Exegetes would often interpret an object, person, or event from the Old Testament as a ‘type’—a prefiguration or foreshadowing—of a New Testament figure or event. In this way, the Christian Scriptures fulfill the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, and allegory provided a language through which connections between the two could be built. In *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Beryl Smalley lists the four kinds of Old Testament type identified by Origen in the patristic period:

Prophecies of the coming of Christ, prophecies of the Church and her sacraments . . . , prophecies of the Last Things and of the kingdom of heaven, [and] finally, figures of the relationship between God and the individual soul as exemplified in the history of the chosen people. . . . The two last kinds of types, eschatological and mystical or moral, can be found in the New Testament also.¹

Allegorical types were not restricted to biblical characters and themes; they were also drawn from places and objects. Many Old and New Testament structures have been interpreted as allegories for both the Virgin Mary and the human soul. The Ark of the Covenant or the Temple of Solomon—sacred locations prepared for God to descend to earth and interact with His chosen people—can be seen as types of the Virgin Mary who kept her body pure to receive God into it at the moment of the Incarnation, of the Church in which Christians worship and pray, or even of the soul that receives the presence of Christ.

¹ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964) 7.

In medieval literature, the image of the castle emerges as an architectural allegory, building on elements of earlier Old Testament types. In such allegories, the Virgin Mary is described as a contemporary defensive structure, the castle, perfectly defended by architectural features that represent her virtues. The castle image also appears in secular texts, most famously in the *Roman de la rose*, and in religious texts, such as the *Ancrene Wisse*, representing the female body that required protection to remain chaste. In works like the *Castle of Perseverance* and the “Songe du Castel,” the castle is an allegory for the human body or soul seeking protection from temptation and sin. When applied to Mary, these allegories emphasize the Virgin’s purity and her role as the site of the Incarnation as well as a refuge for sinners.

This chapter will focus on perhaps the earliest extended allegorical castle representing the body of the Virgin Mary, the architectural allegory found in Robert Grosseteste’s *Château d’Amour*. The allegory is an important representation of Christ’s Incarnation and of Mary’s dual function as mediator between divine and human. Grosseteste’s allegorical castle grows out of existing traditions of Latin philosophical and theological allegories, such as Honorius of Autun on the House of Wisdom and Hugh of St. Victor on Noah’s ark, but also draws upon elements of architectural allegories found in love poetry and romance literature describing sexual submission, vividly represented in the palace of love in Andreas Capellanus’ *De Amore* or by the allegorical castle in the *Roman de la rose* in which Jalousie imprisons the rose and Bel Acueil and which is later stormed by the Lover. Grosseteste’s combination of apparently opposing “religious” or “intellectual” elements with “secular” or “courtly” elements creates a tension which highlights the marvelous mingling of divine and human at the heart of Grosseteste’s allegory.

The *Château d'Amour* in Context

Very little is known for certain about Robert Grosseteste's early life.² He was born in Suffolk around 1168, probably of humble origins. In 1198 he became a member of the household of William de Vere, the Bishop of Hereford, on the recommendation of Gerald of Wales. The details of Grosseteste's education and any involvement he may have had with the university environment before 1225 are purely speculative.³ James McEvoy thinks it is likely that Grosseteste's earliest education took place in Hereford, where there was a strong scientific tradition. He most likely taught the arts at Oxford. Grosseteste probably spent some time studying theology at Paris, most likely during the Interdict, but he is unlikely to have taught there. He taught theology at Oxford beginning in 1225. In 1229-1230, he was invited to become the first lecturer to the Franciscans shortly after their arrival in England, where he continued to teach until 1235. From 1229 to 1231 he was the archdeacon of Leicester. In 1235, when he was at least sixty-seven years of age, Grosseteste was appointed Bishop of Lincoln.

Grosseteste was a scholar with broad interests in science, philosophy and theology. He wrote treatises on subjects ranging from cosmology and optics to metaphysics and logic. As a

² For a recent biography of Robert Grosseteste, see James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). McEvoy explores the known details of Grosseteste's early life as well as hypotheses of earlier biographers D. A. Callus and R.W. Southern in the second chapter "A Life Poorly Known: The First Six Decades," 19-30. Earlier biographies include D.A. Callus, "Robert Grosseteste as Scholar," *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop. Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of His Death*, ed. D. A. Callus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955) 1-69 and R.W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

³ McEvoy, *Grosseteste*, 28. McEvoy considers the opposing theories of Callus and Southern. Callus suggests that Grosseteste taught the arts at Oxford and went to Paris to study theology between 1209 and 1214. When he returned, Callus believes Grosseteste went back to Oxford and served as regent master from 1214 until he went to teach for the Franciscans in 1229, where he remained until he became Bishop of Lincoln in 1235. Southern, on the other hand, thinks Grosseteste did not study at Paris, but rather was educated in English provincial schools and through his work as a clerk for ecclesiastical patrons. McEvoy finds Southern's theory unrealistic, as Grosseteste would have had to learn almost everything he knew about theology in a ten-year period during which he was also learning Greek (McEvoy, *Grosseteste*, 22-26).

bishop, he was actively involved in both pastoral care and church reform. Even before he was made bishop, he showed interest in pastoral ministry, composing many biblical commentaries and theological treatises. Although he wrote a great deal in Latin and had a profound influence on subsequent medieval thought on a variety of subjects, Grosseteste never composed a comprehensive *Summa Theologiae* in Latin. In fact, R. W. Southern described the *Château d'Amour* as the closest thing to a comprehensive summary of his thought.⁴ Grosseteste's ideas influenced the development of theology and philosophy throughout the Middle Ages, particularly among the Franciscans.

The exact place of the *Château* within Grosseteste's corpus is difficult to determine. Scholars have put forward a number of theories regarding the date, intended audience, and title of the work and how these factors influence the way the text as a whole is perceived. The date of composition has been placed anywhere from before 1200 to 1251-2. Each scholar's proposed date of composition is inevitably tied to a theory of the text's intended audience, depending on where that date falls in Grosseteste's career. Jessie Murray dates the text to the 1230s based on philological analysis, but does not provide a theory of its intended audience.⁵ Dominica Legge speculated that it may have been compiled for young noblemen, perhaps the sons of Simon de Montfort when they were being brought up in Grosseteste's household, placing the date of composition around 1251-2.⁶ Southern suggested, primarily based on its general style and

⁴ Southern, *Grosseteste*, 224-225.

⁵ Jessie Murray, "Introduction," *Le Château d'amour*, ed. Jessie Murray (Paris: Champion, 1918) 64.

⁶ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 223; Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters: The Influence of the Orders upon Anglo-Norman Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1950) 98-101.

popular metrical form, that the poem was composed for performance in a noble household.⁷

Most recently, Evelyn Mackie argues for a composition date in the early 1230s, when Grosseteste was lecturer to the Oxford Franciscans, because of two thirteenth-century manuscripts that refer to Grosseteste as “mestre” rather than as bishop.⁸ Mackie believes this reference implies that the *Château d’Amour* predates his episcopate. The date also coincides with Murray’s original dating of the language of the text.

As a noted theologian and philosopher, Grosseteste was steeped in the exegetical traditions that gave birth to elaborate architectural edifices. Biblical structures such as Noah’s ark, the Ark of the Covenant, Solomon’s temple, the tabernacle and the House of Wisdom were analyzed and given allegorical significance throughout the early Christian and medieval periods, initially in continuous biblical commentaries and later in separate treatises.⁹ The structures themselves were interpreted as representing the Church, the human body, and the Virgin Mary, and they often took on multiple meanings simultaneously. The various elements that made up the edifices signified virtues, books of the Bible, or other aspects of Christian faith and life that built up and supported the structure as a whole. In the twelfth century, theologians began

⁷ Southern, *Grosseteste*, 225. Other theories on the date of composition include Josiah Cox Russell, who thought the text was likely composed before 1200 for a noble household and S. Harrison Thomson argued for a date between 1215 and 1230. Mackie provides the most recent survey of the earlier theories of composition date and original audience in the introduction to her prose translation of the text: Evelyn A. Mackie, “Robert Grosseteste’s Anglo-Norman Treatise on the Loss and Restoration of Creation Commonly Known as *Le Château d’Amour*: An English Prose Translation,” *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginnings of a British Theological Tradition: Papers Delivered at the Grosseteste Colloquium held at Greyfriars, Oxford on 3rd July 2002*, ed. Maura O’Carroll (Rome: Instituto Storico Dei Cappuccini, 2003) 152-153.

⁸ Mackie, “English Prose Translation,” 153-154

⁹ See Christiania Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) 7-48; David Cowling, *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 55-67; Mary Immaculate Creek, *The Sources and Influence of Robert Grosseteste’s Le Chateau d’Amour* (New Haven: Yale University, 1941) 161-167; Roberta Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle: A Study in the Mediaeval Allgory of the Edifice with Especial Reference to Religious Writings* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr, 1930) 1-9. On exegesis of the New Jerusalem specifically see Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003).

expounding on various biblical structures independently and created free-standing treatises on their allegorical significance. Old Testament structures were the focus of exegetical writing throughout the twelfth century, but from the thirteenth century on, contemporary edifices (religious and otherwise) were used instead. Allegories of religious buildings (such as the parish church and cloister) or secular structures (like the castle) replaced those of the temple, tabernacle, and ark as the focus of architectural allegory. Honorius of Autun, for example, allegorizes the House of Wisdom in Proverbs 9:1 as a representation of the Church, with its seven columns representing seven books of the Bible, each erected by one of the seven virtues, giving the architectural allegory both spiritual significance and mnemonic purpose.¹⁰

The allegory of the castle combined architectural allegory with allegorical siege. The term “castellum,” originally the diminutive of “castrum,” was usually translated as “village” or “town” in biblical passages, but gradually came to mean “castle” in medieval Latin.¹¹ Architectural allegory and the allegorical siege complement one another because, as David Cowling notes, they share the central idea that “Christians both constitute and, indeed, actively construct a building that separates them as a discrete entity from a potentially hostile world, and that serves ultimately as a dwelling-place for God.”¹² Malcolm Hebron traces the roots of the allegorical siege to “a wider rhetoric of warfaring terms” originating in biblical passages such as Ephesians 6:11 and the writings of fourth-century Christians faced with the prospect of the

¹⁰ Honorius of Autun, *Speculum Ecclesiae*, PL 172, Cols. 1101-1102. On the mnemonic use of Old Testament structures, specifically Noah’s ark and the Tabernacle, see chapter five, “The Place of the Tabernacle” in Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 221-276.

¹¹ Cornelius traces the development of these terms and their influence on the development of architectural allegory. See Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 10-13, 37-38.

¹² Cowling, *Building the Text*, 55.

imminent invasion of Rome.¹³ Prudentius' *Psychomachia* is perhaps the best known example of this type of allegorical warfare. Gregory the Great used a number of allegorical sieges in his exegetical writings on the gospels, Ezekiel, and the book of Job. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the castle, rather than the camp, became the site for military conflict and, as the allegorical siege naturally reflects contemporary military practices, the castle or fortress became the allegorical figure used to describe the struggle between good and evil.¹⁴ During the twelfth century, ecclesiastical writers began to take "a greater interest . . . in the description of the place besieged," and to use architectural terminology to describe "complex interiors."¹⁵

By the thirteenth century, the allegorical edifice had also become an established mode of Marian imagery.¹⁶ Old Testament structures like Solomon's temple or the Ark of the Covenant—structures built specifically to contain and protect the presence of God manifested in the world—were interpreted by the early Christian theologians as types of the Virgin Mary. Jerome used the temple in Ezekiel with its closed door as proof of Mary's virginity.¹⁷ Likewise, the enclosed garden in the Song of Songs refers to Mary's virginal body: "hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa hortus conclusus fons signatus" [a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse—a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed].¹⁸ New Testament enclosures, such as the room into which

¹³ Malcolm Hebron, *The Medieval Siege: Theme and Image in Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 137-139. Hebron notes that the siege is "an important aspect of the larger subject of the allegorical fortress" but I would go further and point out that the image of the fortress always assumes assault and defense.

¹⁴ Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 10-13; Creek, *Sources and Influences*, 164; Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 139-143; Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 87-90.

¹⁵ Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 142.

¹⁶ On Marian architectural allegory, see Cornelius 37-48; Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 142-144; Cowling, *Building the Text*, 58-60; Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 92-100.

¹⁷ "Porta haec clausa erit non aperietur et vir non transiet per eam quoniam Dominus Deus Israhel ingressus est per eam eritque clausa" [this door shall be closed and shall not be opened and man shall not go through it because the Lord God of Israel went in through it and it shall be closed] (Ezekiel 44:2).

¹⁸ Song of Songs 4:12.

the resurrected Christ enters through a closed door in the Gospel of John, were sometimes interpreted as the Virgin's body: "fores essent clausae ubi erant discipuli propter metum Iudaeorum venit Iesus et stetit in medio et dicit eis pax vobis" [the doors were closed where the disciples were because they were afraid of the Jews, and Jesus came in and stood in the middle and said to them 'Peace be with you'].¹⁹ Augustine cites this entrance of Christ through a closed door, rather than referring to the closed door of Ezekiel, as proof of Mary's virginity.²⁰ The new tomb in which Christ is buried is also interpreted as Mary's virginal womb.²¹ Architectural images of Mary were common in hymns and other liturgical texts.

The image of the castle for the Virgin Mary begins to appear in the eighth and ninth centuries, as a result of the reading from the Gospel of Luke used in the liturgy for the Feast of the Assumption. The reading from Luke, the story of Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha, stated that Jesus "intravit in quoddam castellum" [entered into a certain *castellum*].²² Hrabanus Maurus first interpreted the "castellum" as referring to the Virgin Mary, but the allegory was not developed further until the twelfth century.²³ The allegory was developed in homilies in the twelfth century, interpreted as "an allegory of the Incarnation[,] . . . taken to refer to the miraculous entry of Christ into the architectural stronghold of Mary's virginal body."²⁴ As the architectural structure of the feudal castle emerged, the allegory of the Marian castle grew more

¹⁹ John 20:19.

²⁰ Augustine, *Sermo 191*, PL 38, Col. 1010. For a discussion of Augustine's Mariology see Graef, *Mary*, 94-100.

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of this image, see chapter two below, pages 108-111.

²² Luke 10:38.

²³ Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 12, 37. Sr. Mary Creek doubts that Hrabanus Maurus' use of "castellum" was intended to be interpreted as "castle" (*Sources and Influences*, 163).

²⁴ Whitehead, "A Fortress and a Shield: The Representation of the Virgin in the *Château d'Amour* of Robert Grosseteste," *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 110. Sometimes these interpretations begin as attempts to explain the choice of reading for the Marian feast.

complex, first on the Continent and then in England. An early twelfth-century homily on the gospel of Luke by Ralph d'Escures, falsely attributed to Anselm, is the earliest English example of the castle representing Mary's body.²⁵ His allegory is much simpler than Grosseteste's, but does include a tower (representing humility) and wall around the castle (representing virginity): "Castellum enim dicitur quaelibet turris, et murus in circuitu eius. Quae duo sese invicem defendunt, ita ut hostes per murum ab arce et a muro per arcem arceantur" [For whichever is called the castle, the tower and the wall surrounding it. Those two things defend one another mutually, so that the enemies are kept from the fortress by the wall and from the wall by the fortress].²⁶ Like biblical architectural allegories of early Christian exegesis, the Marian castle allegory was "linked to the concept of protection or shelter, specifically for the presence of God."²⁷

The castle was also allegorized as a representation of the human soul or body during the same period. Religious texts portrayed the individual resisting temptation as a castle under siege, which will be the focus of the next chapter on the *Ancrene Wisse*. Generally seen as a specialization of the allegorical fortress representing the individual soul or body, Marian architectural allegories often incorporate many of the same elements including the opposition of vices and virtues. Marian architectural and siege allegories either identify the Virgin "with the protecting, unpenetrated castle as the shield for the soul, or in references to the spotless womb

²⁵ Ralph d'Escures, "Exegesis on Luke 10:38 Around 1100: Worcester MS F.94, ff. 1r-23, a Tribute to James E. Cross," ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Medieval Sermon Studies* 40(1997) 22-29. See also Southern, *Grosseteste*, 225. It is also printed with the works of Anselm of Canterbury, *Homilia IX*, PL 158, Cols. 644-649. See also Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 46; G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933) 77; Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 93.

²⁶ "Exegesis on Luke 10:38," ll. 30-33.

²⁷ Evelyn Anne Mackie, "Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*: A Text in Context" (Diss., University of Toronto, 2002) 76.

which protected Christ.”²⁸ Mary is linked to ideas of protection, containment, and impenetrability—an impenetrability that creates a pure space to receive Christ into the world and a fortified refuge for the faithful against the world. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the allegorical castle of the Virgin Mary moved from sermons and exegetical writings into a more literary context, the most notable of which is Robert Grosseteste’s allegorical exemplum in the *Château d’Amour*.²⁹

Grosseteste drew extensively on twelfth-century homilists and other allegories from the Latin tradition including commentaries on the New Jerusalem in Revelations to create his architectural allegory, but as a Marian allegory, it is far more extensive than earlier versions and shows signs of influence from architectural allegories developing in love poetry and romance around the same period. Grosseteste’s Castle of Love “greatly particularized and elaborated” the architectural allegory of Virgin as castle, and it had “an abiding influence on the English pulpit of the last two pre-Reformation centuries.”³⁰ Where Ralph d’Escures wrote only of the tower and wall of the castle, Grosseteste includes a much more detailed plan for his allegorical castle. He describes its foundation and enumerates its turrets, baileys and barbicans. Grosseteste’s architectural allegory differs from the intellectual tradition of architectural allegory, as Christiania Whitehead points out, in that there is less attention to proportion, form and number and he includes elements of popular love poetry and romance that gesture toward a tradition of secular allegory representing the fallible female body.³¹

²⁸ Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 143.

²⁹ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 93.

³⁰ Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 46; Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, 77.

³¹ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 87-90. While there is less attention to geometric construction and measurement, the numbers involved are still highly significant and correspond to numbers with religious significance, especially three, four, and seven, recalling the mnemonic function of earlier architectural allegories.

The *Château d'Amour* is a brief account of salvation history, from creation and the fall, through the Incarnation of Christ to the crucifixion and Last Judgment. No vernacular title appears in any of the extant Anglo-Norman manuscripts. The title *Le Château d'Amour* is based on a line added to the Latin prologue of a fourteenth-century manuscript (London, British Library MS Egerton 846), which mentions two names that are sometimes given to the poem: the *Castellum amoris* and the *Scala celi*, each potentially drawn from lines from the poem.³² The poem is organized as an explanation of Isaiah's prophecy and of the names by which Christ will be known: "parvulus enim natus est nobis filius datus est nobis . . . et vocabitur nomen eius Admirabilis consiliarius Deus fortis Pater futuri saeculi Princeps pacis" [for a child is born to us, a son is given to us . . . and His name shall be Wonderful, Counselor, mighty God, Father of the world to come, and Prince of Peace].³³ Although it surveys all of salvation history, the poem is probably best known for two of its allegorical passages, the Four Daughters of God and the Castle of Love, which have been the primary focus of scholarship on the poem.³⁴ The poem is written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, which was the most common form for Anglo-Norman romances and which, combined with the title it has been given by its previous editors, has led some scholars to assume that the *Château* is a work of "courtly literature."³⁵ Evelyn Mackie has recently reevaluated the poem, stressing above all its scholastic and intellectual nature and

³² The reference to the ladder occurs in ll. 829-830. Mackie, "English Prose Translation," 157-158. The earliest known reference to the French title *Chasteau d'amours* appears in John Leland's *Commentarii de Scriptores Britannicis*. Most library inventories list the text by the incipit of the text or the Latin prologue or by description of its content. Mackie proposes using a title drawn from one such descriptive catalogue entry from 1458, "The Loss and Restoration of Creation," arguing that continued use of *Château d'Amour* as a title, apart from being anachronistic, skews the expectations of scholars and critics regarding the content of the poem as a whole. Although Mackie's suggestion of a new title, "The Loss and Restoration of Creation," would perhaps redirect attention to the content of the poem as a whole, I will continue to use the title *Le Château d'Amour*, as scholarship up to this point (including Mackie's own work) has used this title and the change would only increase confusion.

³³ Isaiah 9:6.

³⁴ Mackie, "English Prose Translation," 159.

³⁵ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 14.

arguing that its intellectual content, rather than language of composition, should be the primary factor in the classification of the text.³⁶ Although Mackie is correct in her assessment of the work's religious character, her argument puts too much emphasis on the distinction between courtly literature and religious literature, a distinction which was not always straightforward in thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman literature. Her argument both enhances and perpetuates a false distinction between the categories of religious and secular literature rather than acknowledging that there is, in fact, a mixing of categories at work in the *Château d'Amour*.

The question of audience has significant implications on how the allegorical castle of Mary's female body is read. The original audience for Grosseteste's work cannot be known with certainty. When attempting to determine the intended audience, scholars typically consider Grosseteste's choice of a vernacular language (Anglo-Norman French), his choice of verse, the social hierarchies central to the text's allegories, and the manuscript context of the various surviving copies and translations of the work. Mackie believes that the manuscript evidence suggests a scholastic audience. She dismisses the sons of Simon de Montfort as the intended audience, as this suggestion was first made based on the assumption that the poem was composed late in Grosseteste's career, only considering his immediate circle as bishop. The earlier date that Mackie proposes points to a different audience and purpose entirely.

Mackie believes the *Château d'Amour* fits into Grosseteste's time with the community of Franciscans at Oxford. Mackie's MS P (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 902) contains marginal notes which indicate that the text was studied closely in an intellectual milieu. In addition, sources and authorities are cited in Latin, and much of the terminology is typical of

³⁶ Mackie, "A Text in Context," 61.

Grosseteste's philosophical and theological work. The text itself contains theology reminiscent of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*. The rainbow and colors of the castle may reflect Grosseteste's optical theory as well as the tradition of exegesis on Revelations.³⁷ The use of "Grossetestian terminology" used throughout the text lends to its intellectual character.³⁸ Mackie argues the overall content is "essentially biblical translation with commentary."³⁹ She suggests that the work may have been composed for the Oxford Franciscan community, specifically for lay brothers who may not have been able to read Latin, so that they could receive theological instruction in their vernacular: "The use of the vernacular in such a context may seem unexpected, yet the tradition of religious and didactic writing, including biblical and scholastic translation, was well-established in Anglo-Norman culture."⁴⁰ Andrew Reeves suggests another possibility for the text's usefulness within the Franciscan community: that it was intended for use as a preaching aid.⁴¹ If the text was used to instruct the laity or to assist others in their instruction of the laity, allusions to secular allegory would likely have been appreciated by both Grosseteste's primary and secondary audience.

Mackie notes that later manuscripts that were prepared for women contain a number of simplifications to the text's language and content, changes which, she argues, simplify the technical language of a scholarly text for an audience of less educated readers.⁴² The overall

³⁷ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 43.

³⁸ Mackie, "A Text in Context," 50.

³⁹ Mackie, "English Prose Translation," 159.

⁴⁰ Mackie, "A Text in Context," 52

⁴¹ Andrew B. Reeves, "Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England: Lateran IV to *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*" (Diss., University of Toronto, 2009) 182.

⁴² Mackie, "Scribal Intervention and the Question of Audience: Editing *Le Château d'Amour*," *Editing Robert Grosseteste: Papers given at the thirty-sixth annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 3-4*

readership of the text, then, must have extended beyond the more learned original audience to readers who, at least in the opinion of the scribes and compilers of later versions, would benefit from these simplifications. Though this audience would be less likely to appreciate the intellectual traditions informing the text, they would surely be aware of the similarities between the religious allegory and secular allegories.

Whether or not Grosseteste intended to allude to secular love and romance genres, it would be difficult to assume that medieval readers would not have made the connection themselves. As Reeves argues, the *Château d'Amour* clearly reflects the concerns of the aristocratic classes in England, the same people who would have had access to secular allegories found in texts like the *Roman de la rose*. If, following Mackie's suggestion, it was composed for an intellectual audience such as the Oxford Franciscans, the students themselves would likely have come from aristocratic or upwardly mobile social circles, and if it was intended for use as a preaching aid, the material would have been particularly suited to an upper-class, lay audience. As Reeves writes: "it seems likely that Grosseteste wrote the *Château d'Amour* to instruct laypeople or to help others instruct laypeople, and specifically those laypeople of the social class who would be using Anglo-Norman."⁴³

Mackie claims to challenge what she sees as a "generally accepted assertion that the [*Château d'Amour*] belongs to courtly literature," but this claim is misleading, as there is hardly

November 2000, ed. Joseph Ward Goering and Evelyn Anne Mackie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 65.

⁴³ Reeves, "Teaching the Creed," 182.

a scholarly consensus that places the *Château d'Amour* securely among so-called courtly texts.⁴⁴ Although many critics highlight the “courtly” or “romance” aspects of the language and allegories within the text, they do *not* argue that the text is not a religious one. In fact, the consensus seems to be that the text is ambiguous in its use of popular, “courtly” images and verse form to express religious content. Legge sees the work as “belong[ing] to courtly literature” because of its aristocratic and feudal tone, but argues that it is clearly part of the thirteenth-century move to create manuals of religious knowledge for the laity.⁴⁵ Mackie disapproves in particular of the parallels that are so frequently drawn between the architectural allegory found in *Château* and those found in texts like the *Roman de la rose*. But again, her statement is deceptive as only a few, early scholars thought of the castle in the *Roman de la rose* as a source for Grosseteste’s allegory.⁴⁶ Sr. Mary Creek concludes, on the contrary, that the sources for the allegorical castle were “both romantic and religious,” and Southern comments on

⁴⁴ Mackie, “English Prose Translation,” 159.

⁴⁵ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 223. Elsewhere, Legge states that the *Château d'Amour* “was indeed a ‘romance,’ but it is presented without an apology, and there is no comparison with worldly romances” (*Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, 99). Legge identifies Grosseteste’s work as “an account of the Creation, the Fall and the Redemption, in readable form” (*Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* 98). Despite calling the text a “romance,” she clearly acknowledges its religious purpose. Jane Zatta has also highlighted the poem’s courtly romance, arguing that it uses “the models, goals, and value systems of feudal society. . . as an epistemological model to explain the nature of Christ’s sacrifice and the benefits of salvation” (170). See Jane Zatta, “The ‘Romance’ of the *Castle of Love*,” *Chaucer Yearbook: A Journal of Late Medieval Studies* 5(1998) 163-185.

⁴⁶ Mackie, “A Text in Context,” 63-64. Mackie is specifically referring to scholars like J. J. Jusserand, who refers to the castle as “a sort of pious Romaunt of the Rose” (213). See J. J. Jusserand, *A Literary History of the English People From the Origins to the Renaissance* (London: Unwin, 1895) 213. Mackie does not want to think of the castle allegory in relation to secular allegories as she feels the verse form and vernacular language choice combined with the anachronistic title have made the allegory the focus of undue scholarly attention, arguing that authors who do so are simply grasping for a source for the image and have been misled by the title given to the poem by its editors. Mackie’s disagreement with this type of argument ultimately stems from her frustration that the work as a whole is often ignored in favor of a focus on its extended allegories (the Four Daughters of God and the Castle of Love), which represent only a third of the entire poem. She has little to say about the allegory, primarily noting similarities to commentaries such as that of Hugh of St. Cher on Revelation. She focuses instead on the structure of the poem as a whole, discussion of other sections that have been generally neglected, and manuscript evidence for early readership. Malcolm Hebron, on the other hand, has argued that homiletic writings probably contributed to the imagery of the siege that was then used to create secular love allegories. In this case, spiritual allegories would be the source of the courtly ones, not the other way around. Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 151.

its “mixture of popular design and technical background.”⁴⁷ G. R. Owst argues that while allegories in secular romance may “conceivably have suggested the likelihood of its popularity with sermon audiences at one time or another,” the biblical source in Luke’s gospel “leaves no possible doubt as to its Scriptural origin.”⁴⁸

Many scholars have commented upon the ambiguity of genre in Anglo-Norman romance and hagiography.⁴⁹ James McEvoy comments that the language and imagery of Grosseteste’s unambiguously religious Anglo-Norman prayer to St. Margaret is strongly reminiscent of courtly love, describing the voice of the prayer as that of “a knight pledged to uphold [Margaret’s] honour before the whole world, while at the same time suing for her intercession with the King.”⁵⁰ Marian devotion of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is often permeated by the conventions of courtly love.

The effect of these allusions to “erotic” secular texts is not to diminish the overall spiritual meaning of the text (which no one really doubts was intended for religious purposes), but rather to trigger associations from other contexts which color the emotional reception of the allegory in the minds of its audience. Even the audience of Franciscan lay brothers in a scholastic context suggested by Mackie would have appreciated allusions to current literary culture that make the imagery more vivid. The Franciscans were actively engaged in preaching

⁴⁷ Creek, *Sources and Influences*, 167; Southern, *Grosseteste*, 225.

⁴⁸ Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, 77.

⁴⁹ On this topic see Peter F. Dembowski, “Literary Problems of Hagiography in Old French,” *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* 7(1976) 117-130; Susan Crane, “Religion in Pious Romances,” *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 92-133; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “‘Bet . . . to . . . rede on holy seyntes lyves . . .’; Romance and Hagiography Again,” *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale, (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 1994) 83-97.

⁵⁰ James McEvoy, “Robert Grosseteste: The Man and His Legacy,” *Editing Robert Grosseteste*, ed. Evelyn A Mackie and Joseph Goering (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 19.

in the world and known specifically for including “popular songs, jokes, and theatrical effects” for spiritual ends in their preaching.⁵¹ Whether to instruct the Franciscan lay brothers, for the brothers to use in their own instruction of the laity, or for the edification of a noble family, the allusion to popular literature, then, could suit a variety of potential readers of the text. The issue is not the source of the initial idea, but the effect of the allegory as a whole on its readers. Because secular architectural allegories of the female body as castle existed, the spiritual allegories are unable to escape the connotations of human erotic love that would have become interwoven with the religious allegorizations of the body. It is important, therefore, to consider the function of the secular connotations of architectural allegory within religious discourse.

Architecture and Spiritual Eros

While Mackie's call for attention to the unity of the entire poem and less concentrated study of the allegorical passages is valid, my study will focus specifically on the Marian architectural allegory for the body. Though the allegory has arguably received scholarly attention disproportionate to its position in Grosseteste's poem as a whole, a new analysis of the castle of love allegory will provide a venue for reconciling the potentially conflicting religious and romance elements of the poem. Readings of both religious architectural allegories (including Grosseteste's other architectural allegory found in the *Templum Dei*) and popular secular architectural allegories (in particular those in Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* and a later example found in the *Roman de la rose*) will provide a context for understanding the complexities of Grosseteste's Marian castle. In reading these secular allegories alongside Grosseteste's religious

⁵¹ Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004) 17.

allegory, I do not wish to argue that secular allegories were the source for Grosseteste's allegorical castle of love, but, rather, I hope to expand upon Whitehead's observation that religious and secular architectural allegories "repeatedly inter-refer at the level of similitude, parody or antithesis."⁵² Can we see any secular, erotic overtones present in Grosseteste's allegory for the body of the Virgin Mary? And, if so, what do secular connotations of the female body as allegorical edifice contribute to a similar allegory in an explicitly religious context?

The castle allegory follows the allegory of the Four Daughters of God, used by Grosseteste to explain how the Incarnation was necessary for the salvation of humanity. The allegory of the Four Daughters of God has been traced back to interpretations of Psalm 84:11, which reads: "misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; iustitia et pax osculatae sunt" [mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed]. Hugh of St. Victor and Bernard of Clairvaux each composed versions of the allegory, possibly influenced by an eleventh-century Jewish midrash. Bernard's version seems to have been the more influential of the two. Later dissemination of this allegory is attributed to its inclusion in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* and Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.⁵³ The allegory of the castle is used as an *exemplum* to elaborate upon the name "Merveillus" [Marvelous] in the source quotation from Isaiah.⁵⁴ Jesus is marvelous because he is both God and man.

⁵² Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 96.

⁵³ See Kari Sajavaara, "Introduction," *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's 'Chateau d'Amour'*, ed. Kari Sajavaara, Neuphilologischer Verein, Helsingfors, Mémoires 32 (Helsinki: Société néophilologique, 1967) 62-90; Hans Jürgen Diller, "From Synthesis to Compromise: The Four Daughters of God in Early English Drama," *Early Drama, Art, and Music Review* 18:2 (1996) 88-103; Hope Traver, *The Four Daughters of God: A Study of the Versions of This Allegory with Especial Reference to Those in Latin, French, and English* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1907). For a discussion of Grosseteste's theories of redemption based on the allegory of the Four Daughters of God, see C. W. Marx, "Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*," *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1995) 65-79.

⁵⁴ *Château d'Amour*, l.524

Christ is marvelous, Grosseteste tells us, because he is fully God and fully man; the only way for Christ to become fully man was to be born from a woman. The only suitable shelter for such a marvelous child, he tells us, was “un chastel bel e grant, / bien fermé e avenant” [a castle fine and grand, well-fortified and pleasing], the body of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁵ Grosseteste describes the location, appearance, and defenses of this castle and then carefully explains the allegorical significance of each detail.

The allegorical castle is located “en la marche” [in the border country]—a place perhaps near a wilderness or enemy land that must rely on its fortifications for safety (l. 581). Located in this place of danger, the Virgin acts as “escu et targe” [shield and buckler] from “touz noz enemis” [all our enemies] (ll. 672-673, 167). Despite being located in a border country, the castle has nothing to fear from any enemies because it is well defended. It is built high upon a rock and is “si bien enclose de fossez parfanz e haut” [so well enclosed by a moat, deep and high] (ll. 584-585).⁵⁶ The castle itself has four turrets (representing the four cardinal virtues: strength, temperance, justice and prudence), three baileys (standing for Mary’s maidenhood, chastity, and holy marriage), and seven barbicans (signifying the seven virtues) (ll. 705-736). The castle and its defenses are as beautiful as they are strong: “beauté ad plus assez ke lange ne poet descrire quer penser, ne buche dire” [it is more beautiful than tongue can describe, heart can conceive or mouth can tell] (ll. 597-600). The rock upon which the castle is built is “dure e bis e bien poli desi k’aval” [steadfast, solid and well polished from top to bottom], representing “le

⁵⁵ *Château d’Amour*, ll. 577-578. All quotations of the *Château d’Amour* are taken from Mackie, “A Text in Context.” Translations are taken from Mackie, “English Prose Translation,” 166. Subsequent citations from the *Château d’Amour* and Mackie’s translation are given parenthetically by line number. I have corrected Mackie’s translation to render the text more literally. Mackie’s translation of “bien fermé” as “well-fortified” is appropriate in the architectural context of the allegory; however “fermé” has other connotations which are more suggestive of the chaste female body represented by the allegorical edifice. I will address this issue in more detail below.

⁵⁶ Mackie translates “enclose” as “protected” (166).

quer de la Marie ke unkes en mal ne moillist mais a Deu server se prist, e sa seynte virginité gardat en humilité” [the heart of Mary who never submitted to evil but set herself to serve God, and humbly kept her holy virginity] (ll. 588-589, 676-680). Every detail of the castle represents moral fortification against the devil and temptation. The castle is a structure suited to receive God at the Incarnation and introduce Him to the world, but also built to receive those fleeing the temptations of the world who seek admittance into heaven.

The outside of the castle is colorful: the foundation is green, the middle of the castle “est ynde e bleu” [is indigo and blue], and the battlement “plus est vermal ke n’est rose” [is more crimson than is the rose]; the inside of the castle is white (ll. 614, 620, 625).⁵⁷ The colors of the castle correspond to the traditional exegetical interpretation of three of the foundations of the celestial city in the book of Revelations: jasper, sapphire, and chalcedony. The *Gloss* reads:

Jaspis. viridis virorem fidei immarescentem significant. . . . Saphirus. similis sereno caelo . . . significant altitudinem spei sanctorum. . . . Calcedonis. colorem pallentis lucernae . . . significant flammam internae charitatis sanctorum.

[Jasper, green signifies the unfading green of faith. . . . Sapphire: like serene heaven . . . signifies the height of the hope of the saints. . . . Chalcedony: the color of the paleness of the lamp. . . signifies the flame of the internal charity of the saints].⁵⁸

Like the jasper, the green foundation signifies “la fei de la Virgine” [the faith of the Virgin] which renews itself and is the foundation of the other virtues (ll. 681-690). The blue, middle part

⁵⁷ Dominica Legge argues that the colorful exterior, rainbow over the castle, and pure white interior of the castle corresponds to Grosseteste’s theories on light and optics (Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, 223-224). Akbari examines the allegorical significance of the light, showing that the “refracted light of the rainbow . . . corresponds to the colours of the castle. . . . The inside of the castle is filled with pure white light. . . . Here, the divine light, transparent and white within the castle, appears multicoloured on its exterior surface because it is refracted through the medium of the human body of Mary” (*Seeing Through the Veil*, 43).

⁵⁸ *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps, Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, 4 vols, introduced by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992) 576. The description of the New Jerusalem occurs at Rev. 21:11-25. Mackie has discussed this correspondence of the colors of the castle to the stone foundations in Revelations and their interpretation using Hugh of St. Cher’s commentary. See Mackie, “A Text in Context,” 77-78.

of the castle is the color “de beauté e de duçur” [of beauty and sweetness], signifying that she serves God “od tendrur, en esperance” [with tenderness, in hope] (ll. 691-696). Finally, crimson represents “la seynte charité” [holy charity] that illumines Mary and makes her burn with love for God (ll. 697-704).

Grosseteste’s description of the three parts of the Marian castle also corresponds to his division of the spiritual temple and its powers in the *Templum Dei*. In the *Templum Dei*, Grosseteste describes the bodily temple, comprised of kidneys, which are the foundation; sides, back and chest, which are the walls; and head, which is the roof.⁵⁹ Here, he gives a direct correspondence of structural element and body part. Each part has its respective instruments and is fortified by one of the cardinal virtues—temperance, courage and prudence. Grosseteste also creates a spiritual temple which, like the bodily temple, is divided into three structural elements: *uis cognitiva*, the foundation; *uis potencialis*, the walls; and *uis affectiua*, the roof.⁶⁰ Once again, each portion of the temple has a special power: *fides*, *spes*, and *amor* [faith, hope, and love].⁶¹

Next to the fountain is “de yvoure une trone” [an ivory throne] with “set degrez” [seven steps] which, we are told, God made out of the Virgin’s soul in order that he might occupy it (ll. 644, 648). Within the castle’s tallest tower is a fountain that flows in four streams out into the moat surrounding the castle.⁶² The waters of the fountain, which represent God’s grace, fill the

⁵⁹ Robert Grosseteste, *Templum Dei*, ed. Joseph Goering and F.A.C. Mantello (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984) I.2. Whitehead discusses the *Templum Dei* on pages 24-27 of *Castles of the Mind*.

⁶⁰ *Templum Dei* I.3. It is interesting to note that the power of the highest power of the spiritual temple is its affective power—the ability to feel and experience emotion.

⁶¹ Grosseteste further subdivides *amor* according to itself into *dilectio* “eligitur ex diuersis res que amatur” [the thing which is loved is chosen from many things], *caritas* “per comparacionem cara habetur” [the thing loved is held dear by comparison], and *amor* “per experimentum appetitur uniri” [there is a desire to be united through experience] as well as according to “ea que diliguntur” [the objects that are loved] (God, oneself, and one’s neighbor) and “ea que diligunt” [the subjects that love] (the soul, the heart, and the mind) (*Templum Dei* V.1).

⁶² *Château d’Amour* ll. 635-642.

virgin and overflow out of the castle, providing grace and healing to the whole world.⁶³

Grosseteste does not explicitly define the significance of the four streams, but they seem to recall the four rivers of Eden, drawing a parallel between the creation of the world and the re-creation of humanity in the Incarnation.⁶⁴ The moat represents Mary's voluntary poverty which is so wide that the devil is rendered powerless because no siege engine can throw anything across it to damage the castle.⁶⁵

It is difficult to avoid comparison of the allegorical fortifications representing Mary's body and those representing the lady who is the object of desire in allegories found in love poetry and romance. Although Mackie objects to this comparison, we cannot understand religious depiction of the female body without considering the secular and vice versa.

Architectural allegories found in texts such as Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* reveal some of the associations of the female body with architectural structures that would have been familiar to the audience of Grosseteste's allegory. One of the best known architectural allegories for the female body, found in the *Roman de la rose*, although it was completed too late to be a source for the *Château d'Amour*, demonstrates the implications of the figurative architecture of the female body carried to their extreme conclusion.

Architectural allegories were popular in both religious and courtly literature in the early thirteenth century, and neither can be read in isolation. The allegories developed alongside one another.⁶⁶ The overlapping significations of the religious and secular allegories problematize the

⁶³ *Château d'Amour* ll. 758 "fait succor a tuit le monde."

⁶⁴ Genesis 2:10-14. The fountain and streams also seem to be connected to the fountain or well of living waters in the Song of Songs 4:15.

⁶⁵ *Château d'Amour* ll. 762-766.

⁶⁶ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 96.

defensive and purifying structures of the Marian architectural allegory. Where the fortifications of Grosseteste's castle of love must not fail, the fortifications of the female body in love poetry and romance were doomed to fail and served only as temporary barriers to challenge and excite the lover in his advance.⁶⁷ And yet, even the well-defended castle of the Virgin is not entirely impenetrable. When God descends miraculously into the castle of Mary's body, or when the narrator begs entry into the castle, both are admitted, and the reader is faced with an apparent contradiction.⁶⁸

The origins of secular architectural allegories are difficult to trace, as they were probably in use as a part of festivals, songs and proverbs long before they were written down. The use of erotic architectural imagery can be found in classical Latin literature. In his *Amores*, Ovid invokes this type of imagery, crying "excute poste" [cast off the doorpost] or comparing the "durae limen amicae" [threshold of a stern mistress] and her "fores" [gates] to a besieged town and its doors.⁶⁹ Secular allegories developed alongside the religious ones and likely drew on imagery from religious texts, adapting the shared imagery to the context of human relations rather than spiritual ones.⁷⁰ In a secular context, "an image with strong Christian theological

⁶⁷ Cowling, *Building the Text*, 29; Whitehead, "A Fortress and a Shield," 126.

⁶⁸ *Château d'Amour* ll. 785-805.

⁶⁹ P. Ovidi Nasonis, *Amores*, ed. E.J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) 1.6.24, 1.9.19-20. Hebron discusses these passages from Ovid on pages 150-151. Cowling also cites Petronius' *Satyricon*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Isidore's *Etymologiae* as examples of Classical and early medieval Latin association of the womb and vulva with architectural structures (*Building the Text*, 28). Betsy Bowden has written on Andreas Cappellanus' reception of such Latin sexual vocabulary, noting that *porta*, *ostium*, and *ianua* are all used to refer to the vagina and that *pulsare* can refer to sexual attack. This note on *pulsare* is particularly pertinent to the passage in Grosseteste's *Château d'Amour* where the narrator addresses the Virgin and begs to be admitted into the castle. See Bowden, "The Art of Courtly Copulation," *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* 9 (1979) 75-76. Though Bowden has been criticized for overstating the evidence for her claims, her argument for sexual wordplay at work is still important. On the use of various metaphors for sex and genitalia in Latin, see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), especially "Doors and paths" on page 89 and "'Strike' and the like" on pages 145-149.

⁷⁰ Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 151.

ramifications has been endowed with meanings from . . . courtly love.”⁷¹ If love allegories did borrow from the religious allegorical tradition, we can infer that the religious allegories were not always received with entirely pure intentions. By looking at the architectural allegory in *De Amore* by Andreas Capellanus we are able to observe the development of architectural allegory in a secular context and discern some of the connotations which certainly colored the meaning of the religious allegories such as Grosseteste’s Marian castle in the minds of its readers.

In his *De Amore*, Andreas Capellanus describes a palace of love with four entrances which correspond to different types of women: the southern entrance for women who carefully judge the worth of their lovers, the western for women who open the entrance indiscriminately for anyone, and the northern for women who are entirely closed to love.⁷² The eastern entrance is reserved for the god of love, just as the eastern entrance to Ezekiel’s temple is for the Lord only. The women of at the western gate, we are told, “extra ipsius limina portae semper reperiuntur vagantes” [are always to be found wandering outside the threshold of the door] and represent “illae mulieres communes quae neminem reiiciunt sed omnes indifferenter admittunt et universorum sunt expositae voluptati” [promiscuous women who refuse no one; they admit all indiscriminately and are available for all men’s pleasure].⁷³ The threshold, or *limen*, suggests the vulnerability of the opening of the female body. While the indiscriminate permissiveness of

⁷¹ Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 162. Because the term “courtly love” was coined in the nineteenth century by Gaston Paris, it has been argued that it would be anachronistic to apply it to medieval literature; however, Joan M. Ferrante has demonstrated that there is some precedent justifying use of the term. On this discussion, see: F. X. Newman, *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1968); Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); Joan M. Ferrante, “Cortes’ Amor in Medieval Texts,” *Speculum* 55.4 (1980) 686-695; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); David F. Hult, “Gaston Paris and the Invention of Courtly Love,” *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 192-224.

⁷² Andreas Capellanus, *Andreas Capellanus On Love*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982) Book I.222-229.

⁷³ Book I. 223 (translation is my own), 226 (Latin and translation from P. G. Walsh).

women at the western gate is criticized, so too is the closed gate of the women to the north:

“quae autem septentrionalis custodiae mancipantur et clausa semper porta morantur, sunt illae feminae quae nemini pulsanti aperiunt, sed denegant ad amoris palatium cunctis ingressum” [but those assigned to guarding the north entrance, who remain perpetually behind closed doors, are the women who open to no man’s knock and refuse all men entry to the palace of Love].⁷⁴ The impenetrable boundaries that would be praised in an allegory representing the Virgin Mary are criticized in the secular allegory in favor of penetrable boundaries. The entrances to Capellanus’ palace are equated to sexual submission—entry through the gate is a figure for entry into the female body.

The besieged castle found in the *Roman de la rose* provides a clear example of the erotic overtones of the castle of the virginal female body, making it useful for comparison. Though critics have often cited this allegorical castle as a typical erotic allegory, there are few who have written detailed studies of the allegory itself. Heather Arden notes that “there is only one article on the hand-to-hand combat that takes place outside the castle, and no extended study of the metaphor of the castle itself.”⁷⁵ The *Roman de la rose* is an allegorical dream vision in which the dreamer, struck by Cupid’s arrows, falls in love with a rose. Guillaume de Lorris composed the first part of the *Roman de la rose*, about 4,000 lines, around 1225. Jean de Meun wrote a lengthy continuation of Guillaume’s text later in the thirteenth century, around 1265. The castle in which the rose is enclosed to prevent the fulfillment of the Lover’s desire is described by both Guillaume and Jean. It first appears toward the end of Guillaume de Lorris’s narrative, after the

⁷⁴ Book I, 226 (translation, P. G. Walsh).

⁷⁵ Heather Arden, “The Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Love in the *Roman de la rose*,” *The Medieval City Under Siege* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995) 192. Arden notes that Jean himself draws attention to the significance of the castle allegory when, in the dedication to his translation of Boethius, he identifies himself as the one who “taught the way to take the castle and to pluck the rose” (“Slings and Arrows,” 192).

Lover has kissed the rose and Male Bouche causes Jalousie to mistrust Bel Accueil.⁷⁶ Jalousie has a fortress built, complete with ditches, a wall, and turrets surrounding a round, central tower, in which she imprisons Bel Accueil and the rose.⁷⁷ The wall is built in a square and has four gates, recalling both Andreas' palace of love and the temple in Ezekiel.⁷⁸ In addition to its structural fortifications, the castle is equipped with all types of "engins."⁷⁹

Toward the end of his continuation, Jean de Meun turns Guillaume's allegorical prison into a besieged castle which ultimately falls to the Lover's assault with the aid of Venus. Jean's allegory depicts the fortified female body in a state of siege "from the perspective of the male attacker."⁸⁰ The religious connotations of the castle allegory "intensify the hermeneutic complexity" of the castle in the *Roman de la rose*.⁸¹ Jean's allegory describes the Lover's conquest of the castle with thinly veiled metaphors of erotic aggression. The lover disguises himself as a pilgrim and, with staff and pouch, forces his way through the narrow openings in the castle's walls.⁸² The castle's defenses are clearly meant to suggest the virginal female body which the Lover violates, forcing his way through with his staff. No one has ever taken the path the Lover follows, which is why it is so narrow that he can hardly get through.⁸³ The castle finally falls when Venus shoots a flaming arrow through a small slit hidden within the tower

⁷⁶ Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: H. Champion, 1965) ll. 3779-3919.

⁷⁷ "fossez. . .mout lé et mout parfont," "un mur," "torneilles," "une tor . . . tote roonde" (ll. 3785, 3787; 3789; 3800; 3816, 3827).

⁷⁸ *Roman de la rose* ll. 3796-3805.

⁷⁹ *Roman de la rose* l. 3836.

⁸⁰ Cowling, *Building the Text*, 29. See also Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 240.

⁸¹ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 239.

⁸² *Roman de la rose* l. 21217.

⁸³ *Roman de la rose* ll. 21615-21644.

situated between two pillars signifying “nothing but a glorified vagina.”⁸⁴ Jean’s allegory pushes the reader’s experience from the polite, thrill of double entendre into blatantly sexualized imagery with inescapable anatomical and erotic meaning. The Lover invades the castle with his phallic staff rather than assaulting the castle with words and pleas. In the end, Jean makes explicit what was previously implied delicately through the euphemisms of the allegory in secular love poetry and romance and focuses his allegory on masculine aggression rather than female receptivity.

The erotic connotations of the allegorical edifice representing the female body exist in both secular and religious literature. Even without considering the use of architecture to represent the sexually receptive female body found in texts such as Andreas’s *De Amore* or Jean’s portion of the *Roman de la Rose*, architectural imagery describing the female body with erotic overtones was not foreign to religious literature. The Song of Songs, for example, makes frequent use of architectural elements to describe female beauty. The beloved’s neck is said to be “sicut turris David” [like David’s tower], “aedificata est cum propugnaculis mille clypei pendent ex ea” [it is built up with ramparts, one thousand shields hang from it].⁸⁵ She is called an enclosed garden and a sealed fountain.⁸⁶ The beloved, describing herself, says “ego murus et ubera mea sicut turris” [I am a wall and my breasts are like a tower].⁸⁷ Although I am not aware of any detailed studies on the subject, it seems erotic connotations of architecture at work in

⁸⁴ “petitete archiere. . . par devant, non pas par ancoste. . . antre . II. Pilerez assise” *Roman de la rose*, ll. 20761-20766; Aldo S. Bernardo, “Sex and Salvation in the Middle Ages: From the *Romance of the Rose* to the *Divine Comedy*,” *Italica* 67.3 (1990) 311.

⁸⁵ Song of Songs 4:4.

⁸⁶ Song of Songs 4:12.

⁸⁷ Song of Songs 8: 9-10.

medieval literature may have originated with the Song of Songs.⁸⁸ The Song contains the basic architectural features which are essential to the allegory of the enclosed female as it appears later in medieval writings: towers, walls, and doors that can be opened to the lover.

Reconciling the conflict between religious and secular love has posed a problem for critics of the *Château d'Amour*. Whitehead notes the problematic nature of the secular connotations of the narrator's appeal for entry into the Marian castle (ll. 793-824), but does not explore the purpose of the tension created by the juxtaposition of religious and secular. Mackie, on the other hand, rejects the idea that secular love poetry would have had any influence on Grosseteste's allegory at all. What Mackie and Whitehead both fail to recognize is the *function* of the erotic within spiritual discourse. Although Mackie objects to Whitehead's comparison of the architectural allegory found in Grosseteste's poem to secular allegories, the religious content and purpose of Grosseteste's text do not invalidate such an investigation. Whitehead's reading of the *Château d'Amour* draws attention to the anatomical, erotic connotations that architectural allegories accumulate as a result of their association with the sexualized female body in love poetry and romance literature, complicating our understanding of the Grosseteste's Marian allegory; however, she does not pursue the implications of these erotic connotations within religious allegory. The Marian allegory cannot be read without reference to contemporary allegorical conventions. Mackie's translation of the *Château d'Amour* reflects her efforts to highlight the allegory's intellectual content and shift the focus away from similarities to allegories of the fortified female body. While Mackie's translation of "bien fermé" as "well-

⁸⁸ Scholars who analyze the medieval allegorical tradition of the Song of Songs give little attention to the Song's use of architectural language, focusing on the erotic allegory of bride and bridegroom. Similarly, scholars who discuss architectural allegory rarely consider the Song as source or inspiration for allegorization of the female body as architectural space. It seems, however, that architectural imagery in the Song would certainly have contributed to the erotic connotations of architectural allegories for the female body in both secular and religious literature.

fortified” and of “enclose” as “protected” fit well within the context of the architectural function of the castle, her word choice glosses over the connotations of these words that are associated with female chastity.⁸⁹

Charles Dahlberg explores some of these issues in his examination of two terms for love, *amor* and *caritas*, in the writings of Alan of Lille, Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx, arguing that “at least from the time of Augustine, the term *amor*—and often the term *dilectio*—came to be used for both charity and cupidity, as well as for other kinds of love.”⁹⁰ Dahlberg demonstrates the spectrum of meanings connoted by the term *amor*, examining descriptions of love and friendship in Alan’s *De planctu naturae*, *Summa de arte prædicatoria*, and *Elucidatio in Cantica canticorum*, Bernard’s *De diligendo Deo*, and Aelred’s *De spirituali amicitia*. Unlike Dahlberg, I would argue that the term *amor* in the *Elucidatio* cannot be interpreted unproblematically as “charity.”⁹¹ Although Dahlberg’s analysis of the various terms for love depends largely on D. W. Robertson’s theories about medieval literature which are now generally thought to be overly rigid and limiting, recent scholars including Simon Gaunt and Barbara Newman have begun to revisit the overlapping meanings of love in religious and secular contexts.⁹² Gaunt argues that courtly texts create an “apparent ethical seriousness” through the use of religious vocabulary and imagery.⁹³ Newman concludes that the terms *amor*, *caritas*, and *dilectio* are frequently used interchangeably in Richard of St. Victor and that Gérard of Liège

⁸⁹ See pages 36 above.

⁹⁰ Charles Dahlberg, “Love and the *Roman de la Rose*,” *Speculum* 44.4 (Oct. 1969) 569.

⁹¹ Dahlberg, “Love and the *Roman de la Rose*,” 570.

⁹² Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 1-15; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 138-189.

⁹³ Gaunt, *Love and Death*, 7.

thought that “divine and carnal love, though opposed in morality, are identical in psychology.”⁹⁴

The tension between the different nuances of these terms and their usage is part of what invigorates the allegoresis.

Debates over the correct interpretation of Andreas’ *De Amore* typify the struggle to reconcile secular and religious ideas of love. Is the text, as D. W. Robertson once argued, an ironic condemnation of cupidity?⁹⁵ Betsy Bowden’s observations, though criticized by Don Monson and others for forcing her “‘dirty-joke’ hypothesis,” remind us of the possibilities of sexual puns in choice of words and erotic metaphors in Andreas’ text.⁹⁶ Monson argues, on the other hand, that although puns and ironic interpretations may exist for Andreas’ text, it is much harder to say with any certainty that they were intended by the author. He rightly points out that any attempt to force consistency on the entire text is bound to fail. Just as love poetry and romances are “steeped in a textual culture that stems as much from the Church as it does from the profane environment of the court,” so, too, must religious texts have been influenced by secular writings.⁹⁷

The distinction between sacred and secular texts is not straightforward, as many studies of the *Roman de la rose* have shown. Reactions of later authors to the *Roman de la rose* clearly show that at least some medieval readers believed the language of a secular love allegory could also contain the potential for spiritual understanding. Sylvia Huot notes that “conflicting signals

⁹⁴ Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 151.

⁹⁵ D. W. Robertson, Jr., “The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory,” *Speculum* 26.1 (1951) 24-49 and “The Subject of the ‘De Amore’ of Andreas Capellanus,” *Modern Philology* 50.3 (1953) 145-161.

⁹⁶ Don A. Monson, “Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony,” *Speculum* 63.3 (1988) 558. For Monson’s critique of Bowden and her followers see pages 556-572.

⁹⁷ Gaunt, *Love and Death*, 9.

creating a sense of vacillation between sacred and erotic registers are present from the very beginning of Guillaume's *Rose*.⁹⁸ She has shown how various medieval readers responded to and expanded upon the ideas in the *Roman de la rose*, highlighting the spiritual potential of the allegory. Gui de Mori, for example, added allusions to Hugh of St. Victor's *De arrha anime* [*On the wedding gift of the soul*], a mystical text describing the relationship between the individual soul and Christ using the erotic language of the Song of Songs. By citing Hugh's work on mystical, spiritual love alongside the human love found in the *Roman de la rose*, Gui "casts in relief one of the central problems of the *Rose*, namely, the integration of sexual desire and Christian love, and the role of eros in both the natural and the divine orders."⁹⁹ For Gui, human erotic love is not entirely separate from spiritual love. Another example is found in Guillaume de Deguilleville, who uses the imagery and allegory from the *Roman de la rose* as a jumping off point for the spiritual allegory in his *Pelerinage de vie humaine*.¹⁰⁰ The reactions of these later authors demonstrate that erotic language and imagery were accepted modes of religious discourse.

The allegorical siege in the *Roman de la rose*, though decidedly about human erotic love, could be interpreted with spiritual overtones because the language of eros was not foreign to religious writing. Barbara Newman demonstrates that the "apparently distinct spheres [of courtly and monastic culture] were in fact porous and mutually permeable."¹⁰¹ The distinction between sacred and secular discourse on love becomes blurred as erotic love "was progressively

⁹⁸ Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 273.

⁹⁹ Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers*, 120.

¹⁰⁰ Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers*, 207-220.

¹⁰¹ Newman, *God and the Goddesses* 139.

christianized—clothed in the garb of liturgical language, Marian piety, and Neoplatonic philosophy— [and] divine love was simultaneously eroticized, made to speak the languages of *fin' amors* and pagan mythology.”¹⁰² Newman highlights passages in Richard of St. Victor’s writings full of Ovidian metaphors and descriptions of how love affects the true lover in terms that would be at home in any contemporary romance.¹⁰³ In the same way, reading the religious allegory of the Virgin Mary alongside secular allegories such as *De Amore* and the *Roman de la rose* does not degrade the spiritual value or religious content of the *Château d’Amour*, but rather adds nuances to our understanding of the text’s composition and reception.

Vernacular texts from this period are known for blurring the boundaries between sacred and secular. Saints lives and romances, for example, often contain a fusion of religious and courtly elements. Religious allegories for the female body did not exist in a vacuum and cannot be read without some attention to secular allegories, as both deal with the female body in terms of sexual availability (or lack thereof). The juxtaposition of apparently contradictory imagery in Grosseteste’s allegory, like the puns and contradictions in Andreas’ and Jean’s texts, are part of the exploration of love. Religious and secular texts alike invoke a concept of love and contribute to a definition of love that is not easily separated into binaries of spiritual and human. On some level, whether these double entendres, metaphors and puns were used intentionally by the author is irrelevant—the fact of their existence and of their ability to signify on multiple registers tells us something about the nature of love, of embodiment, and of the relationship between the human and the divine.

¹⁰² Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 139.

¹⁰³ Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 148-150.

Body and Flesh

As we have seen, religious and secular allegories employ common imagery and language to describe love. The castle allegory brings gendered images of embodiment and sexuality into question. Just as embodiment and sexuality in secular literature cannot be adequately examined without reference to religious views, religious views cannot be understood without considering how these issues were being depicted in secular literature. The coincidence of the same type of allegory being used for each demands comparison. Grosseteste specifically invokes the erotic potential of the allegorical castle in the *Château d'Amour*. Further analysis of the Marian castle of love will shed light on the function of erotic imagery, both within this text specifically and in religious literature more generally.

Grosseteste uses language that is distinctly reminiscent of conventions from secular love poetry and romance which makes it likely that he did, in fact, intend to allude to secular architectural allegories. The allegorical stronghold representing the Virgin Mary is paradoxically both sealed and open, exploiting the erotic connotations of the secular architectural allegories in order to express God's desire for the pure woman represented by the castle. In the *Château d'Amour*, Mary's perfectly defended castle of love is also called a castle of "delit," a term often used to denote desire or sexual pleasure (l. 659).¹⁰⁴ God gives Mary grace, represented by a fountain within the castle, because "la Pucele tant ama" [he so loved the Virgin] (l. 751). The Incarnation occurs "dedenz sun seint cors" [in her holy body] when Christ miraculously enters the enclosure of her body "par la porte close" [through the closed door] (ll. 783, 785). The impenetrable fortress is open to her heavenly suitor. The Virgin "est enluminé e espriese de feu

¹⁰⁴ "delit," *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, 23 April 2008, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/>

d'amour" [[is] set aflame by the fire of love] (ll. 702-703). It is a fountain "de grace ke tuit le chastel embrace" [of grace which embraces all the castle] (ll. 751-752). Here again, Grosseteste chooses language reminiscent of human, physical love. God's grace does not simply surround or overshadow the virgin; it *embraces* her and enters her body.

At one point, Grosseteste breaks out of his allegoresis and cries out to be admitted into the castle where he may escape his enemies. With a prayer that poignantly echoes major Marian hymns such as the *Salve Regina*, *O Intemerata* and *Obsecro te*, he seeks entry into the protective enclosure of Mary's body. He stands at Mary's "porte" [door] and cries out to her: "franche pucele reygne" [noble maiden queen] (ll. 796, 793). While the epithets and entreaties of the narrator's prayer echo popular Marian hymns, the position of the male narrator pleading for entry into a sealed, allegorical castle are reminiscent of quite a different literary mode: here Grosseteste recalls the trope of the lover pleading for entry into the body of the beloved lady from love poetry. Because Mary is the compassionate intercessor, the narrator's supplication (and the supplication of a devout reader who prays for admittance with the narrator), will be answered favorably—the walls of the fortress of virginity must be and are penetrated. Whitehead comments that this move has "the inadvertent effect of casting the poet-persona in the role of sexual supplicant, whose bids for access inevitably provoke the connotation of a demand for sexual favours" and, more problematically, "suggests the presence of moral compromise" if the fortifications of the allegorical castle are relaxed.¹⁰⁵ However, this move cannot be entirely unintended. Surely Grosseteste did not fail to realize that Mary's body, despite its supernatural purity, is consistently depicted as accessible.

¹⁰⁵ Whitehead, "A Fortress and a Shield," 126.

Throughout the allegory, there are repeated references to the openings of the castle which are barred to evil but open to good. While the gates and doors are closed and well-defended, the possibility of entry remains. Each of the seven barbicans has a “porte e tur” [a gate and tower] where anyone seeking refuge will find it (ll. 607-610). The four turrets also have gates guarded by porters so that “poet riens fors bien entrer” [nothing but good can enter] (l. 712). The fortifications of the castle are not entirely closed—good things can enter them. Those defenses protect not only Mary from the evils of the world, but also the human sinner who flees his enemies in that borderland. Protecting the narrator from the world, the devil and the flesh, the castle of Mary’s body brings him closer to what lies on the other side of the border—closer to God. The fortifications are relaxed, but there is no “moral compromise.”

Like the border country where the castle is located, the Virgin Mary is a liminal space, marking the permeable border between the human world and the divine. Unlike the other features of the allegorical landscape, Grosseteste does not provide the meaning of the border country in which the castle is situated. It is an in-between, liminal space, but we are not told what lies on either side. Theologically, Mary is the mediator between God and humankind. Christ entered the world through her body, and humankind can reach heaven through her intercession. In his sermon for Mary’s Nativity, Bernard of Clairvaux called the Virgin the aqueduct of grace.¹⁰⁶ In this sermon, Bernard describes Mary as the aqueduct through which the fountain of life (that is, Christ) is conveyed from its heavenly source to earth: “plenitudinem fontis ipsius de corde Patris excipiens, nobis edidit illum” [receiving the fullness of this fountain

¹⁰⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, “In nativitate Beatae Mariae: de aquaeductu,” *Opera, vol. 5 Sermones II*, eds. J. LeClercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1968) 275-288.

from the heart of the Father, she brought it forth to us].¹⁰⁷ Mary does not only convey grace from heaven to earth or Christ from God to Man. She is also capable of returning sinners to God. Bernard encourages his listeners to make their offerings through Mary, “ut eodem alveo ad largitorem gratiae gratia redeat quo influxit” [so that through the same channel which it flowed, grace may be returned to the giver of grace].¹⁰⁸ He calls her “haec peccatorum scala, haec mea maxima fiducia est, haec tota ratio spei meae” [the ladder of sinners, my greatest reliance, the entire reason for my hope] because nothing that comes to God through Mary will be denied.¹⁰⁹

In the *Château d'Amour*, Grosseteste also uses the image of a ladder to describe the Virgin Mary in her capacity as mediator. Following his exposition of the allegorical fortress, Grosseteste goes on to say more about the castle. He calls the castle ‘l’eschele bien . . . ou Deu du cel descendi’ [the ladder by which God came down from heaven] (ll. 829-830).¹¹⁰ Yet again, Mary is invoked by liminal, mediating power—her ability to connect the gulf between heaven and earth. Here we see the true mystery, the dual nature of Christ. Descending by this ladder, into this castle, God “de lui prist humanité / dunt coveri sa deité” [from her he took on humanity with which he covered his deity] (ll. 831-832). Just as the castle occupies the border country, the ladder occupies the space between the two points it connects and enables movement between them. The image of the ladder portrays Mary as the link between heaven and earth, enabling the Incarnation.

¹⁰⁷ Bernard, “In nativitate Beatae Mariae,” 277:10-11. This fountain is also reminiscent of the fountain of grace within the castle in the *Château d'Amour*.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard, “In nativitate Beatae Mariae,” 288: 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Bernard, “In nativitate Beatae Mariae,” 279: 21-22.

¹¹⁰ It is from this line that the author of the Latin prologue in MS Egerton 846 adapts the Latin title *Scala celi*, yet another Latin Marian title applied to the poem as a whole.

The Virgin Mary's paradoxically "open" body not only allows God to enter into the world, but it also allows the human supplicant to enter in order to reach God. She serves as a two-way conduit between the human and the divine. The female body itself is also viewed as a liminal space. Theresa Coletti and Karma Lochrie have shown how in "medieval scientific and theological thinking, which saw in the female body's openness 'breaches in boundaries' that were analogous to its moral character," the openings in the female body were viewed as threatening to the structure of society.¹¹¹ Coletti shows how the paradoxical spectacle of Mary's virginal but pregnant female body allowed dramatists to portray "domestic disputes over gender roles, the impact of a transgressed virginity on family and community."¹¹² Like the border country in Grosseteste's allegory, breaches in the boundaries of the body were points of vulnerability. Mary's female, pervious body seems to be wholly redeemed and exploited for good rather than simply closed off and protected from penetration.¹¹³

Karin Boklund-Langopoulou, writing about the "semiotics of virginity" in religious lyrics notes that Virgin Mary's body becomes "a conduit, a passage or gateway between heaven and earth, God and man, spirit and flesh. Christ descended from heaven into her body; but also, in a reverse movement, sinners can pass *through* Mary into heaven."¹¹⁴ Boklund-Langopoulou sees the preoccupation with female virginity in the religious lyrics as promoting an imitation of Marian virginity in an attempt to transform the sinful human body into a "point of

¹¹¹ Theresa Coletti, "Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles," *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) 69. Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 19-27. This idea will be explored in further depth in chapter two.

¹¹² Coletti, "Purity and Danger," 86.

¹¹³ This option is, of course, not open to the average human female. For example, the anchoress' body, which I will discuss at length in chapter two, must only be open for God.

¹¹⁴ Karin Boklund-Langopoulou, "Yate of Heven: Conceptions of the Female Body in the Religious Lyrics," *Writing Religious Women*, 140-141.

communication between heaven and earth, flesh and spirit.”¹¹⁵ She notes that women are exhorted to be virginal, “enclosed towers” like the Virgin Mary, but she fails to note the paradox of being at once “sealed” and a “conduit.” Purity has the unexpected effect of opening the devotee to God, as it did for the Virgin Mary when she conceived virginally. While this literal, physical paradox is not the goal toward which the average Christian can aspire, the analogy is nevertheless a powerful one.

Although the Marian castle carries specific connotations of the physical female body and serves as an *exemplum* of Christ’s Incarnation, the image itself noticeably lacks the features of the fleshly female body. Whitehead argues that the allegorization of Mary’s body as architecture “annuls” the female body in which the Incarnation occurs; however, parallels in secular allegories suggest that the female body does not entirely disappear (or even become asexual or masculinized) through the use of the allegorical fortification. While he avoids explicit references or parallels to female anatomy, Grosseteste nevertheless maintains that the castle represents Mary’s *body*—a suggestion that necessarily triggers connotations of the more anatomical nature of secular allegories.

David Cowling argues that one of the most significant differences between religious and secular versions of the architectural allegory of the female body is that the elements of the religious allegory are clearly defined by the author. The allegorical significance of the secular architectural allegory will be left undefined for the reader to interpret. Andreas’ palace of love in *De Amore* clearly equates entry through the gates to sexual penetration, making it easy to identify their anatomical reference even though Andreas does not spell the correspondence out

¹¹⁵ Boklund-Langopoulou, “*Yate of Heaven*,” 143.

literally in the text. Similarly, while reading about the siege of the castle in Jean's *Roman de la rose*, it is easy to determine the anatomical reference to the narrow slit. In religious allegories, on the other hand, the meaning of the various elements in the allegory "is fixed by the creation of a series of one-to-one correspondences between elements of construction and elements of Christian doctrine."¹¹⁶ The author of a religious architectural allegory "limit[s] the range of meaning" of the allegorical edifice by defining the significance of the each architectural feature to ensure the appropriate message is conveyed.¹¹⁷ We see an example of this technique in the *Château d'Amour*, as Grosseteste carefully explicates the architectural features of the castle as standing for Mary's virtues; however, there are certain elements of the allegory which he leaves undefined. When the range of meaning is left undefined, it is up to the reader to determine the signification. The literary context of secular allegories for the female body, combined with the power of Grosseteste's suggestion that the castle is Mary's body, lead the reader to look for the anatomical elements in Grosseteste's architectural allegory for the Virgin. The reader of the *Château d'Amour* is left to imagine how the castle is like a woman's body.

In comparing the female body allegory in *Château d'Amour* to the allegory in secular texts like the *Roman de la rose*, perhaps the most striking feature is that, although Grosseteste's allegory purports to be an allegory for the body, there is no direct correlation between the anatomy of Mary's body and the various parts of the castle; instead, we are given an anatomy of her character. Mary's virtues are enumerated and praised, and, although the castle is beautiful, Grosseteste does not mention the human physical attributes which make her so. It is this lack of attention to the female flesh, Whitehead argues, that sterilizes what might otherwise be

¹¹⁶ Cowling, *Building the Text*, 56.

¹¹⁷ Cowling, *Building the Text*, 56.

problematic references to the female body. Whitehead contrasts this to the ending of the *Roman de la rose*, which is designed to excite the male reader through “exposure and amplification of the genitals.”¹¹⁸ But Jean does not lay out a one-to-one correspondence of architectural feature to body part. Instead, the reader hears that the small slit is located above two pillars in the front and translates that location from the castle to the female body. The “exposure and amplification of the genitals” takes place not on the page but in the affective response of the reader as he or she supplies the meaning left provocatively undefined by the text.

Unlike the allegory in the *Château d’Amour*, the castle in “Le Songe du Castel” does attempt to recreate human anatomy in architectural form. The late thirteenth-century Picard poem allegorizes the life of man as the siege and eventual fall of a castle. The castle, Man, is in the possession of an indifferent king, the World. It is besieged by seven kings, representing the Seven Deadly Sins, and ultimately conquered by a black king representing Death. The structure of the castle is intended to resemble the anatomy of the human body: two pillars upon which the long edifice stands are legs, the two windows are eyes, and the entrance between the windows is the mouth. The poem is unique in that it gives “singular grotesqueness to the allegory by attempting to make the actual details of the castle correspond to the several members of the body.”¹¹⁹ The poem’s editor, Roberta Cornelius, compares the siege in “Le Songe du Castel” to the narrator’s flight into the Marian castle in Grosseteste’s poem, but there are a number of significant differences. In *Château d’Amour*, the narrator is fleeing from three enemies, the World, the Devil, and the Flesh—three enemies which become standard in the discourse of the allegorical siege. In “Le Songe du Castel,” on the other hand, the dreamer takes refuge in a

¹¹⁸ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 240.

¹¹⁹ “Le Songe du Castel,” ed. Roberta D. Cornelius, *PMLA* 46.2 (1931) 330.

castle representing (and resembling) his own flesh that belongs to the World. While the defenses of this castle are strong and fend off the attack for a while, the king and the dreamer are passively guarded within the castle, awaiting its ultimate (and inevitable) destruction. The king who conquers the castle, though he follows the onslaught of the Seven Deadly Sins, is not the Devil, but rather Death—an enemy which cannot be escaped. Though this allegory depicts man resisting and overcoming sin, the castle still falls in the end, because the life of man in the world is transient.

As we saw earlier, in his other architectural allegory, found in the *Templum Dei*, Grosseteste uses physical human anatomy much more explicitly. He discusses two allegorical temples—one bodily, the other spiritual. The bodily temple is constructed out of the body's organs, each with its particular power. The kidneys, breast and heart, and head represent the foundation, walls, and roof of the temple. This architectural allegory is anatomical, with a one-to-one correspondence of physical body part to architectural structure. Unlike the castle in the “Songe du Castel,” though, its breaches are not identified with physical cavities, nor does its appearance resemble the body of man as the castle is intended to, with its pair of human-like legs and openings resembling the eyes and mouth.

While the body parts do not receive explicit mention in the explanation of the Marian allegorical castle in the *Château d'Amour*, the fact remains that Grosseteste tells his readers it is a *body*—the Virgin Mary's body. Grosseteste plants the *idea* of physicality, of embodiment, into his allegory and into the minds of his readers. By first drawing the reader's attention to Mary's body and then avoiding any anatomical description, Grosseteste leaves the problem of Mary's body to his readers. He leaves the range of meaning undefined, open for the reader to determine. Having been told the castle is her body, the reader automatically looks for the anatomical

correspondence of castle part to body part. If the castle is Mary's female body, then what must its door represent? The door through which Christ entered and departed Mary's body, even in religious allegories that may have wished to gloss over the realities of female anatomy, inescapably refers to her hymen, which was preserved intact in both her conception and (in most accounts by this period) the delivery of her Son. What does it mean for the narrator to beg to be let inside the castle through the same closed door that Christ entered? Far from creating a "semiotic *barricade*, deflecting and absorbing vision and effectively *blocking* the devotee from contemplation of the female physique, especially in relation to the genitally oriented events of conception and pregnancy," Grosseteste's allegory lays the groundwork for the reader to supply the necessary features of the female anatomy which will complete the definition of the architectural features that he has left undefined.¹²⁰

Whitehead's observation that medieval theologians were squeamish with regard to the female body corresponds to the common expectation that religious texts must completely reject sexuality and the female body in order to promote celibacy. In fact, it seems rather unlikely that medieval theologians would have been squeamish enough to try to "annul" the realities of the Virgin's body. Discourse on Mary's virginity and maternity are sometimes surprisingly explicit. Mary's bodily fluids, including breast milk and menses, were a frequent topic of discussion among theologians.¹²¹ Retellings of the apocryphal tale of the midwives who discover Mary's physical virginity following childbirth, for example, were popular throughout Christendom. The story originates in apocryphal sources such as the *Protoevangelium Jacobi* and *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. Joseph brings two midwives to help Mary deliver her baby, but when they

¹²⁰ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 97.

¹²¹ See Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 174.

arrive, they find she has already given birth. The first midwife examines Mary to ensure that she is well, and she is shocked to find that Mary's hymen is intact. The second midwife refuses to believe that her physical virginity could be preserved through childbirth, and her hands wither when she physically examines Mary's body. In Middle English, versions of the story appear in a variety of texts, including the *Nativity of Mary and Christ* and John Mirk's *Festial*.¹²² In the twelfth century, as Rachel Fulton notes, theological disputes between Jews and Christians often focused specifically on the Incarnation and how it was possible for God to allow Himself to be contained in a woman's womb or delivered through her vagina.¹²³ Medieval Christians were not "squeamish on thinking about what happened to the afterbirth or where the milk in [Mary's] breasts came from."¹²⁴ While the breaches of the average woman's body may indeed have given them pause, most theologians are unreserved in their discussion of Mary's bodily openings and fluids. Mary's body is public property.

Mary's holiness was not separate from her humanity—it was intimately linked to the most carnal aspects of her female body. In what way might Mary's body exist physically without being tainted by the corruption associated with the physical world? Lochrie has drawn a distinction between the "flesh" and the "body" rather than following the traditional, simplified distinction of body and spirit. Lochrie notes that the flesh, not the body, is opposed to the spirit; the body is a sort of neutral party existing between the flesh and the spirit that can be influenced

¹²² *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ: ed. From MS BM Stowe 949*, ed. O. S. Pickering, Middle English Texts 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975) ll. 385-395; *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus*, ed. Theodor Erbe. EETS, e.s. 96 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905) 23:7-14.

¹²³ Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 283-285.

¹²⁴ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 284. See also Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaiden: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Cassell, 2000) 37-40, 60-66.

by either.¹²⁵ One of the enemies the narrator of the *Château d'Amour* flees from is, in fact, the flesh. The flesh, “ke tant se plie a fols deliz e glotonie” [so accommodating to sensuality and gluttony] accompanies the temptations of the World and the Devil (ll. 815-816). The narrator flees the flesh and seeks refuge in Mary’s body, implying that Mary’s body is somehow liberated from flesh. But on the other hand, Mary’s flesh is an essential component in the Incarnation. The body and the flesh are categories that overlap but remain, in some sense, distinct.

Conclusions

As Grosseteste’s Marian allegory is translated and adapted in its various Middle English versions, the nuances of the allegory can also be expected to change to suit the needs of the altered context. Whitehead’s reading of Grosseteste’s allegory is influenced by the manuscript context of later Middle English adaptations, specifically the one found in the Vernon Manuscript, as well as its similarity to architectural allegories found in anchoritic texts such as the *Ancrene Wisse*. Returning to the matter of the poem’s title, it is significant to note that the two titles given to the poem MS Egerton 846: the *Castellum amoris* and the *Scala celi* both refer specifically to Marian images in the poem. One of the Middle English versions, found in the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts and dated to c. 1300, has been given the English title the “Castle of Love.”¹²⁶ These titles emphasize the role of Mary as the means or location of a connection between heaven and earth—as a means for regaining what was lost in the Fall. Although Mackie is correct to argue that the title *Château d'Amour* shifts the focus away from the poem’s complete account of salvation history and overall exegetical structure and onto the

¹²⁵ The terms are distinguished, as Lochrie notes; however, at other times they are use interchangeably. It is hard to clearly define exactly where the distinction lies.

¹²⁶ Mackie, “English Prose Translation,” 157 ; Sajavaara, “Introduction,” 159.

architectural allegory of the Incarnation, the fact that these particular versions use this title brings up interesting points with regard to certain manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman text and to the Middle English adaptations and suggests that the scribe, compiler or translator of each of these versions may be emphasizing the Marian allegory within the poem intentionally. The Marian titles, while not original to the poem, do reflect a specific reading of the text that the copyist of MS Egerton 846 and the translator or copyist of the Middle English *Castle of Love* either received or deliberately imposed upon the text—the titles specifically highlight Mary’s role as *Mediatatrix* between heaven and earth, God and humanity.

The *Château d’Amour* was translated and adapted into Middle English as the *Castle of Love* and the *Myroure of Lewed Men*.¹²⁷ Selections of the *Château d’Amour* were also incorporated into the lengthy biblical paraphrase, the *Cursor Mundi*. The *Castle of Love*, though altered in some sections by the translator, is one of the most complete surviving Middle English versions, if not the most faithful.¹²⁸ This Middle English version was composed by an unknown translator around 1300 and exists in three manuscripts (the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts and MS Add. B. 107 at the Bodleian), all dating from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹²⁹ Kari Sajavaara states that the “best version, externally, is the B-passage of the *Cursor Mundi*, but the *Castle of Love* is also, at least up to [line] 1514, a faithful copy of the *Château*.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Most of these versions can be found in Sajavaara’s edition with the exception of the *Cursor Mundi* which is found in *Cursor Mundi*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS, o.s. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Oxford University Press, 1874-1894). Grosseteste’s text is also adapted in the Middle English *King and Four Daughters* and *Four Daughters*, however these two texts make use the debate allegory and not the castle allegory.

¹²⁸ Sajavaara “Introduction,” 256, 102.

¹²⁹ Sajavaara, “Introduction,” 101. The Manuscripts are: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. English Poetry a.1. (the Vernon Manuscript; S.C. 3938-42), c. 1390; London, British Museum, MS. Additional 22283 (the Simeon Manuscript), c. 1400; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Additional B. 107 (S.C. 29560), c. 1450.

¹³⁰ Sajavaara, “Introduction,” 228.

The *Cursor*-poet does not translate all of the *Château d'Amour*, and his borrowings are mixed with other source material. In the context of salvation history, the *Cursor*-poet situates extracts from the *Château d'Amour*, including the allegory of Castle of Love, at the beginning of the fifth age in his universal history, between the Old Testament material and the New.¹³¹ He begins this section with a genealogy of the Virgin Mary (as opposed to the biblical genealogy of Joseph's line) before he provides a description of Isaiah's prophecy and his adaptation of the material from the *Château d'Amour*.¹³² Following the narrator's appeal for admission into the castle, the *Cursor*-poet shifts into a retelling of the apocryphal stories associated with the conception, birth and early life of the Virgin Mary.¹³³ The *Cursor*-poet singles out the two allegories of the Incarnation (the Four Daughters of God and the Castle of Love). He highlights the Marian content of Grosseteste's poem by excerpting these specific passages and framing them within Marian apocryphal material. He marks the allegorical castle as one of the most memorable features of the *Château d'Amour* and passes it on for the edification of his own readers. The allegorical castle of love is placed at the transitional point in the *Cursor*-poet's universal history, signaling the transition from Old to New Testament and allowing for God's physical entrance into human history.

The *Myroure of Lewed Men* (found in London, British Museum, MS Egerton 927, fols. 1-28) is a complete reworking of the Anglo-Norman poem with a specifically instructional purpose in mind. Included among the changes made to Grosseteste's text are specific additions to the castle allegory. This version takes a rather different approach to the Marian allegory from that of

¹³¹ The allegory of the Castle of Love occurs at *Cursor Mundi* ll. 9877-10122.

¹³² Mary's genealogy is recorded at ll. 9229-9264. Joseph's lineage is described in Luke's gospel at 3:23-38 and in Matthew's gospel at 1:1-17.

¹³³ This material is found at ll. 10123-12658.

the *Cursor*-poet and the translator of the *Castle of Love*. The changes in the *Myroure* offer the reader a contrasting use of the Virgin Mary; she is less a mediator and more an example, a *mirror*.

Some of the changes made by the author of the *Myroure* shift the agency away from Mary and back to God, the king. Rather than seeing the beauty and purity of the castle and desiring it, the king makes the castle: “a castel has the king made at his devys.”¹³⁴ The king makes the castle himself and sets it on the rock which represents Mary’s faith and within the fortifications that represent her virtues.¹³⁵ Rather than the object of God’s desire, Mary is created by God specifically to be the pure site of the Incarnation and “for refuyt to all manes kynde / whoso fles therto.”¹³⁶ By concentrating on God’s creation of Mary rather than His desire for her, the *Myroure of Lewed Men* deemphasizes the specific elements of Grosseteste’s allegory that allude to romance and highlight the erotic nature of the allegory. By deemphasizing the romance elements of Grosseteste’s allegory, the poet of the *Myroure* achieves a more didactic tone than the affective, erotic tone of the original.

Robert Grosseteste created an architectural allegory that incorporates both intellectual and spiritual elements as well as erotic or secular ones. The opposition between these binaries (religious and secular), though not truly mutually exclusive, produces a specific, affective reaction in the reader. Grosseteste does not invent the use of erotic allegory for spiritual purposes, but he does draw on elements of popular romance literature to create his version and to emphasize the paradox of Mary’s body. Grosseteste’s Marian castle provides an opportunity for

¹³⁴ *Myroure of Lewed Men* ll. 361.

¹³⁵ *Myroure of Lewed Men* ll. 363-364.

¹³⁶ *Myroure of Lewed Men* ll. 397-398.

meditation on Mary as *Mediatrix*. Comparable architectural allegories can also be offered as a model for imitation by religious women.

Similarities between the Marian architectural allegory and allegories of female virginity lead Whitehead to briefly entertain the possibility that Grosseteste's *Château d'Amour* might have been intended, in a sense, as an "anchoritic *exemplum*."¹³⁷ She does not seem particularly serious in this speculation, and it is unlikely that Grosseteste intended his work in this way; however, it is worth considering how a Marian architectural allegory may have been received by female religious readers. Mackie does mention certain manuscripts of the *Château d'Amour* which were prepared specifically for a female audience. In the roughly contemporary Middle English *Ancrene Wisse*, the architectural allegory of the enclosed female body appears in a text explicitly intended for a female religious readership. In this case, the virginal female body represented by the allegory is the body of an anchoress rather than that of the Virgin Mary, but the Marian reading of the overlapping architectural features adds depth to their significance in the *Ancrene Wisse*.

¹³⁷ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 96. Whitehead does not pursue this idea further. The intended audience of the *Château d'Amour* is the topic of some debate.

Chapter 2

Eros and the Anchoritic Body

In the previous chapter, we saw how Mary's virginal body is often allegorized in medieval literature as a castle, perfectly protected and prepared to receive Christ. Building on earlier homiletic allegories, Robert Grosseteste allegorizes Mary's body as the castle of love into which Christ descends at the Annunciation. The castle of Mary's virginal body is "bien fermé" [well closed] and defended against sin and worldly temptation.¹ The architectural features of the castle, including its four turrets, three baileys, seven barbicans, and moat, symbolize her impenetrable physical and moral virtue: the four cardinal virtues; her maidenhood, chastity, and holy espousal; the seven virtues; and voluntary poverty.² The defensive fortifications of Mary's body both display her perfect purity and serve as defenses for sinners who flee to her protection.

As I have shown, religious architectural allegories cannot be read independently of architectural allegories in non-religious love poetry. Similarities between architectural allegories in courtly love poetry and romance necessarily color the meaning of religious allegories. In the *Château d'Amour*, Mary's perfectly defended castle, her body, is described using imagery and language that invokes the language of erotic allegory from court poetry and romance. The allegorical stronghold representing the Virgin Mary exploits the erotic connotations of the secular architectural allegories in order to express God's desire for the pure woman represented by the castle. Unlike Mary's virginal-maternal body, paradoxically both sealed and open, the body of the female religious must be open only for God. As a result, the function of erotic

¹ *Château d'Amour*, l. 572.

² *Château d'Amour*, ll. 569-760.

devotion and the signification of the permeable female body change in allegories of fortified virginity.

In this chapter, my focus will shift toward anchoritic literature, with particular attention given to the *Ancrene Wisse*, a guide to the anchoritic lifestyle roughly contemporary with the *Château d'Amour*. It was written in the second quarter of the thirteenth century for three sisters, born to a wealthy family, who were entering the anchorhold as laywomen.³ Throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*, architectural allegories are used to represent the body of the female anchorite, but the associations with the body of the Virgin Mary are still attached to the castle image. As in the Marian allegory in the *Château d'Amour*, the erotic associations of architectural allegory from courtly poetry and romance shape the reception of the religious allegory. The tension inherent in the architectural allegory of the female body is heightened by the inclusion of language and imagery from the Song of Songs. Both the architectural allegory and the language of the Song of Songs have Marian associations that serve to emphasize the physical boundaries of both the anchoress' body and the enclosure of the anchorhold, creating excitement and anticipation for the penetration of those boundaries by Christ, specifically in the form of the Eucharist. Allusions to the Annunciation within the *Ancrene Wisse* intensify the interpretive logic of the author's various metaphorical anchorholds and unite many of the themes and images found throughout the text. The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* echoes the Holy Spirit's miraculous penetration of Mary's sealed body at the moment of the Annunciation through his use of architectural allegory, language borrowed from the Song of Songs, and eroticized Eucharistic imagery.

³ Yoko Wada, "What is *Ancrene Wisse*," *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003) 4.

Christiania Whitehead stresses that, while architectural allegories of virginity and the Virgin Mary overlap, they “are not one discourse” and that they have “ultimately differentiated trajectories.”⁴ Though she argues that the traditions of each allegory are separate, she does acknowledge that the Marian allegory is a “specialization” of the allegory of fortified virginity.⁵ She does not, however, recognize the equally important influence that allegorical edifices representing the Virgin’s body, such as the castle allegory in Grosseteste’s *Château d’Amour*, have on the allegories of virginity in texts such as the *Ancrene Wisse*. Whitehead does not discuss the influence of Marian architectural allegory on architectural allegories of virginity, nor does she investigate the importance of Marian typology implicit in the *Ancrene Wisse*’s architectural allegories. Marian allegories add an important layer of signification to the allegories of fortified virginity found in the *Ancrene Wisse*.

The allegorical castles representing Mary and the anchoress are not identical. Grosseteste’s allegory is a sustained description of every element of the castle’s fortification followed by an exposition of the allegorical signification of those elements within a universal scheme based in salvation history. The author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, on the other hand, uses brief architectural analogies as a part of his larger discussion of the anchoress’ personal virtue and lifestyle, in particular in Part Four, to comfort and strengthen the anchoress in the face of both internal and external temptations; and yet there are clear similarities between the two types of allegory. In both the *Château d’Amour* and the *Ancrene Wisse*, the erotic overtones of architectural allegory create tension between perfect virginity and sensual restriction. The

⁴ Whitehead, “A Fortress and a Shield,” 120.

⁵ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 92.

contrast between virginity and sexuality, between a closed body and an open one, arouses an erotic desire for God in the reader.

The *Ancrene Wisse* and the Anchoritic Body

A passage preserved in a single manuscript of the *Ancrene Wisse* directly addresses the three women for whom the work was written and refers to their noble birth and patronage, mentioning that they entered their vocation early in life.⁶ The *Ancrene Wisse* survives in seventeen versions, including both complete texts and fragments: nine in Middle English, four in Latin and four in French.⁷ Middle English is now generally accepted as the original language of the *Ancrene Wisse*. Bella Millett has provided the most recent review of the textual history of the *Ancrene Wisse*, revising the original work done by E.J. Dobson. The most important Middle English manuscripts for the study of the *Ancrene Wisse* are: London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xviii; London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.xiv; London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra C. vi (all three thought to represent the author's original version); and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402 (which, according to Dobson, is a good copy of the revised authorial version, containing revisions from Cleopatra and revisions that address a larger group

⁶ For the text of the passage, see the footnote to 4.192 in *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, ed. Bella Millett, EETS, o.s. 325-326 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005-2006). For comments on this passage, see Millett, "He speaks to Me as if I was a public meeting': Rhetoric and Audience in the Workds of the *Ancrene Wisse* Group," *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008) 51-53. Because this passage is not included in the Corpus, Cleopatra, or Titus manuscripts, some believe it represents an addition to this version rather than the preservation of an address from the author's original (Hasenfratz 16; Wada 4).

⁷ The other surviving Middle English manuscripts of the *Ancrene Wisse* are: Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 234/120; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. th. c. 70; Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2498; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet.a.1 (the Vernon Manuscript); London, British Library, Royal 8 C.i. For more on the manuscripts and versions of the *Ancrene Wisse* and their textual relationships, see Millett, "Textual Introduction," *Ancrene Wisse*, xi-xxxvi.

of anchoresses). Only the Nero manuscript preserves the passage thought to address the original three sisters for whom the guide was composed. The Titus version, though far removed from the authorial text, still dates from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, demonstrating the early popularity of the text. Only one manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402) contains the title *Ancrene Wisse*.⁸

The identity of the author remains unknown, though he was likely a cleric and may have been educated at Paris.⁹ Dobson argued that he belonged to an Augustinian independent congregation, but Millett finds more similarities in the recommended devotions with Dominican practices.¹⁰ The content of and inspiration for the *Ancrene Wisse* is consistent with the Dominican Order's focus on lay spirituality and pastoral care and their influential role as spiritual advisors to women.¹¹

The *Ancrene Wisse* is a part of a group of Middle English texts surviving in various combinations in six manuscripts, all probably copied between 1225 and 1250 in the West Midlands of England and all believed to have been written for and used by female anchorites. These texts provide a window into the lives of enclosed laywomen whose lives are otherwise undocumented as well as into the roots of later medieval forms of lay devotion. Connected by

⁸ Millett, "Mouvance and the Medieval Author: Re-editing *Ancrene Wisse*," *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer) 9-20.

⁹ Millett, "General Introduction," *Ancrene Wisse*, xvii, xxxiv-xxxvi.

¹⁰ E. J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Millett, "The Origins of the *Ancrene Wisse*: New Answers, New Questions," *Medium Ævum* 61 (1992), 206-228; Millett, "General Introduction," xviii. Dobson lays out his argument for the relationship of the *Ancrene Wisse* to Augustinian canons (1-54) and specifically to the Victorine or Premonstratensian Congregations (55-113). Millett accounts for the similarities to the Augustinian Rule and Premonstratensian statutes to the fact the Dominicans adopted this rule when they were founded. Canon 13 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required new religious orders to adopt an existing rule.

¹¹ Cate Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse: From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008) 5-6, 40.

their manuscript traditions and by the premise that they were composed for similar audiences, these texts include female saints lives, a treatise on virginity, an allegory on guarding the soul from temptation, prayers and meditative poems, and, of course, the *Ancrene Wisse*.

The *Ancrene Wisse* presents two separate but interrelated “rules” by which the female anchorite ought to structure her life. The outer rule involves matters concerned with the body: how she ought to dress, how she should structure her day, how she is to interact with other people. The author emphasizes that this rule is man-made and should be adapted to the individual person and circumstances so that it may best serve the inner rule, which governs the heart. The author explains the distinction between the two rules in a preface, and then lays out the guide in eight sections: Part One describes the anchoress’ daily liturgical and devotional routine, Part Two instructs the anchoress to guard her five senses, Part Three teaches her to control her inward emotions, Part Four is on avoiding temptation, Part Five on Confession, Part Six on Penance, Part Seven on love for God, and Part Eight (returning to the external rule) briefly describes the anchoress’ day-to-day conduct and household management. The inner rule has been established by God and cannot be compromised. The author advises the anchoress to “alles weis, wið alle mihte ant strengðe, wel witen þe inre, ant te utter for hire sake” (Preface ll. 34-36) [in all ways with all your might and strength guard well the inner, and the outer for [the inner rule’s] sake] (48).¹² Although he is providing guidelines for the spiritual life of the anchoress, the author is emphatic that these guidelines are not, in fact, intended as a rule in the

¹² My references to the *Ancrene Wisse* are to Millett’s EETS edition. Citations from the *Ancrene Wisse* will be given parenthetically by section and line number. Unless otherwise noted, translations of the *Ancrene Wisse* are taken from Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, eds., “Ancrene Wisse,” in *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 41-207. Translations from Savage and Watson will be cited parenthetically by page number. I have, in places, altered their translation to provide a more literal Modern English translation.

sense of a monastic rule. Discipline and regulation of the body is important only insofar as it promotes love of God.

The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* explicitly invokes the Virgin Mary as an exemplar for anchoritic life. Describing the scene of the Annunciation, the author draws a parallel between Mary's solitude and enclosure and the solitude and enclosure of the anchoress:

Vre leoue Leafdi, ne leadde ha anlich lif? Ne fond te engel hire in anli stude al ane? Nes ha nohwer ute, ah wes biloken feste. For swa we ifindeð: *Ingressus angelus ad eam dixit, Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus*; þet is, 'þe engel wende in to hire.' Penne wes heo inne in anli stude hire ane. Engel to mon i þrung ne eadewede neauer ofte. On oðer half, þurh þet nohwer in Hali Writ nis iwriten of hire speche bute fowr siðen, as is iseid þruppe, sutel prufunge hit is þet ha wes muchel ane þe heold swa silence. (2.575-579)

[Our dear Lady, did she not live a solitary life? Did not the angel find her all alone in a solitary place? She was not outside, but was closely shut in. For so we find: *Ingressus angelus ad eam, dixit: Ave Maria gratia plena, dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus* (Luke 1:28)—that is, “The angel went in to her when she was inside, in a solitary place, on her own.” An angel has very seldom appeared to someone in a crowd. And again, seeing that nowhere in Holy Writ is it written that she spoke, except four times, as I said above, this is a clear proof that she was much alone, who kept such silence.] (108)

Mary is sealed within her body—silent and a virgin—as well as “biloken feste” within her room at the moment of the Annunciation; the author justifies and idealizes the anchoritic lifestyle by likening it to Mary's lifestyle and creating an image of the ideal anchoress. Scholars often use iconographic and literary depictions of Mary at the Annunciation to emphasize the importance and prevalence of the ideals of female chastity and enclosure in their descriptions of anchoritic life. As Elizabeth Robertson put it, while women cannot rise above their physical limitations by conceiving virginally or giving birth without pain (as Mary did), they were encouraged instead to

imitate the silence, obedience, modesty, and humility she displays at the Annunciation.¹³ Liz Herbert McAvoy, describing Aelred of Rievaulx's depiction of Mary in *De institutione inclusarum*, writes that "like the Virgin herself, the anchoress could be regarded as both subject to and expression of that same enclosure-induced perfection."¹⁴ The "subtext within popular iconographic and literary representations of the Annunciation in which the Virgin Mary is frequently depicted as enclosed within the walls of a domestic residence" reflects similar anxieties about the female body and feminine sexual transgression.¹⁵ Despite using images of Mary to describe the situation of medieval anchorites, scholars have not considered the allusions to the Annunciation within the *Ancrene Wisse* itself.

Throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*, the author presents the Virgin Mary as a model for proper anchoritic behavior. In particular, throughout Part Two, he stresses Mary's modesty, humility, and silence in contrast to Eve. Eve's cackling, for example, is contrasted to Mary's infrequent speech, her fear of Gabriel at the Annunciation to Eve's boldness with the snake.¹⁶ The opposition of Eve and Mary in this section is a part of a long tradition of interpreting Mary as the Second Eve, redeeming the sin of the first woman as Christ redeemed the sin of the first man.¹⁷ Through her appropriate responses to God, Mary undoes the inappropriate responses which led to the Fall. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, this traditional discourse is only the beginning of the author's

¹³ Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990) 39.

¹⁴ Liz Herbert McAvoy, "'Ant nes he him seolf recluse i maries wombe?': Julian of Norwich, the Anchorhold and Redemption of the Monstrous Female Body," *Consuming Narratives: Gender and Monstrous Appetite in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Teresa Walters (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002) 131.

¹⁵ McAvoy, "'Ant nes he him seolf recluse i maries wombe?,'" 132.

¹⁶ *Ancrene Wisse* 2.287-297, 2.615-619.

¹⁷ See Graef, *Mary*, 37-41.

depiction of Mary as the ideal anchoress. Rather than focusing on these direct uses of Mary as an anchoritic ideal, this chapter will focus on the more subtle, typological alignment at work in the author's adaptation of architectural allegory and Song of Songs imagery throughout the text.

In the thirteenth century, when the *Ancrene Wisse* was composed, there was a sharp rise in the number of people choosing the anchoritic life. Anchorites lived “in stricter seclusion [than hermits], and [were] not free to wander at will.”¹⁸ Once approved by the bishop, anchorites were sealed into a cell with a ceremony that included the last rites and the Office of the Dead, signifying that the anchorite had died to the world.¹⁹ The anchorite's contact with the world outside the cell was through windows: one window, or “squint,” allowed the anchorite to look into the church to observe Mass, particularly the Elevation of the Host, and receive communion; through another the anchorite would receive her food; and “through a parlour window, small, narrow, and always fast on every side” she would communicate with the outside world.²⁰ After being enclosed in the anchorhold, the anchorite was unable to obtain and transport food and other necessities for him or herself, and thus relied upon the patronage and support of the community—without this support the anchorite would either perish or be forced to abandon the

¹⁸ Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1914) 73. Initially, the term “anchorite” was synonymous with “hermit,” referring to anyone who withdrew from the world, but later it developed into a vocation in its own right, though they were never part of a particular order nor did they follow a specific rule. See also: E. A. Jones, “Anchoritism and Hermits in Historical Context,” *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, Roger Ellis (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2005) 3-18; Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Despite their early dates, Clay (1914) and Warren (1985) remain standard references on anchoritism.

¹⁹ Robert Hasenfratz, “Introduction,” *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Robert Hasenfratz, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) 9; Jones, “Anchoritism and Hermits,” 10-11.

²⁰ Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites of England*, 79. Roberta Gilchrist notes that antiquarians are responsible for much of evidence we have about anchorholds, who dug up cells they found but “seldom recorded [their digs] accurately, or even at all” (*Contemplation and Action*, 192). As a result, very little is known about the structures themselves or any food or artifacts that may have been associated with them. See Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (London, New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 183-193; Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994) 177-181; Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close: The Evolution of the English Cathedral Landscape* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005) 97-99.

anchorhold. In turn, the anchorite was a part of the local community; anchorholds were attached to public buildings, including castles, chapels or convents, and (most frequently) churches “in order that [the anchorites] might derive spiritual advantages from [the church], and at the same time confer spiritual benefits upon the parish.”²¹ Anchorites lived on the margins of society, separated and symbolically dead to the community, yet prominent within the spiritual life of the community and dependent on the community for survival.

Judged by earlier scholars to be insignificant, the original audience of anchoritic texts has become in recent years one of the most productive areas of scholarship, and scholars increasingly emphasize the importance of the female audience on the composition as well as the content of these anchoritic writings.²² Although the life was available for both men and women, the decision seems to have been particularly appealing for women who in the thirteenth century outnumbered their male counterparts by nearly four to one.²³ The manuscript tradition of the *Ancrene Wisse* is itself a testament to the growing popularity of the anchoritic life for thirteenth-century women. A passage in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402 includes an address to a large group of anchoresses:

3e beoð þe ancren of Englonð, swa feole togederes (twenti nuðe oðer ma—Godd i god ow mutli), þet meast grið is among, meast annesse ant anrednesse ant sometreadnesse of anred lif efter a riwle, swa þet alle teoð an, alle iturnt anesweis ant nan frommard oðer, efter þet word is. (4.1077-1081)

²¹ Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites of England*, 73.

²² See the discussion in Bella Millett, George B. Jack, and Yoko Wada, eds., *Ancrene Wisse, The Katherine Group, and The Wooing Group*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996) 15-17.

²³ Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, 20. Warren counts 198 anchorites in the thirteenth century: 123 female, 37 male, and 38 of indeterminate gender. The total number of anchorites more than doubled from the 96 she found in the twelfth century.

[You are, you anchoresses of England, very many together—twenty, now, or more. May God increase you in goodness—you who live in the greatest peace, the greatest oneness and constancy, and in the concord of a steadfast life: following a single rule, so that all pull one way, and all are turned in the same direction, not away from one another] (141).²⁴

The guide, originally intended for a small, closely linked group of anchoresses has been adopted for use by a larger group of over twenty anchoresses united in seeking common guidance for their individual, solitary lives.²⁵

Female anchorites, unlike male, were typically laywomen (as were the sisters for whom the *Ancrene Wisse* was composed) who chose enclosure as an alternative to marriage or upon the death of their husbands.²⁶ While the lack of lifestyle choices available to the medieval woman certainly contributed to the popularity of anchoritism among women, the lifestyle also conformed to the medieval understanding of the perceived flaws of the female body and was an exact embodiment of feminine religious ideals which were developed to discipline and neutralize those flaws.²⁷ Recent scholarship has shown the importance of medieval medical views of the female body in shaping female social roles and the standards of female religious practices.

²⁴ The complete passages in Corpus MS 401 extends from 4.1076-1101. See Millett, “General Introduction,” xxii.

²⁵ Robert Hasenfratz suggests that Part Six on penance also implies a readership beyond the original three sisters, providing advice to less experienced as well as advanced anchoresses. See: Hasenfratz, “Introduction,” 18.

²⁶ Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, 22, 27; Out of 123 female anchorites, Warren could only find two thirteenth-century women who had definitely lived as nuns before becoming anchorites (25).

²⁷ New orders such as the Cistercians were hesitant to admit women and groups geared specifically toward women that were popular on the continent, like the Beguines, were scarce in England, and becoming an anchorite, unlike becoming a nun, was open to women of any social rank provided they had friends and patrons to support them. Religious vocations for medieval women were limited, and the popularity of anchoritism among women in thirteenth-century England seems, at least in part, “a means of containing the explosion of spiritual enthusiasm observable throughout Catholic Europe” (Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, 22). See also: Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience*, 14. Robertson argues that, although the anchorhold was certainly subject to strict male control, the anchoritic life did offer medieval women an opportunity for “privacy, autonomy, and a chance for intellectual development unavailable even in the convent,” which may have accounted for its gender specific appeal (23).

Medieval medical and philosophical constructions of gender difference directly influenced the religious ideals and practices that were thought to be appropriate for women. Medieval conceptions and descriptions of sexual difference were defined in terms of complexion (cool and moist female versus hot and dry male), shape (the internal, female womb versus the external, male penis) and collective disposition; in each category, the female characteristics were thought to be imperfect versions of the male ones.²⁸ The differences in complexion, especially the difference between hot and cool, were thought to cause the other physical differences as well as differences in temperament between men and women. It is the hot complexion of the male that enables him to “grow into a higher stage of completion and perfection” than females.²⁹ Women were thought to be “soft and smooth and weak,” and as a result they required a more sedentary lifestyle than males.³⁰ The superfluous blood produced by the human body had to be purged in the form of menses because the cool, moist body of a woman was unable to purge it in

²⁸ For detailed description of the female complexion, shape and disposition, see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference* and Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Cadden’s study emphasizes male and female social roles and the definition and purpose of marriage, specifically, but the connections to religious practice have been made by Bynum, Lochrie, Robertson, and others. Thomas Laqueur argues that a “one-sex/one-flesh” model (in which the differences between male and female anatomy have essentially been viewed as differences “of degree and not of kind”) dominated medical and philosophical views of the body from ancient through early modern period (25). According to Laqueur, the female, internal reproductive organs were viewed as essentially an inverted (and therefore imperfect) version of the male (26). See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Laqueur discusses the characterization of the inverted relationship between the male and female reproductive organs found in Galen and subsequent thinkers on pages 25-33. Laqueur’s one-sex model has been adopted by some scholars, despite having been criticized for a lack of attention to medieval sources. Cadden in particular has demonstrated that it is not an accurate description of medieval medical views. For a summary of Laqueur and critiques of Laqueur, see Monica Green, “Bodies, Gender, Health, Disease: Recent Work on Medieval Women’s Medicine,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History: Sexuality and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Philip M. Soergel, 3rd Series 2 (New York: AMS Press, 2005) 6-9. Elizabeth Robertson largely follows Laqueur’s one-sex model in “Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse* and Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*,” *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) 142-167.

²⁹ Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, 51; Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 171.

³⁰ Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 172.

the form of body and facial hair or semen.³¹ The female reproductive organs were internal rather than external. The womb and, by extension, women were seen as “passive vessels,” but at the same time the womb was thought to have an appetitive nature; women “lack masculine activity and need (and therefore desire) men’s active principle, semen.”³² Because they are “physiologically cold, wet, and incomplete,” females “by nature sought heat, purgation of moisture, and union with the male.”³³ The female is both passively receptive and actively desirous as a result of her imperfect physiology.

Perhaps most significantly, the perceived physiological shortcomings of the female body were thought to be connected to specific character traits and, accordingly, to moral inadequacies—women were thought to be emotional, inconstant, lustful, etc. The openings of the female body, necessary for purging their excessively moist humors, were viewed as breaches in the boundaries of their bodies which made them vulnerable. The female body failed to separate what was inside it from what was outside, and vice versa. Like breaches in a defensive wall around a city, the openings in the female body had to be protected and fortified.

Caroline Walker Bynum’s work on female religious practices that impose and regulate bodily closure—restriction of food intake, excretion, menstruation, etc.—have been further developed by Karma Lochrie and (with particular attention to anchoritic writings) Elizabeth

³¹ Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 173. Some thinkers held that females also produced semen, but it was an inferior type of semen and was in addition to menses. Galen, for example, thought that the ovaries sent sperm into the uterus (Jacquart and Thomasset 50).

³² Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 178.

³³ Robertson, “Medieval Medical Views of Women and Female Spirituality,” 142.

Robertson and Anne Savage.³⁴ Lochrie argues that the human body was the composite of both the male and female aspects and that the feminine was typically associated specifically with the flesh or the will, the disruptive aspects of the self that battle for control of the body with the masculine spirit or reason. According to theologians like Bernard of Clairvaux, the human will and human drives (which are described as female) work with the flesh, competing against the soul (described as male) for control of the individual.³⁵ Lochrie demonstrates how Bernard, in his treatise “On Conversion,” builds on the “Augustinian distinction between flesh and body and on the vulnerability of the will due to the Fall” to develop a theory of affectivity that identifies the will with Eve or the female in opposition to reason which he identifies with Adam or the male.³⁶ Woman “occupies the border between body and soul, the fissure through which a constant assault on the body may be conducted. . . . Thus the soul finds itself contaminated from within and without and vexed by a kind of vertigo.”³⁷ Robertson and Lochrie both call attention to the misogyny inherent in this gendered distinction between mind and body and see the expectations of anchoritic life represented in the *Ancrene Wisse* as an example of the restrictive religious standards imposed on medieval women and used to control the disruptive nature of

³⁴ Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Female Body and Religious Practice,” 181-238; Karma Lochrie, “The Language of Transgression” and *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), especially chapter 1, “The Body as Text and the Semiotics of Suffering,” 13-55.

³⁵ Lochrie, *Margery Kempe*, 16-23. See also Lochrie’s discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux in “The Language of Transgression,” 115-140, especially 121-124; Bynum, “. . . And Woman His Humanity,” 151-179; Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Astell shows a similar formulation in Isaac of Stella’s *Epistola de Anima*, with a “holistic redemption of body and soul made possible through a firm identification with, and engagement of, the lower, body-linked powers—that is, the affects” (6).

³⁶ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 20.

³⁷ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 21.

woman.³⁸ Women were generally associated with more somatic forms of devotional practice, as Bynum's work has shown.³⁹

As a result of the theological and medical association of the female body with permeability and receptivity, the female body was thought to be vulnerable to both physiological and moral attack and to require enclosure and fortification in order to achieve sanctity. The religious ideal for women "consist[ed] primarily in adopting boundaries and maintaining an unbroken body" and contributed to the establishment of the ideals of virginity and enclosure for female religious life, in particular the anchoritic lifestyle.⁴⁰ Perceived physiological shortcomings of the female body were corrected or compensated for by means of gender-specific religious ideals and practices. Physical, intact virginity was viewed as completely closed off from the outside world, "clean, pure, without breach . . . a closed, impenetrable space."⁴¹ The anchoritic lifestyle, particularly for the female anchorite, is a vivid enactment of this sealed female spiritual ideal. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, as in other anchoritic texts, the "sealed body . . .

³⁸ Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views of Women," 148-150; Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 24-27. Lochrie finds opportunity for subversion of those patriarchal controls in the practices of fifteenth-century women mystics such as Angela of Foligno and Margery Kempe.

³⁹ Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice." Whether or not the somatic nature of female spirituality was primarily imposed by male authorities, it is generally accepted that feminine spiritual practices were often primarily focused on the body. Robertson argues that women, defined in terms of their physicality and connected with the side of human nature that detracts from God and spiritual pursuits, were thought unfit to "climb an allegorical ladder to God and thereby transcend the body," and instead were expected to lead spiritual lives through physical suffering and bodily discipline, "self-consciousness about the body, rather than by a transcendence of it" (*Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Reader*, 41). Robertson's argument reflects not only the association of women with more somatic religious practices but also with a trend in scholarship identified by that distinguishes between positive and negative mysticism (ranking negative mysticism as the more advanced of the two) and aligns female mysticism with the positive, body-oriented mysticism (Lochrie, "The Language of Transgression," 116). Michelle Karnes has recently attempted to correct the attitude that affective devotion was a less advanced form of spirituality by examining Bonaventure's theories of cognition and imagination.

⁴⁰ Lochrie, "The Language of Transgression," 125. Ann W. Astell makes a similar argument following a Jungian model of the human being as animus and anima rather than medieval medical theory. Astell argues that the Song of Songs commentaries involve recognizing the feminine aspect of the self and using it to a spiritual end.

⁴¹ Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, "The Female Body in the Religious Lyrics," *Writing Religious Women*, 141.

becomes a sign not only of virginity but of the *integritas* of all the senses, particularly speech and sight.”⁴²

For the female anchorite, anchoritism was not simply withdrawal from the world into the fortification of the anchorhold; it involved a symbolic fortification of the body’s physical boundaries. The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* insists that, in addition to being enclosed within the anchorhold, the anchoress’ body itself must be sealed against external influences. He expresses this enclosure of the body through his use of architectural allegories—such as the anchoress’ body as anchorhold—which contain the anchoress in a series of impenetrable spaces. The anchoress’ pure female body is maintained by sealing its openings (that is, maintaining virginity and restricting the senses) just as the openings of the anchorhold are sealed or covered. Throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*, the author warns against three enemies: the world, the devil, and the anchoress’ own flesh. While external temptations could be shut out by the walls of the anchorhold, the anchoress’ permeable, female flesh was an ever-present enemy within her otherwise secure retreat. The religious woman ought to be isolated from interaction with the world.

Architectural allegories in the *Ancrene Wisse*, inspired by the anchoress’ isolation within the enclosure of her anchorhold and reiterated by her protected and uncorrupted body, highlight the importance of female virginity and valorize the anchoress’ particular form of asceticism. Whitehead argues that images of fortified virginity appear in the *Ancrene Wisse* “with such unprecedented frequency that one can almost go so far as to say that its author’s perception of

⁴² Lochrie, “The Language of Transgression,” 125-126.

the anchoritic vocation must have been intrinsically architectural.”⁴³ In her study of medieval architectural allegory, she includes a description of the allegorical tradition which influenced the architectural allegories found in the *Ancrene Wisse* as well as brief accounts of two of the many structures used in the *Ancrene Wisse* to describe the life and practices of an anchoress.

Whitehead’s analysis of the tradition of architectural allegory, while thorough, focuses largely on other texts, providing little original analysis of the allegories found in the *Ancrene Wisse*, which she uses primarily as points of comparison. Therefore, I will provide a brief overview of allegorical fortifications found in the *Ancrene Wisse* before focusing specifically on the allegorical castle imagery. The first two types of architectural allegory are briefly addressed by Whitehead: the allegory of the body as anchorhold in Part Two and the Christ-knight allegory in Part Seven.

Part Two of the *Ancrene Wisse* is dedicated entirely to a discussion of “þe heorte warde thurh the fif wittes” (2.1-2) [the defense of the heart by the five senses] (66) in which the anchoress is advised to guard both the openings of her anchorhold and her body. The allegory in this section is similar to allegories in other texts which describe the body as a household guarded from the dangers and temptations of the world by the senses, allegorized as the “wardens” of the soul.⁴⁴ In this sort of allegory, “man, or man’s conscience, is the . . . castle in which the wardens of the soul protect their charge; in some cases, however, there is emphasis upon the body as the actual edifice,” as we find in the *Ancrene Wisse*.⁴⁵ Perhaps the most famous Middle English

⁴³ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 91.

⁴⁴ The treatment of the senses as guardians of the soul can be found as early as Philo Judaeus. It is often, though not always, connected to the allegorization of the human body as castle. See Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 20, 22; Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 119-122; Julie Hassel, “Reading a Wife in *Sawles Warde*,” *Choosing Not to Marry: Women and Autonomy in the Katherine Group* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 81-97.

⁴⁵ Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 20.

example of this type of architectural allegory is another anchoritic text from the Katherine Group, the group of five anchoritic texts associated with the *Ancrene Wisse*, called *Sawles Warde*.⁴⁶ *Sawles Warde* is a Middle English homily based on the twelfth-century pseudo-Anselmian dialogue *De custodia interioris hominis*.⁴⁷ It is an allegory describing the human being as a household. The dwelling place (the body) must be governed properly by Wit (the husband) in order for the household to survive the attack of the vices. Wit, aided by the virtues (four daughters), struggles with Will (his unruly wife) for control of their servants (which represent the senses). Under the governance of Wit, the senses help to resist the attack of the vices, but when Will is in charge, they allow in all manner of temptation. Unlike the allegorical household in *Sawles Warde*, the allegorization of the senses in Part Two of the *Ancrene Wisse* is tailored specifically to the anchoritic life. The senses are openings in her anchorhold, rather than servants. While an anchoress may have had a servant, she was not the mistress of a large household. Although *Sawles Warde* is an anchoritic text as well (associated with the Katherine Group), it is an adaptation of an existing allegory for anchorites, whereas the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* makes a particular effort to create specifically anchoritic allegories.

The allegory of body as household is poignantly adapted to the anchoress' literal architectural surroundings in Part Two of the *Ancrene Wisse*. As he describes how the anchoress should conduct herself in her interactions with the world outside her anchorhold, he describes her body as an allegorical anchorhold. In this section, the author expounds upon a quote from

⁴⁶ *Sawles Warde: An Early Middle English Homily*, ed. R. M. Wilson, Leeds School of English Language Texts and Monographs 3 (Kendal: University of Leeds, 1938).

⁴⁷ Hugh of St. Victor's *De anima* was originally considered to be the source of *Sawles Warde*, but Wolfgang Becker has since shown that Hugh's text is in fact a compilation from various authors. The source of the allegory in *De anima* is *De custodia*. Becker concludes that the author of *Sawles Warde* was working from a manuscript of the pseudo-Anselmian text. See Wolfgang Becker, "The Source Text of *Sawles Warde*," *Manuscripta* 24 (1980): 44-48.

Proverbs, “‘Wið alles cunnes warde, dohter,’ seið Salomon, ‘wite wel þin heorte; for sawle lif is in hire, ʒef ha is wel iloket’” (2.3-5) [“Protect your heart well with every kind of defense, daughter,” says Solomon, “for if she is well locked away, the soul’s life is in her”] (66).⁴⁸ Contact with the world outside the anchorhold through any of the five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, and “euch limes felunge” (2.6-7) [feeling in every part]—must be limited, because “Toutes celes qe bien les closent, Dieu bien les garde” (2.212) [All those who close [the windows of the senses] well, God will guard them well].⁴⁹ The eyes in particular are compared to the windows of the anchorhold, which the anchoress should “þe leaste þet ʒe eauer mahen luuieð ower þurles” (2.20-21) [love . . . as little as [she] possibly can] (66). Sin, he cautions, comes to women who look out and see as Eve did when saw the apple: “on alre earst in hire sunne inʒong of hire ehsihðe” (2.59-60) [before all else, sin found went into her through her eyesight].⁵⁰ The heart, he cautions, follows the eye: “þus eode sihðe beuoren ant makede wei to uuel lust, ant com þe dede þrefter þet al moncun ifeleð” (2.66-67) [thus sight went before and made way for evil lust, and the deed that all mankind feels came after].⁵¹ Leaving the window of the eyes open can allow the anchoress to sin by looking out, but it can also lead others who are able to see her into sin. Dinah allowed herself to be seen because she “eode ut to bihalden uncuðe wummen” (2.89) [went out to look at strange women] (68).⁵² Dinah is reprimanded because she wanted to see and because by going out to see, she exposed herself to the sight of

⁴⁸ Proverbs 4:23

⁴⁹ This passage is quoted from the Anglo-Norman manuscript in Millett’s edition due to damage to the Corpus 402 text.

⁵⁰ Translation here is my own. Genesis 3:6.

⁵¹ Translation here is my own.

⁵² Genesis 34:1.

men and made herself vulnerable.⁵³ The mouth and ears, like the eyes, should also be closed. The anchoress is to imitate Mary's silence rather than Eve's wanton speech and to guard her ears against the evil speech of others.⁵⁴ The anchoress is warned to close and seal all the "windows" of the senses just as she covers the windows of her literal, physical anchorhold so that sin will not pass in or out through them.

Part Seven contains the famous allegory of Christ lover-knight, used by the author as he describes the love shared between the anchoress and Christ. In this allegory, the anchoress's soul is described as a lady living within an "eorðene castel" (7.69) [earthen castle] (190) who scorns the advances of a king who represents Christ. When the maiden's castle is besieged by her enemies, who represent the devil, the king offers to rid her of her enemies, knowing that he will die in the fight. He asks only that she love him after he has died. The king "dude him i turnement, ant hefde for his leoues luue his scheld i feht, as kene cniht, on euche half ipurlet" (7.99-100) [entered himself in the tournament and, for his love's love, had his shield pierced on every side like a brave knight].⁵⁵ This shield represents Christ's body, which he gives to us to protect us from temptation. This allegory has been studied over the years by Rosemary Woolf and more recently by Catherine Innes-Parker.⁵⁶ Whitehead devotes much of her discussion of architectural allegory in the *Ancrene Wisse* to this text despite the fact that the allegory is primarily about Christ's loving sacrifice rather than about the allegorical edifice fortifying the

⁵³ The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* also gives the example of Bathsheba who allowed David to see her bathing and led him into sin (2.101-116).

⁵⁴ Mary's silence at the Annunciation is contrasted to Eve's "cackling" at 2.284-297.

⁵⁵ Translation is my own.

⁵⁶ Rosemary Woolf, "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 13.49 (1962) 1-16; Catherine Innes-Parker, "Ancrene Wisse and þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd: The Thirteenth-Century Female Reader and the Lover-Knight," *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Jane Taylor and Lesley Smith (London: Boydell and Brewer, 1995) 137-147; Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 66.

body or soul. Although the soul is under siege by the devil, the details of the castle and siege are largely absent from the description. The allegory is centered more on the relationship of Christ as the lover-knight persistently wooing and then dying for the lady than on the architectural elements of bodily defense. The passage is notable, though, in that it combines female enclosure and an allegory of love.

The third significant architectural allegory employed in the *Ancrene Wisse*, which is the primary focus of my argument, is the image of fortified virginity. Unlike the body as anchorhold or the Christ as lover-knight allegories, the castle of virginity allegory is not a single, extended allegorical passage; rather, the author uses brief architectural images to describe the anchoress' body and anchorhold as a fortified castle throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*, especially in Parts Two, Four and Seven. The allegory of the besieged castle represents the intact, virginal body resisting temptation. The earliest description of virginity in terms of architectural fortification is found in Tertullian. Allegories of the female body as fortified castle became increasingly common in both religious and secular literature in the early thirteenth century.⁵⁷ Whitehead has shown that, unlike classical and early Christian architectural allegories used to describe the Christian community, the allegory of the castle of fortified virginity "promote[s] a specifically female and highly individualized interpretation of the virtuous soul."⁵⁸ The castle's defenses are "used to signify mental and bodily *restraint* and *withdrawal* from the terrain of sensual involvement."⁵⁹ In the *Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoress' body is depicted as a fortress built to defend her from the

⁵⁷ Cornelius, *The Figurative Castle*, 14-19; Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 89.

⁵⁸ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 91. Whitehead contrasts the twelfth and thirteenth-century castle allegories representing individual virtue with classical and early Christian architectural allegories which were often used to describe the Christian community.

⁵⁹ Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, 91.

temptations of three enemies, “of þe feond, of þe world, of ure flesche oðerhwile” (4.50) [the devil, the world, and sometimes from our flesh] (115).

The author’s use of architectural structures associated with the castle is particularly prominent in Part Four on temptations: “Castel is euch god mon þet te deouel weorreð” (4.948-949) [every good person against whom the devil makes war is a castle] (137). The anchoress should also guard her speech; echoing the allegory of pure body as sealed anchorhold, the talkative person is likened to a “burh wiðute wal þet ferde mei in oueral” (2.402-403) [city without a wall that an army can enter from any side], and the anchoress is encouraged to imitate Mary’s infrequent speech.⁶⁰ He warns the anchoress that if she is not experiencing temptation, it may be because “þe tur nix nawt asailet, ne castel ne cite, hwen ha beoð iwunnen” (4.706-707) [no tower, nor castle, nor city is assailed when it is already won] (131). The castle is better defended by “wallinde weater, þet is, wið hate teares” (4.945) [boiling water, that is with hot tears] and by “deop dich of deop eadmodnesse, ant wete teares þer-to” (4. 949-950) [the deep moat of deep humility and wet tears around it] (137). In the *Ancrene Wisse*, the defensive architectural features of the castle represent the anchoress as she resists temptation. As I demonstrated in chapter one, these same defensive allegorical structures are often used to describe another virginal female body—the body of the Virgin Mary.

The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* simultaneously exploits both the Marian associations of architectural allegory and the associations with the erotic female body from court romance and

⁶⁰ “burgh,” *The Middle English Dictionary*, 24 May 2011 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED6328>. This word can either refer to a city or to a castle or stronghold. Hassenfratz translates it as “castle,” Savage and Watson translate it as “town,” which is more correct because the Latin quotation which the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* is translating uses the word “urbs.” Either definition, however, is consistent with the tradition of architectural allegory as discussed by Cornelius.

poetry, as Grosseteste did in his *Château d'Amour*. Just as Mary's body is penetrated by God at the Incarnation, in the *Ancrene Wisse*, Christ is able to penetrate the walls of the anchorhold. When the anchoress receives the Host, she is receiving “þe meidene bearn, Iesu Godd, Godes sune, þe licomliche lihteð oðerhwiles to ower in, ant inwið ow eadmodliche nimeð his herbearhe” (4.1292-1294) [the virgin’s child, Jesus God, God’s son, who descends at those times in the flesh to your inn, and humbly takes his shelter within you] (146). This description of the anchoress’ Eucharistic devotion strongly recalls the Annunciation as depicted in both biblical and devotional sources. The words evoke the opening chapter of John’s Gospel: “et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis” [and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us].⁶¹ The verbs “lighten” and “alighten” are common in Middle English descriptions of the Annunciation, including translations of the *Château d'Amour*.⁶² The anchoress becomes Christ’s “herbearhe,” which is reminiscent of the *Château d'Amour*, where we are told that Christ lodges (“herberger”) in the castle of Mary’s body.⁶³

Like the defenses of the allegorical castles of court romance and poetry that stimulate desire, the walls of the anchorhold—which the anchoress has been warned to keep sealed and impenetrable—now become tantalizing and are easily stormed by her lover. The anchoress seals her bodily senses to the outside world in order to create a “stude dearne” (2.645) [secret place] (82) where she and her lover, Christ, can be together. The author tells the anchoress that she has

⁶¹ John 1:14.

⁶² “Castle of Love,” *Middle English Translations of 'Chateau d'Amour,'* ll. 53, 663, 918; “lighten,” “alighten,” *The Middle English Dictionary*, 25 April 2008, [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/m/med/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/myaccess/library.utoronto.ca/m/med/). See, for example, *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ: ed. from MS BM Stowe 949*, ed. O.S. Pickering, Middle English Texts 1 (Heidleberg: Carl Winter-Universitätsverlag, 1975) ll. 233-234: “þer riht þe Holy Gost, þoru þe aungeles gretynge, / In this holy mayde alyhte, vs of peyne to bringe.”

⁶³ “herberger” *Château d'Amour* ll. 775; “herberger,” to lodge at or in, *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, 23 April 2008, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/>.

daily access to Christ, who “kimeð forð ant schaweð him to ow fleschliche ant licomliche inwið þe Measse” [comes out and shows himself to you in a fleshly and bodily way in the mass] with “bute a wah bitweonen” (4.1225-1227) [only a wall between] (144). The passage emphasizes the physicality of the encounter: the anchoress has Christ’s “blisfule bodi” when He reveals Himself to her “fleschliche ant licomliche” (4.1227) [in a fleshly and bodily way] (144) and, as her lover, seeks to fulfill her needs. Christ is a concerned lover, who appears to the anchoress and converses intimately with her. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, the relationship between human and divine is expressed in terms of human, erotic love.

The erotic overtones of the architectural allegory and theme of Christ as lover seem on the surface to contradict the author's emphasis on virginity and strict physical restraint, but devotional and erotic language are not always opposing forces. Susannah Mary Chewning describes the use of erotic imagery and language in mystical and anchoritic literature as “a delicately contrived paradox regarding the virginal nature of the mystic in her physical existence and in her spiritual role as sexualized bride of Christ,” a paradox which “frequently disrupt[s] modern readers and their expectations of medieval spirituality.”⁶⁴ Chewning maintains that:

because of the controversial nature of the presence of the Song of Songs within spiritual works, as well as the tenuous condition of the feminine within medieval theological discourse, the choice here to sensualize Christ and his relationship to a feminine speaker does seem to indicate an original use of such imagery, at least within twelfth century [sic] English mysticism.⁶⁵

It is difficult to say exactly how “controversial” the presence of Song of Songs imagery in spiritual works was in the thirteenth century, well after the first blush of affective piety and

⁶⁴ Susannah Mary Chewning, “Mi bodi henge / wið þi bodi” : The Paradox of Sensuality in *Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*,” *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made Flesh*, ed. Susannah Mary Chewning (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 183.

⁶⁵ Chewning, “The Paradox of Sensuality,” 188.

individual and Marian commentaries on the Song of Songs. Denys Turner suggests that the language of eros is so deeply ingrained in medieval Christian spiritual discourse “as to have become the near universal, spontaneous and unselfconscious idiom of that relationship. Nor [sic] only of how Christians speak of it, it is as much the idiom, the mood and the feel of their experience.”⁶⁶ Although erotic language and images become universal and spontaneous in religious discourse, they nevertheless disrupt the reader’s expectations of a spiritual text. Part of what makes the erotic language and imagery shocking is its juxtaposition with instructions to maintain strict sensory restriction, a juxtaposition which is often commented upon but rarely identified as a rhetorical strategy. In the *Ancrene Wisse*, the disruption occurs as a result of the apparent inconsistency between the sensory restriction emphasized for the anchoress in the outer rule and the sensory indulgence allowed her by the inner rule. In her discussion of erotic discourse in early medieval English religious literature, Lara Farina highlights the tension created by the author between the anchoress’ withdrawal and the sensual imagery used throughout the text, noting that the anchoress’ bodily senses and openings are zones of potential pleasure as well as danger.⁶⁷ I would go further and argue that those zones are pleasurable precisely because they are potentially dangerous. Desire, according to Foucault, is not simply repressed by power, but rather created by the prohibitions of the law. Power has a negative relation, that is it “can ‘do’ nothing but say no. . . ; what it produces, if anything, is absences and gaps; it overlooks elements, introduces discontinuities, separates what is joined, and marks off boundaries. Its effects take the general form of limit and lack.”⁶⁸ By prohibiting certain actions,

⁶⁶ Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs*, Cistercian Studies Series 156 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995) 25.

⁶⁷ Lara Farina, *Erotic Discourse and Early English Religious Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 46-48.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction (La volonté de savoir)*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 83.

power creates a lack and that lack constitutes desire.⁶⁹ Thus, when the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* emphasizes the importance of sensual restriction and sexual purity, he creates a lack that creates sensual and sexual desire. The lack is then highlighted through his explicit invocation of sensual and erotic imagery.

Christ as Lover and the Song of Songs

Although erotic language and imagery are recognized as a common feature of anchoritic or mystical discourse, very few scholars have attempted to clarify precisely what is erotic about the language and how exactly the erotic functions within a spiritual discourse. In scholarly writings about devotional eros and erotic allegory, there has been a general lack of specificity of terms such as *erotic*, *sensual* and other similar words which can often lead us to forget “just what in the world we think we are talking about.”⁷⁰ Before proceeding with my analysis of erotic allegory in the *Ancrene Wisse*, I will briefly discuss how such terms have been used in scholarly discourse and attempt to define their use for my own purposes. Two authors in particular, Nancy F. Partner and Lara Farina, represent opposite ends of the spectrum and demonstrate why it is important to clarify what precisely is meant by the term “erotic.”

In “Did Mystics Have Sex?,” Partner denounces the scholarly tendency to sterilize mystical discourse by referring to the sexual nature of descriptions of mystical experience as “erotic.” She writes: “In every essay I have read, the blunt word ‘sex’ is absent, replaced by the

⁶⁹ Foucault writes “the law is what constitutes both desire and the lack on which it is predicated. Where there is desire, the power relation is already present: an illusion, then, to denounce this relation for a repression exerted after the event; but vanity as well, to go questing after a desire that is beyond the reach of power” (*The History of Sexuality*, 81-82).

⁷⁰ Nancy F. Partner, “Did Mystics Have Sex?,” *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 303.

politely distant ‘erotic’; the act of intercourse is euphemized as ‘marriage,’ or disembodied as ‘union,’ and there are no orgasms at all.”⁷¹ The problem, however, does not seem to be with the word “erotic,” which by definition refers specifically to that which is sexually stimulating, but rather with the attitude described by Partner. In its true meaning, the term *erotic* is indeed appropriate in an allegorical or devotional context, because it is not limited to the physical as the term sexual tends to be. The term itself, then, is not the problem; the problem is the tendency to try to “clean up” the allegory and to separate the erotic and allegorical from the sexual.

Farina falls on the opposite end of the spectrum from Partner; she has a tendency to conflate the meaning of the term *sensual* with *erotic* or *sexual*. She defines the erotic as that which involves “pleasure in the movement of the body.”⁷² While she sets out to complicate the history of sexuality, she is far too quick to equate the physical with the sexual. Farina’s erotic reading of *Ancrene Wisse* focuses on chastity and sensuality, but it does not elaborate on explicitly *sexual* eroticism of the Song of Songs and architectural allegory. Farina’s observation that the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* makes use of sensory detail and material imagery in the *Ancrene Wisse* is not particularly new. Robertson, for example, has argued that the devotional program of the *Ancrene Wisse* was “quotidian” specifically in an attempt to create religious practices that were deemed accessible to women. Farina, however, identifies this same tendency toward the sensual as “erotic.” But the sensual does not necessarily relate to the sexual or the erotic; it only means that something has to do with the senses.

Imagery that invokes the physical senses is sensual; it is not necessarily erotic. As Lochrie notes, body and sexuality “are not equivalent even though modern scholars of medieval

⁷¹ Partner, “Did Mystics Have Sex?,” 302.

⁷² Farina, *Erotic Discourse*, 2.

religious practices and female spirituality implicitly make this association.”⁷³ As the sensual appeals to the physical, though, it can *become* erotic or sexual. By generalizing the term *erotic* and avoiding detailed discussion of the more explicitly erotic images found in the *Ancrene Wisse*, Farina further sterilizes the term erotic by actually avoiding the sexual undertones of the *sponsa Christi* imagery that she cites as evidence but never fully analyzes.⁷⁴ The *Ancrene Wisse* is not erotic because it invokes the *sponsa Christi* theme but because, like the Song of Songs, it uses imagery and language of desire, embrace, and penetration to describe the affective relationship between the anchoress and God. The erotic ought to have a more specific meaning than just sensation generally—it must point toward love, longing, desire.

Eros is a longing for completion in and union with an other. In the case of physical, human eros, this type of love seeks sexual union. In the case of spiritual eros, this type of love is directed toward God and seeks union with God. Human, physical eros is used powerfully as an allegory for spiritual longing and desire. Allegorically, the physical, sexual characteristics of eros are invoked to create desire within the human reader. Although eros and the erotic can refer to either spiritual or physical desire, the sexual (that is, the physically erotic) is of central importance within the context of allegorical eros. Farina is not necessarily wrong to relate the sensual to the erotic, but she does not fully illustrate how the two are related and *how and why* they are being used. The sexual is explicitly invoked for its physicality, because affective piety is intended to use the physical and sensual for the service of the spiritual. The interpretation of the erotic as spiritual does not necessarily result in “primly reconfigur[ing] [it] into a known

⁷³ Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 18. Bynum has also cautioned against the tendency to conflate the body and sexuality. Bynum writes that “the recent outpouring of work on the history of the body, especially the female body, has largely equated the body with sexuality and understood discipline or control of body as the rejection of sex or of woman” (“The Female Body and Religious Practice,” 182).

⁷⁴ Farina, *Erotic Discourse*, 48-52.

matrix of orthodox, pious meaning” any more than the most gruesome description of the Crucifixion could be considered “prim” simply because its ultimate meaning is religious and its purpose is devotional.⁷⁵

The fact is that the erotic allegory truly is “metaphorical code for the supernatural” with an “ultimate referent [that] is outside the range of human perception and understanding” by more than just “doctrinal fiat.”⁷⁶ It is not simply declared to be so, it is *used* as such. The ultimate referent—the object of desire—is God and is, to some extent, outside the range of human perception; however, the purpose of affective piety in general and erotic allegory in particular is to bring God *into the range of human perception*. The physical, sexual act is also a referent of the erotic allegory, along with all the emotions and sensations associated with it. The invocation of affect does not “clean up” the messiness of the senses and the passions. It uses the senses and the passions with all their messy, carnal power to bring a physical being into union with God—and to bring God into the messiness of carnal humanity. If the allegory is forced to be “prim,” it loses its power.

Bernard’s sermons on the Song of Songs are frequently cited as evidence for the use of erotic imagery in mystical and contemplative contexts; however, the Bernardine sermons represent only one of many allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs that influenced medieval devotion.⁷⁷ The Song of Songs is “a poem charged with a sense of sexual fulfillment

⁷⁵ Partner, “Did Mystics Have Sex?,” 302

⁷⁶ Partner, “Did Mystics Have Sex?,” 302.

⁷⁷ Much of Farina’s chapter on the *Ancrene Wisse* is dedicated to *sponsa Christi* metaphors and the Bernardine tradition, but she never actually examines the direct references to the Song of Songs found in the text, nor does she consider Song of Songs commentaries as interpretive tools for further analysis of the erotic discourse she writes about. It is important to understand the complexities of *sponsa Christi* imagery and to consider more than the Bernardine tradition in devotion.

anticipated.”⁷⁸ Unlike the other books of the Bible, the Song “makes no direct mention of God; instead, it celebrates the passionate joys and sorrows of unnamed lovers.”⁷⁹ When early Christian exegetes were faced with the erotic language and imagery in the Song of Songs, they had difficulty reconciling it with the Christian emphasis on virginity. Origen solved this problem by using allegory to interpret the Song and strip it of its carnal, literal level in order to expose an underlying spiritual message of divine love. In his commentary, Origen interprets the eroticism of the Song as a description of the union of Christ and the Church or of the Word and the Christian soul, rather than referring to human, sexual union.⁸⁰ Origen’s allegorical solution “remained the basis for all subsequent interpretation (*allegoresis*) of the Song’s veiled meaning (*allegoria*),” and the Song was interpreted allegorically throughout the medieval Christian exegetical tradition: the bridegroom representing Christ, and the bride representing the Church, the soul, or (from the twelfth century on) the Virgin Mary.⁸¹ From the twelfth century until late in the Middle Ages, all three interpretations (ecclesiological, individual, and Mariological) remained interdependent.⁸²

Although individual images or phrases were interpreted as types of the soul or the Virgin, particularly in the liturgy for Marian feasts, the vast majority of pre-twelfth century interpretations were ecclesiological, reading Christ’s love for His Church into the passionate

⁷⁸ Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, 84.

⁷⁹ Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 1. As Denys Turner notes, the problem posed by the erotic content of the Songs is not only that it expresses sexual desire, but that the sexual desire is not even certainly within the confines of marriage. There is no actual context provided for the Song of Songs. Origen read the Song as a wedding song to legitimize the erotic desire expressed by the text’s literal sense, but in fact, “the text is careless in providing clear indications that the lovers are even married” (*Eros and Allegory*, 84).

⁸⁰ Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 2.

⁸¹ E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) 4; Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 4.

⁸² Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, 39.

dialogue of the Song. Beginning in the twelfth century, commentators choose to exploit, rather than avoid, the Song's erotic potential and frequently read the bride of the Song as an allegory for the soul or as the Virgin Mary. Individual interpretations focus on "personalistic spirituality, in which the Song of Songs was increasingly read as a dynamic guide to the quest of each human being for the union with God."⁸³ The bride in the Song is the soul that desires God, the bridegroom. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs are perhaps the best known and most influential example of an individual interpretation. Bernard uses allegorical interpretations of the Song to provide "an objective justification for a rhetorical use of the text" on a literal level, and then uses that literal, erotic sense to explore the passionate love between the individual soul and God.⁸⁴

Mariological interpretations also choose to highlight the literal sense of the Song. Rather than deliteralizing the Song, Mariological interpretations "reliteralize" it, placing it within the historical biography of the Virgin Mary.⁸⁵ Individual images or phrases from the Song were interpreted as types of the Virgin, particularly in the liturgy or sermons for Marian feasts such as the Assumption. These liturgical uses of the Song in Marian contexts "laid the ground for a Marian interpretation," but it was not until the twelfth century that theologians began to interpret the Song "from the single view-point of Mary's historical relationship to Christ."⁸⁶ Honorius of Autun was probably the first to write an entirely Mariological exposition of the Song of Songs.⁸⁷

⁸³ Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 123.

⁸⁴ Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 96.

⁸⁵ I borrow the term from Astell. See Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 16.

⁸⁶ Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 43; see also Rachel Fulton, "'Quae Est Ista,'" 61-67.

⁸⁷ There is some disagreement among scholars as to who wrote the earliest Mariological exposition of the Song. Matter and Fulton attribute the first exposition to Honorius but credits Rupert with the first formal commentary (Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 155; Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 289). Astell and Turner, on the other

Honorius' exposition primarily focuses on the Assumption, beginning his commentary as a response to questions about why the Song was used in the liturgy for that feast. The commentaries of Rupert of Deutz and Alan of Lille incorporate other events of Mary's life, including the Annunciation, into the dialogue of the Song. These Marian commentaries, as Rachel Fulton demonstrates, reflect an emerging interest in interpersonal relationships, a desire to bridge a gap between God and human, self and other, that she sees as a crucial stage in the development of affective piety in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. The relationship between Mary and Christ was central to discussions of the individual's relationship with the world and with God.⁸⁸

Alan of Lille's commentary has not received the same attention as the Marian commentaries of Rupert and Honorius in recent studies of the Song's commentary tradition. Ann W. Astell argues that exegetes favoring the Marian interpretation use the Virgin Mary as a "unique type of, and model for, longing for God."⁸⁹ Mary becomes, Astell argues, the *alter ego* for the exegete to identify with his own longing for God. While Fulton agrees that commentators like Rupert of Deutz identify with Mary personally, she takes issue with Astell's assessment of Alan's commentary, arguing instead that it was "the product of the university lecture hall rather than the private contemplative cell."⁹⁰ She describes the *Elucidatio* as "stilted and pedantic, wholly lacking in the fervor so evident in the other commentaries of a personal devotion to the

hand, consider Rupert's exposition to be the first (Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 43; Turner, *Eros and Allegory*, 306 n. 1). In either case, the two wrote around the same period and do not appear to have influenced one another directly.

⁸⁸ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 195-203.

⁸⁹ Astell, *The Song of Songs*, 68.

⁹⁰ Fulton, "The Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs in the High Middle Ages," (Diss., Columbia University, 1994) 484.

Virgin,” concluding that the text amounts to the lecture or student notes of a master of theology, not an impassioned devotional/contemplative exercise.⁹¹ E. Ann Matter also notes the stark contrast of Alan’s “calm, didactic voice” as compared to Rupert’s “breathless devotional tone.”⁹² Alan’s voice is more distant and didactic than Rupert’s mystical identification with Mary. Alan may not use her as an alter ego—he does separate himself from Mary’s experiences—but he clearly holds her up as a model in his commentary. My aim in reading Alan’s commentary alongside the *Ancrene Wisse* is not to imply that it was necessarily used as a source, but rather to demonstrate how another Marian bridal allegory functions in a didactic, exemplary (rather than personal, mystical) context.

Like so many details about his life, the date and circumstances surrounding the composition of Alan’s Song of Songs commentary, the *Elucidatio in Cantica Canticorum*, remain uncertain. A well-known master of theology at Paris in the twelfth century, Alan wrote a number of handbooks for his students in addition to his more famous *Anticlaudianus* and *De planctu naturae*. The commentary was requested by the prior of Cluny and may have been written toward the end of Alan’s life after he had gone to live as a monk of Cîteaux.⁹³ While this will not be an in-depth look at the *Elucidatio*, I would like to highlight a few passages which are notable when read alongside the Marian allusions in the *Ancrene Wisse*. Alan’s text contains a number of interesting parallels to the *Ancrene Wisse*, in particular the paradox of the sexualized

⁹¹ Fulton, “The Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs,” 484.

⁹² Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 165.

⁹³ Astell places the *Elucidatio* toward the end of Alan’s life, but Fulton argues it was earlier and reflects his work as a teacher more than his retreat to a life of contemplation. The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* was probably not Cistercian, but he was influenced by Cistercian materials. The *Ancrene Wisse* was influenced by Aelred of Rievaulx’s *De institutione inclusarum* and makes extensive use of Bernard of Clairvaux. On the author’s use of Aelred, see “Introduction,” *Aelred of Rievaulx’s De institutione inclusarum: Two English Versions*, ed. John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, EETS, o.s. 287 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) xxxviii-xliii.

virgin, Mary as model for religious life, and the image of Mary's womb as an anchorhold for Christ.

According to Alan of Lille's *Elucidatio*, the opening line of the Song, "Osculetur me osculo oris sui" [Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth] is spoken by the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation: "petit ergo, ut in se celebretur Incarnatio, et ut Spiritus sanctus superveniat" [she sought, therefore, that the Incarnation be celebrated in her and that the Holy Spirit would come upon her] (Col. 53D-54A).⁹⁴ The moment of conception involves, as it does in human conception, erotic desire. Mary is "sponsi optans praesentiam, desiderans gloriosam conceptionem" [wishing for the presence of the spouse, desiring the glorious conception] (Col. 53B). The Incarnation is *celebrated* within Mary's body, just as the Mass—the transubstantiation of Christ—is celebrated. Alan reiterates that Mary remained virginal when she conceived, stating that the Holy Spirit "fuit tabernaculum vel umbraculum in ea contra concupiscentiae incentivum" [was a tent or shelter against the instigation of desire] (Col. 65C). Mary's desire for God was not concupiscence. Both "tabernaculum" and "umbraculum" have the additional connotation of tabernacle or shrine, recalling typological interpretations of the tabernacle and Arc of the Covenant in The Hebrew Scriptures as Mary's womb. This typological reference continues to emphasize the importance of sacred enclosures. Alan is very emphatic on the non-carnal nature of her desire. Mary says:

"non steti rigida elatione, non ambulans inquieta curiositate, non jacui resolute voluptate: ideo plena gratia apud Deum per humilitatem, apud angelos per virginitatem, apud homines per fecunditatem" (Col. 65C-66A)

⁹⁴ Song of Songs 1:1. Alan of Lille, *Elucidatio in Cantica Canticorum*, PL 210, Col. 51-110. Citations will be given parenthetically in the text. All translations of Alan's text, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

[I did not stand with rigid elation, nor was I walking with unquiet curiosity, nor did I lie with resolved voluptuousness: therefore, full of grace near God through humility, near the angels through virginity, among men through fecundity.]

Alan emphasizes Mary's simultaneous desire and purity. Although he calls it desire (Mary is "optans" [wishing for] the presence of her spouse and "desiderans" [desiring] to conceive), Alan is careful to avoid attributing carnality to the desire Mary felt at the Annunciation (Col. 53B). This particular description checks the erotic potential of Mary's direct experience of God, which he describes elsewhere as "extasis" [ecstasy] (Col. 66C).⁹⁵ Desire is problematic, as is Mary's paradoxical virginal/maternal body. When the bride describes herself saying "nigra sum sed formosa" [I am black but beautiful], Alan interprets this as a reference to the paradox of Mary's virginal maternity: "'nigra sum,' id est gravida, et ita videor virginitate non esse integra 'sed' tamen 'formosa,' quia virgo mentis et corporis integritate" ["I am black," that is, pregnant, and thus it may seem she is not intact in her virginity, "but," nevertheless, "I am beautiful," because she is a virgin with integrity of mind and of body] (Col. 57C).⁹⁶ There is a contradiction between her two physical states—maternity and intact virginity—but "Virgo rei veritate" [she is Virgin in the truth of the matter] (Col. 59A).

Throughout his commentary, Alan endeavors to demonstrate Mary's role as a model of living for all the faithful. His interpretation of the lines "quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino" [because your breasts are better than wine] explains that the virgin's breasts, unlike those of most mothers, are not tainted by the stain of lust or the flesh.⁹⁷ Mary nourishes Christ with the milk

⁹⁵ See Col. 66C-66D, discussed below. Rupert's commentary is much less concerned with the problematic nature of desire, which contributes to its "fervor" noted by Matter and Fulton.

⁹⁶ Song of Songs 1:4.

⁹⁷ Song of Songs 1:1. Alan writes that Mary's breasts are "sunt virginitas mentis, integritas carnis. Haec propinant vinum aeternae delectationis, et mel jucundae quietis. Haec ubera superant omne vinum, id est viduarum et conjugum statum" [are virginity of the mind, integrity of the flesh. They offer the drink of the wine of eternal

from her breasts which “non saperet carnis lubricum, sed virginitatis antidotum” [did not taste of the slime of the flesh, but of the antidote of her virginity] (Col. 54B). In addition to nourishing Christ, Mary nourishes all the faithful with the milk of her two breasts, which Alan interprets as “duo exemplaria bene vivendi, castitas et humilitas, quas nobis in exemplum proposuit” [two examples of living well, chastity and humility, which she offers as an example for us] (Col. 54C). The Virgin Mary’s life is a nourishing example for all Christians. Alan returns to this interpretation of Mary’s breasts representing her example of virginity and humility, with an added architectural element, when he discusses the line “ego murus et ubera mea sicut turris ex quo facta sum coram eo quasi pacem repperiens” [I am a wall and my breasts are like towers from which I become in his presence like one finding peace].⁹⁸ The Song is full of architectural imagery, and Alan here uses these images to further the idea that Mary is a model of the life of virginity. Alan explains that Mary is a wall because she has “firmum propositum . . . virginitatem servandi, quam Deo vovit” [a firm purpose of preserving her virginity, which she vowed to God] and her breasts (her humility and virginity) are “sicut turris” [like towers] because they “immobiliter . . . custodiunt” [guard [her] immovably] (Col. 107C, 108A). Mary’s life of virginity makes her a model specifically for young girls. Reading the line “Ideo adolescentulae dilexerunt te” [therefore the young girls loved you],⁹⁹ Alan writes:

Quanto magis forma ejus declaratur, tanto magis aliae virgines ad illius imitationem et dilectionem invitantur. Et eleganter respectu Virginis matris aliquae virgines

delight, the honey of joyful rest. These breasts are better than all wine, that is the state of widows or of wives] (Col. 55A).

⁹⁸ Song of Songs 8:10.

⁹⁹ Song of Songs 1:2.

adolescentulae dicuntur, quia haec mater, hae filiae; haec regina, hae famulae; haec matron, hae adolescentulae; haec magistra, hae discipulae. (Col. 55C)

[The more her *forma* is proclaimed, the more other virgins are invited to imitate and love her. And other virgins are elegantly called young maidens with respect to the Virgin mother because she is the mother, they the daughters; she is the queen, they are the handmaidens; she is the matron, they the young maidens; she is the teacher, they are the students.]¹⁰⁰

The term “forma” can have the connotation of physical form or beauty, but it can also mean a mold or pattern. In this case, the very characteristic that makes Mary beautiful, her purity, is also what makes her an exemplar for those of the professed religious life. This passage also makes explicit that it is young women who are called to this life of virginity in imitation of Mary.

Alan compares the Virgin’s womb to a cell when he expounds upon the verse “Introduxit me in cellaria sua” [He brought me in his cellar], writing “Rex regum et Dominus dominantium introduxit se in cellam virginalis uteri” [The King of kings and Lord of lords brought himself into the cell of the virginal womb] (Col. 56B).¹⁰¹ At the end of her life, Christ repays His mother for His bodily Incarnation with bodily Assumption: “consequenter post ascensionem introduxit Virginem in cellam paradise” [consequently after the ascension he brought the Virgin into the cell of paradise] (Col. 56B). Christ and Mary each offer the other a type of enclosure in which the other can remain separated from the evils of the world. The relationship is reciprocal. Alan explores the play on words between “cella,” meaning *room* or *cell*; “cellarius,” *storeroom*; and “caelum,” *heaven*. He writes:

Eleganter autem nomine cellae vel cellarii significatur proprietates coeli; quia (ut praemittamus allusionem vocabuli) sicut in cellario reponuntur vina quae hominem

¹⁰⁰ It is interesting that in this passage, Alan describes the relationship between Mary and other virgins in much the same terms as the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* uses to describe the relationship between the inner and outer rules—the relationship of lady to maid servant.

¹⁰¹ Song of Songs 1:3.

satiant, inebriant, a curis saecularibus alienant; sic coelestis beatitudo beatos ita inebriat, quod solitarios reddit et omnino ab amore terrenorum secludit. . . . Et sicut aliquis existens in cella, ut solitarius eremita, seclusus est a strepitu saeculi, ita aliquis existens in coelo a tumultu mundi (Col. 56B-56C).

[The nature of heaven is signified elegantly by the name cell or cellar, because (in order to allow for word-play) just as wines which satisfy and inebriate man and alienate man from worldly cares are stored in the cellar; in the same way heavenly blessedness inebriates the saints, because it restores solitaires and entirely secludes them from love of earthly things. . . . And just as someone living in a cell, such as the solitary hermit, is secluded from the noise of the world, likewise someone living in heaven has been secluded from the commotion of the world.]

Alan here compares the solitary life with a glimpse of the joys of heaven. The cell and heaven, like Mary's womb, allow for protection or seclusion from the chaos and distraction of the world. Mary's womb as an anchoritic cell (which I will discuss at greater length below) is perhaps the most poignant architectural allegory in the *Ancrene Wisse*. Christ's entry into the cell of Mary's womb makes enclosed life into a direct form of *imitatio Christi*. The relationship between Christ and Mary is one of reciprocal protection—Mary shelters Christ in her womb and, in return, Christ brings Mary into heaven, sheltering her body from the corruption of death. The image is used often to describe anchoritic life after the *Ancrene Wisse*, but I am not familiar with any earlier uses of the image. Alan returns to the idea of the contemplative life represented in the wine cellar. He expounds on the cellar as referring to the Old Testament, knowledge of which Christ gave to Mary, and then he expands on this idea as he discusses the verse “fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo” [prop me up with flowers, surround me with apples, because I am languishing with love].¹⁰² Alan writes that the wine cellar represents Mary's direct experience of God, her complete removal from the chaos of the world is rapture and ecstasy:

¹⁰² Song of Songs 2:5.

Vel per cellam vinariam intelligitur mentis excessus, qui et extasis dicitur, quo Virgo ad coelestium contemplationem rapiebatur quae et apotheosis, id est deificatio vel theophania divina apparitio nuncupatur, in hanc Virgo ab amore terrenorum suspensa rapiebatur (Col. 66C-66D).

[Or, departure of the mind is understood through the wine cellar, which is also called ecstasy. By this ecstasy the Virgin was carried off to contemplation of heavenly things which is also apotheosis, that is, deification or *theophania*, called divine apparition. The Virgin was carried off into this, suspended from the love of earthly things.]

Seclusion from the world facilitates contemplation of God, which in turn allows Mary to be caught up entirely into the ecstasy of beatific vision.

These excerpts of Alan's *Elucidatio* reveal characteristics of the Marian bridal allegory which are also major themes within the *Ancrene Wisse*: the attribution of desire to Mary at the moment of the Incarnation, the contrast between Mary's virginity and maternity and between her virginity and her desire, the dual emphasis on exemplary chastity and humility, and the importance of withdrawal and enclosure. These elements of the Marian bride will inform my analysis of the erotic allegories within the *Ancrene Wisse*.

The anchoress as Marian bride

The individual and Mariological interpretations of the Song of Songs both have an impact on the erotic language incorporated into the *Ancrene Wisse*. The emphasis on Mary's desire for God at the moment of the Annunciation found in Mariological interpretations makes them fundamental to understanding the allusions to the Annunciation in the *Ancrene Wisse*. As we saw above in Alan's commentary, the opening line of the Song, "Osculetur me osculo oris sui" is attributed to Mary. When Gabriel announces to Mary that she will become the mother of Christ, she desires

her lover, Christ, and “long[s] for the conception of the Word within her.”¹⁰³ In devotional literature, Mary regularly refers to Christ as her father, brother, and spouse. Sarah Stanbury notes that “the flexible uses of categories of family, sexuality, gender, and the body are a marked feature of late medieval devotional language and imagery generally, appearing throughout Middle English religious lyrics as well as in meditative guides and treatises” and argues that religious lyrics eroticize incest and transcend taboo “as a trope for the holy.”¹⁰⁴ Mary is both mother and lover of her Son, yet another paradoxical relationship embodied by the Virgin Mary. This erotic, incestuous language is found in the Song of Songs, when the lover refers to the beloved as “soror mea sponsa” [my sister, my spouse].¹⁰⁵ Rupert interprets this verse as a description of Mary’s desire for Christ at the Annunciation with even more passion than Alan. In his *Commentaria in Cantica Canticorum*, he describes the verse as a sudden, joyous exclamation brought on by “inundatio gaudii, vis amoris, torrens voluptatis” [a flood of joy, a violence of love, a rush of pleasure] at the promise of a kiss from the Lord’s mouth.¹⁰⁶ God “semetipsum revelavit” [revealed himself] to Mary, His spouse, just as He “schaweð” (4.1226) himself to the anchoress in the Eucharist, and she responds with ecstatic anticipation.¹⁰⁷

The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* uses the same verse from the Song of Songs, the “luue boc” (2.805), to describe the special relationship between the anchoress and Christ. The anchoress is “Godes spuse” [God’s spouse] and Christ “spekeð ant cleopeð” her “to him se

¹⁰³ Turner, *Eros and Allegory* 119.

¹⁰⁴ Stanbury, “Gender and Voice in Middle English Religious Lyrics,” *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005) 229, 230.

¹⁰⁵ Song of Songs 4:9, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Cantica Canticorum*, 2 volumes, ed. Helmut and Ilse Deutz, *Fontes Christiani* 70 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005) 120.

¹⁰⁷ Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Cantica*, 122.

luveliche” (2.811-812) [speaks and calls [her] to him so lovingly] (86). But Christ is a jealous lover; the author warns the anchoress, saying:

Hald te i ti chambre. Ne fed tu nawt wiðuten þine gate tichnes, ah hald wiðinnen þin hercnunge, þi speche, ant ti sihðe, ant tun feaste hare zeten—muð ant ehe ant eare; for nawt ha beoð bilokene inwið wah oðer wal þe þes zeten openið, bute azein Godes sonde, ant liveneð of sawle. (2.813-818)

[Stay in your chamber, and do not feed your kids outside your gate, but keep your listening, your speech and your sight within, and close fast their gates, mouth and eye and ear. She is locked in for nothing, inside fence or wall, if she opens these gates, except to God's messenger and the soul's nourishment.] (86)

The anchorhold and anchoress' body are both enclosed, private chambers—places reserved for Christ, her spouse. This passage highlights both the structural and bodily enclosure of the anchoress. The author draws a connection between the anchoress' experience and the Annunciation when he writes that the anchoress is only to open to “Godes sonde” and “liveneð of sawle.” Gabriel, God's messenger, was able to enter Mary's enclosed, private space just as “liveneð of sawle” can penetrate the anchoress' enclosed space and body in the Eucharist.

In Part One, the author uses erotic language to describe the anchoress' Eucharistic devotional practice as an encounter between lovers, calling to mind individual and Mariological interpretations of the Song of Songs. The author describes the experience of the anchoress' meditation at the consecration by combining language reminiscent of the Annunciation with erotic imagery of Christ as lover:

Efter þe measse cos, hwen þe preost sacreð—þer forȝeoteð al þe world, þer beoð al ut of bodi, þer i sperclinde luue bicluppeð ower leofmon, þe into ower breostes bur is iliht of heouene, ant haldeð him heteueste aþet he habbe iȝettet ow al þet ȝe eauer easkið. (1.241-244)

[After the kiss of peace when the priest consecrates the host, forget all the world, be wholly out of your body, embrace in shining love your lover who has alighted into the bower of your heart from heaven, and hold him as tight as you can until he has granted all you ever ask.] (59)

The anchoress is encouraged both to forget her body and to be physically intimate with Christ, her lover. She is to “bicluppeth” her “leofmon” and hold Him within the secret place of her heart. The anchoress is instructed to hold on to her lover until He gives her what she wants. This passage evokes the Song of Songs, where the bride says: “inveni quem diligit anima mea tenui eum nec dimittam” [I sought Him whom my heart loves and I held him and I would not let him go].¹⁰⁸ Christ “is iliht of heouene” from heaven into her “breostes bur.” The Middle English word “bour,” along with the verb “lighten,” was commonly used in Middle English descriptions of the Annunciation, to describe the womb, and in descriptions of personal devotion, the heart.¹⁰⁹ The anchoress’ heart, like Mary’s womb, is compared to a lady’s bower, a private chamber or garden.¹¹⁰ This reference to a garden recalls both the *hortus conclusus* of the Song of Songs and the erotic garden in the *Roman de la rose*.¹¹¹ Christ is descending to the anchoress as He did to Mary at the moment of the Annunciation, into the enclosed body of a solitary virgin.

The anchoress literally receives Christ into her body by consuming the consecrated Host. In one sense, the author removes the particularity from the anchoress’ experience of Christ by locating it in the Eucharist—this reception of Christ is shared by everyone who witnesses the consecration or receives the Host. And yet it seems that, despite being a shared experience

¹⁰⁸ Song of Songs 3:4. Savage and Watson suggest that this passage alludes to the story of Jacob wrestling with the God found in Genesis 32:24-26. Jacob refuses to release the angel, saying: “respondit non dimittam te nisi benedixeris mihi.” *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrone Wisse and Associated Works*, ed. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 59. Unlike Savage and Watson, Gunn also associates the line with the Song of Songs. See Gunn, *Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality*, 61.

¹⁰⁹ “bour,” *The Middle English Dictionary*, 25 April 2008, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/m/med/>; “lighten,” *MED*. These words are common in descriptions of both the Annunciation and devotional experience. The parallels between Mary’s experience of the Annunciation and private devotion have been commented on, but still require further inquiry.

¹¹⁰ Roberta Gilchrist discusses women’s physical space within the medieval castle in “The Contested Garden: Gender, Space and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle,” *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London: Routledge, 1999) 128-145.

¹¹¹ Song of Songs 4:12-16, 5:1; *Roman de la Rose* ll. 461-628.

(shared by the community), it is nevertheless an intensely private one. The anchoress is separated by a wall from the consecration, which on the one hand removes her from the immediacy of the experience which is being seen by the congregation. But this wall also makes *her* experience a private, solitary one. Unlike the priest or the congregation, the anchoress witnesses the consecration within the privacy of her anchorhold. She has privacy and the opportunity for intimacy not available to the unenclosed.

By alluding to the Annunciation to describe the anchoress' Eucharistic meditation, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* likens the Consecration to the Incarnation. In each of these descriptions, Christ *becomes* flesh; however, the Eucharist is not a liturgical commemoration of Christ's Incarnation, but of His Passion and death. The lover who descends to the anchoress is the "ilke blisfule bodi þet com of þe meiden ant deide o þe rode" (4.1224-1225) [that same blissful body which came out of the maiden and died on the cross] (144). The flesh the anchoress desires is Christ's crucified, sacrificial body. The use of erotic language from the Song to refer to the Annunciation, Crucifixion, or Consecration expresses the human (whether the anchoress' or Mary's) anticipation and longing for Christ's physical, human presence—a desire for the redemptive fulfillment of Christ's Incarnation, death and Resurrection. Thus, Annunciation imagery in the *Ancrene Wisse* is never entirely separated from Passion imagery. Just as Christ's death, His purpose, is inherent in His Incarnation, Mary's suffering and compassion are implicit in her initial assent to God.

In the same way, the author's discussion of Christ's two anchorholds, Mary's womb and the tomb joins Christ's Incarnation and death into a single image. In Part Six of the *Ancrene Wisse*, the author combines enclosed anchorhold and fortified castle allegories representing the virginal female bodies of both the anchoress and the Virgin Mary in his description of Christ as a

recluse within Mary's womb.¹¹² As a virgin, Mary's womb is sealed and protected, and Christ is confined within its "nearow wununge" (6.419) [narrow dwelling] (186). The author calls "Marie wombe" and the "stanene þruh" [this tomb] Christ's "ancre-huses" and compares them to the anchoress' two anchorhouses, "þe licome" [the body] and "þe uttre hus, þet is as þe utter wah abute the castel" [the outer house, which is like the outer wall around a castle] (6.422, 424-425, 430-431; 186-187). Mary remained a perpetual virgin; her womb—Christ's anchorhold—was closed when Christ entered it at the Annunciation and remained closed when she gave birth to Him. Like Mary's womb, the anchoress' body should remain "wiðuten bruche ant wem" (6.429-430) [without a break or stain].

In the image of the womb as anchorhold, the anchoress is aligned both with Mary, as enclosed female recipient of Christ's body, and with Christ, as the one enclosed within a "nearow" space (6.419). Christ enters into the anchoress' body, as He entered Mary's. If, however, the anchorhold is a womb, the anchoress not only imitates Mary carrying Christ, she also imitates Christ within the womb. Within the anchorhold, she grows to become more like Christ. As in Alan's commentary, where Christ repays Mary for providing the cell of her womb to protect Him from the world by bringing her into the cell of heaven at the end of her life, there is a relationship of mutual protection created between Christ and the anchoress.

The reciprocity of the architectural images in the *Ancrene Wisse* and the relationship between Christ and the anchoress becomes even more complex when the author reverses their roles in Part Four of the *Ancrene Wisse* and describes Christ, rather than the anchoress, as both

¹¹² *Ancrene Wisse* 6.417-431.

the architectural stronghold and open, pervious body. Christ is now the fortress in which the anchoress takes shelter:

Ʒef þe feondes ferd—þet beoð his temptatiuns—asailið ow swiðe, ondswerieð him ant seggeð, *Metati sumus castra iuxta lapidem adiutorii. Porro Philistiim venerunt in Afech.* ‘Ʒe, Lauerd, wunder is; we beoð iloget her bi þe þet art stan of help, tur of treowe sucurs, castel of strengðe, ant te deofles ferd is woddre upon us þen upon eani opre.’ (4.1231-1236)

[If the enemy’s army, who are his temptations, assail you strongly, answer him and say, *Metati sumus castra iuxta lapidem adiutorii; porro Philistiim venerunt in Afech* (1 Samuel 4:1-2): ‘Yes Lord, it is wonderful, here we are, camping beside you who are the stone of help, the tower of true succor, the castle of strength, and the devil’s army is more enraged against us than against any others.’] (144)

Before the anchoress was a castle, defending herself against the world, the devil and her flesh;

Christ now becomes her castle and defense. The anchoress is instructed to:

Flih to his wunden. Muchel he luuede us þe lette makien swucche þurles in him forte huden us in. Creop in ham wið þi þoht—ne beoð ha al opene?—ant wið his deorewurðe blod biblodge þin heorte. . . . He him seolf cleopeð þe toward teose wunden. *Columba mea, in foraminibus petre, in cauernis macerie*: ‘Mi culure,’ he seið, ‘cum hud te i mine limen þurles, i þe hole of mi side.’ Muche luue he cudde to his leoue culure, þet he swuch hudles makede. Loke nu þet tu, þe he cleopeð ‘culure’, habbe culure eunde—þet is, wiðute galle—ant cum to him baldeliche, ant make scheld of his passiun. (4.1628-1645)

[Flee into his wounds. He loved us much who allowed such holes to be made in him for us to hide in. Creep into them with your thought—are they not entirely open?—and bloody your heart with his precious blood. . . . He himself calls you toward these wounds: *Columba mea in foraminibus petre, in cavernis macerie* (Canticles 2:14)—‘My dove,’ he says, “come hide yourself in the openings in my limbs, in the hole in my side.’ Much love he showed to his dear dove in making such hiding-places. See now that you whom he calls a dove have the nature of the dove, which is without gall, and come to him boldly. And make a shield of his passion.] (155)

Christ makes His wounded body into a shelter for the anchoress. In these passages, Christ opens His body to allow the anchoress to enter it and seals it against “the feondes ferd.” Using the words of the bridegroom from the Song of Songs, He calls to the anchoress, inviting her to enter

his body.¹¹³ Kristen McQuinn argues that imagery of entering Christ's Wounded Side alludes "to female menstruation and sexual penetration, establishing mutuality between the Wounded Side and female enclosure."¹¹⁴ In the *Ancrene Wisse*, this mutuality occurs not only in descriptions of Christ's body as pervious and penetrable, but also in the use of an enclosed, allegorical fortress to refer to Christ. He has made his body "open," pervious—like the female body—in order to allow her to enter Him. Like the allegorical castle of Mary's body, Christ's body is simultaneously penetrable and fortified. These scenes represent a reversal of the Annunciation. At the Annunciation, God entered humanity through a woman's pervious (but pure and sealed) flesh, but here the woman seeking protection from the devil takes refuge within the pervious, incarnate flesh of God. The descriptions of Christ's open wounds and of Christ as fortress invert the normative gender association of allegorical castle as female body and the relationship between God and humanity.

The author's inclusion of Annunciation scenes and allusions is a conscious choice and useful device. The primary meditative focus of the *Ancrene Wisse*, as in many other devotional and meditative texts, is the Passion of Christ. The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* constantly emphasizes the importance of the Passion and the anchoress' *imitatio Christi*. He tells the

¹¹³ The image of the dove taking refuge in the clefts of the rocks was associated with the wounds of Christ in the *Glossa Ordinaria*. According to Kristin McQuinn, it is Bernard's commentary on the Song of Songs (though he does not specifically mention the wound) that "aided the widespread dedication to the Wounded Side, which was assimilated in the thirteenth century into the Cult of the Sacred Heart" (96). Kristen McQuinn, "'Crepe into that blessed syde': Enclosure Imagery in Aelred of Rievaulx's *de Institutione Inclusarum*," *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005) 95-102. Julian of Norwich also uses the image of Christ's wounded side as shelter: "With a glad chere oure good lorde looked into his side and beheld, enjoyenge. And with his swete looking he led forth the understanding of his creature by the same wound into his sid, within. And ther he shewed a fair, delectable place, and large inow for alle mankind that shalle be saved to rest in pees and in love" (XXIV.1-4); *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2006).

¹¹⁴ McQuinn, "'Crepe into that blessed side,'" 101.

anchoress that the ideal spiritual existence is to live as though she were Crucified with Christ. Her anchorhold is her tomb, and she is to live as one who is dead to the outside world.¹¹⁵ In affective meditation, biblical figures were often used as “surrogates for the meditator.”¹¹⁶ Mary’s relationship with Christ and her actual presence at the Crucifixion make her an ideal surrogate, and many poems and meditations use Mary primarily to incite compassion in the heart of the meditator; however, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* does not emphasize *imitatio Mariae* at the foot of the cross. Instead, the author concentrates on typological alignment of the anchoress with Mary at the Annunciation.¹¹⁷ Although the Crucifixion and *imitatio Christi* are central to the author’s vision of the anchoritic life, Mary’s role and the function of these allusions to the Annunciation must also be considered. In comparing the anchoress’ Eucharistic devotion to Mary’s experience of the Annunciation, the author emphasizes the importance of reception of the Eucharist, the acceptance and internalization of Christ.¹¹⁸

Within the *Ancrene Wisse*, scenes representing the Annunciation and the anchoress’ contemplation of the consecration and reception of the Eucharist are moments when the walls of her allegorical castle are breached, the imagery of Christ as lover is intensified, and parallels

¹¹⁵ The anchorhold is thus an image of both womb and tomb—a single image of death and birth. This recalls the transubstantiated Host which is simultaneously the Incarnational and Crucified body of Christ.

¹¹⁶ Denise N. Baker, Introduction, “The Privy of the Passion,” trans. Denise N. Baker, *Cultures of Piety*, ed. Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 89.

¹¹⁷ The *Ancrene Wisse* does not focus on Mary’s suffering at the foot of the cross to the extent that *planctus Mariae* often do. The author does not elaborate on her sorrows; he merely states that Christ’s flesh was more sensitive because it was taken from a virgin and that Mary’s tears (as well as those of other onlookers) caused Christ additional suffering (*Ancrene Wisse* 2.672-679, 755-759). Mary’s Compassion at the foot of the cross will be discussed at greater length in chapter 3 below.

¹¹⁸ The author’s use of Annunciation allusions in a Eucharistic context may reflect growing Eucharistic devotion and the importance of seeing the Consecration of the Host. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 91-130. Forms of devotion focusing on the humanity of Christ, such as Eucharistic devotion, were generally recognized as particularly appealing to women, as Caroline Walker Bynum argues in “Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century,” *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 119-148. McQuinn and others have extended Bynum’s focus on Eucharistic devotion to include devotion to the Wounded Side and Sacred Heart.

between the anchoress and Mary converge. In the daily liturgical practices laid out in Part One of *Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoress prays to Mary, recalling the Annunciation as the first of Mary's Five Joys:

'Leafdi, seinte Marie, for þe ilke muchele blisse þet tu hefdest inwiðe þe i þet ilke time þet Iesu Godd, Godes sune, efter þe engles gretunge nom flesch ant blod in þe and of þe, underfeng mi gretunge wið þe ilke *Aue*, ant make me telle lutel of euch blisse utewið, ah froure me inwið, ant ernde me þeo of heouene. Ant ase wis as i þe ilke flesch þet he toc of þe nes neauer sunne, ne i þin, as me leueð, efter þe ilke tacunge, hwet-se biuore were, clense mi sawle of fleschliche sunnen.' (1.275-282)

['O Lady St. Mary, for the same great joy that you had within you in that time that Jesus God, God's Son, after the angel's greeting, took flesh and blood in you and of you, accept my greeting with the same *Hail*. And make me count every outward joy as little; but comfort me within and send me the joys of heaven. And as surely as in the same flesh that he took from you there was never sin, nor in your own after that same taking, whatever may have been before, cleanse my soul from fleshly sins. '] (61)

The description of the Annunciation in Mary's Joys interweaves both internal and external experience of joy, bringing to mind the author's original distinction between the inner and outer rules and blurring the boundaries of the virginal body. The anchoress is encouraged to attempt to express externally and feel internally the same joy which Mary felt internally at the moment of the Annunciation. This description, and other allusions to the Annunciation, weaves together the anchoress' internal and external experience of God.

When Mary accepts and internalizes God, God becomes externally and physically realized. Spiritual perception of God becomes physical at the moment in which Christ takes flesh in Mary's womb or in the Mass at the Consecration or reception of the Host. The anchoress' encounter with God is both "ut of bodi" and deeply internalized.¹¹⁹ As Nicholas Watson argues, the anchoress, unlike the mystic, does not need to forget her body and the

¹¹⁹ *Ancrene Wisse* 1.242.

external world to ascend toward God, as she is “already enclosed within a powerful imaginative structure and require[s] only a personal and affective realization of its significance.”¹²⁰

Architectural allegories are one way the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* brings the reader’s focus back to the physical location of the anchoritic enclosure in order to “return the reader to a sense of her own external conditions.”¹²¹ The Annunciation allusions are linked to both intimacy with Christ and awareness of her physical enclosure. The anchoress is made acutely aware of the physical boundaries of her anchorhold and of her body, making the penetration of those boundaries by her divine lover all the more powerful.

The anchorhold becomes a private, sexualized space through the parallels the author draws between its physical openings and the physical openings of the female anchorite’s body. In order to maintain physical and spiritual purity, body and anchorhold alike must be sealed against penetration from the temptation and sin of the world. The persuasive power of the sensory descriptions throughout the *Ancrene Wisse* “lies in its configuration of [sensory] restraint as, paradoxically, sensual and pleasurable in itself, a representation that runs contrary to the *Wisse*’s advice to the anchoress not to heed ‘things that are pleasing to the senses.’”¹²² But the pleasure is not, as Farina suggests, spontaneously generated within the anchorite’s own body; the impetus for the pleasure is in the penetration of the walls of her anchorhold and of her body.¹²³ The anchorite is taught to clearly define the boundaries of her body, to clearly distinguish the inside from the outside, but by emphasizing those boundaries, she becomes hypersensitive to

¹²⁰ Nicholas Watson, “The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion,” *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium IV Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987) 140.

¹²¹ Watson, “Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion,” 140.

¹²² Farina, *Erotic Discourse*, 47.

¹²³ Farina, *Erotic Discourse*, 47; the image appears at 2.482-496.

their dissolution. This, not simply the invocation of the sensual, is what makes the text erotic. Christ, the divine lover, is not bound by the physical limitations posed by the walls of the anchorhold or of the body and easily penetrates the boundaries into the anchoress' soul.

Conclusions

In the first chapter, we saw how the paradox of Mary's body—at once virginally closed and erotically open—creates an affective response in the reader, providing an opportunity to contemplate the joining of heaven and earth through her female body. In this chapter we have seen an individual application of Marian typology for the solitary female anchoress. The affective response created within the *Ancrene Wisse* is found not simply in the invocation of eros and desire, but also in the conflict created between desire and restraint.

In this chapter, I have analyzed two allegorical traditions associated with the Virgin Mary in order to reveal some of the complexities of imagery in thirteenth-century anchoritic spirituality. In his use of Marian architectural allegory and Song of Songs language, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* combines themes and ideas that existed in twelfth-century Marian devotion with thirteenth-century ideals of female bodily enclosure and rising Eucharistic devotion. The author draws upon Marian theological and literary traditions to create a model of and image for the anchoritic lifestyle. By adapting these Marian traditions, he uses the figure of Mary as a rhetorical and meditative device—a means for expressing the anchoress' receptivity of Christ. In medieval theology, Mary's body, as the site of the Incarnation, was often the physical site for speculation about the relationship between divinity and humanity. By looking at figures of Mary in devotional texts, we see how those figures can be used as literary devices to define and structure reciprocal interaction between the divine and human, spiritual and corporeal.

The outer rule that restricts the anchoress's body and senses is adaptable; it is only binding insofar as it serves the inner rule of love. Discipline and restriction must promote a desire for God. The adaptability of the "rule" highlights the contradiction of sensory restriction and sensory overload created by the author. The outer rule is yet another boundary created for the anchoress that must be vigilantly maintained—except when it can be relaxed. The anchoress must be always cognizant of the rule and must always be considering whether or not it should apply in a particular circumstance. In a passage in Part Two, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* compares hope to "a swete spice inwið þe heorte, þete sweteð al þet bitter þet te bodi drinkeð" (2.482-483) [a sweet spice in the heart that sweetens all the bitterness that the body drinks] (78). The spice must be kept in the mouth in order to serve its purpose:

Ah hwa-se cheoweð spice, ha schal tunen hire muð þet te swote breað ant te strengðe þrof leaue wiðinnen; ah heo þe openeð hire muð wið mucche meaðelunge, ant brekeð silence, ha spit hope al ut ant te swotnesse þrof mid wortliche words, ant leoseð aȝein þe feond gastelich strengðe. (2.483-487)

[But whoever chews spice must shut her mouth, so that the sweet breath and its virtue stay inside. But she who opens her mouth with much chattering, and breaks silence, she spits out hope and its sweetness entirely with worldly words, and loses spiritual virtue to the enemy.] (78)

When the mouth is kept shut, it is able to preserve the full sweetness and benefit of the spice; if, on the other hand, the mouth is left open, the spice's properties escape. Containment increases both pleasure and benefit of the spice. This image describing the physical sense of taste encapsulates the purpose of both the sensual and the erotic imagery throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*: sensory restriction leads to sensory explosion. Just as she is to keep the mouth closed, the anchoress is to keep her body closed, or virginal; just as she receives increased sensual pleasure by keeping her mouth closed, she receives increased erotic pleasure by maintaining her closed, sexual body. Lack creates and feeds desire, and when that desire is fulfilled it is all the more pleasurable as a result of the previous lack. By creating an instant, instinctual, visceral reaction

by means of the flesh, but at the same time creating a rule that checks that reaction, the author casts the dual fleshly/spiritual nature of humanity in stark relief and forces the reader to question her natural reaction and question why he would intentionally provoke such a reaction. The opposition between sexual and virginal is both insisted upon and called into question.

The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* draws on two traditions that compare spiritual penetration with sexual penetration—the eroticized allegories of architectural stronghold as female body and the soul or Virgin Mary as bride of Christ. The anchoress is typologically aligned with the Virgin Mary, and Mary becomes the realization of the paradoxical sanctity of the “sexualized virgin.”¹²⁴ The Marian paradox becomes not her virginal maternity, but her virginal sexuality. Such a paradoxical existence is indicative of the liminal nature of both anchoress and the Virgin Mary. Cate Gunn, describing the liminal nature of the anchoritic life, writes that for the anchoress, liminality is not a temporary, transitional stage, but “a permanent state of being, but one that, of its very nature, defies permanence. . . . She is suspended on the threshold between earth and heaven—a continuing moment of transcendence.”¹²⁵ This permanent liminality could likewise describe the state of Mary. She constantly occupies the space between opposites—between human and divine, between life and death, between virgin and mother. Her mediating power is tied to her liminal status which, in turn, is related to her feminine nature. Within this economy of desire, the female is liminal. Mary’s liminality transcends binaries in order to mediate between them, and the paradoxical juxtaposition of these binaries expresses the ineffability of her liminal, mediating capacity.

¹²⁴ Chewning, ““Mi bodi henge /wið þi bodi,””183.

¹²⁵ Gunn, *Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality*, 52-53.

The individual application of the Marian allegory found in the *Ancrene Wisse* opens up further, moving beyond the context of the original three anchoresses first to a community of anchorites and later to lay devotional practices. Later versions of the *Ancrene Wisse* were revised in order to expand the text's audience to address the growing number of women and men choosing the anchoritic lifestyle throughout England as well as, in some cases, the laity, both male and female.¹²⁶ Many devotional texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth century adapt or excerpt parts of the *Ancrene Wisse*, and testify to its enduring popularity and devotional use by both men and women, whether religious and lay.¹²⁷ As Bella Millett and others have shown, the *Ancrene Wisse* and other anchoritic devotional texts and practices move outside the anchorhold during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and played an important role in the shaping of late medieval devotional attitudes and practices among lay people.¹²⁸

When anchoritic forms of devotion move outside the anchorhold, they are removed from the “powerful imaginative structure” that Watson highlighted. The emphasis on the reality of the anchoress's body, flesh, and physical enclosure that serves to heighten her spiritual experience does not serve the same purpose to the lay person living in the world. What, then, is the effect of the *Ancrene Wisse*'s references to physical boundaries and their penetration on the unenclosed reader? Although not under the same restrictions as the anchorite, every Christian has limits or

¹²⁶ Wada, “What is *Ancrene Wisse*,” 2,4.

¹²⁷ Robert Hasenfrantz, introduction, *Ancrene Wisse*, TEAMS, ed. Robert Hasenfratz (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) 35.

¹²⁸ Millett has shown how the devotions detailed in Part 1 of the *Ancrene Wisse* are very similar to the contents of Books of Hours, which became central to lay devotional routines. Denis Renevey argues that Margery Kempe adapts practices intended for private contemplation in the anchorhold to her own very public form of devotion, “attest[ing] to the ever-increasing hermeneutic scope offered to those outside the monastic and anchoritic milieu who have an interest in the contemplative life” (Renevey 202). See: Millett, “*Ancrene Wisse* and the Book of Hours,” *Writing Religious Women*, 21-40; Denis Renevey, “Margery's Performing Body: The Translation of Late Medieval Discursive Religious Practices,” *Writing Religious Women*, 197-216.

boundaries placed on his or her fleshly (and often specifically sexual) practices. Although the relationship between flesh and soul is formulated as a paradox, both the regulation of the flesh and its invocation for spiritual purposes within Christian theological and devotional thought assumes that body and soul are essentially and intimately linked. The body or flesh takes on a liminal, mediating function, imitating Mary's embodied mediation of divine and human. As we continue into the second half of this study, we will continue to see the invocation of the body, this time in the form of compassionate identification with Christ and the Virgin Mary in meditations on the Passion.

Chapter 3

Mourning and Compassion

In the first two chapters, I analyzed figurative representations of the relationship of human and divine, first of the Virgin Mary and then of the female religious. The first chapter examined Robert Grosseteste's intellectual exploration of the relationship between human and divine through the allegorization of the Virgin Mary's body as castle. Grosseteste's allegory challenges analyses that rely on strict distinctions between religious and secular, intellectual and popular. The allegory of the female body exploits erotic connotations of fortification and siege that were at play in secular love poetry and romance literature. The second chapter explained the creation of a typological alignment of the anchoress with the Virgin Mary through the author's use of architectural allegories and erotic language and imagery from the Song of Songs throughout the *Ancrene Wisse*. The power of the erotic language and imagery is heightened by its contrast to the extreme austerity of the anchoress' life and the sensory restriction prescribed for her daily life. Grosseteste's allegory provides a subject for contemplation on the mystery of the Incarnation. The allusions to Marian allegories in the *Ancrene Wisse* function in a different way, creating not only a mystery on which to meditate, but a model to imitate. The anchoress aligns herself with Mary and attempts to imitate Mary's desire and receptivity of Christ.

As I continue to study the theme of Mary's role in articulating the relationship between the human and the divine, I will turn now to the depictions of Mary in *planctus Mariae*, or Marian laments. *Planctus Mariae* are narratives of the Passion that specifically depict the Virgin Mary's human suffering and compassion during and immediately following the death of her Son. Where the first two chapters looked at the emotions of love and desire, this chapter will deal

specifically with empathetic suffering and identification with Christ and Mary. As in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the meditating reader of Marian laments is directed to identify himself or herself with Mary. I will examine how the relationship between the meditator and the Virgin in the context of Passion meditations and Marian laments incites the human, emotional response to the Passion that is central to affective devotion.

This chapter will build upon work that has been done on the relationship between gender and religious expression, examining how gender issues reflect on the unique case of the Virgin Mary. Many interpretations of the Marian laments struggle to explain how the laments, and Marian devotion more generally, reflect medieval attitudes toward women.¹ Some have seen devotion to the Virgin as way to reclaim a place for woman in an otherwise male-dominated faith. Others have argued that Mary represents an unrealistic standard which real women cannot hope to approach.² More recently, scholars such as Karma Lochrie and Anne Clark Bartlett have tried to show that there was room for women to both participate in and subvert medieval misogynist discourse.³ Issues of Mary as a representative woman subject to male authority arise in the context of the Marian lament. Sarah Stanbury, for example, has noted that “even though [Mary’s] countenance and voice technically control the [Marian lament lyric], its lines of sight really belong to the passerby.”⁴ Stanbury argues that Mary’s position in Passion narratives is “a

¹ See “Gender and the Representation of Women in Medieval Passion Narratives” in Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 111-144.

² See, for example, Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 134-174.

³ Lochrie, “The Language of Transgression,” 115-140 and Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*. Although Thomas Bestul places himself primarily in this camp, he consistently emphasizes Mary’s domination by male figures in the laments (Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 117).

⁴ Sarah Stanbury, “The Virgin’s Gaze: Spectacle and Transgression in Middle English Lyrics of the Passion,” *PMLA* 106.5 (1991) 1090.

story of her powerlessness in grief” and that her gaze is “transformed into spectacle.”⁵ As Thomas Bestul notes, although women play an important role in Passion narratives, the perspective is still “a deeply masculine one” that “construct[s] an image of the Virgin Mary that largely conforms to male expectations of female behavior and male understandings of female personality, psychology, and appropriate demeanor.”⁶ Rachel Fulton argues that Mary’s extreme emotional display, lack of speech, and physical weakness are manifestations of the power of suffering, rather than a misogynistic attribution of emotionalism to women that robs them of speech and control.⁷ She maintains that Mary’s suffering is not usually attributed to her relationship with women, but rather to her unique relationship with Christ.⁸

While it may be tempting to interpret depictions of Mary as representative of the status of medieval women, this practice may not be productive and we must proceed with caution. The relationship between Mary and “woman” is rarely straightforward and raises a number of issues with regard to Mary as a model for both male and female readers of devotional material, women’s agency and authority within misogynistic discourse, and the way in which the relationship between body and soul is laid out in terms of gender categories. As was shown above, body, flesh, and emotions were associated with the feminine aspect of the self: “male and female were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive,

⁵ Stanbury, “The Virgin’s Gaze,” 1090.

⁶ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 119.

⁷ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 426, 586 n.76. Fulton, following Elaine Scarry and Esther Cohen, describes the pain Mary shares with Christ as “so irretrievably subjective, so isolating, so utterly destructive of language as to be beyond communication from one person to another in anything other than metaphor and simile. . . an experience on the very boundary of self and language so shattering that, at least in some later narrative imaginings of the Passion, she would find herself actually incapable of speech, of uttering anything other than groans and cries” (426). Esther Cohen, “The Animated Pain of the Body,” *American Historical Review* 105(2000): 36-68; Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 3-19.

⁸ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 465.

rational/irrational, reason/emotion, self-control/lust, judgment/mercy and order/disorder.”⁹

Rather than looking specifically at the implications of the depiction of Mary in the laments as reflecting gender specific attitudes, I will focus on how these depictions reflect devotional practices that made use of gendered terminology but which were not necessarily gender specific practices. Compassion specifically (as Sarah McNamer shows) and affect generally (as Lochrie and Astell demonstrate) were associated with feminine behavior; however, it is the Virgin Mary and—*not* women generally—with whom the meditator is called to identify.¹⁰ Mary’s role in Passion devotion is sometimes brushed aside by pointing to Mary’s general prominence in late medieval devotional culture or by noting that her place as Christ’s mother made her a privileged eye witness, but it is fruitful to further investigate the significance of these explanations to enhance our understanding of the role of Marian devotion, and the role of mediation more generally, within affective devotion.

One type of *planctus Mariae*, the dialogue with St. Bernard, developed from the Latin meditative “Quis dabit.” This text is notable for the dialogue occurring not only between Christ and Mary, but between Mary and the meditator. Rosemary Woolf and C.W. Marx, among others, have shown that the “Quis dabit” had an important influence on vernacular Marian laments.¹¹ The “Quis dabit” is distinct from other Passion meditations in that it is framed as a dialogue between a narrator and the Virgin Mary. The narrator, hoping to suffer along with

⁹ Bynum, “. . . And Woman His Humanity,” 151.

¹⁰ McNamer specifically argues that to feel compassion was to feel “like a woman,” but, I would argue, the specific identification with Christ advocated in the *planctus Mariae* is a type of *immitatio Mariae* that goes beyond performing a feminine gendered role. Affective devotion begins by engaging the feminine aspects of the soul, but the end result transcends the limits of the gender roles of actual human women. See McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 119-149.

¹¹ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 247-257; C. W. Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation of Mary to Saint Bernard’ and the ‘Quis dabit,’” *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990) 137-157.

Christ, asks Mary to tell him how she felt as she witnessed her Son's death. In this chapter, I will first examine the Latin "Quis dabit" and its Middle English adaptations (specifically those found in the *Cursor Mundi* and the Vernon manuscript) with particular attention to the narrative point of view and meditative identification of the dialogue. I will then turn to other Middle English Marian laments that also make use of dialogue or interaction between the meditator and Mary. The poems I will look at in this section (particularly "Thou synfull man of resoun þat walkest here vp & downe" [IMEV #3692] and "With fauoure in hir face ferr passing my Reason" [IMEV #4189]) use an imagined exchange of both words and gazes between the reader and the Virgin Mary to evoke a compassionate response to Christ's death. The dialogue form draws the reader of the poem into the meditative scene, using Mary as a point of access to the drama of the Passion, promoting imaginative, personal engagement with this central moment in salvation history.

Affective Piety and Marian Devotion

An overview of the development of affective piety and its relationship to Marian devotion will provide a necessary context for understanding the specific texts I propose to address. Over the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the devotional focus of western Christendom shifted from a focus on the triumphant divinity of Christ to a focus on His humanity and, consequently, His suffering and death.¹² The origins of this movement have traditionally been associated with

¹² Bernard McGinn, "Christ as Savior in the West," *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1986) 253-259; Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (London: Routledge and Kegan Pual, 1987) 375-391; Richard Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in late Medieval Devotion," *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (London: Routledge and Kegan Pual, 1987) 75-108; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 3 (600-1300) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) 106-119.

figures such as Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Aelred of Rievaulx. Anselm of Canterbury's theory of atonement demonstrates that redemption for the Fall was necessary in order to satisfy the demands of God's mercy, but that the redemption had to be bought in order to satisfy the demands of justice. The ransom must be infinite, to match God's infinite justice, and so the only being capable of making that ransom was God; however, the only being responsible for the atonement was man. Thus, Christ, the Godman, was the only being capable of adequately atoning for the sins of mankind.¹³ Anselm's *Prayers* express the devotional counterpart to his incarnational theology, advocating imaginative meditation on the Passion.¹⁴

Theological writings were only one side of the new religious tone of the high and late Middle Ages. New devotional impulses arose in conjunction with these new theological ideas encouraging the cultivation of an interior spiritual life through private meditation on Christ's human existence, particularly His birth and death, in order to stir love and compassion which would then draw the meditator toward God. These affective devotional practices were developed primarily among the Cistercians and were later adopted and promoted by the Franciscans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The movement was not limited to the religious; as early as the late eleventh century, aristocratic lay people—especially women—were able to participate and imitate monastic contemplative practices.

The development of the affective devotional movement has been reexamined recently with particular attention to the history of emotion by Fulton and McNamer. Fulton attempts to

¹³ Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, *S. Anselmii Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag (Günther Holzboog), 1984) 2:39-133. For discussion of Anselm's theory of atonement see: Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 3, 36-133, esp. 84-86, 94-96, 101-102, 126-132.

¹⁴ Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," 378. *Orationes sive meditationes* in *S. Anselmii opera*, 3:1-91.

identify not only the *how* but the *why* behind the emotional shift that took place in religious devotion of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, interpreting this emotional shift as a turn inward triggered by disappointed anticipation of the second coming and the loss of the Holy Land in the Crusades.¹⁵ Devotees sought identification with Christ within the soul rather than physically in the world. Fulton argues that the affective move inward began with a move outward through compassionate identification with the physical suffering of Christ and demonstrated an emerging interest in interpersonal relationships—a desire to bridge the gap between God and human, self and Other.¹⁶

In her recent study on the development of medieval compassion, McNamer reassesses the importance of female piety in the development of the affective devotional movement, arguing that Fulton was too quick to dismiss women as the intended recipients of meditative texts, in particular Anselm's prayers, and that "women . . . were instrumental to this shift in sensibility at the very beginning."¹⁷ McNamer argues that the tradition which has typically been characterized as Bernardine, Anselmian, Cistercian or Franciscan was in fact motivated by and developed for women. Reexamining seminal texts of affective meditation (John of Fécamp's *Libellus de scripturis et verbis partum collectus*, Anselm's *Prayers and Meditations*, and Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes vitae Christi*), she argues that these texts were written as spiritual advice for women and that they reflect exercises specifically intended to edify women in their lives as *sponsae Christi*.¹⁸

¹⁵ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 78-106.

¹⁶ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 199.

¹⁷ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 59.

¹⁸ McNamer's argument that the affective devotional style was seen as particularly suited to women because they were capable of becoming literally and legally married to Christ is rather literal and, as a result, limited. While I think it may in fact be the case that "gender does matter" in how these texts were conceived, constructed, and

As I discussed in chapter two above, affective piety was characterized by its emphasis on physicality and *imitatio Christi*, specifically imitation of His suffering.¹⁹ The feminine side of the individual (the human will, drives, and flesh) struggle against the masculine side (the soul) for control of the individual.²⁰ As both Lochrie and Astell have shown, affective piety encouraged the arousal of the emotions, or affects, which were associated, according to medieval theology, with the feminine aspect of the individual. McNamer argues that in the Middle Ages compassion was gendered female, and that feeling compassion was related to female gender performance. Compassion, like other emotions, was associated with the feminine aspect of the individual. Engaging the senses, describing the sights, sounds, and smells experienced at the Crucifixion, mobilizes the feminine flesh to do what it does best—to feel.²¹

It is not surprising, given the connection between human nature and the emotions with the feminine, that along with this new focus on Christ's human nature came an increase in Marian devotion. As Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary was not only the individual with whom He shared the most intimate human bond, but she was also the source of His humanity. The period saw a renewed devotion to Mary in a number of areas: her role in the Incarnation and Nativity, her special relationship with Christ, and her place as Queen of Heaven after her

received, I am not convinced that affectivity was considered an appropriate feminine mode because women could marry a male Christ rather than because of a tendency on the part of theologians to view women as more literal and fleshly than men. I also don't see that the texts were necessarily intended to be read exclusively by women, even if they were intended to be read initially by them.

¹⁹ Karma Lochrie's description of the relationship between corporeality and imitation of Christ's suffering is particularly insightful. See Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 13-55.

²⁰ See chapter two above, pages 76-77.

²¹ In chapter four, I will explore how the sense of sight is physically (not just imaginatively) engaged in the use of devotional images.

Assumption.²² But it is perhaps in the devotion to Mary's sorrow and in meditations on her compassion at the crucifixion that the connection between rising interest in Christ's humanity and Marian devotion is most apparent. The addition of Mary's grief to descriptions of the tortures Christ endured intensifies the overall sorrowful mood of the crucifixion scene and gives voice to a human, emotional response to the loss of Christ.

As with other events in Mary's life, the Gospels provide little information about Mary's words and actions during her Son's Crucifixion. In the Gospel of John, we are told that Mary stood at the foot of the Cross and that Jesus committed her to the care of John.²³ Beyond these meager details, nothing is stated explicitly in the Bible about Mary's thoughts, emotions, or actions as she witnessed the Crucifixion of her Son. The portrayal of Mary at the foot of the cross underwent dramatic changes over the course of the medieval period, paralleling the Church's changing attitudes toward death and toward Christ's humanity.

In the early years of Christianity, extravagant expressions of grief over the dead were interpreted as a lack of faith in Christ's promise of salvation.²⁴ Theologians struggled to balance Mary's natural, maternal sorrow for her Son's Crucifixion with her joy in its redemptive purpose. Origen interpreted Simeon's prophecy of the sword that would pierce Mary's heart as doubt that would enter her heart about Christ's divinity, particularly during His Passion.²⁵ Mary's awareness of God's plan for humanity's redemption would have allowed her, it was thought, to

²² Bynum, "' . . . And Woman His Humanity,'" 151-179.

²³ John 19:25-27.

²⁴ For lengthy discussion of the development of Mary's compassion, see Graef, *Mary*, 45f, 46, 56, 63, 72, 81-86, 96-97, 114, 122, 126, 163, 170, 189, 193, 200-201, 244, 261-264, 273, 284-287, 294, 296, 306-309, 320; Sandro Sticca, *The Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition of the Middle Ages*, trans. Joseph R. Berrigan (Athens, London: The University of Georgia Press, 1988) 20-25.

²⁵ Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 33; Graef, *Mary*, 45-46.

endure Christ's death, and thus "the strength, the impassivity, and the stoicism of the Virgin at the time of the Passion of Christ were especially exalted by Christian authors of the patristic age."²⁶

The Latin Fathers, on the other hand, insisted on Mary's faith. Ambrose interpreted the sword of Simeon's prophecy as Mary's foreknowledge of the Passion. He explains that while she felt pity for Christ's suffering, she watched Him die in steadfast faith.²⁷ Ambrose interpreted the Bible's silence about Mary's words and actions to mean that Mary stood stoically beneath the Cross during the Crucifixion, writing: "stantem illam lego, flentem non lego" [I read that she stood; I do not read that she wept].²⁸ Augustine was the first to interpret Simeon's words as a reference to the grief of Mary.²⁹ The Latin Fathers admitted that she would have felt grief at the death of her Son, but restrict her expression of that grief on account of her faith in the Resurrection and the salvific purpose of Christ's Sacrifice. Following Ambrose and other Latin Fathers, the image of the stoic Virgin dominates Passion narratives until the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the West.

Over time as doctrine developed and religious practices changed, devout imagination supplied details about Mary's suffering and compassion at the foot of the cross. In the East, Mary's grief appears earlier than in the West in apocryphal writings such as the *Acta Pilati B* in

²⁶ Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 20-21.

²⁷ Graef, *Mary*, 81-82.

²⁸ Ambrose, *Epistola* 63, Col. 1218. Ambrose writes similar descriptions in his, *De obitu Valentiniani consolati*, *Expositio evangelii secundum lucam*, and *De institutione virginis et s. Mariae virginitate perpetua ad Eusebium*.

²⁹ Graef, *Mary*, 96-97. Augustine, *Epistola* 121, PL 33, Cols. 468-470. Although Augustine interprets the sword as Mary's grief, the idea of Mary's co-suffering with Christ is not developed until much later. See Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 534 n. 9.

the fourth century.³⁰ Syriac poets Ephraim the Syriac (d. 383) and James of Sarug (c. 451-521) and later Simon Metaphrastes (d. late tenth century) wrote descriptions of Mary at the foot of the Cross that anticipated many of the themes that would later develop in the Western Marian lament.³¹ Byzantine liturgical verses express Mary's sorrow "without any of the extravagances of the Western lamentations."³²

In the west, as affective piety developed and devotional interest shifted toward a focus on the humanity of Christ and His capacity for suffering, the portrayal of His mother's response naturally shifted as well. Although some theologians, such as Richard of St. Victor and Alan of Lille, continue to advocate the earlier, stoic portrayal of Mary at the Crucifixion, most begin to emphasize the mutual suffering she experienced along with Christ.³³ As affect becomes a legitimate means of cultivating an interior spiritual life, Mary's expressions of grief are no longer seen as undermining her faith in the Resurrection. Artistic representations of Mary follow a similar pattern, evolving from a woman with upright and prayerful posture to that of the mother overwhelmed by grief in a swoon.³⁴ Affective performance becomes a proof of rather than a challenge to faith. The *planctus Mariae* became a popular form of devotional literature

³⁰ Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 33. For a more complete description of the eastern tradition see Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 31-49 and Graef, *Mary*, 45-46, 63, 72.

³¹ Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 33-39, 47; Graef, *Mary*, 122, 201.

³² Graef, *Mary*, 263. It has been argued that the shift from a stoic Virgin to the *mater dolorosa* occurred in the West after they encountered Eastern depictions during the Crusades. Fulton, however, questions the attribution of the new emphasis on Mary's humanity and suffering to the influence of Greek lamentations, believing that there isn't strong enough evidence of textual transmission. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 216.

³³ Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 20.

³⁴ For a discussion of these developments in art history see Amy Neff, "The Pain of *Compassio*: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *The Art Bulletin*, 80.2 (1998) 254-273; Otto G. von Simson, "*Compassio* and *Co-redemptio* in Roger van der Weyden's *Descent From the Cross*," *The Art Bulletin*, 35.1 (1953) 9-16.

throughout Western Europe around the twelfth century and persisted through the rest of the medieval period.³⁵

In *planctus Mariae*, the Virgin Mary narrates the events of the passion and describes the suffering she endures while witnessing the death of her Son. In order to achieve their purpose, as George R. Keiser notes, “pathos is the dominant mode” of the Marian lament.³⁶ They make use of rhetorical devices such as apostrophe, graphic description, and especially “an antithetical style and structure” to heighten their emotional impact and to inspire “a meditator to share in the sorrows of Mary and thereby to achieve a pathetic union with both Mary and her Son.”³⁷ The purpose of the Marian lament was to stir compassion in the heart of a meditating reader in order that he or she might feel compunction and share in the redemptive suffering of Mary and Christ.

The “Quis dabit” and the Lamentation of Mary to St. Bernard

Among the Latin texts most influential on late medieval affective piety is a thirteenth-century meditation, the *Liber de passione Christi et doloribus et planctibus matris eius*, commonly referred to by its incipit as the “Quis dabit.”³⁸ This meditation belongs to the same tradition of Passion meditations as the *Dialogus beatae Mariae et Anselmi de Passione domini*, the *De meditatione passione Christi per septem diei horas libellus*, and the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*.³⁹

³⁵ Graef, *Mary*, 263. Graef states that this portrayal of Mary’s grief lasted through the fourteenth century, but the genre remains popular in England through the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century.

³⁶ George R. Keiser, “The Middle English *Planctus Mariae* and the Rhetoric of Pathos,” *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature 28 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985) 168.

³⁷ Keiser, “The Middle English *Planctus Mariae*,” 168, 169.

³⁸ See Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 50-56; C.W. Marx, “The *Quis dabit* of Oglerius de Tridino, Monk and Abbot of Locedio,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 4 (1994), 118–129.

³⁹ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 53-54. Each of these texts was falsely ascribed to Bernard, Anselm, Augustine, or Bonaventure. These false attributions no doubt contributed to the idea that affective piety originated with Anselm,

Though it was usually attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux during the Middle Ages, it is now generally believed to be an extract of a larger work, the *Tractatus in Laudibus Sancte Dei Genetricis*, composed by Oglerius de Tridino (1136-1214), Cistercian monk and later Abbot at the monastery of Locedio, in the early thirteenth century.⁴⁰ There is no real consensus about the original purpose of the text. It has been considered a sermon collection or a treatise, but Marx argues that it is most accurately described as a meditation.⁴¹

The “Quis dabit” is structured in the form of a dialogue between a narrator and the Virgin Mary in which Mary relates the events of the Passion, expanding significantly on the events reported in the New Testament and justifying these departures because “they are reported by an eye-witness”—Mary.⁴² In its extracted form, the “Quis dabit” gained popularity over the course of the thirteenth century and became one of the “most popular religious works of the entire later Middle Ages,” perhaps even more popular than the *Meditationes vitae Christi*.⁴³ Manuscripts of the text survive from throughout western Europe, but it seems to have been most popular in England and France; Thomas Bestul has counted more than thirty-five Latin manuscripts of the “Quis dabit” dating from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries in English libraries

Bernard and the Cistercians and was later associated with the Franciscans. Although McNamer takes issue with this traditional description of the origins of affective piety, the fact that the meditative tradition is received as Bernardine, Anselmian, or Bonaventuran tells us that it was read, even in the Middle Ages, as associated with a male figure. The dialogue between Mary and Bernard in the Pseudo-Bernardine meditations based on the ‘Quis dabit,’ for example, were part of a long-standing association between St. Bernard and passion meditation.

⁴⁰ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 51-52. The manuscripts of the “Quis dabit” are very difficult to trace, due in part to their number. C. W. Marx has been working on a full census of manuscripts found in British collections. See Marx, “Quis dabit,” 119 n. 9.

⁴¹ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 140.

⁴² Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 52.

⁴³ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 52.

alone.⁴⁴ The number of early printed editions, more than twenty-nine editions between 1467 and 1568, testify to its enduring popularity.⁴⁵ Meditative texts such as the “*Quis dabit*” helped to shape the *planctus Mariae* tradition in the later Middle Ages, introducing motifs and rhetorical devices for describing Mary’s compassion, triggering an affective response, and establishing Mary as the point of identification for that emotion. By inspiring sympathy for Mary, the text brings the meditator closer to Christ’s suffering and to his own redemption.

The importance of the “*Quis dabit*” on the vernacular *planctus Mariae* tradition in England was highlighted by Woolf, who wrote that it “undoubtedly had a strong and direct influence upon the English complaints of the Virgin belonging to the fifteenth century.”⁴⁶ Marx has recently reemphasized the influence of the Latin meditation on English texts.⁴⁷ My analysis of the depiction of Mary’s compassion in English devotional literature will begin with the “*Quis dabit*” and direct Middle English adaptations of the text, with particular focus on the poetic version included in the *Cursor Mundi* which, until now, has been overlooked or misconstrued in the scholarship on both *planctus Mariae* and the *Cursor Mundi* as a whole.

The earliest Middle English adaptation of the “*Quis dabit*” is a poem describing Mary’s compassion in the form of a dialogue with St. Bernard found toward the end of the *Cursor Mundi*, a lengthy biblical paraphrase, most likely compiled around 1300 in northern England. Nearly 30,000 lines long, in primarily short rhyming couplets, the *Cursor Mundi* relates the

⁴⁴ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 210 n. 127.

⁴⁵ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 52, 210 n. 127; Leopold Janaushek, *Bibliographia Bernardina, Xenia Bernardina* 4 (Vienna: Holder, 1891), pp. viii (n. 51) and 499.

⁴⁶ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 248.

⁴⁷ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 139. See also Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 64-68 for comments on the influence of Latin Passion narratives (including the “*Quis dabit*”) on vernacular French, German and English Passion narratives.

entire history of the world from creation to Judgment Day. Today, the *Cursor Mundi* survives in nine manuscripts: Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians, ff. 37r-50r, 1r-15v; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A iii, ff. 2r-163r; Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dod. Theol. 107r, ff. 2r-169v; Oxford, Bodleian, Fairfax 14 (SC 3894), ff. 4r-123v; Cambridge, Trinity College, R.3.8 (588), ff. 1r-142v; London, College of Arms (Herald's College), Arundel Press LVII, ff. 1r-132v; Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud Misc., 416 (Bodl. 1479), ff. 65r-181v; London, British Library, Additional 36983, ff. 1r-174v; London, British Library, Additional 31042, ff. 3r-32v.⁴⁸ The compiler, the *Cursor*-poet, drew on Latin, French and English material to compile his paraphrase, all the while maintaining a “strongly-defined narrative presence in the prologue and elsewhere.”⁴⁹ He dedicates the work as a whole to the Virgin Mary, and, following his account of Judgment Day, includes additional Marian material including a Middle English translation of the Anglo-Norman miracle of the establishment of the Feast of the Conception of Our Lady and a translation of the “Quis dabit.”⁵⁰

The *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” [IMEV #3208], like much of the *Cursor*-poet’s material, was probably incorporated into the *Cursor Mundi* from another source; however, the four manuscripts of the *Cursor Mundi* which contain this “Lamentation” are now the only witnesses to this text. This earliest Middle English version of Mary’s Lament to St. Bernard, characterized by the *Manual of Writings in Middle English* as essentially “a reproduction with

⁴⁸ For descriptions of each of the manuscripts, see John J. Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts, and Contexts* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1998) 23-46.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi*, 3.

⁵⁰ For more on the *Cursor Mundi*, see: Thompson, *Cursor Mundi*; *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*, eds. Sarah M. Horrall, et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1978-1986); Guy Trudel, “The Middle English Book of Penance and the Readers of the *Cursor Mundi*,” *Medium Aevum* 74.1(2005) 10-33.

some expansions of the Latin,” is found in four of the nine *Cursor Mundi* manuscripts: Edinburgh, Cotton, Göttingen, and Fairfax.⁵¹

According to the *IMEV*, there are two other Middle English verse versions of Bernard’s dialogue with the Virgin, but both are later than, and distinct from, the *Cursor Mundi* version. One [*IMEV* #771] is found in three manuscripts: Bodleian Rawlinson poet. 175 (SC 14667), f. 76-80; Cotton Tiberius E. vii, f. 82-85v; Lambeth, Sion College Arc. L. 40.2/E.25, ff. 39-47v. The other [*IMEV* #1869], is found in six: Bodleian Laud misc. 463 (SC 1596), f. 160-164; Bodleian Douce 126 (SC 21700), f. 84v; Trinity Oxf. 57, f. 167-169v; Cambridge, Dd. 1.1, f. 21-29v; British Library Additional MS 11307, f. 97v, and Bodleian, MS Eng. poet. a.I (SC 3938), f. 287-288v, the Vernon manuscript. These two versions are, in fact, the same version. Both are based on an Anglo-Norman poetic version of the “Quis dabit”; the only difference is the inclusion of an additional prologue in the Vernon version adapted from the Anglo-Norman version of the dialogue, the thirteenth-century *Plainte de La Vierge*.⁵²

The Vernon manuscript is one of the two largest surviving Middle English anthologies of prose and verse. Copied sometime after 1389, the manuscript was originally composed of more than 420 vellum leaves containing between 377 and 404 items including texts from the *South English Legendary* and *Northern Homilies*, prayers and devotions, *Miracles of Our Lady*, three exemplary romances and various poems.⁵³ The Vernon manuscript is now missing some 177

⁵¹ *MWME* 686.

⁵² *Plaintes de la Vierge en Anglo-Francais*, ed. F. J. Tanqueray (Paris: E. Champion, 1921) 12-22, 63-109.

⁵³ For more information on the Vernon manuscript, see A. I. Doyle’s introduction to *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. Poet.a.I*, ed. A. I. Doyle (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987) and Derek Pearsall, ed., *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), especially A. I. Doyle, “The Shaping of the Vernon and Simeon Manuscript,” 1-13; P. R. Robinson, “The Vernon Manuscript as a ‘Coucher Book,’” 15-28; N. F. Blake, “Vernon Manuscript: Contents and Organization,” 45-59.

leaves. It is a “compendium: an *omnium gatherum* of the religious and devotional literature available to the collector at the time it was made.”⁵⁴ P. R. Robinson speculates that it may have been compiled from its diverse sources as a “library copy or reference collection of contemporary religious and moral works.”⁵⁵ Because of its size and the number and variety of texts it contains, N. F. Blake argues that the Vernon Manuscript was probably written at a religious house.⁵⁶ Some have speculated that it had a secular readership, but Blake thinks it unlikely, suggesting instead a community of nuns or semi-religious women as its intended audience.⁵⁷

C. W. Marx has written on the relationship between the “*Quis dabit*” and the later Middle English version found in the Vernon manuscript. Contending with Woolf’s claim that “texts which derive from [the “*Quis dabit*”] adopted its extreme emotionalism,” he argues that the Vernon version of the text attempts to balance the tension between Mary’s grief with her faith and give the text an instructional (versus meditative) purpose.⁵⁸ The few critics who have considered the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” assume that the same is true for this text. John J. Thompson, for example, writes that in the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” the original emphasis on introverted human emotion has shifted (as Marx argues that it did in the Vernon version) “towards a much more publicly-stated clerical concern for the vernacular instruction of the ‘lewed.’”⁵⁹ The shift from meditative to instructional implies a new, outward focus; where the meditative text looks inward at the spiritual turmoil and inner emotion of the narrator, the

⁵⁴ Robinson, “Vernon as Coucher Book,” 27.

⁵⁵ Robinson, “Vernon as Coucher Book,” 27.

⁵⁶ Blake, “Vernon Contents and Organization,” 58.

⁵⁷ Blake, “Vernon Contents and Organization,” 58.

⁵⁸ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 155.

⁵⁹ Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi*, 174.

instructional text looks out at the audience receiving the text and presents it for that audience's edification. In the Vernon version, the poet achieves this outward focus by restructuring the text's form and altering its content: the Vernon version has a prologue adapted from the Anglo-Norman prologue which is distinct from the Latin text, it imposes and maintains a dialogue format throughout the text, restricts descriptions of Mary's grief, and it includes additional characters and events not found in the original Latin text.⁶⁰ Examination of the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation," however, reveals that it is quite different from the poem that appears in the Vernon manuscript.

The poet of the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" did not change his text in the same ways Marx observed in the Vernon version, and, therefore, the motivation for and results of those changes cannot be applied to it. Comparison of the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" to both the "Quis dabit" and the Vernon version demonstrates: first, how the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" maintains and expands the use of the first person narration that appeared in the original Latin meditation but was discarded in the Vernon version's reworking of the "Quis dabit"; second, how the *Cursor Mundi* narrows the narrative focus on Mary's grief by limiting depictions of other events and characters; and third, how the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" places increased emphasis on John's relationship with Mary, making the text more personal and introspective. These alterations, far from indicating a clerical concern with instruction, increase the meditative and emotional quality of the text.

The description of the Passion in the "Quis dabit" and the Middle English poems based on it are contained in the frame of a dialogue. The prologues of each of these three texts (the

⁶⁰ Marx, "The Middle English Verse 'Lamentation,'" 149.

“Quis dabit,” the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” and the Vernon version) establish both the tone and the narrator of each piece, but each version creates a different type of narrator. The prologue of the “Quis dabit” begins with a reference to Jeremiah: “Quis dabit capiti meo aquam et oculis meis fontem lacrimarum[?]” [Who will give water for my head and a fountain of tears for my eyes?].⁶¹ The narrator addresses the daughters of Jerusalem, referring on a literal, historical level to the women Christ encounters on the road to Calvary and on an allegorical level the “sponse dilecte” [beloved brides], virgins dedicated to Christ (41:5-7, 9-11).⁶² Mary, he states, is among this group and the narrator attempts to place himself within this community. The prologue expresses the narrator’s desire to feel and express sorrow for the Passion of Christ.

The prologue of the Latin “Quis dabit” expresses the first-person narrator’s individual “spiritual crisis” and his desire to experience the emotions Mary felt while watching her Son die.⁶³ The narrator seeks a solution to his crisis through personal revelation from the Virgin

⁶¹ Jeremiah 9:1. There are several modern printings of different versions of the “Quis dabit” available. I have chosen to follow Marx and use Mushacke’s edition for my comparison of the “Quis dabit” to the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” in order to facilitate further comparison with the Vernon version: W. Mushacke, ed., “Tractatus beati Bernardi de planctu beate Marie,” *Altprovenzalische Marienklage des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, Romanische Bibliothek 3 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1890), pp. 238-241. Other editions include: Thomas H. Bestul, ed., “Meditation by Bernard on the Lamentation of the Blessed Virgin,” *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) 165-185; C.W. Marx, “The *Quis dabit* of Oglerius de Tridino, Monk and Abbot of Locedio,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 4 (1994), 118-129; G. Kribel, “Studien zu Richard Rolle de Hampole, II, Lamentatio St. Bernardi de compassione Mariae,” *Englische Studien* 8 (1884): 85-114. The editions by Kribel and Mushacke are both based on early printed texts. The version available in the PL is based on MS E.V.4, but it is incomplete. See Marx, “The *Quis dabit*,” 119-120. Citation to the “Quis dabit” are parenthetical by page and line number. Translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

⁶² Luke 23:28. It is possible that the author is addressing a female audience, which would corroborate McNamer’s argument that even the earliest affective meditations were intended for women as a part of their marriage contract with Christ. It certainly does seem that the narrator associates mourning and compassion with this group of women and attempts to place himself within that group, to “feel like a woman,” as McNamer would put it. On the other hand, these women only appear in the opening of the prologue, after which point the dialogue is only between the narrator and Mary. In some texts of the “Quis dabit,” the narrator states that “poterat hec ecclesia esse inter illas feminas Ierusalem” [it could be that the church was there among the women of Jerusalem], creating a community of mourners that includes the entire church, not restricted to professed religious or to one gender or the other (“Meditacio Bernardi de lamentacione beate virginis,” ed. Thomas Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 166. Translation is my own). See also: McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 60, 86-115.

⁶³ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 147.

Mary. He asks to be struck with sorrow and pain as she was and, seeking to identify with her, asks her to recall the events of the Crucifixion, declaring both his desire and his inability to weep. He says: “Flere peropto, nichil me aliud libet, sed miser ego cor lapideum habeo et ideo flere nequeo” [I choose to weep. Nothing else is permitted me, but I, a wretch, have a heart of stone and therefore I cannot weep] (42:30-31). The narrator feels separated from the Virgin and her suffering and seeks a closer connection to her.

The prologue of the “Quis dabit” ends with the narrator’s first question: “dic si in Iherusalem eras quando captus filius tuus fuit et vinctus ad Annam tractus et ductus” [say if you were in Jerusalem when your son was captured and bound and drawn and dragged to Annas] (43:1-2). After Mary finishes responding to the narrator’s question, the narrative style of the “Quis dabit” changes, and the remainder of the text is narrated from a third-person perspective. Mary narrates her experience of the Passion up to the point where Christ commends her to John (45:44-47). At this point, the narrator describes the exchange between Mary, Christ and John. When Mary speaks after this point, it is reported to the reader through the narrator rather than directly by Mary:

Iuxta crucem stabat iam emortua mater que illum conceperat de spiritu sancto. Vox non erat; ibat, stabat dolens seuo confecta dolore, expectans corpus cristi deponi de cruce et plorabat dicens: Reddite misere matri corpus velut exanime.” (47:26-32)

[Already dead, the mother was standing near the cross, she who had conceived Him by the Holy Spirit. There was no voice; she was walking, she was standing, suffering, consumed by fierce sorrow, waiting for the body of Christ to be taken down from the cross, she was crying, saying: ‘Return the body as if dead to the wretched mother;]

Mary is no longer narrating her own experience. The narrator does not ask any more questions and Mary does not relate the rest of the events of the Passion.

The Vernon version includes elements of the *Quis dabit* prologue, but only after an additional prologue, which sets the poem's didactic tone and dissociates this narrator from the original narrator's spiritual crisis. The prologue of the Vernon version voices the poet's didactic purpose:

Lewed men be not lered in lore,
As Clerkes ben in holi writ. . .
And, ȝif cristes will wore,
Wel fayn I wolde amenden hit (Vern. ll. 1-8).⁶⁴

[Unlearned men are not educated in lore
as clerkes are in holy writ. . .
and if it were Christ's will,
I would attempt to amend it.]

According to Marx, the narrator believes it is "the obligation of the learned to instruct the unlearned" and he does so by "making available a Latin text in the vernacular."⁶⁵ This prologue is an essential part of the Vernon version's shift from meditative to instructional text; nothing similar is found in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation." The additional Vernon prologue is delivered by the "poet" persona, and, once established, this persona reports the exchange between Bernard and Mary in the form of a dialogue, strictly maintained, narrated from a third-person point of view. The narrator tells us that Bernard:

. . . in to chirche wenden he con,
to witen of þat Ladi wo.
To him wel feire speken heo gon,
What was his wille to asken þo.

[. . . he went in to church

⁶⁴ *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 98 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892-1901).

⁶⁵ Marx, "The Middle English Verse 'Lamentation,'" 147. The concern Marx identifies on the part of the poet exists in both the Vernon version and the Anglo-Norman *planctus Mariae* on which the Vernon version is based. The "Quis dabit" describes the meditation as authorized by divine revelation, where the Vernon version relies on the authority of Bernard.

To learn of that Lady's woe
She began to speak very fairly to him
And to ask what he wanted to ask then] (Vern. ll. 91-96)

The narrator repeatedly refers to Bernard as a *witness*, invoking his authority rather than the authority of Mary's direct revelation through dialogue. Bernard "witnessed in Latyn" what the author now turns into English (Vern. l. 18). Again at lines 85 and 92, the narrator emphasizes Bernard's position as witness, along with John, to Mary's grief: "bereþ "Seynt Bernard, þat holy mon, / Witnessed wel þat it is so" (Vern. ll. 91-92). The narrator does enter into the meditative experience personally, but appeals to Bernard's reputation for affective piety and devotion to the Virgin to present his description of the Passion.⁶⁶

Mary repeatedly addresses Bernard by name, constantly reminding the reader that he or she is observing rather than participating in the dialogue. While it is true that, as Marx argues, "the narrative point of view remains constantly with Mary," Mary's narration of the events of the Passion appears in clearly designated speeches within the framework of the poet's narration of the dialogue.⁶⁷ By clearly indicating the speaker at all times, the Vernon version prevents the reader from fully identifying with either of the speakers. The reader is made constantly aware that Bernard, not the reader, is speaking and being spoken to. The use of the third person denies the reader a place within the exchange—the reader can observe but may not participate. The poet distances himself and his readers from Bernard's meditative exercise as well as from Mary's emotion.

⁶⁶ Although McNamer argues that there is no indication that the affective meditation associated with Bernard in most scholarship was actually indicative of his own devotional practices, we must consider that the attribution of these devotional types is not only an element of modern scholarship but was in fact made in medieval texts. The fact that the meditative tradition is received as Bernardine tells us that it was read, even in the Middle Ages, as associated with a male figure. The dialogue between Mary and Bernard in the Pseudo-Bernardine meditations based on the 'Quis dabit,' for example, were part of a long-standing association between St. Bernard and Passion meditation.

⁶⁷ Marx, "The Middle English Verse 'Lamentation,'" 151.

The prologue to the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” is different from both the “Quis dabit” and the Vernon version. Like the “Quis dabit,” the prologue in the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” is delivered by an unidentified first-person narrator, who says: “spell yeit i wald spek if i cuth. . . for mikel i haf to mote” [tell yet I would speak if I could . . . for I have much to say] (*CM* ll. 23945-23947).⁶⁸ In the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” the narrator does not experience the crisis of the narrator of the “Quis dabit.” He, too, desires to lament with the Virgin, but unlike the Latin narrator, he does not have difficulty relating to Mary’s sorrow. He says if there was any “mirthes in [his] muth” he would gladly speak them and comfort Mary, but will instead weep “wit hir wepeing” and suffer “wit crist” (*CM* ll. 23976-23977, 23946). He desires to bear “all [Christ] bare” (*CM* ll. 23980). The narrator is instantly present at the Crucifixion and describes it first hand: “I se him hang. i se hir wring” [I see him hang, I see her writhe/wring] (*CM* l. 23960).

Unlike in the Vernon version, the narrator of the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” maintains the use of the first-person perspective. The “I” of the prologue becomes the “I” that questions the Virgin Mary and records her responses. By maintaining much of the structure of the original “Quis dabit”—in particular the first-person narrative point of view—the meditative feel of the Latin text is enhanced in the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation.” The Vernon version imposes an autobiographical frame upon the “Quis dabit,” reading its “I” as the individual experience of Bernard and appealing to his authority to validate the description of the Passion. In contrast, the “I” of the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” is “scripted . . . for another’s use . . . as a position to be entered into and made both passionate and personal by the one who performs the prayer.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Cursor Mundi*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS os 68, (London: Oxford University Press, 1874-1894). Unless otherwise noted the quotations of the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” will be drawn from the Cotton MS.

⁶⁹ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 70. In her discussion of the prayers John of Fécamp, McNamer draws an important distinction between the autobiographical “I” and “I” that appears in the Psalms and is used for prayer. It

Bernard's name never actually appears in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation." As in the "Quis dabit," we assume the narrator is Bernard only because the text is attributed to him.⁷⁰ As the prologue ends, the narrator engages in a conversation with Mary: "sai me moder witvten wem / was þou þan at ierusalem" [tell me, Mother without blemish, were you at Jerusalem then?] (CM ll. 23987-23988). Mary's response is reported by the narrator: "'I sai,' coth þou, 'þat i was þar'" ["I say," you said, "that I was there"] (CM ll. 23993). The narrator refers to himself in the first person and Mary in the second, and Mary never uses his name when addressing him. This first person narration allows a reader or listener to identify either with the speaker—imagining himself as the "I" who engages in the meditative act of conversing with Mary—or with Mary—imagining himself as the "þou" who sees and reports the events of the Passion. In either case, the audience is drawn into the dialogue and personally involved in the meditative exercise.

The use of the first person narrator in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" becomes particularly noticeable during the deposition and burial scenes. At this point, the narrative point of view in the "Quis dabit" has shifted and Mary is referred to in the third person. Mary no longer directly relates what she saw, felt, and did. The narrator of the "Quis dabit" tells us that Mary sees that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus want to take Christ down from the cross: "Quos ut vidit mater eius volentes eum deponere de cruce" [whom, as his mother saw, wanted to take him down from the cross] (48:17-18). Mary is overwhelmed by emotion, therefore she no

is the latter "impassioned 'I'" that we see at work in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation." See McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 67-73

⁷⁰ According to the *MWME*: "The ascription of the Latin sermon to St. Bernard or to St. Augustine, the exact relationship of the French and Latin versions to the English and of the *Cursor Mundi* version to the other two, as well as the authorship, have yet to be worked out" (687). Marx's study began to work out the relationship of the Middle English version found in the Vernon Manuscript to the Anglo-Norman and Latin versions; my study is, in part, an attempt to begin this work with respect to the *Cursor Mundi* version.

longer describes that emotion to the narrator. The narrator witnesses Mary's emotional display and describes it for the meditator:

Stabat ad caput sui extincti filij mater Maria lacrimis faciem eius rigans, per diversa torquebatur suspiria, quaciens caput et amarissime plangens se ad ceruicem manibus percuciebat (48:28-31).

[Mother Mary was standing at the head of her dead Son watering His face with tears, tormented by many sighs, shaking her head and wailing most bitterly, striking herself at the neck with her hands.]

The account is no longer the Virgin's eye-witness account or her personal experience, it is an event witnessed by a third party.

The narrative point of view in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" is distinct from both the "Quis dabit" and the Vernon version during the deposition and burial scenes. Mary continues to relate her experiences and emotions in the first person, giving the description a more poignant resonance. Rather than hearing the narrator's description, Mary describes her own behavior: "on him me hefd i scock" [over him I shook my head] (*CM* ll. 24503). In the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" we read:

Quen i him had in armes fald,
þat suet flexs all dri and cald,
Behaldand on his wondes,
þan bigan me gle to gru
Mar þan animan wald tru,
And neud me mi stondes.
Bot þar-of brued me sum bote,
þat i moght toche him hand and fote,
And hald him in mi barme ;
Ne moght i noght for-ber grete,
Bot quen i sa moght kis þat suete,
þe vnharder was mi harm (*CM* ll. 24491-24502).

[When I had folded him in my arms,
That sweet flesh all dry and cold,
Looking upon his wounds,
Then my countenance began to shudder

More than any man would believe
And renewed my pangs for me
But some relief came of it for me
That I might touch him hand and foot
And hold him to my breast
Nor could I forbear greatly
But when I so might kiss that sweet one
The less was my sorrow.]

Mary herself describes what happened, what she did, and how it affects her emotionally. In the “Quis dabit” and the Vernon version, the use of the third person removes the reader from the immediacy of the Crucifixion scene, but in the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” the reader has direct access to Mary’s eye-witness account.

In addition to using a first-person narrator to direct the reader’s focus inward rather than the third person to distance the reader from the emotion in the poem, the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” narrows the focus on Mary’s suffering. The Vernon version, as Marx demonstrates, restructures the material borrowed from the “Quis dabit” and includes events associated with the Passion which were not originally in Latin text.⁷¹ Just before Bernard asks Mary to tell him what Christ said on the Cross, the Vernon version includes an additional exchange between the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene for which there is no parallel in the “Quis dabit.” Mary describes her conversation with “þe Maudeleyne” for more than six stanzas (Vern. ll. 385-438). The Vernon version also includes additional material about Christ’s arrest (Vern. ll. 185-200), Christ being taken to Pilate and the release of Barabas (Vern. ll. 233-264)

⁷¹ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 148-149.

and the legend of Longinus (Vern. ll. 613-624).⁷² These added details make the poem “an account more of the Passion and less of the sorrows of Mary.”⁷³

The *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” on the other hand, limits the description of even those events which are found in the Latin text, such as references to the women of Jerusalem who were with Mary, in order to isolate her further in her grief. The narrator of the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” does not refer to or address the daughters of Jerusalem in the prologue. Instead, the narrator here immediately identifies with Mary’s suffering, as all Christians should, and creates an intimacy between Christ and Mary that is shared by all true Christians from the very beginning of the poem:

Hir dule ne ma i noght for-dill,
Bot wit hir wepeing wepe i will,
Wit crist to suffer sare;
For all his bale was me to bete,
He dranc þe sure and i þe suete,
Mi baret all he bare. (*CM* ll. 23975-23980)

[I cannot soothe her sorrow,
But with her weeping I will weep,
To suffer harshly with Christ;
For all his torment was to atone for me,
He drank the sour and I the sweet,
He bore all my woe.]

Mary is not surrounded by a group of mourners; Mary and Christ are the only figures present as the narrator begins the meditation. Mary’s extreme isolation is used rhetorically by the poet here, as in other *planctus Mariae*, to heighten the emotional intensity of Mary’s suffering.⁷⁴

⁷² For more details on the Vernon version’s added material, see Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 147-150.

⁷³ Marx, “The Middle English Verse ‘Lamentation,’” 150.

⁷⁴ Keiser examines various rhetorical strategies used in Middle English *planctus Mariae*. See Keiser, “The Middle English *Planctus Mariae*,” 167-193.

Nothing is allowed to distract the meditator from Christ's pain and Mary's grief. The narrator expresses his desire to weep with Mary, which will in turn allow him to suffer along with Christ.

The role of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" help to illustrate this point more fully. In the "Quis dabit," Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus appear twice; their first appearance, in the deposition scene, is significantly shorter than in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation." In the "Quis dabit," we are told that "vir nobilis quidam nomine Ioseph . . . iuit ad Pylatum postulans sibi dari corpus Ihesu" [a certain noble man named Joseph went to Pilate asking to be given the body of Jesus] (48:13-14). In the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation," Mary tells the narrator that the two "her-wit come me son succor / and sum lightnes o mi langur" [come after this to help my Son and some lightness from my misery] (*CM* ll. 24479-24480). The scene remains focused on the Crucifixion, omitting any information extraneous to Christ's suffering and Mary's compassion. When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus arrive, Mary tells us that "þair come was me ful quem / wit þaim god chere þai broght inogh" [their coming was very pleasing, they brought enough good cheer with them] (*CM* ll. 24484-24485). They were able to cheer her a little by taking the nails "vte of his fete . . . and als vte of his hend" [out of his feet . . . and also out of his hands] (*CM* ll. 24486-24487). Their actions are only reported when Mary sees them, and then only insofar as they relate to Mary's emotional state. The deposition and burial scenes, which Marx notes were "obscured by Mary's sorrow" in the "Quis dabit," are even more obscured in the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation."⁷⁵

There is one figure that features not less but more prominently—the Apostle John. John's increased role could challenge the argument I have just made, but the narrator uses this

⁷⁵ Marx, "The Middle English Verse 'Lamentation'" 144.

figure in an innovative way which continues to heighten the introspective quality. The *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” elaborates on John’s presence during the Crucifixion and his kinship with the Virgin Mary. The “Quis dabit” expands the biblical scene in which Christ commends His mother to the care of the Apostle John, but the *Cursor Mundi* text goes further, describing John’s participation in the pain of compassion. Mary and John together are called “martirs,” “cosins,” and “maidens” (*CM* ll. 24311-24312). Mary says that although her “wond it was herder þan his,” the suffering of both “war herd i-nogh” (*CM* ll. 24435-24436).

The relationship between John and Mary in depictions of the Passion has been noted by Jeffrey Hamburger and Sarah McNamer. Hamburger argues that John’s “abstraction from the compulsions of the flesh” make him a “strangely androgynous figure.”⁷⁶ According to Hamburger, when Christ entrusts His mother to John and John to His mother, John becomes her adoptive son and, in effect, “assume[s] Christ’s place on earth. . . a prelude and precondition to the adoptive sonship of all the faithful.”⁷⁷ This status makes him model and intercessor for all Christians. In her analysis of the gendered nature of compassion in Nicholas Love’s *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, McNamer identifies the figure of John as “potentially destabilizing” to the “gendered drama of feeling.”⁷⁸ John’s youth and effeminate characteristics, she argues, signal his function as a liminal figure. John is able to negotiate the boundaries between affective and rational, domestic and public, female and male, representing an “idealized

⁷⁶ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 166.

⁷⁷ Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*, 167. Hamburger goes on to show that in some texts, John’s adoptive sonship extends to the point of quasi-divinity, demonstrating “the extent to which man can assume the powers and privileges of divinity” (176).

⁷⁸ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 142.

model for the embodiment of feminine feeling in a masculine self.”⁷⁹ If compassion was gendered female and feeling compassion was related to female gender performance (as McNamer argues), the compassionate bond between Mary and Christ is due primarily to her gender. John is capable of compassion as well primarily because of his youth and effeminate characteristics (including his virginity).⁸⁰

In the prologue to the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” the narrator says:

Hir pining was hir suns pine
 Pair baiþer paines aght to be mine
 If þat I luue þam true;
 I se him hang. i se hir wring,
 Þe car all of þat cumli king,
 All christen agh to reu (*CM* ll. 23957-23962)

[Her pain was her Son’s pain
 The pain of both ought to be mine
 If I love them faithfully;
 I see him hang, I see her writhe/wring,
 The care of all that comely king
 All Christians ought to pity]

Mary experienced her Son’s pain, and that same pain will also be the narrator’s pain and the pain of all Christians who truly love Mary and Christ. In emphasizing John’s sympathy (and perhaps even compassion) with the Virgin, Mary’s pain becomes John’s pain. John, in his imitation and adoption of Mary’s suffering, becomes a model for the narrator. The increased emphasis on John in *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” continues into the “Apostrophe to St. John” which follows

⁷⁹ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 148.

⁸⁰ McNamer pushes the association of the feminine and compassion further and argues that Nicholas Love instructs the readers of his *Mirror* to identify with Mary and place herself in her perspective once again *because* she is female. Mary’s intimacy with Christ, however, has to do with their shared flesh—female flesh, yes, but specifically and uniquely one with Christ’s. Is the reader encouraged to “feel like a woman” or to feel like *this* woman? On the other hand, Mary’s female flesh is symbolically representative of human flesh generally. Mary, as I argued before, functions on a number of symbolic registers simultaneously. Her femininity is a part of that, but it is an unusual form of femininity.

immediately after the “Lamentation” in the *Cursor Mundi*. In this piece, thought to be the original work of the *Cursor*-poet, the poet praises John for his “mekenes” and “maiden-hed” which made him worthy to care for Christ’s mother (*CM* ll. 24672, 24678). John’s close relationship with Mary is a manifestation of the relationship the narrator desires both for himself and for all Christians. John’s care for the Virgin Mary enables him to function as an intercessor as well as a model for the meditator.⁸¹ By including an additional figure (John) in the intimacy of Christ’s suffering, the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” creates a potential space for identification with Mary. The meditator is able to enter and share in the pain shared by Christ, the Virgin Mary, and John.

The *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” carries Mary’s suffering further than the “Quis dabit.” In the “Quis dabit,” Mary repeatedly expresses her desire to be crucified with Christ, but in the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” Mary tells us that she actually experiences the pain of the Crucifixion. She says:

Wit-vten croice þe cros i bare,
 Þat croiced was, was al mi care;
 Quen i on him bi-heild,
 Wit spere þai stoked him wit wrang,
 Þat ilk min hert it thoru stang,
 And hyed me til held.
 ¶þe nails þat him fest on rode,
 Toru mi hend and fete þai stode (*CM* ll. 24353-24370).

[Without a cross, I bear the cross,
 That Crucified One was all my care
 When I looked on him
 With the spear they stuck him wrongly
 That same spear stung through my heart,
 And tried to hold me

⁸¹ John’s exemplary intimacy with Mary is highlighted in other works, such as Aelred of Rievaulx’s *De institutione inclusarum*. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*, 174.

The nails that fastened him on the cross
Through my hands and feet they stood.]

Here, though she is not actually being crucified, Christ's pain literally becomes Mary's pain, and she becomes almost one with Christ through her compassion. She feels the spear pierce her heart and the nails in her hands and feet. If John can be seen as a model for the narrator, then his closeness to Mary brings him (and the reader) closer to her; therefore, the closer Mary is to Christ, the closer the narrator and readers can become to Him.

Marx attributes the "deliberate policies of revision" in the Vernon version to three things: an accommodation of "different literary contexts," a "response to problems in the "Quis dabit" itself, and a "response to doctrinal and literary pressures."⁸² It is likely that many of these same pressures would have also been present for the poet of the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation," but the poet responds to them in different ways and does not seem to share the same instructional motive for these changes. The Vernon version addresses the potential theological problem of Mary's excessive grief (which could be interpreted as a lack of faith in the Resurrection) by limiting its depiction of Mary's sorrow and emphasizing her faith, but the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" increases Mary's suffering and draws a distinction between the suffering she expresses and the faith she maintained in her heart. Although the description of Mary's grief is intensified, the narrator assures us that, "þis semed strif, bot þis was nan, / for both your will was in an" [this seemed to be strife, but it was none, for both your wills were one] (*CM* ll. 24584-24586). Although Mary's words and actions might cause one to think she despaired and lost her faith, Mary does understand that Christ's death is necessary for the salvation of humanity. She does

⁸² Marx, "The Middle English Verse 'Lamentation,'" 146-147.

not actually oppose His redemptive sacrifice. Mary's laments were "discord o muth, of hert accord" [discord of the mouth, accord of the heart]; her will was one with Christ's (*CM* l. 24594).

Marx's analysis of the Vernon version served to complicate Rosemary Woolf's argument that what she saw as excessive emotion in later medieval compassion lyrics could be attributed to the influence of texts such as the "Quis dabit" by reminding us of the complexities of the *planctus Mariae* tradition; unfortunately, Marx's argument has since been used to oversimplify the tradition in the opposite direction. The changes Marx identifies in the Vernon version which restrained the emotional tone of the "Quis dabit" do not reflect, as Thompson assumes, the tone of the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation." The Vernon version reminds us that the *planctus Mariae* tradition cannot be described in terms of a broad shift from emotional restraint to emotional excess. The *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" makes use of the dramatic situation of the "Quis dabit," but also, as we have seen, builds upon its introspection and meditative tone. The *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" is evidence of the gradual increase of the emotional and meditative feel of *planctus Mariae* in the later Middle Ages. The inclusion of the "Lamentation" poem in the *Cursor Mundi* manuscripts cannot be seen as direct evidence for an overall didactic or instructional purpose for the text as a whole. The direct influence of the "Quis dabit" on Middle English *planctus Mariae* reveals a tradition that is adaptable to a variety of purposes and that cannot be analyzed simply as teleological.

Dialogue and Point of View in Middle English *Planctus Mariae*

We have seen how, from the twelfth century on, affective meditation became an increasingly popular form of devotion and how the Virgin Mary could be used within such meditation as a

point of identification and as a source of information about the imaginative and emotional details of the Passion. Rosemary Woolf argues that fifteenth-century Marian laments “derive from [“Quis dabit”] much of their detail and also the excessive emotionalism which colours both content and style.”⁸³ While the emotional style and gruesome details of the “Quis dabit” certainly influenced later Passion meditations, the true impact of the “Quis dabit” on late medieval Marian laments lies not in the descriptive details they borrow, but rather in the meditative goal of identification with the Virgin Mary which they adopt. This meditative goal and the method through which it achieves that goal, namely the dramatic dialogue between meditator and the Virgin Mary, distinguish “Quis dabit” from other Passion meditations such as the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, and even from the *Dialogus beatae Mariae et Anselmi de Passione domini*. Even pseudo-Anselm’s dialogue is less effective in this sense, as “‘Anselm’ is a very passive interlocutor.”⁸⁴ The *Dialogus* tends to be more objective, drawing more material directly from scriptural accounts and various historical sources rather than creating affective details to increase the meditative quality of the text.⁸⁵ Marx, describing the prologue of the “Quis dabit,” notes that the narrator is “obsessed with learning about Mary’s compassion so that he too may experience grief.”⁸⁶ The “Quis dabit” “works towards intensification of emotion and response,” and the prologue is primarily concerned with “the nature of compassion, the profound desire to understand emotionally the sorrows of Mary for Christ.”⁸⁷ This emotional understanding and identification with the Virgin is an essential characteristic of the “Quis dabit”

⁸³ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 248.

⁸⁴ Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 53-54.

⁸⁵ See Bestul’s discussion of this work in *Texts of the Passion* 51-54, 126-128. Sticca still considered this work genuine, citing it as Anselm’s major contribution to the *planctus Mariae* and affective traditions. See Sticca, *Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition*, 102-104.

⁸⁶ Marx, “The Middle English Veres ‘Lamentation,’” 141.

⁸⁷ Marx, “The Middle English Veres ‘Lamentation,’” 141.

and perhaps its most significant contribution to the *planctus Mariae* tradition. In this final section, I focus on two Middle English Marian laments which, like the “Quis dabit,” involve a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and a meditator. The meditative “I” in these lyrics can be inhabited by the reader of the poem, allowing him or her to enter into an imaginative dialogue with the Virgin Mary in order to facilitate meditation on the Passion. Though not directly connected to the “Quis dabit” tradition, these later Middle English Marian laments make use of similar imaginative interaction with the Virgin Mary to enable the meditator to enter into an affective meditation on the Passion.

In the prologue of the “Quis dabit,” the narrator’s “heart of stone” and inability to weep are contrasted to Mary’s empathetic relationship with Christ. The narrator recognizes his insensitivity as the antithesis of Mary’s empathy and seeks her help to soften his hard heart. Looking again at the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” the narrator does not express any inability to sympathize with Mary’s sorrow. He does, however, say that it is the obligation of all Christians to feel compassion: “All christen agh to reu” (*CM* ll. 23962). Throughout the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” the narrator continues to express his desire to weep and suffer with Mary. He asks the Virgin to make “vs to reu al wit þi reuth” (*CM* ll. 24054). The *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation,” unlike the “Quis dabit” and the Vernon version, takes this theme farther. Mary says: “Qua ne wist forwit quat weping were, / Do list to me and þai mai here” [Whoever does not know what it is to weep, let them listen to me and they may hear] (*CM* ll. 24440-24441). Mary invites the meditator to learn compassion from her, putting herself forward as our emotional instructor. George C. Taylor suggested that this line from the *Cursor Mundi* “Lamentation” was a possible source for the refrain “Who can not wepe, com lern at me” used in one of Mary’s

laments in the play *Christ's Burial*.⁸⁸ *Christ's Burial*, as Woolf comments, "is not properly a play, but rather a meditation to be read."⁸⁹ Mary, with the dead body of Christ in her lap, calls upon a meditating audience to sit with her and look upon Christ as she does so that the meditators may feel the pain of her compassion.⁹⁰ She instructs anyone "who can not wepe" to:

beholde your Lorde, myn awn der son
Thus dolfulye delt with, ose ye see.
Se how his hede with thornys is thronge!
Se how he naylit was tille a tree!⁹¹

Repeating her invitation to "com and lern" in nearly every stanza from lines 662 to 725, Mary constantly encourages the meditator to experience every detail of Christ's suffering as she describes it. Similar refrains can be found in other late medieval verse *planctus Mariae* including "Thou synfull man of resoun þat walkest here vp & downe" [IMEV #3692] and "With fauoure in hir face ferr passing my Reason" [IMEV #4189]. In each of these lyrics, Mary is depicted in the pieta stance, holding Christ's dead body in her lap, as she engages either an internal meditator or the meditating reader of the poem, teaching the meditator to experience empathy for both her suffering and Christ's.

⁸⁸ George C. Taylor, "The English 'planctus Mariae,'" *Modern Philology* 4.4 (1907) 632-633; "Christ's Burial," *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, ed. Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall Jr., EETS os 283 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) ll. 669. It is interesting that Taylor does not mention this refrain on his list of motifs as it occurs in three of the *planctus Mariae* he discusses: the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" (II in Taylor's list), "Who cannot weep, come learn at me" (IMEV 4189, XVII in Taylor), and "Christ's Burial" (IMEV 95, XXV in Taylor). While Taylor argues for a close relationship between the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation" and Mary's lamentation in "Christ's Burial" based on this and other similarities, the editors argue that the influence of the *Cursor Mundi* was only indirect, because "if the playwright had been working directly from the *Cursor Mundi*, much more of the language would have been similar" (xci-xcii). Neither Taylor nor the play's editors cite particularly convincing evidence for either argument.

⁸⁹ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 263.

⁹⁰ "Christ's Burial" ll. 658.

⁹¹ "Christ's Burial" ll. 670-673.

The fifteenth-century poem “Thou synfull man of resoun þat walkest here vp & downe” [IMEV #3692], begins with the Virgin Mary calling out to the reader, the “synfull man of resoun” to look at her (l. 1).⁹² Mary, mourning for the suffering and death of Christ, beseeches the reader to gaze upon her suffering and take pity on her. Unlike some *planctus Mariae*, Mary does not describe the events of the Passion one by one, walking the reader through a meditation on the sequence of events surrounding Christ’s death on the cross. Instead, the scene of the poem is frozen in time—the reader gazes on Mary as she holds the dead body of her Son, presenting His body (as well as her own) as objects for contemplation.

The sensory, affective details of the Marian laments make these lyrics highly visual, and, as a result, they lend themselves well to studies of the gaze, most notably in the work of Sarah Stanbury, who has used the concept of the gaze from psychoanalytic and feminist film theory to examine the role of the Virgin in Middle English Passion and lament lyrics. The Marian lament provides an unusual opportunity for a woman (that is, Mary) to look on a male body (the body of Christ) and to voice her perspective. However, Stanbury argues, in many of these lyrics Mary is made the object of the reader’s gaze rather than the subject of her own. Although she is initially vocal in her lament, Mary often becomes transfixed, gazing in stunned silence on Christ. She swoons, losing control of her body. Mary calls the reader to look at her and take pity on her. Mary, Stanbury argues, emphasizes her role “as spectacle rather than as spectator.”⁹³ Although the laments give Mary a voice and agency, Mary’s actions make her an object of pity for the person reading, listening to, or imagining her lament—she becomes an image rather than an

⁹² This poem is published by Carlton Brown under the title “O Thou, with Heart of Stone” in *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Carleton Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1939) 16-17. The poem is found in a single manuscript, Oxford Bodleian Library, Ashmole 189 (SC 6777, f. 109).

⁹³ Stanbury, “The Virgin’s Gaze,” 1090.

individual. However, I would argue that while Mary does become the object of the meditator's compassionate gaze, she both invites and controls that gaze, inviting the meditator to internalize her pain (and, by extension, Christ's pain) and become, in turn, an object of God's pity. To be the object of God's pity is a way of actively seeking salvation. Being an object or image does not necessarily imply passivity.

Stanbury draws attention to the refrain in "Thou synfull man of resoun," arguing that as Mary looks upon Christ's suffering, she "internalize[s] pain, becoming not the subject of the gaze but an object of pity," thereby losing the power of her gaze.⁹⁴ Mary appears in these poems at her most visible and vocal even as she calls the reader to gaze on her. By making herself the object of the reader's gaze, she deprives herself, according to Stanbury, of the original authority of her position. However, if the reader is drawn into the scene as a spectator gazing on Mary, the point of learning to suffer with Mary is in some sense to become an object of pity oneself. Looking at the first stanza of the lyric, we see Mary repeatedly directing the reader's gaze, saying: "cast py respecceyoun," "se," and "loke one" (ll. 3, 4, 6). She tells him exactly what he should look at: her "mortall countenaunce," "bloody terys," and "sorofull chere" and exactly what his response to those sights ought to be (ll. 3, 4, 6). He is to "haue ther-of pytee" and "lerne to wepe with me" (ll. 6, 7).

Karen Saupe's commentary on her edition of the poem suggests that the opening lines, are spoken by Christ rather than the Virgin; however, I see nothing to indicate definitively that the speaker is the Crucified Christ.⁹⁵ I am not alone in reading the opening voice as that of the Virgin Mary. Stanbury also interprets the initial speaker of the poem to be the Virgin Mary,

⁹⁴ Stanbury, "The Virgin's Gaze," 1090.

⁹⁵ Karen Saupe, *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998) 223.

though without commenting on the potential ambiguity of the speaker highlighted by Saupe.⁹⁶

The ambiguity of the speaker emphasizes Mary's intimacy with Christ as she shares in His Passion, but close examination of the motifs of the stanza clearly point to Mary as the sole narrator of the poem. The stanza in question reads:

Thou synfull man of resoun þat walkest ehre vp & downe,
Cast þy respeccyoun one my mortall countenaunce.
Se my bloody terys fro my herte roote rebowne,
My dysmayd body chased from all pleasaunce,
Perysshed with þe swerd moste dedly of vengauce.
Loke one my sorofull chere & haue ther-of pytee,
Be-wailynge my woo & payne, & lerne to wepe with me. (ll. 1-7)

In line three, she refers to her bloody tears, a characteristic feature of Mary's compassionate suffering.⁹⁷ The motif appears in other Middle English Marian laments, such as "Stond wel, Moder, under rode" [IMEV #3211] and in Latin works such as the *Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae et Salvatoris Rhythmica*.⁹⁸ Andrew Breeze lists fifteen poems catalogued in the IMEV in which the Virgin Mary cries tears of blood.⁹⁹ The appearance of tears of blood painted onto a statue of the *Pietà* in "De arte lacrimandi" [IMEV #2347] suggests that the Virgin's bloody tears were a recognizable visual motif as well.¹⁰⁰

The "swerd moste dedly of vengauce" referred to in line five most likely refers to the sword that Simeon foretold would pierce Mary's heart in Luke's gospel: "et tuam ipsius animam

⁹⁶ Stanbury, "The Virgin's Gaze," 1090.

⁹⁷ Graef, *Mary*, 261.

⁹⁸ In "Stonde wel, Moder, under rode," Christ asks Mary to "wasse away [her] blodi teren" (l. 14). "Stonde wel, Moder, under rode," *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, 87-89.

⁹⁹ Breeze, looking for the source of this motif in Celtic literature, lists its occurrences in Middle English religious texts in Andrew Breeze, "The Virgin's Tears of Blood," *Celtica* 20 (1988) 110-122, <http://www.celt.dias.ie/publications/celtica/c20/c20-110-122.pdf>. The motif appears in IMEV #293, 328, 648, 771, 776, 1318, 1650, 1869, 1907, 1943, 2347, 3211, 3221, 3692, and 4154.

¹⁰⁰ "De arte lacrimandi," ed. R. M. Garrett, *Anglia* 32 (1909) 269-294; Breeze, "The Virgin's Tears," 114.

pertransiet gladius” [and a sword will pierce your own heart].¹⁰¹ The sword of Simeon’s prophecy was first interpreted as a prediction of Mary’s sorrow during the Crucifixion by Augustine.¹⁰² The image became common in Passion narratives from the twelfth century on and in artwork beginning in the mid-thirteenth century “as a symbol of Mary’s pain at the Passion, as the counterpart of the lance used to pierce Christ’s side, and as the embodiment of Christ’s pain shared by his mother.”¹⁰³ The motif of the sword of Simeon’s prophecy is even more prominent in Passion narratives than are Mary’s tears of blood.¹⁰⁴ The “Quis dabit,” for example, describes Mary’s sorrow as a sword:

Nam gladius Cristi animas vtrorumque transibat, transibat seuus, seue perimebat vtrumque. Que magis amabat, seuior flebat, inmane mater senciebat Cristi dolores, virgoque gladium est passa doloris Cristi morientis. (47: 1-5).

[For the sword of Christ pierced both their hearts; the cruel sword pierced and killed them both cruelly. And she was loving more, was weeping more; the mother was feeling Christ’s sorrows savagely. And the Virgin suffered the sword of the sorrow of Christ dying.]

Thus, although the reference to the “dysmayd body chased from all plesaunce” could refer to Christ’s crucified body, it more likely reflects Mary’s own state of despair (l. 4).

Saupe’s observation that the ambiguity of the initial speaker in the poem highlights the intimacy of the connection between mother and child is still valid. The sword of Simeon, as

¹⁰¹ Luke 2:35

¹⁰² Graef, *Mary*, 96-97.

¹⁰³ Carol M. Schuler, “The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: Popular Culture and Cultic Imagery in Pre-Reformation Europe,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 21.1/2 (1992) 6.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor’s Table of Motives in “The English ‘planctus Mariae,’” 10, number 10. This motif is one frequently used in Marian laments to create an antithesis between Mary’s joy during Christ’s Nativity and childhood and her sorrow at His Crucifixion (Keiser, “The Middle English *planctus Mariae*,” 170-172, 181-182).

Carol Schuler put it, is the “embodiment of Christ’s pain shared by his mother.”¹⁰⁵ In the “Quis dabit,” we read that:

Vulnera matris erant Cristi dolores, seui fuerunt tortores in anima matris. . . dolores nati animam gladiabant in carne Cristi, soluebant debitum mortis quod grauius erat quam mori anime matris (47:5-13)

[the wounds of the mother were Christ’s sorrows, the savage torturers in the heart of the mother The sorrows of the Son put her heart to the sword in the flesh of Christ. They released the debt of death which was more painful for the mother’s heart than to die herself.]

Mary feels the same pain that Christ feels, perhaps even more acutely than He feels it Himself.

In “Thou synfull man of resoun,” it is difficult to determine exactly who is speaking because Mary’s flesh and Christ’s are one and the same. In the Incarnation, Christ assumes His human flesh from Mary’s virginal body.¹⁰⁶ As Fulton writes, “Mary’s maternal office identified her body as one with Christ’s.”¹⁰⁷ Their flesh is common, shared as a result of the Incarnation, and their suffering, therefore, is also shared.

The proper response to the Passion, of course, cannot be commanded; it must be felt. The reader of “Thou synfull man of resoun” should feel “loue” and should “lyst” [desire] to “behold & see” Christ’s death and Mary’s sorrow so that he can “lerne to wepe” by feeling the same compassion that Mary feels (ll. 13-14). Although Mary directs the gaze of the reader toward her “mortall countenaunce” in the first stanza, she redirects that gaze in the second and third stanzas, first toward Christ and, finally, toward the reader as she instructs him to examine his own sinful nature. In the second stanza, she implores the meditator: “Yf þu can not wepe for

¹⁰⁵ Schuler, “The Seven Sorrows,” 6.

¹⁰⁶ The idea of the shared flesh of Mary and Christ extended to arguments for her bodily Assumption. If Christ’s flesh was one with Mary’s, her body could not be allowed to decay after death. See Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 391-397.

¹⁰⁷ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 200.

my perplexed heuynesse, / Yet wepe for my dere sone, which one my lap lieth ded” (ll. 8-9). Shocked that his heart is “so indurate” that he cannot feel compassion for either her Son’s death or for her lamentation, Mary makes a final plea to the hard-hearted “man of resoun.” She appeals to an even more basic instinct, his concern for himself. In line 17, she tells him that if he cannot feel empathy for the suffering of another, even when that other is Christ or the Virgin Mary, then he should at least weep for his own sins.

This self-directed gaze imitates the divine gaze; in seeing his own sins and feeling sorrow for them, the reader will see himself as God sees him. The object of empathetic identification shifts, realigning the relationship between human and divine as the reader finds himself the object of God’s merciful gaze. In one sense the gaze moves inward: where the meditator was initially instructed to look on Mary and Christ, the poem ends with the meditator looking at himself. In another sense, however, the gaze that the meditator now directs toward himself has *gained a new perspective*. When Mary tells him to look inward, saying: “Than wepe for þy synnes, when þu wakest of þy slepe / And remembre hys kyndnes, hys payne, hys passioun” (ll. 17-18). She reminds him to think not only of himself but of Christ’s sacrifice. No longer selfishly preoccupied with ‘resoun,’ he can now gaze inward having seen the suffering of Christ and Mary—suffering caused by the very sins for which he is now taught to weep. Just as Christ grieves over those sins, the meditator can now see himself with newfound compassion, the same compassion God has for humanity. As Rachel Fulton says, writing about the growth of the affective devotional movement, the devotional shift toward interiority begins by looking *out*: “to

move inward, toward the image of Christ in the heart, the soul must first move outward, to compassionate others in pain.”¹⁰⁸

“With fauoure in hir face ferr passing my Reason” [IMEV # 4189] has a similar refrain in which Mary calls on the narrator to learn compassion.¹⁰⁹ This poem differs from the first in that it is delivered by a narrator who describes a woman whom he sees weeping and the words that she speaks to him. The poem opens with the narrator describing his state of mind and establishing the narrative persona. Both the first and second stanzas begin with the narrator’s description of either Mary’s words or his own. Although the narrator gazes on the Virgin Mary, he does not control the vision. The Virgin Mary appears to him in an altered state of consciousness: “half waking, half slepyng” (l. 1). He is “sodenly afraid,” which suggests that the apparition catches him off guard. At the end of the poem, Mary “vanyst Away,” leaving the narrator alone again (l. 36).

In the second stanza, the narrator says that he is “so harde hartid” that he cannot weep, and Mary responds “with wordys shortly pat smarted” (ll. 10-11). These words finally cause the narrator to weep, “veryfying” the truth of her words that those who cannot feel compassion can learn from Mary (l. 17-18). Unlike the first two, the third stanza begins with Mary’s speech. After finally stirring compassion in the narrator’s heart, she continues her lament. In this stanza, Mary’s own compassion and suffering are shared with anyone who can see her. She asks: “What wigt may me behold & wepe nat? noon truly!” (l. 21). All who gaze on her are joined in mutual compassion, almost creating a community of mourners.

¹⁰⁸ Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 199.

¹⁰⁹ This poem is published by Carlton Brown under the title “Who cannot Weep come Learn of me” in *Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century*, 17-18.

In the final stanza, Mary “caste hire ey” on the narrator and orders him to “see, mane, thy brothir” (l. 28). The narrator is made the object upon which Mary gazes as she directs him toward the appropriate focus of his devotion by turning to kiss Christ. When Mary swoons, the narrator tells us that he is not sure which of the two was “more deedly” (l. 31). In her swoon, Mary is imitating Christ and becomes, at least in appearance, just as lifeless as He is. This moment reveals the intimate bond between the two.

The narrator is given the opportunity to share in this special bond of kinship. Mary tells the narrator that Christ is his “brothir.” In the next line, she says “swete, am I not thy modir”—presumably referring to Christ, but also necessarily to Christ’s brother, the narrator (l. 29). These familial bonds are created in order to move the narrator to compassion (l. 12). Mary’s instructions to the narrator in the second stanza call him to be moved by his *nature*. She says, “nature shall move pee thou must be converted” (l. 12). The narrator is joined to Christ and Mary by his nature as a human being. By that same nature, he is capable of emotion. He is called, as is the meditating reader of the lyric, to be moved by compassion and kinship for his “brother” (l. 28).

By calling the reader to look at her and take pity on her, Mary does emphasize her “role as spectacle rather than as spectator.”¹¹⁰ However, Mary does not simply invite the gaze of the meditator—she controls that gaze and dictates how the meditator is to use it. When she invites the meditator to learn from her, she invites him to internalize her pain (which is, by extension, Christ’s pain) through his imaginative gaze. She invites him to become an object of pity himself. The meditator must share in the “mutual *pite*” that exists between Christ and Mary in order to

¹¹⁰ Stanbury, “The Virgin’s Gaze,” 1090.

atone for his sins and merit God's mercy.¹¹¹ Mary serves as more than a passive "point of access into the human drama of the Passion" for the reader of these late medieval Marian laments.¹¹² She actively engages the meditator and invites him to learn compassion from her.

The figure of Mary in the *planctus Mariae* provides the meditator with an example of an appropriate response to the sight of Christ crucified. Mary, as eyewitness to her Son's death, is touched by what she sees. In these two lyrics, Mary interacts with a narrator or the meditating reader, making the imaginative gaze central to the meditator's spiritual exercise. The meditator looks at a visualization of Mary. Mary directs that gaze toward Christ so that the meditator can also be touched through his own act of compassionate gazing. Thus, even as an object of pity, Mary controls the meditator's gaze. She teaches the meditator how to become an object of God's pity through compassion for Christ and sorrow for his or her own sins. In these two Marian laments, Mary reaches out and engages the meditator's imagination. The meditator is not simply shown a model for response in the figure of the sorrowing Virgin, he or she is actually implicated in the exchange of gaze and in the affective relationships created within the lyrics. Examination of the lines of sight created in these poems gives us insight into the way affective devotion and meditation was intended to work both theologically and as a tool for prayer by demanding active, imaginative participation on the part of the meditating reader of the poem.

Conclusions

The meditative interaction between Mary and the narrator in the "Quis dabit" and the *Cursor Mundi* "Lamentation," and in these Marian laments, draws the reader into an affective, educative

¹¹¹ Keiser, "The Middle English *Planctus Mariae*," 178.

¹¹² Stanbury, "The Virgin's Gaze," 1089.

relationship with the text: by talking to Mary, the narrator (and through the narrator, the meditator) learns participation in Christ's suffering; Mary's lamentation becomes a tutorial in affectivity. In other meditations, such as Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, an adaptation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, the narrator tells his readers what to do, see, and feel; he is a teacher rather than a narrative persona that the reader can take up. Love's *Mirror* illustrates the meditative exercises encouraged in late medieval devotional practice, practices which are essential to the meditative dialogue *planctus Mariae* lyrics I have been examining. The passion scene, like all the meditations in Love's *Mirror*, is introduced and narrated by an instructor, the authorial voice of either Pseudo-Bonaventure or Nicholas Love. The narrator guides the reader as he or she begins to meditate: "Go we þan now to þe processe of his passion, takyng hede & makyng vs in mynde as present, to all þat foloweþ."¹¹³ The meditator is instructed on what to imagine and how to feel in response to the events that are narrated. When Christ prays in Gethsemane, for example, the narrator says "skilfully we shold be stirede to inwarde compassion, & wondere here."¹¹⁴ The same guiding voice is present to narrate the Virgin's compassion:

And þou also by deuoute ymaginacion as þou were þere bodily present, confort oure lady & þat felawshipe praiyng hem to ete sumwhat, for ȝit þei bene fasting, & after to slepe, bot þat I trowe was ful lytel; & so taking hir blessing, go þi weye at þis tyme.¹¹⁵

The narrator tells the meditator what to do, how and why to do it, and even when to stop the imaginative interaction. The rhetorical effect of the meditative dialogue Marian laments is quite different. Mary herself adopts the role of instructor. There is no third party to set the scene or

¹¹³ Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Reading Text*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004) 161.1-2.

¹¹⁴ Love 161.22-23.

¹¹⁵ Love 188.2-6.

provide guidance and instruction to the reader, but there is also no third party to intrude on the intimacy of the prayer. In this sense, these Marian laments are even more scripted for performative devotion than Love's *Mirror*.¹¹⁶ The Virgin Mary, not the authorial voice, is instructing the meditator. The meditative dialogue *planctus Mariae* lyrics create a space for the meditator within the action of the poem.

McNamer highlights the fact that Passion meditations such as the one found in Love's text encourage the reader to identify with the compassionate Virgin and the other female figures in the scene as opposed to the cold, unfeeling rationality of the male figures—that the meditator should “feel like a woman.”¹¹⁷ She argues further that “beholding,” rather than being synonymous with seeing, looking, or gazing, takes on a specific, technical meaning in Middle English devotional writings—to see empathetically—and that it was a specifically feminine way of seeing.¹¹⁸ In her examination of the Passion meditation in Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesu Christ*, she notes that the readers are encouraged to behold Christ and feel compassion for his suffering, as Mary does, and not in the stoic fashion of the men depicted in the scene or even in the paternal mode of seeing attributed to God the Father.¹¹⁹ Seeing or feeling like a woman means engaging the affective and (at least temporarily) allowing the emotions to overwhelm reason.

The feminine aspect of the individual (whether it is called the flesh, will, or affect) is the human aspect. Feeling like a woman is feeling like a human. Bearing this in mind, what can we

¹¹⁶ See McNamer's analysis of Nicholas Love in McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 128-134.

¹¹⁷ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 119-149.

¹¹⁸ McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 134-145.

¹¹⁹ Lochrie, similarly, argues that in the Digby Crucifixion play, Joseph tries to ground the emotion in reason or practical considerations (*Translations of the Flesh* 188-191).

learn from the spectacle of the sorrowing Virgin? Like Mary, the meditator is to express his or her natural, human emotion triggered by direct engagement with Mary. When the meditator imitates Mary and unleashes those emotions, he or she becomes, like Mary, a spectacle. Mary encourages the male narrator of “Thou synfull man of resoun” to abandon reason in favor of emotion.

Looking and feeling are closely linked in meditations on Mary’s compassion. The looking we have been discussing to this point has been an imaginative faculty. When Mary instructs the reader to look, she is encouraging him or her to visualize the scene and become imaginatively and emotionally present in it. Through the meditation, the “man of resoun” abandons his physical surroundings (along with his reason) in order to experience compassion. But this forfeiting of the physical setting in favor of an interior, imaginative one is not always what we find. In the final chapter, I would like to consider the role of physical objects and surroundings in late medieval devotional culture. What is the purpose of external, physical and visual practices in the cultivation of interior, affective piety?

Chapter 4

Living Images

The laments I considered at the end of chapter three dealt with a gaze that is imaginative. The meditator, guided by the Virgin Mary, visualizes the Passion, looking at Mary and Christ with the mind's eye. The circumstances change somewhat when the object of the meditator's gaze is a physical representation of the Virgin Mary. In these related Middle English Marian laments, dialogue between meditator and the Virgin occurs not with an imaginative figure of Mary, but with her physical representation in a Pietà. A Middle English Marian lament found in Codex Ashmole 61 and Rawlinson C.86 [IMEV #1447], for example, introduces the poem not as an imagined complaint of the envisioned Virgin Mary, but as the imagined words spoken to the meditator by a statue of the Pietà in a church.¹ Here, the narrator of the poem does not need to visualize Mary in the Pietà stance, but instead he or she sees—and hears—her physical representation in a Pietà statue. The meditator gazes, physically now, on a devotional object.

This new form of lament is closely connected to the development of devotional artwork that coincided with the rise of affective piety. The iconography of the Pietà, with Mary holding Christ's dead body in her lap, developed in southern Germany around 1320 and spread throughout Europe before the end of the fourteenth century.² Rosemary Woolf argues that the emergence of this posture in both literary and artistic images

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 61 (SC 6922*), ff. 106-107; Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C.86 (SC 11951), ff. 72v-74.

² Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2004) 121-156.

gave to the Virgin the prominence that was aesthetically fitting, once she, instead of Christ, became the central object of compassion: the Pietà, in which without impropriety she could occupy the centre, Christ being dead, and in which she appeared in an attitude epitomizing her role of grief, was the perfect form for her complaint.³

Earlier Marian laments tend to describe the Virgin standing next to and gazing at the cross from the perspective of a narrator who is kept at a distance from the scene; Mary cannot face, or address, the meditator without turning away from Christ and, as a result, there are very few thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Marian laments that involve the same type of intimate exchange.⁴ The emergence of the Pietà as a devotional image marks the turning point, literally, in the development of the Marian lament.

In the Pietà stance, Christ has already died and no longer feels pain, so Mary becomes the sole object of the reader's compassion. However, it does not necessarily follow that she is the only object of contemplation. Mary may have turned away from the cross to face the meditator, but she has not turned away from Christ—the Pietà is a contextualized contemplation of Christ's broken body. In one sense, if Mary is the primary focus, Christ functions almost as an object—an instrument of her torture just as the instruments of the Passion often surround the Image of Pity. But in another sense, Christ, though dead, remains the primary contemplative focus. If we consider the stance of the figures within the Pietà, we see that Christ's dead body occupies the center of the image; it is positioned between Mary and the viewer. Our visual access to Mary is, in fact, partially obscured by the body of Christ. This indicates that the Virgin Mary is not the central figure for contemplation—Christ's body, not Mary's, is front and center in the image. The positioning of Mary and Christ in the Pietà stance enables a direct exchange between the meditating reader of the poem and the Virgin Mary, while at the same time allowing both parties

³ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 255.

⁴ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 241

to contemplate the Crucified Christ. Christ's body occupies the space between the viewer and the Virgin where their gazes meet. Just as in the images of the *Sedes sapientiae*, in which Mary holds the infant Christ in her lap, Mary is holding Christ and presenting Him to the viewer. She enables the viewer's access to Christ. Mary's focalization of Christ is, moreover, paradigmatic for the viewer—the viewer is to feel what she feels not only in empathy for her own suffering, but in feeling the pain she feels for Christ alongside her. Through Mary, Christ's suffering continues and the viewer is able to participate in that continued suffering—to suffer with Christ.

The Lamentation in Ashmole 61 is (as Woolf puts it) a “slightly strange variation of the Pietà convention” in which Mary's lament is contextualized not within an imagined post-Crucifixion scene, but in front of an image of the Pietà in a church.⁵ The poem is a variation of another fifteenth-century Marian lament [IMEV #2619] that is found in three manuscripts: Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Ff.2.38, ff. 55vb-56rb; Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Ff.5.48, ff. 73-74v; Manchester, Chetham's Library 8009 [Mun.A6.31], ff. 119v-121.⁶ In both versions, the scene is frozen in time—the reader gazes on Mary as she holds the dead body of her Son, presenting His body (as well as her own) as objects for contemplation. Mary's monologue relates what she sees: she looks at the woman she addresses playing with her baby. Mary alternates descriptions of the woman and her happy, living child and descriptions of herself holding her Son's broken, lifeless body. She contrasts what she sees with what she is inviting the reader, usually assumed to be a woman, to see. Comparison of the Ashmole 61 version with IMEV #2619 reveals a unique variation of the Pietà motif. The most significant

⁵ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 257.

⁶ “Number 2619,” *The IMEV: An Open-Access, Web-Based Edition of the Index of Middle English Verse*, 26 July 2011 <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/record.php?recID=2619>. This version lacks the narrative preface of the Ashmole 61 version and has two additional stanzas (stanzas five and seven).

difference between the two versions is the presence of a three-stanza opening prologue in the Ashmole 61 version that frames Mary's monologue:

In a chyrch as I gan knelle
Thys endres dey for to here messe,
I saw a syght me lykyd welle;
I schall you tell how that it was.
I saw a Pyté in a place:
Oure Lady and hyr sone in fere;
Wele oft sche syghed and seyd, "Alas,
For now lyes dede my dere son dere." (ll. 1-8) ⁷

The narrator of the Ashmole lament meditates on the passion by engaging in a dialogue with the Virgin Mary; however, the dialogue with the Virgin occurs not with an imaginative figure of Mary but with her material representation in a "pyté."

The function of the Pietà statue in the Ashmole Lamentation poem raises questions about the place of devotional images and objects in medieval Christianity. For Woolf, this speaking statue represents an "unmistakable sign of the decay of the tradition" of Passion lyrics. ⁸ She argues that the religious image in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 intrudes between the reader and the imaginative biblical scene, hindering the success of the meditation. I would like to consider some of the implications of the "living" image in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, rather than simply seeing it as a deterioration of a purer form of Passion meditation. Does the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 present an appropriate use of images? Michelle Karnes alludes to a possible relationship between the mental image created in the mind as a part of cognition and the

⁷ "The Lament of Mary," *Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse*, ed. George Shuffelton, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).

⁸ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 257.

visual, devotional image, but she does not explore the interpretive potential of this connection.⁹ Does mediation—whether the mediation of a devotional object, a saint or the Virgin Mary, or even the mediation of our senses—help facilitate human interaction with the divine, or, as Woolf implies, does it hinder the devotee’s direct access to God?

Traditionally, religious images were justified following the formulation of Gregory the Great, who wrote that images served as an important instructional tool for the uneducated—religious images were to be books for the illiterate. The speaking statue in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, however, is more than just a book for the illiterate. Using the questions raised by the speaking image in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 as a starting point, this chapter examines how images function in Middle English devotional texts, including Marian miracles and some of the sermons in John Mirk’s *Festial*. In the last several years, art historians including Hans Belting, Thomas Lentjes, and Michael Camille have argued that gazing on devotional objects was more than just looking; to look on an object was to communicate with it (and with the thing the object represents).¹⁰ How does meditation and prayer directed at an image work and how it is imaginatively productive for the meditator? In what ways does the position of religious images in devotional culture shift from early strategies of justification to later medieval iconoclastic controversies, specifically those which arose in the context of Lollard debates? Medieval

⁹ Michelle Karnes, “The “school of devotion,”” 165-168. Karnes writes: “That the comfort with mental images . . . was met by a growing comfort with visual images is well established, though the task of analyzing these two phenomena in conjunction with each other remains a vexed pursuit. Nonetheless, their coexistence is so striking that some attempt at a joint analysis appears to be called for, even if the lines of relation between them remain murky. This imperative to relate them appears even in the fact that medievals themselves did so” (165).

¹⁰ Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: A.D. Caratzas, 1990); Thomas Lentjes, ““As far as the eye can see . . .”: Rituals of Gazing in the Late Middle Ages,” *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 360-373; Michael Camille, “Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing,” *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 197-223.

scientific theories of vision and optics necessarily had an effect on the understanding of how images were thought to function, as Sarah Stanbury, Shannon Gayk and others have begun to investigate. In each of these contexts, anxieties about religious images reflect anxieties about human physicality and about the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds.

The Justification of Images

Christianity inherited the prohibition against the making and worshipping of images found in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Exodus, the Second Commandment strictly forbids images explicitly:

Non habebis deos alienos coram me non facies tibi sculptile neque omnem similitudinem quae est in caelo desuper et quae in terra deorsum nec eorum quae sunt in aquis sub terra non adorabis ea neque coles (Exodus 20:3-5).

[Do not have strange gods before me and do not make for yourself a graven thing nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or on earth below nor of those things which are in the waters under the earth and do not adore or worship them.]

The undeniable prohibition against making or worshipping idols in Exodus created an ongoing tension for Christianity that reemerges in various contexts throughout Christian history.¹¹

Discussions of images elsewhere in both the Old and New Testaments reinforce the ban.¹²

¹¹ Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 27. This is a prohibition not only against the adoration or worship of idols, but against creating the likeness of *anything* “in heaven above or on the earth below.” It presumably forbids any type of representational art at all. Camille looks at how the prohibition against idolatry seems specifically geared toward the makers of images and not simply those worshipping images. The problem of the man-made nature of idols is also addressed by L. O. Aranye Fradenburg in her essay “Making, Mourning, and the Love of Idols,” in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England*, ed. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 25-42.

¹² Prohibitions against images can be found at Deuteronomy 5:8, 27:15; Psalms 113:12-16, 134:15-18; John 4:24; Acts 19: 24-27; Romans 1:23; Revelations 9:20. For a detailed discussion of the status of images in the Greek, Roman, and early Christian eras, see Thomas F. X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) 10-45. Shannon Gayk provides a concise summary of the history of Christian controversies regarding images from the Byzantine controversies through Lollard objections in late medieval England in the introduction to her dissertation “‘Sensible Signes’: Mediating Images in Late Medieval Literature,” (Diss., University of Notre Dame, 2005) 1-46. See also Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Despite this clear prohibition, there is evidence of Christian representational art from the beginning of the third century.¹³ The condemnation of idolatry did not prevent the earliest Christians from using figural art as such, but the place of images in Christian worship was never free from controversy.

In the west, Gregory the Great's justification—found in two letters he wrote to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles around the year 600—provided the definitive and lasting justification for the use of images. Serenus had destroyed religious images and thrown them out of churches because he had seen the people adoring them. In his letters, although he does not condone idolatry, Gregory cautions Serenus against the wholesale destruction of images. Rather than destroying pictures, the Church can use them. Gregory describes the didactic value of religious images:

Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus, quia in ipsa ignorantes uident quod sequi debeant, in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt; unde praecipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est.¹⁴

[For a picture provides for the uneducated people looking at it the same thing that the scripture provides for those reading, because in the picture, those ignorant people see

¹³ Noble, *Images*, 12. Shannon Gayk writes that the first five centuries of Christian theologians unequivocally denounced both the production and the veneration of images and cites the conversion of Constantine and the consequent rise of Christianity as a state religion as the turning point in the acceptance of images ("Sensible Signes," 15-17). The objections of theologians, however, did not prevent the creation of images in the early Church. See: Hans von Campenhausen, "The Theological Problem of Images in the Early Church," *Tradition and Life in the Church*, 171-200.

¹⁴ Gregory the Great, "Letter XI, 10," *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum libri*, 2 vols. ed. Dag Norberg, CCSL 140A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1982) 874. 23-26. This same justification appears in a more concise formulation in "Letter IX, 209": "Idcirco enim pictura in ecclesiis adhibetur, ut hi qui litteras nesciunt saltem in parietibus uidendo legant, quae legere in codicibus non ualent" [and therefore painting is used in churches so that those who do not know letters may, by looking on the walls, read those things which they are unable to read in books] *Registrum epistularum*, 768, ll. 12-14. For discussion of Gregory's defense of images, see Herbert Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph, Blackwell Companions to Art History (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 151-171; Michael Camille, "The Gregorian Definition Revisited: Writing and the Medieval Image," *L'image: Fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident medieval*, ed. Jérôme Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1996) 89-107.

what should follow. Those who do not know letters read in those very pictures. Whence, for the gentiles, the picture exists instead of the reading.]

Images in churches need not be destroyed, but rather they should be preserved and used in the churches because of their ability to communicate the scripture to the illiterate. Gregory carefully distinguishes between adoring images (which is forbidden), and learning—by *means* of images—what ought to be adored.¹⁵ Images can and should be used as a substitute for texts—as books for the illiterate. Two other arguments appear in an eighth-century letter to the recluse Secundinus which was falsely attributed to Gregory and circulated with his letters in the *Registrum Gregorii*: that images were linked to the Incarnation because Christ appeared in physical, visible form; and that images had the power to engage the viewer on a more emotional level than information that was written or spoken.¹⁶ Gregory's justification of images was taken for granted by the twelfth century. The definition of images as books for the laity fit well with the use of narrative artwork in the earlier Middle Ages. As theological ideas and devotional practices changed with the rise of affective devotion, new forms of religious artwork emerged and the justification of images shifted to emphasize the affective value of art over the didactic. Eventually, a three-fold rationale for the use of images developed: images were permissible because of their ability to teach those who cannot read, their ability to stir the emotions, and their ability to aid the memory. This *triplex ratio* was likely inspired by St. John of Damascus (d. c. 750), who wrote against the iconoclasts during the Byzantine iconoclastic debate. His writings were known in the West from the mid-twelfth century.¹⁷ It has been argued that the *triplex ratio*

¹⁵ “Aliud est enim picturam adorare, aliud per picturae historiam quid sit adorandum addiscere” [For it is one thing to adore a picture and another to learn through the *historia* of the picture what should be adored] (Letter XI, *Registrum epistularum*, 10, 874, 22-23).

¹⁶ Kessler, “Gregory the Great,” 151-152.

¹⁷ Gábor Endrödi, “The Chancellor’s Three Reasons for Paintings in Churches,” *Bonum et Pulchrum: Essays in Art History in Honour of Ernő Marosi on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Livia Varga et al. (Budapest 2010) 137-150

of instruction, affect and memory was distilled from Gregory's justifications by Honorius of Autun. Gábor Endrődi, however, has traced the introduction of the *triplex ratio* to the scholastics through Philip the Chancellor's *Summa de bono* (c. 1225-1228). John's argument links representational art explicitly with the Incarnation: "when you see the bodiless become human for your sake, then you may accomplish the figure of a human form; when the invisible becomes visible in the flesh, then you may depict the likeness of something seen."¹⁸ Our dual nature as human beings makes it impossible for us to endure unmediated perception of the divine. For John, the icon, like the Incarnate Christ, "provides for mediated vision, for an indirect cognition of God."¹⁹ The *triplex ratio*, along with Gregory's formulation of images as *libri laicorum* formed the basis for the defense of images in the writings of theologians such as Bonaventure and Aquinas as well as in later vernacular devotional texts like *Dives et Pauper*.²⁰

Part of the discussion of the role of images in Christian devotion was the issue of identifying the proper object of worship and the difference between types of reverence. A distinction is drawn between *latria*, the worship paid exclusively to God, and *dulia*, the

http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2010/1103/pdf/Endroedi_The_Chancellors_Three_Reasons_for_Painting_in_Churches_2010.pdf, especially 138-139. Endrődi notes that not only does Philip specifically cite John of Damascus rather than Gregory on the justification of images, but also that other formulations which have been credited with the distillation of the *triplex ratio*, specifically that of Honorius of Autun, do not use quite the same three arguments.

¹⁸ John of Damascus, "Defense Against Those Who Attack the Holy Images," *Three Treatises on the Divine Image*, ed. and trans. Andrew Louth (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003) 24. For more on John of Damascus, his treatises on the divine image, and his role in the defense of religious images, see: Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), especially 183-253, and Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially 191-222.

¹⁹ Barasch, *Icon*, 218.

²⁰ See *Dives and Pauper*, vol. 1, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum, EETS, o.s. 275 (London: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1976-2004) 82.

veneration due to saints. *Dulia* is further divided between the veneration due to all saints and the special reverence due to the Virgin Mary, which is called *hyperdulia*. In the West, theologians never taught that proper reverence could be directed toward an image *qua* image.²¹ As Aquinas states, “creaturae autem insensibili non debetur honor vel reverentia, nisi ratione naturae rationalis” [neither honor nor reverence is paid to inanimate creatures, unless by reason of a rational nature].²² Non-rational things cannot themselves be the objects of reverence, according to Aquinas; rather, the *dulia* paid to the image was in fact directed toward the rational being through the image that represented it. Aquinas offers two ways that reverence toward an inanimate object is permissible: first, if the object “repraesentat naturam rationalem” [represents a rational nature], and second, if the object “ei quocumque modo coniungitur” [is in some way connected to it].²³ Reverence can be directed toward religious images insofar as they are representations of holy or divine people.

Aquinas, using Aristotle, explains how religious images function. He writes that when an image is seen, there is a twofold motion of the soul toward it: “unus quidem in imaginem ipsam, secundum quod est res quaedam; alio modo, in imaginem inquantum est imago alterius” [one toward the image itself, according to which it is a thing in itself; in the other way toward the image insofar as it is an image of something else].²⁴ Aquinas concludes, as we might expect, that “inquantum est res quaedam. . . nulla reverentia exhibetur” [no reverence is exhibited insofar as

²¹ In the East, it was argued that *dulia* could, in fact, be directed toward objects (Gayk, “Sensible Signes,” 21-22).

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Peter Caramello (Rome: Merietti, 1956) 3a.25, 4. Translations from Latin are my own.

²³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.25, 4.

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.25, 3.

it is a thing in itself].²⁵ This does not, however, eliminate the usefulness of religious images, nor does it mean that Christians are forbidden to use images. Aquinas points out that, although the fruitless works of pagans are forbidden (such as the worship of idols) the worship of God through an image is not forbidden, because “communicare. . . eorum utilibus operibus Apostolus non prohibet” [the Apostle does not prohibit taking part in their useful works].²⁶ Worship directed through a religious image, Aquinas acknowledges, can be fruitful. In his *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, William Durandus, after citing Gregory’s standard argument to justify the use of images in churches, also notes the affective power of images. He describes the effect that pictures have on the viewer:

Pictura namque plus uidetur mouere animum quam scriptura. Per picturam quidem res gesta ante oculos ponitur quasi in presenti generi uideatur, sed per scripturam res gesta quasi per auditum, qui minus animum mouet, ad memoriam reuocatur.

[Indeed, pictures seem to move the soul more than texts. Through pictures certain deeds are placed before the eyes, and they seem to be happening in the present time, but with texts, the deeds seem to be only a story heard, which moves the soul less, when the thing is recalled by the memory.]²⁷

Unlike the written word, a picture brings the person or event depicted to the viewer in the present moment. Because pictures have this unique power, they are more highly revered than written texts.²⁸

Even critics of religious images, such as the author of a Wycliffite treatise on “Images and Pilgrimages,” still admit that visual images have a certain value.²⁹ A distinction must be

²⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.25, 3.

²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.25, 3.

²⁷ William Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum I-IV*, ed. A. Davril and T. M. Thibodeau, CCCM 140 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1995) I.iii.4, ll. 63-67. Translations of Durandus are from Timothy M. Thibodeau’s translation: *The Rationale divinorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) 34.

²⁸ Durandus I.iii.4, ll. 67-69.

made between Wyclif's position on devotional images and the position of Wycliffites or Lollards.³⁰ Most scholars agree that Wyclif's personal position on images was cautious but not unorthodox, despite the fact that iconoclasm came to be associated with Lollardy.³¹ Wyclif himself did not focus much on the issue of images, but he does address them as a part of his discussion of the Ten Commandments in *De mandatis* and in his *Sermon XIII*. He recognizes that images have good uses: "ad excitandum, facilitandum et accendendum mentes fidelium, ut colant devocius Deum suum" [for exciting, facilitating, and arousing the minds of the faithful, so that they worship their God more devoutly].³² An examination of his writings on images reveals that in fact he warns very strongly against the abuse of images. He writes:

²⁹ There is some dispute about how to identify heretics and specifically Lollards. Scholars have had a tendency over the years to consider Lollardy the only English heresy, leading them to label people with heterodox beliefs "Lollards" even if they were too early to be true followers of Wyclif or if their ideas were inconsistent with Lollard beliefs. Andrew E. Larsen has reexamined the criteria used to identify Lollards in "Are All Lollards Lollards?," *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003) 59-72.

³⁰ For the purposes of this chapter, I will only look briefly at writings dealing specifically with the issue of devotional images. For more on Wyclif's writings, the Wycliffite heresy, and Lollardy, see: Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 45 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England: Reconstructing Piety* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Royal Historical Society and Boydell Press, 2006).

³¹ Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 137-143; Anne Hudson, "Notes to Text 16. Images and Pilgrimages," *Selections from English Wycliffite Writing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 180; Ian Christopher Levy, "Wyclif and the Christian Life," *A Companion to John Wyclif, Late Medieval Theologian*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 4 (Boston: Brill, 2006) 334-335. Whether or not Wycliffites and Lollards were actually followers of Wyclif or religious dissenters more generally is a matter of some debate. According to Hudson, Lollards and Wycliffites were a relatively coherent group that expanded upon, but generally followed the teachings of Wyclif; most claimed to be followers of Wyclif and although "in some respects the Lollards went further than Wyclif, . . . the seed of their ideas can always be found in Wyclif" (Hudson, *English Wycliffite Writings*, 9). This is certainly true of the treatise "On Images and Pilgrimages"; many of the arguments contained in the treatise can be found in Wyclif's own warnings about images.

³² John Wyclif, *Tractatus de Mandatis Divinis; accedit Tractatus de Statu Innocentie*, ed. Johann Loserth and F.D. Matthew (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1966) 156.16-17. See also *Sermones*, 4 vols., ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1886-89) Sermo XIII 92.1-5. Translations from Latin are my own.

“Quod cum sepe contingit in laicis, patet quod securum foret, ut in lege veteri, quod omnes tales ymagines sint delete. Debent enim christiani minus Judeis signis attendere et in Christo qui sursum est voluntatem suam suspendere” (Sermo XIII 91.17-21)

[But often when it comes to the laity, it is clear that it would be safer for all such images to be destroyed as in the old law. For Christians should attend to signs even less than Jews and put all their desire on Christ who is on high.]

Anything which a person “supra singular alia in affeccione preponderat, constituit Deum suum” [values more than every other thing in affection constitutes that person’s God].³³ Wyclif links the use of images with preoccupation with materiality as well as to adoration of the Host. He defines as idolaters those who “adorantes ymagines ac ostiam consecratam” [adore images and the consecrated Host].³⁴ He goes on to emphasize that the Host is only a symbol of Christ’s body, not, as some of the laity mistakenly believe, “idemptice corpus Christi” [the identical body of Christ].³⁵ Images and the Host should only be adored insofar as they represent something else, not for their own sake.³⁶

The objections of Wyclif and of Lollards to images were clearly not new, nor were the debates during this period confined to Lollard circles.³⁷ Wycliffite arguments against images were drawn from earlier controversies as well as more recent scholastic sources. Collections of stock quotations and examples were compiled in the *Floretum* and the *Rosarium* which were used for creating arguments by both sides of the polemic. Lollards primarily objected to social aspects of pilgrimages and devotion to images, which “diverted much-needed funds to the clergy

³³ Sermo XIII 90.16-17.

³⁴ Sermo XIII 90.13.

³⁵ Sermo XIII 91.30-31.

³⁶ Sermo XIII 91.15-17, 28.

³⁷ As Robert Lutton notes, the controversy over images existed “outside Lollard circles, and predated Wyclif” (*Lollardy and Orthodox Religion* 83).

and religious orders, that ought to have been given to the poor, who were the true image of Christ.”³⁸ These social concerns are reflected in the treatise on *Images and Pilgrimages*.

The treatise on “Images and Pilgrimages” begins with a prayer asking God to save His people “fro erring in ymagis.”³⁹ Uneducated people, the author argues, are likely to forget “þe meruelouse and precious werkis þat han ben done by [God], and by [His] dere holy seyntis thorowe [His] large graunt vnto hem, fully traystyng þat ymagis han done þe werkis of grace and not [God].”⁴⁰ However, the author does admit that images are justified in specific circumstances:

But syþen Crist was makid man, it is suffrid for lewid men to haue a pore crucifix, by þe cause to haue mynde on þe harde passioun and bittere depþ þat Crist suffrid willfully for þe synne of man.⁴¹

The Mosaic prohibition against idols stands, insofar as it applies to God the Father, but it is overturned to an extent by the new law established by the incarnation and death of Christ. An image of a crucifix is allowed “syþen Crist was makid man” as a reminder of Christ’s “harde passioun and bittere depþ.” The image, however, ought to be “pore” and not decorated with “greet cost.”⁴² An image ought not to have “myche siluer and gold and precious cloþis and stones þeronne and aboute it.”⁴³ The abuse of images is specifically tied to attitudes toward wealth and material possessions.⁴⁴ A richly decorated image, though it may be considered a book for the laity, is like a book that teaches falsehoods about Christ and, like the false book, it

³⁸ Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion*, 83.

³⁹ “Images and Pilgrimages,” *English Wycliffite Writings*, 16, l.1.

⁴⁰ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 2-5

⁴¹ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 12-15.

⁴² “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 12, 16.

⁴³ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 16-17.

⁴⁴ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 54ff. This coincides with Wyclif’s concern with excessive adornment of images. See *De mandatis divinis* 166.4-10 and Sermon XIII 92.5-15.

should be burnt.⁴⁵ “Images and Pilgrimages” goes on to denounce offerings made to images, saying that the time and money would be more wisely spent visiting and caring for the poor.⁴⁶ Despite objections to the abuse of images—whether attributing divine power to the image rather than the being it represents, false representation of religious figures, or improper use of wealth—the treatise does acknowledge the educative and affective value of images. Images are the “bokis of lewid men to sture þem on þe mynde of Cristis passion.”⁴⁷

Artwork that depicts biblical narratives most embodies the function of image as *libri laicorum*, relating the content of a biblical passage without much risk of promoting veneration. The primary subject of the image is a *story* rather than an *individual*. As Herbert Kessler writes, “Narrative art was deemed both less likely than portraiture to provoke dangerous veneration and more effective for teaching because it could capture attention with its drama and then lead the faithful to an understanding of the meaning of the pictured event.”⁴⁸ Art historians have traditionally distinguished between two basic categories of western religious art: the *historia* (which depicts a scene or relates a story) and the *imago* (which represents a person). This distinction was first drawn by Erwin Panofsky in an attempt to categorize the form and function of medieval religious artwork.⁴⁹ Panofsky argued that a third category of image emerges in the later medieval period along with the emergence of affective devotion—the devotional image, or *Andachtsbild*. The devotional image is a sort of hybrid of the *imago* and *historia*; like the *imago*,

⁴⁵ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 23-24.

⁴⁶ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 17-21, 63ff.

⁴⁷ “Images and Pilgrimages” ll. 21-22.

⁴⁸ Kessler, “Gregory the Great,” 156.

⁴⁹ Erwin Panofsky, “‘Imago Pietatis,’ Ein Beitrag zur typengeschichte des ‘Schmerzenmanns’ und der ‘Maria Mediatrix’” *Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1927) 261-308.

it represents an individual, but it borrows the sense of life from the *historia*.⁵⁰ Sixten Ringbom, building on Panofsky's categories, argues that while a portrait icon could depict a person, the devotional image (particular in the form of the "scenic close-up") could convey a mood or situation. Ringbom emphasizes the psychological intimacy of the half-length image which made this image type particularly suited for private devotion.⁵¹ The devotional image combines the intimacy of the portrait with the dynamic nature of the narrative and is, thus, both still and lively; it creates an intimacy which allows the viewer the "experience of dialogue and at the same time 'inspection' of the bodily details."⁵² This emotional context gives movement and "life" to the image and allows for affective connection between the viewer and the image.

Ringbom distinguished between the *Andachtsbild* and the devotional image (despite the fact that "devotional image" is its literal translation), emphasizing the privacy of the devotional image which, he argued, the *Andachtsbild* (as a piece of large, public art) did not have. Hans Belting felt that Ringbom's distinction failed to account for the complexity of the relationship between the form (the panel painting) and the function (devotion) of a devotional image. He demonstrates that the *Imago Pietatis* "did not have a form that had come into being in its own right, but rather usurped a foreign one," that is, the eastern icon.⁵³ Belting argues that the changes in artistic style result from (and therefore follow) the development of affective devotion; affective devotion is reflected in the style of images beginning around the thirteenth century though it is reflected in texts much earlier than that. Although he argues that the form and

⁵⁰ Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd ed. (Doornspijk: Davaco Publishers, 1984) 57.

⁵¹ Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 48.

⁵² Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 45; Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 58, 71.

⁵³ Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 43.

function of devotional images was more complex than Ringbom's formulation, Belting's study nevertheless focuses on images that are portable and either displayed or privately accessible. The emphasis on the private nature of devotional images as opposed to cult images by both Ringbom and Belting places private devotional use of images almost exclusively in the province of those wealthy enough to maintain private chapels or own portable images. Richard Marks, on the other hand, demonstrates that public art can, in fact, be used for private devotion. Marks argues that "the English devotional image flourished in the public space of the parish church," demonstrating that "for the laity as a whole, the devotional images in their parish church remained the principal focus of affective piety until the Reformation."⁵⁴

The development of the devotional image corresponds with the shift in devotional attitudes toward affective piety that occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. New forms of religious art emerged that were "more spiritually charged and accessible."⁵⁵ These images were intended for contemplative use rather than narrative exposition.⁵⁶ Just as devotional literature strove to enable emotional identification with Christ, Mary or the Saints, so too did the devotional image—the role of images shifts away from their use as *libri laicorum* toward affective tools. Emotional identification is an essential component of affective devotion and has a direct connection to the way in which the devotional image can be considered a "likeness." Belting notes that the devotional image is a portrait not in the sense of likeness to a living model or a faithful reproduction, but rather in its "suggestion of reality . . . [and] appearance of life."⁵⁷ In the case of the *Imago Pietatis*, the portrait of Christ resembles a true man through the evidence

⁵⁴ Marks, *Image and Devotion*, 16.

⁵⁵ Camille, *Gothic Idol*, 206.

⁵⁶ Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 41-43; Camille, *Gothic Idol*, 206; Marks, *Image and Devotion*, 15-17.

⁵⁷ Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 4.

of physical suffering and through rhetorical gestures which invite the viewer's "desire to imitate or 'resemble' in life the human Jesus. 'Our ability to rediscover resemblance is nothing but a vestige of the once powerful compulsion to become and act alike.'" ⁵⁸ The devotional image arouses this desire to imitate and encourages conformity to Christ, which is the ultimate goal of affective piety. The visual stimulus of the devotional image can be interpreted by the devotee through two different cognitive responses: the affective response and the intellectual response.

For the purposes of affective piety, affection and intellection are both treated as ways of knowing, and both are mediated through the act of vision by means of the faculty of imagination. The viewer receives information that is processed and understood, but he or she also receives information that is interpreted emotionally. Vision was considered the highest of the senses—the least rooted in the flesh and the most directly linked to the mind—and yet it is capable of transmitting information that relates directly to the emotions and not to the intellect. In the case of the Marian lament poem or the Pietà, the meditator cannot *understand* how Mary felt when she saw her Son suffer and die on the Cross unless he or she identifies and empathizes with her. In this sense, the full intellectual response cannot be achieved without first achieving the appropriate affective response. Gazing at an image of the Crucifixion or the *Imago Pietatis*, a meditator might know intellectually that the Crucifixion occurred and understand the theological causes and results, but this intellectual response does not trigger the desire to conform himself or herself with Christ. The affective response adds essential depth to our human understanding. The affective involves identification; the intellectual does not.

⁵⁸ Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 5; Belting here quotes Walter Benjamin, "Lehre vom Ähnlichen," *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977) 204ff.

The role of material objects in devotional practice is connected to the role of body, which (as we have seen) takes on new importance in affective devotion. In *The Gothic Idol*, Michael Camille examines the increasing popularity of religious images despite growing fear of idolatry and argues that, although the term “idolatry” was reserved for the “Other” (especially Jews and Saracens), the use of images in the late medieval church was dangerously close to pagan idolatry. However, Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that it is not the pagan that is the true “Other,” but rather the human body itself. The attitudes of late medieval Christians toward their images reflect simultaneous mistrust and attachment that parallel attitudes toward the body. As Bynum provocatively suggests in her review of *The Gothic Idol*, “‘being’ and ‘being like’ may be closer to each other than many modern theorists are comfortable admitting.”⁵⁹ The devotional image *is like* the person it resembles (such as Christ or the Virgin Mary), but in resembling Christ or the Virgin Mary, in making that person present to the viewer, the devotional image *is* that person for the viewer’s physical perception. The viewer is touched by more than the physical image seen; the viewer is touched by who it resembles and is moved to try to make himself or herself resemble that person as well. The resemblance allows the image to be efficacious. When the devotee looks at, prays to, speaks with, or touches the image, the boundary between the material and the spiritual breaks down. Following Bynum’s observation, I wish instead to consider how the medieval attitudes toward devotional images as material manifestations of a spiritual presence—the relationship of image to the person imaged and the anxieties regarding the success and usefulness of such representation—reflects the troubled relationship between the human flesh and the human soul and the value of using the flesh for spiritual ends in affective devotion.

⁵⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, “Review: Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image Making in Medieval Art*,” *The Art Bulletin* 72.2 (1990) 332.

Anxiety about idolatry is associated with anxiety about physicality in general—our human physicality and, indeed, the physicality of God in Christ Incarnate.

The invocation of the senses and of affect appeals directly to our physical being—our flesh—and assumes that flesh (or body in Bynum’s formulation) shares an identity with the soul. Human flesh cannot be denied or ignored because it was formed by God in His image and likeness and then assumed by Christ in the Incarnation. The Incarnation makes it possible to have images of God (specifically of the second person of the Trinity) and for physical images to have efficacy beyond their material form. Physical and spiritual are essentially connected through the mystery of the Incarnation, and Mary is involved in that mystery because it is her flesh that He takes on and unites with His divinity. Mary is the conduit through which Christ entered into the world and through which we can return to God.⁶⁰ In the Incarnation, Christ took flesh from Mary in order to become man; through Mary, the spiritual becomes material and the material gains access to the spiritual.

The miracle of the Oxford Scholars found in the *South English Legendary* shows how an image of the Crucifixion with Mary at the foot of the cross serves a threefold purpose, as an instructional tool for a mother to teach her son, a lifelong reminder of Mary’s suffering for Christ, and a source of compunction for his sins.⁶¹ In this tale, a young boy in Church with his mother “biheld þat rode in churche and stod in grete þoʒte.”⁶² The child is instantly struck by the

⁶⁰ See the discussion of Bernard’s allegory of the aqueduct in chapter one on page 52.

⁶¹ This miracle tale appears as a group of miracles following the legend of “St. Theophilus.” See Beverly Boyd, *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1964) 105-108.

⁶² “St. Theophilus,” *The South English Legendary: Edited from Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS. 145 and British Museum MS. Harley 2277 with variants from Bodley MS. Ashmole 43 and British Museum MS. Cotton Julius D. IX*, ed. Charlotte d’Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, EETS, o.s. 235-236, 244 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956-1959) l. 412.

image of the crucifix. Knowing nothing about the people or story represented by the image, he experiences an innocent, unlearned reaction to a devotional image. He asks his mother “wat is þe mon þat 3end anhonged is . . . And wat is pulke faire womman þat stont bi him so stille.”⁶³ The boy instinctively knows that there is meaning behind the image and asks about the two figures represented. His mother then instructs him in the *historia* that accompanies the image, telling him that the man is Christ who died “to bringe us to þe ioie of heuene” and that the woman is his mother who stood “bi him þo me him slou.”⁶⁴ The boy’s first, affective response stays with him throughout his life: “Þei þis child were 3ong ofte siþe on þis deol it þo3te / Seld were he euere were out of is herte he is bro3te.”⁶⁵

The Crucifix is a sign representing Christ and Mary, who are each pictured in the image, as well as the story represented, the Crucifixion. The boy’s question to his mother, “wat is,” is both a question of identity—who is this man? who is this woman?—and a question of ontology—what *is* Christ? The boy is asking who the people represented are as well as what they are; in answer to his question, he is instructed in the theological significance of the Crucifixion. The image allows the boy to know Christ, intellectually and affectively, so that he can conform his own identity to Christ’s.

In this miracle tale, we see a devotional image being used in precisely the way we expect, as an alternative to reading. The image inspires curiosity, provides opportunity, and aids in the memory of the as yet uneducated Christian. The emotional impact of the image both precedes the lesson and lasts beyond it. It is that initial emotion that stays with the boy throughout his life and reminds him of Christ’s sacrifice and Mary’s sorrow. Eventually the boy dies and is

⁶³ *South English Legendary* ll. 413, 418

⁶⁴ *South English Legendary* ll. 416, 421

⁶⁵ *South English Legendary* ll. 425-426

rewarded for his lifelong devotion. The purpose of Christ's sacrificial death, "to bringe us to þe ioie of heuene," is realized at the end of the boy's life when Mary "hure sulf zeode biuore and opened þe dore of heuene."⁶⁶ When Mary introduces him to her Son: "lo her mi frend."⁶⁷ The boy's knowledge of Christ is repaid—Christ knows him in return and receives him into heaven. Mary tends to the candles that are lit by his body in the Church, acknowledging and honoring his physical human body as well as his soul as a reward for his devotion.

The Visuality and Physicality of Devotion

In a footnote to the first two lines of the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, "In a chyrch as I gan knelle / Thys endres dey for to here messe," George Shuffelton, the editor of the TEAMS edition of *Codex Ashmole 61*, states that these lines are meant as a reference to the Eucharist and to the doctrine of transubstantiation (ll. 1-2). He suggests that the miracle of the speaking statue may be similar to Eucharistic miracles in which the consecrated Host is perceived as a baby or as actual flesh. While I cannot read this specific implication into the poem's opening lines and think they are only being used to provide the setting for the meditation, I do believe Shuffelton's comment highlights an important aspect of this Marian lyric: the miraculous speaking statue, like miracles confirming transubstantiation, is about divine presence manifested in a material object. Marks has suggested that the *Pietà* may have served as a visual representation of the invisible miracle of transubstantiation. In his discussion of images of Our Lady of Pity at Thame and Horton, Marks suggests that the placement of these images near the rood allowed "the viewer to

⁶⁶ *South English Legendary* ll. 459-460.

⁶⁷ *South English Legendary* l. 462.

construct a narrative of the Passion.”⁶⁸ The proximity of the image to the altar would have “underlined its role as a Eucharistic image, especially during Mass, when the symbolic Real Presence could be echoed graphically by Christ’s broken body in the arms of His grieving yet meditative mother.”⁶⁹ The Pietà is a material, visual manifestation that supplements the viewers’ understanding of the transubstantiated Host. But it represents much more than the *narrative* of the Passion; in fact, it does not even depict the Passion. Rather, it is an affective parallel to the more abstract miracle taking place on the altar. It connects the viewer with the emotional context necessary for a complete devotional experience of the consecration.

The visual experience of the consecration was perhaps the most important part of the medieval Eucharistic experience. In the late twelfth century it became customary for the priest to elevate the Host at the moment of consecration when the miracle of transubstantiation occurred so that it could be adored by the people attending Mass.⁷⁰ All the senses were engaged to draw the attention of the faithful to the consecration: “Bells pealed, incense was burnt, candles were lit, hands were clasped, supplications were mouthed.”⁷¹ However, particular emphasis was placed on sight. Seeing the elevated Host was considered “the essence of the rite” and “‘spiritual communion’ which could be experienced through a fervent viewing” became almost a substitute to actually receiving the Host in sacramental communion.⁷² As Eamon Duffy writes: “for most people, most of the time the Host was something to be seen, not to be consumed.”⁷³

⁶⁸ Marks, *Image and Devotion*, 137.

⁶⁹ Marks, *Image and Devotion*, 137.

⁷⁰ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 55, 57; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 95.

⁷¹ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 58.

⁷² Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 60, 64. Actual reception of the Host was a rare occurrence for the medieval Christian, occurring only once a year at Easter. See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 73; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 95-102.

⁷³ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 95.

The mystery of transubstantiation depended upon the ability of a material object to be, in reality, something other than it appeared to be. Prior to the moment of transubstantiation, adoration of the Host was considered idolatry because bread and wine had no life beyond their matter.⁷⁴ Like the idol of pagans, the bread and wine are “dead” matter. After the consecration, however, the bread and wine are, in reality, the body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine that can be seen by the congregation is merely the form in which the substance of Christ appears—they have life beyond their basic material form. The life within the consecrated bread and wine, though, is paradoxical because it is the crucified (and therefore dead) flesh of Christ, but it is alive because Christ rose from the dead and it gives life to those who receive it. In the image of the Pietà, as with the consecrated Host, the viewer’s gaze is directed toward the crucified body of Christ by the living image of Mary. The paradox of living image of a dead body, like the paradox of the living-but-dead body that Belting observed in the *Imago Pietatis*, “results from the other, greater paradox, the joining of God and man in a single person.”⁷⁵ The viewer must see the living quality of the image despite the fact that it is the image of a dead body.

Eucharistic miracles and visions of mystics in which the bread appeared or tasted like actual flesh confirmed the truth of the Church’s teaching of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine were the true body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. In the treatise on the sacrament of the altar that follows his *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, Nicholas Love includes a number of Eucharistic miracles that confirm the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine. These miracles declare “expressely þe forme & þe soþenes of

⁷⁴ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 54.

⁷⁵ Belting, *Image and its Public*, 2.

þat blessed sacrament.”⁷⁶ God reveals these miracles for two reasons, the same reasons that Love includes the tales in his treatise: first, to comfort true believers and “kyndle hir hertes in to þe more feruent loue of god”; and second, to “conuerte hem þat bene of misbyleue in to þe trewe byleue.”⁷⁷

In one such miracle, Hugh of Lincoln is celebrating a mass at which a clerk experiences a vision of Christ at the moment of consecration. At the moment of the elevation, when the bishop “helde vp goddus body in forme of brede,” Christ appears to a devout clerk listening to the mass “bytewix þe preestes holy handes . . . in likenes of a passyng faire litel childe.”⁷⁸ As the consecration continues, the clerk sees Christ “offringe him self in sacrifice to þe fadre for mannus hele & sauacion.”⁷⁹ Miracles in which Christ appears as a child in the Host are particularly common. The juxtaposition of Christ’s birth and death, as we saw in the *Ancrene Wisse* with the use of Annunciation imagery at the consecration and in Marian laments in which Mary recalls her interactions with Christ when he was an infant, creates a stark emotional contrast.⁸⁰ The juxtaposition of these two moments of Christ’s life serves another purpose—Christ’s Incarnation and death are the liminal phases that define the boundaries of His human existence. These events are the transitional moments at which God enters into and departs from physical existence; they are the point of connection between the divine and the human.

⁷⁶ Love, “De Sacramento,” *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, 232.6-7.

⁷⁷ “De Sacramento” 228.11-12; 230.33.

⁷⁸ “De Sacramento” 230.9-11.

⁷⁹ “De Sacramento” 230.16-18.

⁸⁰ The contrast created in Marian lyrics between Christ the infant and Christ Crucified is part of the antithetical style George R. Keiser discusses in his essay on the *planctus Mariae*.

In another miracle, a woman laughs out loud when she hears St. Gregory announce that the bread is the body of Christ, explaining that she had made the bread with her own hands.⁸¹ Gregory prays for the woman, and the two find that the Host has transformed “in to þe likenes of a fynger in flesh & blode.”⁸² In yet another miracle, Love describes how the Host turned into “flesh & alle ouere wetē with þe rede blode” that poured out of the Host when Hugh of Lincoln broke it on the altar during the consecration.⁸³ In each of these miracles, the truth of the mystery of transubstantiation is revealed visually when God makes an exception to the standard formula of transubstantiation—the body of Christ appears in its true form rather than in the form of bread and wine.

In these miraculous Eucharistic visions, the external senses—specifically sight—enable the medieval Christian’s access to God through mediation. The senses mediate our access to the world around us. Touch is an encounter between our physical body and the physical bodies of other material objects. Vision, which was generally held to be the most important of the senses, is the primary means for the individual subject to encounter and to understand the world and objects in it. It became an “all-purpose and enduring symbol, a metonymy for all the external senses.”⁸⁴ The function of vision is more complicated than that of touch, in that it links material objects with our mind, bridging a gap between material and immaterial. Vision enables both intellectual and affective knowing. Vision is not only a way of perceiving the material world; it is also an analogy for the acquisition of knowledge and understanding.⁸⁵

⁸¹ “De Sacramento” 231.4.

⁸² “De Sacramento” 231.7-8.

⁸³ “De Sacramento” 231.40-41.

⁸⁴ Richard Newhauser, “Peter of Limoges, Optics, and the Science of the Senses,” *Senses & Society* 5.1 (2010) 29.

⁸⁵ Newhauser, “Science of the Senses,” 29; Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 3-6.

The medieval understanding of how vision worked was not simply a means of accounting for visual perception. The relationship between subject and object—between rational being and material world—and their respective roles in the visual encounter were at the heart of medieval optical theory. Some of the implications of vision with respect to the imaginative gaze in the context of affective meditation have already emerged. As I argue in chapter three above, the reader of the medieval Marian lament is drawn into an exchange of gaze by Mary who draws the reader's gaze onto her as an object of compassion but then directs the reader's gaze toward Christ and finally back onto the reader. By calling the reader to imitate her own compassionate gaze, Mary helps the reader to become the object of God's merciful gaze. As the meditator gazes on a devotional image such as the Pietà in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, it is the physical gaze, the sense of sight, in addition to the imaginative gaze that must be considered.

A brief review of the history of medieval optical theory will enable a deeper exploration how vision mediates the devotional experience and give some insight into our understanding of the use of images in medieval devotion. The purpose of vision, as Suzanne Conklin Akbari writes, is the “meeting of subject and object . . . [and] the description of how this encounter takes place, and whether the encounter is direct or through a mediating third term, is the purpose of optics.”⁸⁶ Ancient and medieval optical theory generally held that there must be some sort of physical contact between the object seen and the visual organ in order for the object to “stimulate or influence the visual power and be perceived.”⁸⁷ Medieval optical theories sought to explain how this physical contact was initiated, placing the initial agency either with the seeing subject or with the object seen. The two basic mechanisms of sight were extramission and intromission,

⁸⁶ Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 22-23.

⁸⁷ David C. Lindberg, “The Science of Optics,” *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 339.

and medieval optical theories were categorized according to which mechanism was primarily at work.⁸⁸ “Intromission” theories hold that the contact between viewer and object originates with the object. The object of sight projects its visual form (generally referred to as the *species*) to the eye of the subject. “Extramission” theories describe the contact between subject and object as initiated by the viewer, who sends out some sort of visualizing power or beam that enables the transmission of the *species* back to the viewer. Plato argued that a fiery beam, emitted from the eye, is impressed by a force emitted from the object and then returns to the eye with that impression. Aristotle, on the other hand, rejected extramission and argued that vision was enabled by a medium that exists independently between the subject and object and is capable of transmitting the form of an object like an impression to the viewer. Extramission theories, following ancient theories of Plato (available in medieval Europe through Calcidius’s translation of the *Timaeus* as well as the writings of Neoplatonists), Euclid, and Ptolemy dominated medieval optics until around the middle of the thirteenth century. These theories were reinforced by the writings of Augustine, Macrobius, and Boethius.⁸⁹

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, translations of previously unavailable Greek writings on optics (including Aristotle) as well as Arabic treatises on optics were made available and began to influence Western scientific thought. The most influential of the Arabic texts was

⁸⁸ Intromission theories of optics originated with the Greek atomists. The Epicureans expanded on their ideas. The Pythagoreans argued that the species of large objects would be impossible for the eye to receive and proposed an extramission theory instead. For a more detailed account of the history of optics in ancient and medieval science, see: Lindberg, “The Science of Optics,” 338-368; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 21-44; Newhauser, “Science of the Senses,” 28-44.

⁸⁹ Lindberg, “The Science of Optics,” 349; Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 26-30. Augustine depicts the mechanism of vision as extramissive, following the Neoplatonists for the most part. Unlike the Neoplatonists, Augustine insists that the visual beam is *material* (as the Stoics did). Augustine’s writings are crucial to the development of the metaphor of sight for knowledge and the distinctions between corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual sight (see Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 26-28).

the eleventh-century *Perspectiva* by Alhazen (ibn al-Haytham) which was generally more Aristotelian and intromissive than the theories that had dominated medieval optics up to that point.⁹⁰ Around the middle of the thirteenth century, the effects of these newly available theories can be seen, particularly in the work of Roger Bacon and other “perspectivists.” Bacon’s theory merged aspects of both intromission and extramission, suggesting that the relationship between the seeing subject and the object seen was reciprocal. The *species* are generated by the form of the object and the potential of the medium, but the process also requires the visual rays from the seeing subject’s eye “to excite or ennoble the medium and the species of the visible object.”⁹¹

Bacon theorized that an object generates species of light and color in the medium directly next to it. The *species*, in turn, generate *species* in the medium next to it and so on until they reach the eye of the seeing subject. The *species* thus transmit the form of the object seen through “a process of successive actualization of the potentials” of the medium and, ultimately, the visual organ.⁹² According to Bacon’s optical theory, being seen is an “act” rather than simply a “state.” In his description of the process of sight, Bacon refers to the object seen as the *agens*, the “agent,” and the seeing subject as the *patiens*, the “subject of action” or “recipient.” He writes: “agens influit speciem in materiam patientis” [the agent sends forth a species into the matter of

⁹⁰ Alhazen’s theory drew on both the geometrical theories of Euclid and Ptolemy and earlier Greek theories of the visual cone. The changes in optical theory between the eleventh and fourteenth century coincided with a shift in world view, also reflected in contemporary theories of language and allegory. It is difficult to say whether scientific theories triggered the changes in theories of language or whether both were part of the same shift (Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 43).

⁹¹ Lindberg, “The Science of Optics,” 352. Bacon synthesized elements of Robert Grosseteste’s theories on light and Alhazen’s perspectivism. Grosseteste (who did not have access to Alhazen’s treatise) argued that species were generated by both the subject and the object and moved between the two.

⁹² Katherine H. Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optic, Epistemology, and the Foundation of Semantics, 1250-1345*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 22 (New York: E.J. Brill, 1988) 8.

the recipient].⁹³ The recipient can be either the medium or the sense organ.⁹⁴ The seeing subject, rather than the object of sight, is the passive, receptive party in the relationship.⁹⁵ The agent attempts to conform the recipient to itself: “agens intendit assimilare sibi patiens” [the agent directs its efforts to making the recipient similar to itself]. This is a particularly important part of Bacon’s theory with regard to devotional seeing.

Although the sophisticated scientific treatises on optics would not have been accessible to the wider population, the optical theories contained in them filtered down to the wider population through preaching materials. The Franciscans played a particularly important role, both in the study of optics (producing a number of optical writers including Bacon and John Pecham) and, because of the order’s pastoral activity, the dissemination of optical theories into devotional settings. Grosseteste, who was connected with the Franciscan order, composed both scientific and pastoral works. His work on optics appears in devotional contexts, notably in the *Château d’Amour*, where he uses the refraction of light to describe the diffusion of God’s grace through the Virgin Mary into the world by describing the inside of the castle as pure white but the outside as multicolored.⁹⁶ Peter of Limoges wrote specifically on the moral implications of optical theory in his preaching manual, the *Tractatus Moralis de Oculo*.⁹⁷ In his treatise, Peter “educates

⁹³ Roger Bacon, *De multiplicatione specierum* in David C. Lindberg, ed., *Roger Bacon's Philosophy of Nature: A Critical Edition, with English Translation, Introduction, and Notes, of De multiplicatione specierum and De speculis comburentibus*, trans. David C. Lindberg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) ll. 77-81. All translations of *De multiplicatione specierum* are Lindberg’s.

⁹⁴ *De multiplicarione specierum* ll. 142-143.

⁹⁵ See also Tachau, *Vision and Certitude*, 16.

⁹⁶ The image occurs at ll. *Château d’Amour* ll. 614-704. See Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 43.

⁹⁷ For more on Peter Limoges and his treatise, see Richard G. Newhauser, “Peter of Limoges, Optics, and the Science of the Senses,” *Senses & Society* 5.1 (2010) 28-44; Newhauser, “Nature’s moral eye: Peter of Limoges’ *Tractatus moralis de oculo*,” *Man and Nature in the Middle Ages*, ed. S.J. Ridyard and R.G. Benson, *Sewanee Mediaeval Studies* 6 (Sewanee, TN: University of the South Press, 1995) 125-36; Dallas G. Denery, II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology, and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

the viewer in a series of lessons on how to see, that is to say, on how to transform sensation into perception, or, the science of vision into pastoral theology,” and helps to “make thinking about the senses themselves part of the common cultural work of the pulpit.”⁹⁸

Suzannah Biernoff and Sarah Stanbury have begun to address the significance of the differences between medieval and modern theories of optics on the devotional gaze. Biernoff examines the similarities between sight and touch, arguing that both rely on distance and an intervening medium (the medium, in the case of vision, and the flesh in the case of touch) in order to function. Stanbury, following Biernoff, highlights that “mechanical linkages between the viewer and object of his or her gaze” were central to the medieval theories. She uses this information, however, only to argue that “gazing is a direct kind of physical sensation, altering the eye and also altering the object seen. Vision is a form of touch.”⁹⁹ It is not simply the physical contact between viewer and object that I wish to highlight, but rather the fact that, according to such theories of optics, the seeing subject is not the active agent, but rather the passive recipient. It is not only the eye that is altered by the compassionate gaze: it is the heart. The hard heart is touched, moved by what it sees, and it changes.

The emphasis on the similarities of vision and touch by both Biernoff and Stanbury is misleading; vision is like touch only in that there was thought to be actual, physical contact established between the seeing subject and the object seen. Touch, however, was regarded as the

Press, 2005), especially chapter three “Peter of Limoges, Perspectivist Optics and the Displacement of Vision,” pages 75-115.

⁹⁸ Newhauser, “Science of the Senses,” 33, 34.

⁹⁹ Stanbury, “Gender and Voice,” 235-236.

basest form of sensation. Grounded in the body, touch was directly linked to sensuality and, thus, to potential sin.¹⁰⁰ Vision, on the other hand, was the highest of the bodily senses—the sense least rooted in the body. Physical contact occurred in vision, but it occurred only indirectly through the medium; the seeing subject and the object seen do not come together unmediated. Sight also had the most direct link to the functions of the mind and the spirit, allowing for it to act as a metaphor for the acquisition of knowledge and divine revelation.¹⁰¹

Biernoff's other argument—that the nature of vision was reciprocal in Bacon's theory—is also deceptive. Although Bacon does argue that in the act of seeing there is activity at work both in the seeing subject and in the object seen, the activity of each party is very different. The activity is more complementary than reciprocal: the object seen sends out its species through the medium; the seeing subject sends out the visual beam, activating the medium and then receives the species. A devotional image attempts to manifest the presence of God, Christ, Mary, or the saints in a physical, sensory way; vision, then, attempts to assimilate the material object into the immaterial mind or soul. Intromission theories demonstrate that the "subject" is not exclusively "active," nor is the "object" exclusively "passive" as we tend to think of them today. When Biernoff emphasizes the "reciprocal" relationship between subject and object in Bacon's optical theory and connects it to reciprocity between viewer and devotional image in Belting's arguments about devotional images, she misses a crucial point. The relationship between seeing subject and object seen is not reciprocal insofar as one is subject and the other is object, but

¹⁰⁰ See C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 29-30.

¹⁰¹ Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 3-6. Woolgar, *The Senses*, 23, 147.

rather because there is an *exchange of gazes*.¹⁰² Truly reciprocal visual activity occurs only when there is a true exchange of gaze—when the object seen is also a seeing subject.

The activity of the object seen cannot fully explain the reciprocal relationship between devotee and devotional image. In the case of the devotional gaze on an image, the object seen is also a seeing subject—even when it is a material object—because of its resemblance or likeness to the person imaged (for example, Christ, Mary, or a saint). Thus, the question becomes not simply how does vision allow us to see a devotional image, but what exactly are we seeing. When we look at a Pietà, do we see a statue of Mary and Christ—or do we see Mary and Christ? And, if we see Mary and Christ, do they also see us? Medieval theories of vision allowed for activity or agency on the part of the object seen as well as the seeing subject. As Michael Camille writes, “the intromission model took the emphasis away from vision and onto the power of images themselves, whose eyes, as in cult statues and devotional images, could stare back.”¹⁰³ Is it possible for the devotional image to be capable of gazing back? As spiritual beings, our access to the material world is necessarily mediated by our senses. Optical theory attempts to explain the process by which material objects can be known by the immaterial self and thus offers a way to resolve the very tension created by Christ’s Incarnation. Vision mediates between the material and the immaterial. This gap between the material and immaterial is the very gap mediated by the Virgin Mary, Christ’s Incarnation, transubstantiation, or a devotional image.

In the Marian lament (discussed at length in Chapter 3), the Virgin Mary’s gaze has been interpreted by Stanbury as problematic because she does not have control of her own gaze.

¹⁰² Belting, *The Image and its Public*, 57-58.

¹⁰³ Michael Camille, “Before the Gaze,” 207.

Stanbury comments that Mary's "gaze seems to oscillate between its assertive command of Christ's body and an objectified deferral in which her own act of looking turns her into a spectacle."¹⁰⁴ But every seeing subject, according to perspectivist theories, would necessarily oscillate between active and passive roles. The receptive role assigned to the seeing subject in intromission and perspectivist optical theories necessitates a reevaluation of the very notion of passivity and its purpose. Moreover, the sight of the compassionate Virgin would result in a sense impression that not only allows it to be seen, but also conforms the meditator to it, instigating an imitation of her compassion. Mary is the mirror in which complete empathetic union with Christ is made visible to the meditator. The meditator's gaze is explicitly invoked, directed and commanded. He or she is brought into a visual economy of salvation. The interactive nature of vision becomes even more important when we consider the depiction and treatment of actual devotional objects, in particular as portrayed in Marian miracles, the *Book of Margery Kempe*, and the Lamentation in Ashmole 61.

Interacting with Images

A small, carved figure of the infant Christ and a cradle featured prominently in the religious experiences of Margaretha Ebner, a Dominican nun and mystic born in 1291 in Donauwörth, Bavaria. Her *Revelations* record her nursing the figure at its request. Margaretha treated the figure like a human baby—rocking it, feeding it, and swaddling it.¹⁰⁵ Margaretha's mystical imitation of Mary's motherhood is not a purely visionary experience. Margaretha interacts in an

¹⁰⁴ Stanbury, "Gender and Voice," 237.

¹⁰⁵ For more on Margaretha's *Revelations* and religious practices, see: Ulinka Rublack, "Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents," *Gender and History*, 6.1 (1994) 37-57; Rosemary Drage Hale, "Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)Holds the Divine," *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Medieval Spirituality* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1999) 210-241.

intensely personal—and physically intimate—way with a material representation of Christ.

Ulinka Rublack argues that a doll of the infant Jesus gained “lifelikeness through an attribution of speech-acts and gestures” and could “become the source of a nun’s socially acknowledged spiritual power and deepen her understanding of God”¹⁰⁶

Stanbury has argued that the primary distinction between an image and an idol has to do with the “vivacity of matter.”¹⁰⁷ Idols do not have life, being “dead matter,” but images “couple an object with promises of extended life, much as the Incarnation joins manhood (the body) with divinity (the abstraction).”¹⁰⁸ An idol has no existence beyond its matter. It is wrong to demonstrate devotion to idols because they lack life, existence beyond mere matter. An image, on the other hand, has meaning beyond its physical, material form. In this sense, it is “alive.” The discourse of images in literature, however, goes beyond this metaphorical “life” of devotional images. Images are shown as actually living—they speak and interact with the meditator. Defining “life” as existence beyond material form could be seen, in the case of images, as misleading. The very purpose of an image is to signify something beyond—an image of the crucifix signifies the crucified body of Christ (which, though dead, will live again in the Resurrection), Christ’s sacrificial death, and the redemption of all Christians through it. But does this signifying function of a devotional image truly give it “life”?

Some miracle tales go even farther in their depiction of images as living things. In a Marian miracle found in Mirk’s sermon for Mary’s nativity, an image of Mary behaves almost as

¹⁰⁶ Ulinka Rublack, “Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents,” *Gender & History* 6.1 (2007) 39.

¹⁰⁷ Sarah Stanbury, “The Vivacity of Images: St. Katherine, Knighton’s Lollards, and the Breaking of Idols,” *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England*, ed. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 138.

¹⁰⁸ Stanbury, “Vivacity of Images,” 139.

a “real” person. A widow has a son who was captured by his enemies and locked in prison. She loves her son “as hur sowle” and was “put yn gret dystresse” by his imprisonment, and she relates the emotional bond she shares with her son to the relationship between Mary and Christ. She cries “to our lady nyght and day forto helpe hur, þat scho might haue hor sonne delyyuert out of þat deses þat he was yn.”¹⁰⁹ Because her prayers have not been answered, the woman goes into the church to the statue of the Virgin and addresses the statue directly, saying: “Blessyd maydyn, oft I haue prayde þe for delyuerance of my sonne, and am not holpen. Wherefore, so as ȝe wyll not helpe me to haue my son, I wyll take youris ynstyd of myn, tyll ȝe send myn home.”¹¹⁰ The woman takes the Christ child from the knee of the statue, brings it home with her, and locks it up in her “cofur.”¹¹¹ The widow acts upon the image of Mary, expecting that Mary herself will be affected—and she is. The following night, the Virgin Mary appears to the widow’s son, releases him from his bonds and opens the doors. She tells him to return to his mother “and say I pray hur, as I send to hir hor sonne hole and sownde, so bring scho my sonne aȝeyne to me without harme.”¹¹² The widow returns the Christ child “without harme” to the image of Mary, giving thanks for the return of her son and living the rest of her life in Mary’s service.

The widow’s interactions with Mary and Christ are not limited to the internal and spiritual; they are external and physical interactions with the devotional representations of Mary and Christ in her parish church. She interacts with the statue exactly as she might interact with another, human woman, and Mary responds in kind. The woman goes to speak to the image of

¹⁰⁹ This miracle story is found in the sermon for “St. Theophilus” in *Mirk’s Festial*, 247-248.

¹¹⁰ *Mirk’s Festial* 248.

¹¹¹ *Mirk’s Festial* 248.

¹¹² *Mirk’s Festial* 248.

Mary face to face. She addresses the image directly as a person and holds the image responsible for not restoring her son saying “as ȝe wyll not helpe me.” In the tale, the statue is referred to as “hur,” rather than it, further evidence that the statue is more than an inanimate, material object. The widow’s treatment of the statue as a living being is shown to be justified. The image of Mary responds as a living woman would respond: she notices that her child has been taken and desires to have Him returned to her. Not only does the image experience emotion, it/she also demonstrates agency. The image acts in order to be reunited with her Son. The image of Mary experiences emotion and her reactions correspond to those one would expect from Mary, the living, human Mother of God.

It is easy to say that miracles such as this one are literary accounts that literalize the signifying power of images, but to do so may be intellectualizing what in fact seems to have been a much more somatic experience of devotional objects. This miracle tale demonstrates precisely the type of attitude toward images that is denounced in the treatise on *Images and Pilgrimages*. Like Wycliff, the author of the treatise was concerned that uneducated people, not knowing any better, would attribute works accomplished by God, Mary, or the saint to the agency of the image itself.

In the story of the widow in Mirk’s *Festial*, the image of Mary is somehow *real*—it shows signs of sentience when it senses action and responds with emotion and physical action. The belief in real presence in the face of apparent absence—the ability of a spiritual being to occupy a human form, much less a non-human material form—was a consistent cause for anxiety in late medieval Christianity. This anxiety appears in debates over both transubstantiation and the use of images. The use of devotional objects for meditation raises important questions about the relationship of the representation to the thing represented—the

divine that is the ultimate object of the meditator's devotion. The relationship between the meditator and the Virgin Mary in Lamentation in Ashmole 61 is interactive. The dialogue, the presence of the physical statue, and the appeals to the meditator's emotions all serve to bring the reader closer to Mary and Christ, but they also bring Christ and Mary closer to the reader. As in the Incarnation, the distant, immaterial deity becomes proximate, adopting material form and human emotion. Affective meditation works to transport meditator to God and God to meditator.

In the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, there is no real description of the Pietà itself. This may be, as Stanbury suggests regarding the lack of details about images in Langland, in order to avoid any implications of idolatry.¹¹³ We do not know what sort of Pietà the narrator sees in the church. It could be a statue made of wood or stone; it could be on a stained glass window or a painting. If the image is adorned with gold, cloth or precious stones, such as those denounced in the Lollard treatise against images, these adornments are not mentioned. All we are told is that it is located in a church and that it sighs and speaks. The statue is not identified by any of its physical characteristics but by its *life*.

The poem juxtaposes descriptions of a woman playing with her baby and Mary caressing her Son's dead body, creating a stark contrast between the woman's joy and Mary's sorrow. This juxtaposition creates the antithetical style of Marian laments highlighted by Keiser and is key to the structure of the Lamentation in Ashmole 61.¹¹⁴ Mary appeals to "all women that ever be bore / and have bore chylder," asking them to "behold and se" the dead body that lies on her

¹¹³ Stanbury here is following Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's comments on images in Langland which she summarizes, saying "Langland avoids describing icons of affective piety . . . To describe a devotional object was to risk coveting it" (Stanbury, *Visual Object of Desire*, 100). See also: Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Denise Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce Piers Plowman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999) 38, 26.

¹¹⁴ See chapter three, 131, 159 n. 104.

“skyrtte” in place of the baby dancing on its mother’s knees (ll.25-26, 28, 29). The mother places a cap on her baby’s head, cleans his ears (ll. 34-35), picks out a “chaplyte” [garland] for him to wear (l. 41), gazes on his face (l. 51); Mary, on the other hand, picks thorns out of Christ’s forehead (l. 39) from the “chaplyte of thornes prikyng” (l. 45) and is able to put her finger through the hole in His feet (ll. 53-55). The happy domestic scene of mother and child highlights the tragedy of the scene created by Mary and Christ.

In addition to heightening the emotional impact of the poem, the contrast between the interaction of the woman and her child with Mary’s interaction with Christ’s body, creates a parallel between the baby and Christ. In stanza four, Mary addresses all women in the first two lines, instructing them to look at her (ll. 25-26). In the second two lines of this stanza, she describes herself with her son lying in her lap (ll. 27-28). She then shifts to describe women with their children dancing on their knees (ll. 29-30). The focus then narrows as Mary addresses one specific woman. Mary alternates between descriptions of the woman holding her baby and herself holding Christ’s body, emphasizing the parallel Mary is creating. At first, the alternations between Mary’s situation and the situation of women and their babies (or a specific woman and her baby) are unhurried: the fourth stanza alternates, more or less every two lines; the fifth and seventh stanzas describe the woman for three lines (ll. 34-36, 50-52) and Mary for three lines (ll. 37-39, 53-55). As the poem builds to its climax, however, this pattern changes. Stanza eight begins with a renewed appeal to the woman; Mary commands her to “loke on me agene” (l. 57). Then, after only one line describing the woman, Mary keeps the focus of the woman’s gaze on her for the next five lines (ll. 59-63). After Mary’s extended description of her son in stanza eight, the descriptions of the two tableaux suddenly begin to shift rapidly. In stanza nine, she describes the woman with her baby in l. 65, herself and Christ in l. 66, and then

alternates between the two scenes in each of the next two lines: “Thyn is lowse, and myn is bownd, / And thyn hath lyfe, and dede is he” (ll. 67-68). These quick shifts are jarring to the reader after the more gradual descriptions in earlier stanzas; the differences between the two tableaux are thrown into stark relief.

In the second half of stanza nine, Mary describes the purpose of Christ’s death and her suffering. Mary’s Son lies dead in her lap “for the luffe of thee” (l. 69). The parallelism of the earlier stanzas becomes instead a substitution: Christ for the woman’s baby. Mary now calls the woman to join her in her weeping because it is for the sake of her child that Christ has been crucified. The refrain that appears through most of the poem: “For thy son dyghed my dere son dere” highlights substitution of Mary’s Son for the woman’s baby.¹¹⁵ This substitution, which begins as the substitution of Christ for the child of one woman whom Mary has been addressing, is in fact the substitution of Christ for all mankind. Twice, Mary tells the reader “My sone is yours and lufys you wele” (ll. 74, 94), highlighting the exchange. Not only is Christ dying on behalf of her baby. Christ *is* the woman’s baby. But the substitution is not only one for one. Mary’s address opens up to a wider audience, briefly expanding the focus. Where she previously addressed a single woman, using the second person singular “thou,” Mary now addresses “both man and wyffe” in the second person plural (l. 73). Christ’s death redeems more than one child; it redeems all of mankind.

In addition to the substitution of Christ for the child and for all mankind, there is a second type of substitution happening in this passage—the substitution of devotional object for living being and vice versa. The Virgin Mary does not *become* the object of the meditator’s gaze in the

¹¹⁵ This refrain appears in all stanzas except the first, third and eighth. See ll. 16, 32, 40, 48, 56, 72, 80, 88, 96.

Lamentation in Ashmole 61: Mary already *is* a devotional object. The woman, and by extension the meditating reader, gazes upon a physical object, and the object gazes back. In the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, the speaking, looking statue alters the way the woman views images, herself, and other people and things in the world. The image of Mary instructs the woman to view her own child as a devotional object. Mary criticizes the woman, saying “And thyn were dede and hade no lyfe, / Thou cowth well wepe at every mele; / For my son thou wepys never a dele” (l. 75-77). The woman’s love for her child is contrasted with her insufficient love for Christ. Mary tells the woman that whether her son is alive or dead, she should “wepe . . . for myn and not for it” (l. 90). When she thinks of her own baby, she should think about Christ. The woman’s child becomes a “living image”—a flesh and blood reminder of Christ.

Margery Kempe experienced a similar reaction to seeing a mother nursing her baby boy. When in Rome, she saw a “powr woman” with a “lytel manchylde sowkyng on hir brest” for a while and then the child ran to Margery.¹¹⁶ As she looks upon the mother and child, Margery recalls Mary and Christ, and as a result she “brast all in-to wepyng.”¹¹⁷ But she does not think upon Mary and the infant Christ—she envisions Mary and Christ “in tyme of hys Passyon.”¹¹⁸ The sight of mother and child here function as the woman’s child is intended to in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, conjuring up an image of their antithesis, the sorrowing Virgin holding her Son’s dead body.

¹¹⁶ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech, EETS o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) I.39.

¹¹⁷ *BMK* I.39.

¹¹⁸ *BMK* I.39.

At the sight of the Pietà, Margery is instantly transported into the drama of the Passion. In church when she sees “a fayr ymage of owr Lady clepyd a ‘pyte,’” and is at once “al holy occupyed in the Passyon of owr Lord Jhesu Crist and in the compassion of owr Lady, Seynt Mary.”¹¹⁹ The visual stimulus of the devotional image is enough to trigger an extreme emotional response. Of course, the response of Margery Kempe to devotional stimuli cannot necessarily be treated as common. She was infamous for her weeping, and it did not make her popular among her fellow worshippers. However, her response reflects an extreme example of the proper use of images. As she tells the priest who tries to stop her outburst by telling her that Christ “is ded long sithyn,” the memory of Christ’s death is “fresch to me as he had deyde this same day.”¹²⁰ The devotional image is intended to reanimate events long past within the soul of the believer.

The image of Mary in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 comes alive through the dialogue of the poem, thus proving its value as a religious image. We are told in line seven that she *sighs* and *speaks*. Throughout the poem she interacts with the meditating reader, looking at the woman with her baby and demanding that the woman look back at her. Because the statue shows these signs of life, it is clearly more than matter. The living statue is more than a “dead” idol. But what is the purpose of its life? The communication that takes place between meditator and image serves the same salvific purpose as the image in the miracle of the Oxford Scholar: it teaches the meditator an appropriate emotional response to Christ’s death and Mary’s compassion in a memorable way. Like the boy in the miracle tale whose mother explained the significance of the Crucifix and the sorrowful depiction of Mary, the narrator who saw this Pietà

¹¹⁹ BMK I.60.

¹²⁰ BMK I.60.

come to life will remember the lesson of compassion learned through her encounter. The poem provides the text for a guided meditation in front of the devotional image.

The speaking Pietà does more than simply function as a reminder of Christ's sacrifice and Mary's sorrow. The added visual element of the Pietà supplements the reader/viewer's meditative experience of the scene described in the text, and the poem's text provides the dialogue for the encounter; both image and text become interactive. The use of text and image together engage the meditator's senses in multiple ways simultaneously. In gazing on the Pietà, the narrator becomes receptive to Mary's lament and to the devotional lesson she has to share.

Conclusions

Both devotional texts and objects mediate between the meditator and the divine, in the case of the Marian lament poem and Pietà by representing Christ's sacrificed body and Mary's sorrow. Like the woman in the Lamentation in Ashmole 61, a meditating reader/viewer gains access to the scene through the visual medium of the statue, or stained glass, or painting—or through graphic descriptions within the text. Interior meditation is stimulated by external mediators (such as the text or image). The external senses awaken the interior. Affective piety, as Rachel Fulton has argued, was not simply a move inward; the intense interiorization of affective piety had to begin with a move outward through feeling compassion toward another—the epitome of which was Mary's compassion for Christ. The treatment of devotional images in these texts adds a layer of complexity to this formulation. The meditating reader of the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 attempts to access and participate in the intimate bond between Mary and Christ through Mary's monologue, but he or she does this through the additional mediation of the devotional object, the Pietà.

The medieval reader of the Lamentation in Ashmole 61 may have read this poem in church, sitting before an image of the Pietà, taking on the role of the narrator in the dialogue that takes place in the poem with the Virgin.¹²¹ Image and text together provide a multi-sensory prayer experience. The meditating reader sees the image and reads the words, possibly aloud, and is able to enter more fully into the dramatic situation of the poem. The reader's devotional energy is directed toward the image, but it passes through the physical stone, wood, glass, or paint of the image itself (and, indeed, beyond the written letters of the poem) and into the post-Crucifixion scene depicted in the Pietà. Both poem and image use the affective, fleshly response to give life and meaning to what would otherwise be inanimate matter.

Image and text both provide a type of visual access to the Pietà. In the case of the image, the scene is physically represented; in the text, the scene is evoked through language so that the reader may visualize it. In creating the imaginative vision of the scene, however, the text creates a more controlled meditation. The poem directs the reader's gaze just as Mary directs the narrator's gaze. In describing the details of Christ's crucified body, the poem limits the reader's focus to specific details, preventing his or her imaginative gaze from wandering. In the case of the devotional image, however, the meditator's gaze is free to wander, creating opportunity for undisciplined imagination. The use of text and image together could be seen as an attempt to direct an otherwise uncontrolled eye.

The additional mediation of the devotional object serves as a physical, sensory stimulus for meditation. As Trevor Hart comments in his essay on visual piety, the power of the visual

¹²¹ The idea that this specific prayer is meant to be read in front of a specific devotional image is reminiscent of the daily devotions described in Part One of the *Ancrene Wisse*. The anchoress' devotional practices are to take place in specific places within her anchorhold (in front of the altar, a specific image, the crucifix, or at her squint while witnessing the elevation of the Host) and with a specific gesture or posture (before she gets out of bed, standing, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, and so on).

religious image is its ability to “shape responses at the level of both body and soul.”¹²² The meditator does not conjure the visualization of Christ’s broken body or Mary’s mourning internally; instead, he or she has a visual trigger before his or her very eyes that corresponds to the content of the poem. In the previous chapter, St. John functioned as an additional mediator between the meditator and Mary, in that he was a third party, internal to the biblical narrative, to whom the meditator could relate more directly than to the sorrowing Virgin. In each case, the meditations provide the meditator with layers of mediation, each intended to bring a seemingly distant God within our realm of experience, one by engaging the senses and the other by appealing to familiar human relationships.

The relationship of meditator and devotional object also raises questions (perhaps even in the mind of the meditator) about the relationship between the physical and the spiritual. How different is the image’s relationship to Mary and Christ from the troubled relationship between the human body and the human soul? Mary appeals to the maternal bond the reader has with her child to induce the appropriate emotional response, but then redirects it toward a higher purpose: compassion for Christ, and sorrow for personal sin. The ties of the flesh challenge the spiritual quest of every Christian, and yet are justified through Christ’s incarnation. Matter is likewise justified: bread through the doctrine of transubstantiation, and, less formally, wood or stone through miraculous, living images. Simultaneous promotion and criticism of religious images reflects the same paradoxical acknowledgment and rejection of the physical seen in the *Ancrene Wisse*. Dependence upon and mistrust of the senses point toward the central paradox of the Christian faith: the mystery of the Incarnation.

¹²² Trevor Hart, “‘Goodly Sights’ and ‘Unseemly Representations’: Transcendence and the Problems of Visual Piety,” *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (London: T&T Clark, 2007) 200.

Conclusion

Using the Virgin Mary, the *Mediatrice*, as she is depicted in late medieval devotional literature as a starting point, this study has attempted to explore the way mediation functions in medieval Christian thought. The function of various modes of mediation (literary devices, texts, and devotional objects) within affective devotional practice is connected to the central paradox of Christianity—the unity of flesh and spirit. Mediation relies on liminality, on being in between two opposing states. Paradox and ambiguity result from the negotiation of opposites. The Virgin Mary is often described in terms of the central paradox she embodies, her virginal maternity. Mary's paradoxical nature is indicative of her role as mediator; she is, in a sense, in a state of permanent liminality which allows her to bridge the gap between earth and heaven, human and divine, flesh and spirit.

The first two chapters examined the problem of the erotic in religious discourse. By alluding to the erotic, devotional texts enlist human, physical sexuality and sensuality for a spiritual purpose. The juxtaposition of paradoxical spiritual and physical eros creates a tension for the devotional reader, who naturally attempts to reconcile categories which have been set up as binary opposites. The potentially conflicting elements of religious allegory and secular love poetry are apparent in Grosseteste's Marian castle. Mary's female flesh is miraculously able to be both closed (signified by the impenetrable castle) and open both to God at the Incarnation and to the Christian who finds in her refuge from temptation. The tension created by erotic discourse is even more apparent in the *Ancrene Wisse*, where the conflict between flesh and spirit is highlighted by the author's own insistence on the anchoress' sensory restraint. Where the Marian paradox exists through divine grace and the mystery of the Incarnation, the paradox of

the sexualized virgin cannot be resolved for the anchoress (or any individual Christian). The unresolved paradox heightens and perpetuates the desire that is stirred up by the use of erotic language and allegory.

What is the effect on the reader or the devotional value of questioning the boundaries between flesh and spirit, sexuality or sensuality and restraint? The reader senses the transgression of these boundaries and the mingling of binary categories. This troubling of binaries points at the ineffable. With God, the boundaries, restrictions, taboos, and binaries break down in ways that are always to some degree incomprehensible. Allegoresis of the Song of Songs does not erase eroticism, it redirects it. The lingering erotic charge of the language and of the allegorical images themselves puts pressure on the boundary between *caritas* and *eros* and threatens to make the physical expression of spiritual love into something more troublesome. The acceptable limits of physicality, of erotic language, of sensual imagery become unclear and the chaste sensibilities of the reader are challenged. The eroticism of the allegories at first seems to couch spiritual experiences in terms of a purely human, physical experience of love; however, in the true sense of allegory as Isidore defines it, namely “speaking other,” erotic allegory is telling you what the love of God is *not*.¹ The mystical union with God both is and is not the physical union of two lovers. It is and is not erotic and sexual. The spiritual erotic allegory attempts to communicate the union of not only our own dual nature of flesh and spirit, but the union of an embodied/incarnate being with the divine. Just as Christ’s Incarnation achieved this communication in one direction—from heaven to earth—the anchoress’ imitation of Mary at the Annunciation attempts the reverse, communication from earth to heaven.

¹ Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 2 vols., ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) I.xxxvii.22. “Allegoria est alieniloquium. Aliud enim sonat, et aliud intellegitur” [Allegory is ‘speaking other.’ For it says one thing, and another thing is understood].

In the *Ancrene Wisse*, allusions to the Annunciation and erotic imagery were concentrated around the description of the anchoress' Eucharistic devotion. The author unites Incarnation and Crucifixion in a single, erotically charged moment during the consecration of the Host. By linking Incarnation to Crucifixion, the author keeps the redemptive purpose of Christ's Incarnation at the center of the meditation, but the conflation of these two moments at opposite ends of Christ's human life once again highlights the paradoxical nature of the union of human and divine. Life and death, human and divine, sexual and virginal are combined in a single moment. The second half of this study turns from the depiction of the Annunciation/Incarnation and the erotic union of human and divine to the other side of the paradox—from life to death and from erotic desire to empathetic suffering. The last two chapters focus on the emotion more often associated with affective piety, compassion.

In chapter three, we saw how Mary takes control of the reader's gaze and demands his or her active, imaginative participation in her compassionate suffering. Through dialogue and an exchange of gazes, Mary draws the meditator into a tutorial in affectivity, teaching him or her how to feel compassion. The final chapter explored how material devotional objects function as mediators through their likeness to the persons represented. Devotional images are material manifestations of a spiritual presence. The devotional image *is like* the person it resembles—but, the image also *is* the person it resembles, manifesting that person to the viewer. As physical representations, devotional objects stimulate the external senses which, in turn, trigger emotional response. Affective devotion assumes that flesh (or body) shares identity with the soul—material and physical are necessarily connected. This connection is established through the mystery of the Incarnation.

The observations I have made about the role of the Virgin Mary in devotional literature are not limited to the devotional texts; they open up new ways of approaching familiar materials. One such example can be found in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, in the character of Custance. In his description of Custance, Chaucer draws on depictions of the Virgin Mary from devotional writings. A comparison of Mary's control of the reader's gaze in *planctus Mariae* to Chaucer's description of Custance, specifically in the episode where Custance prays for mercy for herself and her infant son, offers a new perspective on the characterization of Custance's apparent passivity.

The similarities between Custance and the Virgin Mary has been observed before, most notably by Sheila Delany, who argues that "like Mary, [Custance] suffers passively."² Custance's obedient passivity is contrasted with her power-hungry mothers-in-law, recreating the traditional opposition of Mary and Eve. Teresa Reed similarly writes that the description of Custance at ll. 162-8 "could easily be about the Holy Virgin."³ Although we are told that "in hire is heigh beautee," the description is more of Custance's character rather than her appearance (l. 162). Her heart is the "verray chamber of hoolynesse," a phrase that recalls descriptions of Mary's womb or the devotee's heart as chamber of Christ in devotional texts (l. 167).⁴ Above all, the passage emphasizes that Custance, like Mary, is humble. We are told she is "withoutte pride" and that "humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye" (ll. 162, 165).

² Sheila Delany, "Womanliness in the *Man of Law's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 9 (1974) 68.

³ Teresa P. Reed, *Shadows of Mary: Reading the Virgin Mary in Medieval Texts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) 27.

⁴ See chapter two, pages 104-105.

Reed notes that these Marian allusions suggest passivity because “modern readers tend to view Mary as passive.”⁵ The parallels between the Virgin Mary and Custance are particularly striking in her appeal to the Virgin Mary at the end of part two, and it is this scene that I will examine here in brief. Here, at the moment when Custance and her infant son are about to be exiled, Chaucer presents a pathetic scene based on a pattern of seeking empathy borrowed from the *planctus Mariae*. George R. Keiser and P. M. Kean have both pointed out the influence of the *planctus Mariae* on the diction used to describe Custance and her enemies, noting this scene in particular, where she compares her child to Mary’s child (ll.834-861).

The exchange in this scene between Custance and the Virgin Mary recalls exchanges between Mary and the meditating reader of the Lamentation in Ashmole 61. Custance’s prayer reverses the dramatic situation of the typical Marian lament. Instead of Mary, holding her Son’s dead body across her lap entreating the meditator to have pity on her, we see Custance, pleading with Mary to pity her. She begs the Virgin for mercy, saying: “and yet now lyveth my litel child . . . Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse rewest on every reweful in distresse” (ll.849, 853-854). Here it is not Christ who “nevere wroghtest synne” (as we hear Mary exclaim in the Lament in Ashmole 61), but Custance’s child (l. 856).⁶ The scene also recalls the miracle from Mirk’s *Festial* of the widow who kidnaps the Christ child from an image of the Virgin and holds it hostage in order to compel Mary to restore her son to her. Like the widow, Custance bargains with Mary. She offers Mary an exchange of children, mine for yours. She makes a bold claim against the Virgin Mary, asserting that Mary, in a sense, ought to exchange her Son, Christ, for Custance’s son.

⁵ Reed, *Shadows of Mary*, 27.

⁶ In line 70, Mary says “For my sone trespassyd never here.”

What I suggest is a re-evaluation of how modern readers have viewed the characterization of Mary as passive, of how Chaucer uses Marian allusion, and indeed of the difference between activity and passivity in religious thought. Mary's suffering (and our suffering in imitation of her) cannot be interpreted unproblematically as passive. There is an important aspect of agency involved in her suffering through which, although she surrenders control of her body, she gains control over the meditator and the meditative gaze. Mary's function in these lament lyrics, as I have shown, is far too complex to be dismissed as passive. Likewise, Custance's alignment with the Virgin Mary cannot be assumed to demonstrate passive acceptance of her fate. Custance turns herself into a spectacle, as the Virgin Mary did in Ashmole 61, but in neither case does this type of spectacle imply passivity. Custance controls the gaze and demands the Virgin's compassion. This new perspective on Mary's role in the *planctus Mariae* demands a more critical assessment of the rhetoric of compassion and of our understanding of passivity in medieval literature.

A reevaluation of activity and passivity in medieval devotional practices has a bearing on our understanding of how mediation was thought to function. Rosemary Woolf's characterization of the speaking Pietà in Ashmole 61 as "another unmistakable sign of the decay of the tradition" of passion meditation suggests that her understanding of mediation and of the interaction between human and divine differs dramatically from the understanding of mediation that underlies affective devotional practices.⁷ Mediation both requires and establishes a liminal space that the meditator can enter into in order to bring himself or herself closer to God and God closer to himself or herself.

⁷ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, 257.

Woolf's position implies that mediation enforces a passive stance on the meditator, but that mediation (as we have seen) requires a liminality that confuses the distinction between active and passive. Similarly, Sarah Stanbury's observation that Mary forfeits her authority by inviting the reader's gaze and making herself into a spectacle fails to recognize that the oscillation of Mary's gaze "between its assertive command of Christ's body and an objectified deferral in which her own act of looking turns her into a spectacle"—between active and passive—is at the very heart of Mary's act of mediation.⁸ In *planctus Mariae*, the physicality of Mary's grief leads her to lose her ability to speak and to control her body. She is silenced and paralyzed; she swoons. Passivity—often identified by the very characteristics that result from an extreme emotional state—ultimately leads to transcendence.

Affect experienced in the body leads beyond the individual body. By means of the body, flesh, and emotions, it is possible to transcend them and achieve union with God. Both eros and compassion are necessarily interpersonal emotions, because they are based in the desire to feel with, to share the senses of another. We cannot ignore the fact that, while the emotions invoked by affective devotion and meditation are internally felt, by their very nature they demand connection with an other. The mediators of medieval Christianity—the senses, language, text, devotional object, saint—bound body and soul, human and divine together. The elimination of such mediators, as for example in the iconoclasm of the Reformation in England, reveals not a removal of barriers between the individual and God, but a changing formulation of the linkages between human and divine.

⁸ Stanbury, "Gender and Voice," 237.

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